

MENANDER AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF HIS AUDIENCE

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Texts and Abbreviations

I use standard Oxford texts without explicit reference to their editors. It is mainly, but not only, the edition of F. Sandbach (*Menandri Reliquiae Selectae*², 1990) for Menander; R. Kauer, W.M. Lindsay, O. Skutsch (*P. Terenti Afri Comoediae*, 1958) for Terence; and W.M. Lindsay (*T. Macci Plauti Comoediae I-II*, 1904-5) for Plautus – where I keep an eye on F. Leo's text (*Plauti Comoediae I-II*, 1895-6, repr. Weidmann 1999). Comic fragments follow R. Kassel, C. Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci* (Berlin, New York, 1983-).

Also consulted were the following texts, referred to by their editor's name only:

Arnott, W.G.	<i>Menander</i> I-III, (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass., 1979-2000)
Austin, C.	<i>Menandri Aspis et Samia, I. Textus, II. Subsidia interpretationis</i> (Berlin, 1969-70)
Belardinelli, A.M.	<i>Menandro, Sicioni</i> (Bari, 1994)
Coulon, V., van Daele, H.	<i>Aristophane. Texte établi et traduit</i> (Paris, 1925-46)
Handley, E.	'Menander, <i>Dis Exapaton</i> ', <i>POxy</i> 4407 (vol. 64 (1997) 14-42)
Jacques, J.M.	<i>Le Dyscolos</i> (Paris, 1963), <i>La Samienne</i> (Paris, 1971), <i>Le Bouclier</i> (Paris, 1998)
Jäkel, S	<i>Menandri Sententiae, Comparatio Menandri et Philistionis.</i> Leipzig. (1964)
Kasser, R., Austin, C.	<i>Papyrus Bodmer XXVI, Ménandre: Le Bouclier.</i> (1969)
Lamagna, M.	<i>La Fanciulla Tosata, Menandro; Testo Critico, Introduzione, Traduzione e Commento</i> (Napoli., 1994)
Martina, A.	<i>Menandri Epitrepontes</i> (Rome, 1997)
Wessner, P.	<i>Aeli Donati quod fertur Commentum Terenti, Accedunt Eugraphi Commentum et Scholia Bembina</i> (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1962)

Abbreviations of journals follow the style of *L'Année philologique*, all others are standard and should be self-explanatory, but note also the following:

Entretiens	Handley, E., Turner, E. G. <i>Ménandre, Sept exposés suivis de discussions. Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique.</i> E. Handley & E. G. Turner (eds.), vol. 16. (Vandœuvres-Genève, Fondation Hardt, 1970)
GS	Gomme, A. W., Sandbach F.H. <i>Menander: A Commentary</i> (Oxford, 1973)
MINC	Webster, T.B.L., Seeberg, A., Green, J.R. <i>Monuments Illustrating New Comedy</i> (revised and enlarged, <i>BICS Suppl.</i> no. 50, London, 1995)

Pompella Pompella, G. *Lexicon Menandreum*, Alpha – Omega, (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York, 1996)

Except for *lunate sigma*, I have in general followed the spelling conventions of the standard editions used, even if that meant a lack of consistency in the use of, e.g. *u/v* in Latin, and *iota subscript/adscript* in Greek. Likewise, I did not strive for absolute consistency in the English transcription where, especially with more familiar words, it did not seem desirable.

Introduction

Episodic plays, says Aristotle, are the worst (*Poet.* 1451b-52a): for, to paraphrase him freely, they only manage to dazzle the spectators, with little regard for internal unity and for how much irrelevance a single plot can bear. This thesis, too, may seem to consist of mutually unrelated material and a preface explaining the rationale behind the form is in order.

My thesis is about the expectations of an audience watching New comedy in a Greek theatre around the end of the fourth century B.C., as they are reflected in the evidence of extant play-texts. It is acknowledged that New Comedy is a highly conventional genre¹ even if the *precise* degree of its predictability cannot be meaningfully researched. Our knowledge of the spectators who went to watch the dramatic performances is nowhere near what we would wish for either and Rosivach as late as four years ago felt the need to re-examine the problem of their composition.² Such anecdotal evidence of their behaviour as we have seems to focus on untypical behaviour but tells us next to nothing about the critical equipment of the usual spectator.³ However, large quantities of new dramas and steady demand for dramatic artefacts clearly testify to their fascination with theatre.⁴ A certain horizon of expectations on the part of an enthusiastic audience may be therefore safely postulated. What it means in concrete terms is more difficult to define: each spectator comes differently equipped, his own appreciation changes with time, and comedy itself is constantly changing before his eyes. Who witnessed Menander's farcical characters or say lively trochaic tetrameters in his early plays, found such elements reduced as both the author and his spectator grew older.

In this work, I shall concentrate on various aspects of what may be rather clumsily termed 'multivoicedness' of Menander's art. A critic's interest in this particular quality may be due to what Haiman sees as a trend of postmodern 'divided self' in a man always conscious of what was said before, and who thus ends up adjusting his or her speaking acts accordingly: either through self-reference, sarcasm, irony, or a number of other approaches.⁵ The model seems to work surprisingly well for the self-enclosed genre of New Comedy, the genre aware of its place in the dramatic tradition. A poet could count on his audience's familiarity with the canon and surprise them by delaying or frustrating their expectations, or for instance by drawing their attention to the tension between the earnestness of the 'real-life' atmosphere of a play and the almost tongue-in-cheek presentation of the building blocks of that experience.

On the whole, I tend to exclude from my discussion isolated fragments and collections of gnomic sayings since recent years have taught us to know better than guess about Menander's solutions. By studying aspects of the dramatist's *techne* in the better preserved plays I hope to throw some light (directly or indirectly) on the role of the

¹ 'New Comedy is, quite simply, the most rule-bound and programmed of all classical narrative genres' Lowe (2000) 190.

² Rosivach (2000).

³ Pickard-Cambridge (1988) esp. 272ff. is still the best point to start; see also Kindermann (1979) and Wallace (1997).

⁴ Cf. Chapter IV (p. 112 below).

⁵ 'One consequence of a jaded perception, I would stress, is that the hip ironic speaker is forever self-conscious and sceptical, particularly of his or her own originality and sincerity. If what I say has been very likely said before, then not only am I that most recognizably pitiful and contemptible of all kids on the playground, a *copycat*, but surely my sincerity in saying it is suspect. Like an actor on a stage, I am painfully conscious of merely repeating someone else's lines, playing a role.' Haiman (1998) 15. Haiman himself admits (page 14) that 'the "postmodern" attitude that there is no new thing (including, notably, postmodernism itself) under the sun – and that this is somehow regrettable – is older than hip.'

spectators' horizon of expectations in his dramas and see how it helped them appreciate the genre.

Chapter I is a running commentary on the fascinating exposition of *Aspis*, a polyphony of voices toying with the genre boundaries. This polyphony is kept up also during Daos' theatrical intrigue that comments not only on a tragic voice it imitates, but also on the comedy in which it appears.

Chapters II and III are devoted to aspects of Menander's stagecraft. He makes his characters' movement in stage space visually appealing and, from the point of view of plot construction, ironic. Chapter III is devoted to the *oikos* as a prime symbol of domestic drama. It will be seen that I take Menander's stagecraft technique to be indicative of his art in general. Characters within his plays – just like spectators – face visual signs and are constantly challenged to decode and act upon them. Decoding is based on arguments from plausibility shared by all spectators.⁶ However, visual signs of drama also refer to an accumulated generic knowledge of comedy and therefore their 'reading' is never a simple process. Besides, New Comedy stagecraft uses more pronounced dramatic irony than any previous dramatic form since the stage has developed new possibilities for representing simultaneously fragmented spaces with characters moving in them unaware of each other.

There are then various layers of meaning in what goes on on stage, and my final chapter looks at them again, interpreting them as ironical references about the genre, tradition, and the author's voice. The greater the familiarity of a spectator with the genre, the more sensitive he is, I claim, to pick up the playwright's encoded comments about his art. And the more willing he becomes to accept the invitation to watch a new play unfold before him.

⁶ Just as Aristotle says they should be: 'we must use as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody' (ἀλλ' ἀνάγκη διὰ τῶν κοινῶν ποιεῖσθαι τὰς πίστεις καὶ τοὺς λόγους *Rh.* 1355a27f.).

I. Techniques of foreshadowing and character presentation in Menander's *Aspis* in the light of Greek dramatic traditions

Watching a new play

Aspis is one of the few plays by Menander whose fully preserved exposition we can follow in detail.¹ Due to its interesting plot complications and a self-conscious intrigue, we get a glimpse of how the play interacts with the audience's very concept of the genre and what its aesthetic effect is. This is still not enough to redeem the play for some critics: despite a few effective scenes, Sandbach and others do not rank it among Menander's dramatically most accomplished plays. They blame implausibly black-and-white character portrayals² and the problem that 'the action of the play is not at all points perfectly fitted to the personages.'³

Within its framework, the play explicitly addresses questions that in plays that are dramatically more successful do not get such a prominent mention. These questions are nevertheless important because they concern the transactions between the playwright and his audience. The situation - especially, but not only - at the opening of *Aspis*, raises interesting questions about the role of the spectators' participation in deciphering and assessing both the evolving plot and its character types in a comedy of peculiar ambiguity. The ambiguity is created by bringing on stage something positively new, but at the same time recognizable as generically comic. Moreover, the admixture of a number of stock motifs that belong to the tragic genre and the explicitly acknowledged element of tragedy give the play an almost unique dimension. This is considered Menander's most self-referential play⁴ that constantly alludes to the process of creating a comedy that should conform to generic rules, by exposing to full view questions about scripting a tragic play within a comic play. To assess some of the techniques of foreshadowing, character presentation, and self-referentiality, we must suppose an audience that is aware of comedy's generic working methods and of the canonical Greek dramatic tradition (discussed more fully below, in Chapter IV).

First, let us look at the situation the spectators are confronted with at the beginning of the play, and then move on to discuss their awareness of the genre and see how the play conforms to their expectations or seems to frustrate them. Later in the chapter, I shall return to the element of self-reflexiveness in the communication with the audience, that is, I shall claim, inherent in the genre.⁵

First Frame: spectacle and hints

Plaut. *Pseudolus* explicitly states the importance of bringing always something new on stage:

¹ Beside *Aspis*, we can follow the drift of the initial scenes only in *Samia*, *Dyskolos*, *Heros*, and *Misoumenos*. The prologue speaker in *Perikeiromene* suggests what went on at the beginning of the play.

² Lloyd-Jones (1971-74) 256ff.

³ GS 62. Enthusiastic voices include: Lloyd-Jones (1971) 195: 'one of the most attractive pieces of Menander among those lately recovered'; Vysoký (1970) 92: 'one of Menander's most accomplished plays' (my transl.). Dover (1987) 202 (without yet knowing it was *Aspis*): 'Comoedia Florentia, stylistically the essence of Menander.'

⁴ Gutzwiller (2000) 102, 122.

⁵ Especially useful discussions dealing with this aspect of Menander's work are: Raina (1987), Scafuro (1997), Stockert (1997), and most comprehensively: Gutzwiller (2000). Seminal was Barchiesi (1971).

*qui in scaenam prouenit,
nouo modo nouom aliquid inuentum adferre addecet;
si id facere nequeat, det locum illi qui queat.* (Plaut. *Ps.* 568ff.)

A Greek spectator who sat down in a *theatron* to watch a play by Menander could not foresee what he would get. His experience was, however, completely different from a modern West-End theatre-goer who can hardly tell if what he is to see will be in effect a comedy, tragicomedy, tragedy or anything else. In many cases, any such categories would be considered unsatisfactory altogether. A Greek spectator could put some trust in the generic rules of the performance he visited.

Let us briefly and in a necessarily oversimplified way outline some of his initial expectations before he begins to watch a new comedy staged for him.

He, unlike a modern reader of Menander, viewed comedy as something *πιθανόν*, true to life, even if the image of Menander's comedy as a mirror of real life may have originated later.⁶ From this point of view, divine prologue speakers and improbabilities of coincidence were not seen as incongruous and jarring, but were embraced as metaphors subsumed in the genre that strives at an honest depiction of a contemporary society. We shall see later that this image of comedy had to be negotiated against the recognition that comedy as a 'closed' genre draws on comic resources in order to imitate real life.

At the same time a spectator must have been aware of a few technical rules that could be easily picked up anyway after watching only a handful of plays. The most obvious rule he would have noticed concerns the resolutions: comedy must end with a sense that at least a short-term resolution has been arrived at, whether it be a 'happy ending', stability in the social situation, a wish-fulfilment or retribution of some sort. The rule need not be defined in more than vague terms since each comedy moulded this basic requirement of poetic satisfaction to its own needs.⁷

Another working rule concerns the *argumentum fabulae*. It should deal with social aspects of contemporary life, within this the common denominator easily being the problems of love, property and sociability. These few social aspects of life repeat themselves in every play with variations only in the emphasis of their treatment. It will not be a criticism, then, to say that *Aspis* may be seen as being wholly made up of these conventional motifs of property, love and sociability. In terms of plot interest, the play derives much of its force from the gradual realization of this conventionality.

A complementary rule suggests that it is satisfactory if the audience have control over what goes on on stage. They have a spatial control, in that all business either appears on stage enacted or becomes narrated for them if it is impracticable to stage it. This rule also concerns control over information and over the planning of intrigues. The spectators are privileged with superior knowledge either through a divine prologue speaker, or characters communicating with them in asides, monologues, and so on. Spectators know the facts and are satisfied to watch who knows what⁸ and how they develop their knowledge.

⁶ Aristophanes of Byzantium is credited with the saying: ὦ Μένανδρε καὶ βίε, πότερος ἄρ' ὑμῶν πότερον ἀπεμιμήσατο; (Men. *Test.* 83 K-A). Cf. Manil. V 475f.: *Menander, qui vitae ostendit vitam* (*Test.* 94 K-A); Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.i.69 *omnem vitae imaginem expressit* (*Test.* 101,3 K-A); Arnott (1968); Gutzwiller (2000) 129; Nesselrath (1990) 149ff.; Zagagi (1994) 94ff. Cf. also below, p. 39 and 112 n.1.

⁷ Neumann (1958).

⁸ Thus the Lar in Plaut. *Aul.* compresses in just two lines all necessary information about which of the characters on stage knows what of the rape that happened nine months earlier: *is scit adulescens, quae sit quam compresserit, / illa illum nescit, neque compressam autem pater* (29f.). The audience will derive much fun not only from their superior knowledge but also from knowing who knows what.

It is true that a play may appear novel, surprising, even shocking, but the audience can count on the fact that eventually they will regain their control. At the beginning of *Perikeiromene*, the spectators probably saw a moving scene during which Glykera, her hair cut off, rushed on stage and lamented the cruel treatment that she suffered from Polemon. She did not know the reason for such behaviour. Only the prologue speaker Agnoia will later explain to us the soldier's motives: the goddess misled him into behaviour totally out of his character. This may seem gratuitous and shocking, therefore she hurries to ask the audience not to be cross with an unusual beginning of the play but bear it patiently because it has a deeper meaning than just a calculated attempt to surprise. Dramatically, she almost seems to be saying, it is an interesting way of bringing the characters onto a new level of knowledge. She says:

πάντα δ' ἐξεκάρητο
ταῦθ' ἔνεκα τοῦ μέλλοντος, εἰς ὀργήν θ' ἵνα
οὗτος ἀφίκητ' - ἐγὼ γὰρ ἦγον οὐ φύσει
τοιούτον ὄντα τοῦτον, ἀρχὴν δ' ἵνα λάβῃ
μηνύσεως τὰ λοιπά - τοὺς θ' αὐτῶν ποτε
εὗροιεν· ὥστ' εἰ τοῦτ' ἐδυσχέρανέ τις
ἀτιμίαν τ' ἐνόμισε, μεταθέσθω πάλιν. (*Pk.* 162ff.)

Finally, the audience may be aware that it is part of the play's *Weltanschauung*, just as their own outlook, that fortune easily changes without warning, and disturbs the stability of life. They may expect a play to move from some sort of instability or misfortune and commotion in the direction of stability. Agnoia's words in the prologue just mentioned, continue as following: διὰ γὰρ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ κακὸν εἰς ἀγαθὸν ῥέπει (*Pk.* 169). Usually, the positive resolution will have been achieved only thanks to the initially adverse situation.

Some of these rules, though obvious and easy to pick up during the course of watching a few plays, could also have circulated in a form of self-contained theories (Peripatetic critics come most easily to mind⁹) and anyone seriously interested in theatre could perhaps become acquainted with them. It must be stressed here that no one came to theatre to tick off for himself these rules as they appear in the play. Very probably, these expectations surface in his consciousness only when they seem to contradict the reality of the play or are otherwise explicitly alluded to.

Plays may begin with a situation of turmoil and commotion within a household. Often this concerns frustrations caused by obstacles to a love affair, as e.g. the beginning of *Misoumenos* and *Heros* show. *Aspis* goes much further in depicting turmoil of tragic dimensions:

The scene opens with a silent procession. On stage arrive Lykian captives and package animals burdened with war booty. An elderly servant must stand out among them for his solemn demeanour. He draws attention to a buckled shield he is carrying. Later we shall learn that the house where he is heading has been prepared for a wedding celebration in the family but it is not easy to guess if either the house or the stage altar were in any way decorated for the occasion. If they were, the opening situation on stage would gain in emotional tension: a procession of gloomy captives would only very

⁹ For a brief discussion with references, see Gutzwiller (2000) 113ff.

jarringly fit into such a festive surrounding - one could almost see it as a reversal of a marriage procession.¹⁰

The spectacle created by war spoils, though surprising and effective, is not uncommon on the Greek stage. One immediately thinks of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (before 914)¹¹ or Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (cf. 225ff.). The scholiast on Eur. *Or.* 57 has a comment showing that Helen in a production of Euripides' play known to him arrived with the spoils of Troy. Such a procession would enliven any tragedy and it is a possibility that revivals of older plays may have been unnecessarily pepped up with such spectacles. Menander, who has been at pains to give the impression that the initial scene imitates tragedy, could be our evidence that this is what spectators commonly saw in the tragic theatre of his time or associated with tragedy.¹²

At some time during their entrance, an old man comes out of his house, disturbed by the noisy commotion and intrigued by the booty. Readers of the play do not agree about when exactly the old man comes on stage. Some prefer to see him arrive along with the slave carrying the shield.¹³ This would then explain why no proper greetings are exchanged between the two. Alternatively, he could have entered during or after the slave's monologue – explaining the slave's lack of attention paid to him during the opening monologue.¹⁴

The slave - it is important for sustaining the tragic sentiment that we do not yet know his name - begins lamenting this sad moment when he has been forced to return home without his young master. They had set out on a military campaign together, full of hopes that their mercenary career should bring benefit to the family. Now that the master is dead, he says, all such hopes have been crushed.

One may wonder whether in: '[unfortunate?] ἡμέραν ἄγω... τὴν νῦν', (*Asp.* 1, 2) '[?this] day' is not included more for dramatic purposes than out of any *πιθανότης*. In reality, Daos would have felt his master's loss most acutely some time ago, not now on his arrival.¹⁵

Both tragedy and comedy discipline themselves to portray action that does not exceed a twenty-four hour time span. It is 'today' that the audience have come to watch the performance and the play responds to this by limiting its action in temporal respect: this is the day when events reach a climax, reversal and/or resolution, all in a compressed manner. For different emotional effects, both tragedy and comedy emphasize the aspect of the play's inner time and the suddenness, coincidence and compression of dramatic events.

¹⁰ A sign that suggests a wedding is or is not under way appears in Ter. *An.*: the house should be decorated and the doorway busy with people coming in and out. The fact that no one was in front of Chremes' door works as a symbol (in stage terms): *solitudo ante ostium...interea intro ire neminem / video, exire neminem; matronam nullam in aedibus, / nil ornati, nil tumulti* (362, 363f.). All this is taken as *magnum signum* (366) that the wedding is off. Of course, in *Andria* this is all merely reported, not directly visible on stage.

¹¹ Taplin (1977) 75ff., 304ff..

¹² Cf. also Arnott (1988) 11ff. Arnott (1993) 25f. has a brief discussion of the initial scene in *Aspis*, in comparison with Aristophanes' techniques. He suggests that *Perikeiromene* could begin with an equally puzzling wordless scene as *Aspis*.

¹³ Cassio (1978) 181, note 8. GS 63 ad *Aspis* 1; Lombard (1971) 124.

¹⁴ Of course the slave's absorption in his lament may have rendered him ignorant of what was happening around him, cf. *Mis.* 312 = 713 Arnott. Those who suggest that first Daos pronounced his monologue and then Smikrines appeared from his house include Vysoký (1970) 83; Kasser and Austin's ed. pr. (p. 12); Holzberg (1974) 28; Lloyd-Jones (1971) 176 is vague but seems to have Smikrines on stage listening to Daos without actually being noticed by the slave.

¹⁵ A few days have passed since the death: 79-81. Alternatively, Daos may emphasize the sad homecoming. Cf. e.g. ὡς τῆς πικρᾶς ἐπιδημίας *Pk.* 360, see also below, 101.

Thus, when Helen bewails the sad fate her husband apparently suffered, she includes an emotionally charged appeal to the sadness of this particular day: *ὡς μέλεος ἀμέρα* (Eur. *Helen* 335).¹⁶ Similarly, Electra, who longed for Orestes' arrival, learns the false story of his death and laments: *οὐ γὰρ τάλαιν', ὅλωλα τῆδ' ἐν ἡμέρᾳ*. (Soph. *El.* 674).

We may visualize the slave as glancing at the shield that he is holding, possibly also striking his head and tearing his hair in distress. Of course, we have no support for this in the text; yet, Getas in Men. *Heros* describes for us explicitly how another slave in distress behaves: *τί γὰρ σὺ κόπτεις τὴν κεφαλὴν οὕτω πυκνά; / τί τὰς τρίχας τίλλεις ἐπιστάς; τί στένεις;* (*Her.* 4f.). It is possible that at the beginning of *Aspis* similar antics were staged, even if it is worth remembering that in *Heros* the distress is caused by an infatuation that a slave (!) finds himself in and so in an essentially comical scene the gestures could have been exaggerated out of proportion.¹⁷

The slave's hopes have been all thwarted now that his master is, as he believes, dead. He had hoped the master would return safe and sound from his military expedition and would live happily ever after:

ἀπὸ στρατείας ἐν βίῳ τ' εὐσχήμονι
ἤδη τὸ λοιπὸν καταβιώσεσθαι τινι,
στρατηγὸν ἢ σύμβουλον ὠνομασμένον,
καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν, ἥσπερ ἐξώρμας τότε
ἔνεκα, σεαυτοῦ νυμφίῳ καταξίῳ
συνοικιεῖν ποθεινὸν¹⁸ ἤκοντ' οἴκαδε... (5ff.)

It was for his sister's sake that the young master went to war, in order to procure for her the dowry and have her married to a suitable man when the *ποθεινός* master arrived home. The adjective indicates that the arrival home was much expected by the whole family, it was to effect a resolution of their social problems similar to resolutions typical in domestic comedy.

However, now it seems that no resolution is possible. The scene is tragic, as the metre and the theme of the lament show.¹⁹ Cassio shows that it contains the typical elements of a ritual lament: a direct address to the deceased person (cf. 2, and 14); a contrast between previous hopes and the present reality (4, 13); the formula 'you are gone, but I...' (13ff.), and praises for the dead person's virtue.²⁰

Yet, because the lament also includes the background facts typical of a comic expository scene, it gains in ambiguity. We hear of generically comic characters in an

¹⁶ Thrasonides' lament at the beginning of Men. *Mis.* is directed not at appealing to this day but rather this *Night*. This has obvious erotic connotations appropriate to his situation (compare Plaut. *Amph.* 545) but it can also be, at least partly, a reversal of the traditional temporal emphasis on 'this day' when lamenting one's misfortune.

¹⁷ Women are sometimes reported to be doing the same offstage: *Dysk.* 673ff., *Asp.* 227ff.

¹⁸ For *ποθεινός* used in this sense, cf. e.g. Eur. *Helen* 540, and Aristophanes' parody of a welcoming address, the famous 'eel-greeting scene' in Ar. *Ach.* 885f., 890. The sentiment of *Aspis* is in direct contrast with the situation in Plaut. *Amph.* 654-58:

AM. *edepol me uxori exoptatum credo aduenturum domum,
quae me amat, quam contra amo, praesertim re gesta bene,
uictis hostibus: quos nemo posse superari ratust,
eos auspicio meo atque [in]ductu primo coetu uicimus.
certe enim med illi expectatum optato uenturum scio.* Cf. Pascucci (1978) 1073.

¹⁹ '...versi di stile quasi perfettamente tragico nella lingua e nel metro', Cassio (1978) 175. Blundell (1980) 71f.; Lampignano (1971-4); Lombard (1971) 122f.

²⁰ Cassio (1978) 175f. with literary parallels.

unusual, tragic situation. A mercenary soldier who goes to war to become quickly rich is a type that we come across in Men. *Kolax* (cf. 27ff.), and soldiers also appear in *Misoumenos*, *Perikeiromene*, *Sikyonios*, *Eunouchos*, and probably *Dis Exapaton* (see 8 n. 30).

The dowry for the young master's sister is procured so that she may marry a suitable husband - again, there are many comedies where procurement of dowry causes an intrigue to take place (see Plaut. *Trin.* 156ff. below, page 17). All that can be said at this stage of the play is that the audience see a tragic situation embedded in the reality and problems of comedy.

In a novel way, in this play the dowry for a girl appears on stage at the very beginning of the play, thus seemingly removing the most obvious obstacle that usually stands in the way of a comic wedding. Apparently, no intrigue will have to be devised to find the money. In fact, however, we shall see that it is exactly the presence of the dowry that will prove forbidding for the girl's happiness. If no dowry had been brought from the campaign, the problem towards which the play is heading would disappear!

In the adjective *καταξίω* (9), Menander shows the obvious worry of a middle class Athenian. We find similar words in Plaut. *Trin.*: ...*habeo dotem unde dem, / ut eam in se dignam condicionem conlocem* (158f.). At the same time, there is a subtle preparation for the problem of the play - Kleostratos wanted to find for his sister a suitable husband, worthy of his family, such as the requirements of poetic justice call for. As the plot will evolve, this adjective will be seen in retrospect as charged and ironic. It will be shown that a man completely unworthy of the girl will try to lay his hands on her and her dowry. The *κατάξιος* will be ousted by an old, antisocial man with no amatory motives - the very opposite of what comedy's rules require of a satisfactory bridegroom.

The audience may wonder how the sombre beginning will be smoothed out with a wedding that will necessarily have to ensue: a marriageable girl has been mentioned and the rules of poetic justice applicable in the genre will see to it that she is not left unmarried. The spectators, in short, are aware of the rules of the game and have to reconcile what they see with this awareness. They wait to see how the two jarring strands within the play, wedding and love versus a death in the family, will be unified.²¹

For himself, the slave had hoped:

ἐμοί τ' ἔσεσθαι τῶν μακρῶν πόνων τινὰ
ἀνάπαυσιν εἰς τὸ γῆρας εὐνοίας χάριν. (11f.)²²

εὐνοίας χάριν in *Aspis* has two expository functions at this place. Firstly, the slave is for the first time shown loyal to his young master: importantly enough, as there will be opportunities in the play to prove it.²³ The second point is more important still: Pan in

²¹ Schäfer (1965) draws attention to a similar problem of two seemingly disparate strands in Menander's *Dyskolos*. However, in *Aspis*, the sombre element is pushed into background, if not completely forgotten with Tyche's arrival, and the characters no longer endeavour to keep the atmosphere gloomy.

²² The situation has a comic equivalent in Plaut. *Trinummus*. Stasimus hopes that his young master will soon return home to save his property and reward a loyal slave for his good service, all the more praiseworthy when it is so hard to find a faithful friend: *o ere Charmide<s>, quom apsentis hic tua res distrahitur tibi, / utinam te rediisse saluom uideam, ut inimicos tuos / ulciscar<e>, ut mihi, ut erga te fui et sum, referas gratiam! / nimium difficilest reperiri amicum ita ut nomen cluet, / quoi tuam quom rem credideris, sine omni cura dormias* (Plaut. *Trin.* 617-21). If the master's farm is given away, the financial situation in the household will become so desperate that the slave will have to play the part of a soldier slave: *sed id si alienatur, actumst de collo meo, / gestandust peregre clupeus, galea, sarcina, etc.* (595f.)

²³ Nesselrath (1990) 283ff. in his discussion of the evolution and increase in the slave role from Old Comedy onwards, concludes that slaves who are 'humanisierter Helfer und Tröster ihres Herrn' (p. 293)

Men. *Dyskolos* gives his divine ἐπιμέλεια as the reason for his interest in organizing the events in the lives of the mortals who will fill the comic stage. The piety of Knemon's daughter caused that:

τὰς δὲ συντρόφους ἐμοὶ
 Νύμφας κολακεύουσ' ἐπιμελῶς τιμῶσά τε
 πέπεικεν αὐτῆς ἐπιμέλειαν σχεῖν τινα
 ἡμᾶς (Dysk. 36ff.)

The effect of Pan's ἐπιμέλεια will be a marriage granted to the girl for her piety. The Lar in Plaut. *Aulularia* promises similarly motivated divine help that stems from the piety of Euclio's daughter, and the result will be another marriage:

eius honoris gratia
feci thesaurum ut hic reperiret Euclio,
quo illam facilius nuptum, si uellet, daret. (Plaut. *Aul.* 25ff.)

These examples may easily be compared with the expository information we get in *Aspis*. The slave expresses his εὐνοια and thus paves the ground for his role of a 'god': his care and interest in his master's property and a wedding for his sister will be organized and directed through the intrigue designed by this loyal slave. He will thus affect the lives of mortals in a similar way that gods in other dramas do.²⁴ Of course Daos is not a god who can effect his ἐπιμέλεια as easily as he wishes, but his stressing of the loyalty to the young master – that developed out of admiration for Kleostratos' character – is paralleled in the mentioned comedies where gods explain in similar terms their reasons for the involvement in the plot situations.

Ironically, τῶν μακρῶν πόνων will not point to (as he means) past toils only, but also to the troubles that are still to come (the intrigue included). It is impossible to say if the audience got this hint and began to suspect that the slave could become the intriguer of the play.²⁵

νῦν δὲ σὺ μὲν οἷχει παραλόγως τ' ἀνῆρπασαι (13), he laments in words that resemble Electra's lament in Sophocles' play (cf. φροῦδος ἀναρπασθείς Soph. *El.* 848). In fact, the entire lament that opens the play bears resemblance to Sophocles' *Electra* 1126ff. There are, however, differences. In *Electra*, we are in control of what we see because the

were probably not developed before Antiphanes. It is a convincing hypothesis that they were a very recent development of the slave type having appeared only some 30 years before Menander began his career. At the same time, it must be said that the type is not novel on the tragic stage where pedagogues, nurses, and other slaves loyal to the household, have a long history.

²⁴ Lombard (1971) 134 has a different explanation of this important concept. 'The notion that εὐνοια should be rewarded had strong political connotations at this time and it may be suggested that the Athenians heard an echo of the rhetorical speech in Daos' words.' Cf. his notes 37 and 38. Cassio (1978) 171, after Macleod, also remarks that Daos' wish for a tranquil old age resembles a parent's hopes to find support in his/her children in old age. Cf. Eur. *Med.* 1032ff.

²⁵ Lombard (1971) 128 takes the words in lines 11f. to mean that Daos 'wished to obtain his freedom had Kleostratos survived the expedition' – although I do not see what makes him think so. Even in his lament directed towards Tyche Daos does not seem to have wished to be released from Kleostratos' services: ὦ Τύχη, / οἷω μ' ἀφ' οἴου δεσπότου παρεγγυᾶν / μέλλεις. τί σ' ἡδίκηκα τηλικούτ' ἐγώ; (213ff.). Of course, there would be some irony if he did obtain his freedom. E.g. at 200-4 Daos puts himself in opposition with the 'freeborn' and tactfully suggests that they should deal with matters of property, weddings, or blood relationships. In fact, it will be none other than he himself who will be responsible for the design of the intrigue (cf. 348-52) that directly influences marriage and property statuses.

intrigue was prepared in advance. Electra's lament is intense and incoherent. In *Aspis*, the lament comes at the beginning of the play and it must fulfil a different dramatic role. It is a bold, surprising, and gripping beginning but at the same time, the tone must allow some expository facts to sneak in. Therefore, Daos must retain his composure to a degree that Electra did not have to.²⁶ Electra makes the same mistake as Daos does, but the audience of the comedy were not prepared for that possibility and so it is difficult to tell if they discerned the connection between the two dramatic texts and the similarity of the mistake just because they could have been acquainted with the tragedy.²⁷

Clash of characters, and their gradual self-revelation

To appreciate the ensuing dialogue between the slave and the old man it is not necessary to be fully aware of the typological potential that the two characters contain, not even the tragic paradigms that may have been a prototype for the scene. If, however, the audience are aware of the 'typological promise' of an antisocial and greedy *senex* on the one hand, and the potential for craftiness on the part of the leading slave on the other, they can appreciate the subtle humour of their gradual revelation – of their 'dropping of the mask', so to speak, in front of the audience and in front of each other.

Significantly, the slave introduces himself for us first by his social role,²⁸ and he does so in a 'loyal' juxtaposition to his master's name: ἐγὼ δ' ὁ παιδαγωγός, <ὦ> Κλεόστρατε (14). Menander prepares the ground for later by making the leading slave a pedagogue for he will later quote extensively from tragedy, use philosophical or medical maxims.²⁹

Daos praises his 'late' master's military quality ἀνὴρ γὰρ ἦσθα τὴν ψυχὴν μέγας, / εἰ καὶ τις ἄλλος (17f.).³⁰ 'Μεγαλοψυχία here denotes military ἀρετή. The ideal, however, has a wide range of association and it happens to be the most prominent virtue in the Peripatetic Philosophy which represented the advanced thought in Menander's time.'³¹

The old man cuts short the pedagogue's characterization of Kleostratos. His first words may well be false: τῆς ἀνεπίστου τύχης, / ὦ Δᾶε (18f.). This seems to repeat the slave's παραπλήσι' ὡς τότ' ἤλπισ' ἐξορμώμεν[ος] (3). In that case, he could have been on stage as early as line 3 was pronounced. Of course, the echo is not clinching for the staging. Especially since it is nothing strange to comment on the unexpectedness of misfortune such as befell this household (cf. Soph. *Electra* 1127). More importantly, in his first utterance, the old man names the slave as Daos, and from the pedagogue we immediately hear his name as well - it is Smikrines. In view of the later developments, it

²⁶ Cf. Lombard (1971) 129 with the perceptive note 23.

²⁷ Del Corno (1975) and Lombard (1971) are more balanced than Vysoký (1970); while Katsouris (1975) does not discuss *Electra* at all.

²⁸ The first term used in the play immediately introduced Daos as a slave by opposition to his master: τρόφιμος (commonly a term of address from a slave, cf. GS 292, ad Men. *Epit.* fr.1).

²⁹ Lines 20f., 27f., 164-6, 189ff, 372, 336f.. Cf. Goldberg (1980) 31. It must be mentioned, however, that even uneducated slaves can freely quote from tragedy (as e.g. Onesimos does in *Epit.* 1123ff.) Sometimes the quotations are almost proverbial and do not indicate any literariness on the speaker's part.

³⁰ Kleostratos' military achievements, as an individual, are never mentioned (as contrasted with the heroic individuality of other comic soldiers); even his shield is not described (as it would be in a heroic stylisation). The type offered a range of variations and so it is no wonder that Menander varied the role of the soldier in his plays. The soldier in *Misoumenos*, *Perikeiromene*, and *Sikyonios*, plays a leading role; a smaller one is allotted to him in *Dis Exapaton*, just how important his role was in *Eunouchos* and *Kolax* is not clear. Soldier as a comic type: Böhne (1968); Hofmann and Wartenberg (1973); Hunter (1985) 66; Nesselrath (1990) 325ff.; Parke (1933) 234ff.; Wehrli (1936) 101.

³¹ Lombard (1971) 134. Ajax has μεγάλη ψυχή (Soph. *Aj.* 154), see Solmsen (1984). The opposite characteristic of a soldier appears in Men. *Mis.* (μικρόψυχος, 757).

is ironic and apposite that Smikrines, the man who will suffer at the hands of the intriguing slave, is the first to spell out Daos' name. By uttering the opponent's name, in itself a very common way of introducing comic characters to the audience,³² the characters may be implicitly emphasizing their role in the plot.

When the slave names himself as his master's *pedagogue*, the tone gains in ambiguity if the spectators acknowledge the existence of the genre. The relationship between a pedagogue and a young master is a familiar concept in the plots of New Comedy. A pedagogue may try to protect the master against love, siding with the old master (as Lydus does in Plaut. *Bacchides*), or side with him against the old morose master (as Acanthio does in Plaut. *Mercator*: line 91 makes it clear that he was Charinus' pedagogue). The scope of the role differs depending on where the pedagogue's loyalty is. Even in this play, the struggle to gain the pedagogue's loyalty will become obvious (cf. 162f.), even though we know already that he shows deep *εὐνοία* for the young master.

However, the type of a pedagogue finds its way into canonical tragedies as well - the one in Sophocles' *Electra* immediately comes to mind - and this should stop us (even though we are watching a comedy) from thinking of it as predominantly a comic type. Menander can carry on exploiting the ambiguity of the type that is equally recognizable on both the comic and tragic stage.³³

Despite his name, Kleostratos was recruited to procure a dowry for his sister and then (as the slave suggests), he would have given up his mercenary career to enjoy a peaceful life. Interestingly enough, later we shall hear that another character in the play bears a soldierly name as well: his uncle Chairestratos. The name is common enough, but could it be that by choosing such a name, Chairestratos will be seen even closer to Kleostratos' role in the play: they have both provided a dowry for Kleostratos' sister; and they are also both mistakenly believed dead at some point during the course of the play.

To signify the person's characteristics by an (un)suitably chosen name or nickname is a device that easily finds its place into Greek drama. Apart from *ad hoc* comic names and patronymics (e.g. Ἀποδρασιππίδης, *Vesp.* 185), or contemptuous distortions of names (e.g. Δημολογοκλέων *Vesp.* 343b), Aristophanes may at times wish to give his characters names that have a longer-term meaning in the plays. For instance, the opposite types of characters within one family are called Philokleon and Bdelykleon in *Vespae* and it is through their names that their relation in the plot is made more obvious. In *Lysistrata* (again, an eloquent name!) the names of a husband and wife gain an erotic sense appropriate to the plot if used together: the name of Myrrhine is perfectly common and in itself innocuous but in company with her husband's name ('Kinesias'), it prepares us for a scene of sexual teasing.³⁴ In *Aves*, Peisetairos and Euelpides reveal their names only at 644f., after persuading the Chorus of birds of their divine nature. We hear their names only after this dramatic role has become clear and the humour is derived from looking back at their action that 'ironically' suits their names.³⁵ Apparently, then, names

³² E.g. Plaut. *Trin.* 48f.

³³ See especially Rizzo (1990). For the increase in the role of the pedagogue in the art and theatre of the late fifth and the fourth centuries, see Green (1994) 57-61.

³⁴ Henderson in his commentary on the play remarks in this respect: 'For the purpose of the following scene, the name 'Myrrhine'...in juxtaposition with 'Kinesias', will have reminded the spectators of the common metaphorical use of 'myrtle'=female genitalia...The significant names underscore the archetypal nature and representative function of the coming encounter.' Henderson (1987) 174 ad 838, cf. also xli.

³⁵ Dunbar (1998) on verses 644 and 645.

can constitute a psychological portrait of their bearers and even add a humorous or ironic touch to the dramatic plot.³⁶

The juxtaposition, almost opposition, of Daos' and Smikrines' name reverts the scene to a rather lighter mood. That is, if we grant that they carry a certain promise of how the plot will develop and the characters will interact in it. Of course, we cannot tell just how ready the spectators are to let their knowledge of the two names shape their expectations and enjoy the ambiguity of the opening scene that comes from such awareness.

It is reasonable to admit that the audience expected the bearer of the name Smikrines to be greedy. Other Smikrines's in Menander include the one in *Epitrepontes*, who complains about his daughter's profligate husband. As Chairestratos confirms in an aside (137f.), Smikrines' calculations are correct and the old man has every reason to want to protect his property from the big spender who has married his daughter. Even so, they call him names: Chairestratos says he is a *κίναδος*, a symbol of shamelessness, who upsets houses (165), and this exactly delineates the view of Smikrines in *Aspis*, who is shameful and cunning as well.³⁷

MacCary's efforts to find a common denominator in all Menander's slaves called Daoi require qualifications that weaken his thesis.³⁸ At most, it can be said that the name truly bears a promise of fulfilling a lighter role in the play, whether it be an episodic role, or an essential part important, for example, in devising an intrigue. However, even if a particular name did not convey any important hint at the character's role in the play, it may certainly gain in significance through the juxtaposition with an antagonist's name, foreshadowing possible directions in the development of the play. At the same time, it comes as a surprise that the serious pedagogue should actually have a name that rings of naughtiness and schemes. Some in the audience must have heaved a sigh of relief upon hearing this name.

When Smikrines is divested of anonymity, his behaviour on stage gains in symbolic meaning, even if we do not in fact know what precisely he may be doing.³⁹ He may have been ogling the war booty for some time now, either conspicuously or with pretended disinterestedness. What is more, the whole plot problem, concentrated into one stage constellation from the beginning of the play, now may seem more explicit: there is the absent Kleostratos' shield, and the dowry he intended for his sister, the man who will want to lay his hands on it, and the slave whose name promises to stop the old man from seizing the property. This stage picture thus foreshadows the whole plot and the functions of the two leading characters in it.

Daos will narrate for Smikrines what happened to his master. He begins in the style of tragic messenger speeches (*ποταμός τις ἐστὶ τῆς Λυκίας καλούμενος /*

³⁶ Cf. Olson (1992), Willi (2002) 5f. with references.

³⁷ ...ἡ καὶ τῶν Μενάνδρου πεποιημένων προσώπων Μοσχίων μὲν ἡμᾶς παρεσκέυασε παρθένους βιάζεσθαι, Χαιρέστρατος δὲ ψαλτρίας ἐρᾶν, Κνήμων δὲ δυσκόλους ἐποίησεν εἶναι, Σμικρίνης δὲ φιλαργύρους ὁ δεδιὼς μή τι τῶν ἔνδον ὁ καπνὸς οἴχοιτο φέρων; (Choricus 32, 73 Foerster). Another Smikrines appears in *Sikyonios* though too little is known of his character to pass any judgements.

³⁸ On Daos: MacCary (1969) 282ff. Brown (1987) offers constructive criticism of MacCary's articles published on this topic (1969, 1971, 1972). MacCary is especially unconvincing in his choice of adjectives to describe Daos as a recurrent type. He is wrong to assume that 'all Daoi seem to be older slaves' (1969, 286): Daos in *Heros* is surely youngish if he fell in love with a girl who was brought up with him. Sherk (1970) calls even the Daos in *Aspis* a 'young man', but I do not see the reason for this. In tragedy, pedagogues are often portrayed as old (e.g. Soph. *El.* 73) but the slave's age in this play is kept vague and never becomes an issue. We may choose to imagine him to be elderly (cf. 12) or just vaguely middle-aged and able to accompany his master on a mercenary career, something not easily expected of an old man (A. *Ag.* 72-74).

³⁹ Cf. below, p. 46.

Ξάνθος...23).⁴⁰ The soldiers were winning easily, looting villages, coming back to camps with loads of money: *χρήματα / ἕκαστος εἶχε πόλλ' ἀπελθών* (32f.). Menander makes Smikrines reply at this place with an ambiguous *ὡς καλόν*. In the light of Tyche's later description of his character, he does not rejoice here at the soldiers' success but only poorly veils his interest in their booty. Here it may still be played down but already his comments begin to show significant consistency.⁴¹

Even Kleostratos experienced good fortune and possessed *χρυσοῦς τινὰς ἑξακοσί]ους, ποτήρι' ἐπιεικῶς συχνά, / τῶν τ' αἰχ]μαλώτων τοῦτον ὃν ὁραῖς πλησίον / [ὄχλον...] (34ff.). With all this booty, he sent Daos to Rhodes, showing full trust in the loyal slave. The items, and even the order in which Daos mentions them, immediately stick in Smikrines' mind (82ff.). The good fortune that the Lykian campaign started with was the real cause for the misfortune that ensued when the soldiers loosened their guard. Military instability belongs to the sphere of Tyche; when we eventually see her later on this will be acknowledged by her.*

From deserters the *barbaroi* learned of the soldiers' scattered force. In the evening the soldiers were revelling (45ff.) and the enemy could take them by surprise. Smikrines disapproves of the soldiers' lack of care for their acquired fortune: *πονηρόν γε σφόδρα* (48). It is a common sentiment that too much good luck is dangerous, e.g.:

*ἀρχὴ μεγίστη τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις κακῶν
τάγαθά, τὰ λίαν ἀγαθά* (Menander fr. 670 K-A)⁴²

Unlike these men Daos was not overwhelmed by a sense of triumph but showed he guarded the master's property in a responsible way: *νύκτας φυλακ]ήν τῶν χρημάτων ποοῦμενος / τῶν τ' ἀνδραποδίων...* (54f.). Smikrines again reacts ambiguously: *ὡς ὤνησ' ἀποσταλεῖς τότε* (62). Though it is possible that Smikrines feels sympathy for Daos who is, after all, the only person who would listen to the old man (163), it is much more probable that he has his eyes focused on the present booty saved by a nice piece of luck. From a secure place, Daos learnt that the Lykians took their prisoners to villages in the mountains. Some in the audience may ask why we need to be told this but hardly anyone would stop to consider the importance of this information. It does prepare a plausible explanation for Kleostratos' return home, but the spectators may as well just wait and see what the prologue god will tell them. They must expect the god(dess) any moment now and that may shape their expectations accordingly. Indeed, the divine prologue speaker will maintain that Kleostratos is not dead, but he could not communicate this to Daos as he was taken a prisoner by the Lykians. The hint here is small, but it offers the only way of rescuing Kleostratos for the plot.⁴³

σαφῶς οὐκ οἶδα: ambiguity of the tragic scene

It has been mentioned already that despite the oppressive atmosphere, the themes that Daos mentioned in his lament form the basis of the comic *argumentum* of a number of plays. Comedies, we may continue, show soldiers differently than Daos does. For

⁴⁰ Goldberg (1980) 31; Lombard (1971) 130ff.

⁴¹ Katsouris (1975) 113ff. discusses similarities between Smikrines and Polymestor in Eur. *Hecuba*.

⁴² Treu (1976) 82 suggests that the reported reversal of fortune need not be merely a literary commonplace but may well allude to a historical expedition of 312 for 'die quasi-realistische Wirkung.'

⁴³ Dworacki (1973) 38: 'We cannot exclude the fact, however, that ancient audiences did not take seriously the news of the death of the youth in the battlefield, for such a death would not be compatible with comedy convention.'

example, the rich soldier in Plaut. *Truculentus* plays an important part in the plot exactly because he became rich during his military campaigns. He hopes to impress his girlfriend with outrageously inflated or made up memories of fighting, and help himself in his amatory interests. In this play, Kleostratos' military achievements are not even mentioned; his love life, moreover, is not included in the list of frustrated wishes that Daos expressed earlier. And when Kleostratos eventually returns and a marriage is arranged for him, we are treated to one more subversion of the dramatic function of comic soldiers.

So far, Smikrines has not mentioned Kleostratos by name. Now he goes *in medias res* and asks: ἐν δὲ τοῖς νεκροῖς / πεπτωκότ' εἶδες τοῦτον; (68f.). Smikrines wants to 'pin bad fortune down' and put her in her place with inquisitive questions that require definitive answers. He wants to be certain of the facts before he can act on them.⁴⁴ Daos, however, cannot decidedly make a tragedy of the situation despite his own conviction that tragedy *did* happen. He cannot give the old man a decisive answer that Smikrines wants but says only: αὐτὸν μὲν σαφῶς / οὐκ ἦν ἐπιγνῶναι... (69f.). This messenger from the battlefield was not an eyewitness of what he is reporting! This is clearly a departure from the conventions of tragic messengers. They tend to put a great emphasis on the fact that what they are reporting is a personally observed situation. If not, there is a possibility that an element of mistake sneaks into the exposition if σαφήνεια cannot be guaranteed. Plaut. *Amphitruo* gives this dramatic option an explicitly comic dimension wholly missing in *Aspis*: Sosia, *qua* messenger, admits that his report of the battle with the Teleboians will have to be made up:

[i.e.. *erus*] *me a portu praemisit domum ut haec nuntiem uxori suae,
ut gesserit rem publicam ductu, imperio, auspicio suo.
ea nunc meditabor quo modo illi dicam, cum illo aduenero.
si dixero mendacium, solens meo more fecero.
nam quom pugnabant maxume, ego tum fugiebam maxume;
uerum quasi adfuerim tamen simulabo atque audita eloquar.
sed quo modo et verbis quibus me deceat fabularier,
prius ipse mecum etiam uolo hic meditari. sic hoc proloquar, etc.*
(Plaut. *Amph.* 195ff.)

As Hunter notes on this play, 'a 'messenger-speech' delivered by a character who saw nothing of what he reports, but merely repeats and embroiders hearsay (v. 200), seems to mock lightly the conventional omniscience of the messenger, particularly in tragedy, and is of a piece with the 'playing with convention' which is such a prominent aspect of this play.'⁴⁵

For a connoisseur of the genre an admission of uncertainty holds a certain promise of a resolution to the expository difficulty and could be said to be amusing in its own right as an element of dramatic convention. Parallels may be added from Ter. *Eun.* 110ff., Men. *Epit.* 491 or *Heros* 20. Similarly, in tragedy, a messenger often says that he is bringing a clear message and confirms this by stressing that he has seen everything with his own eyes: ἦκω σαφῇ τὰ κεῖθεν ἐκ στρατοῦ φέρων (A. *Sept.* 40).⁴⁶ So often,

⁴⁴ Cf. also his yes-or-no questioning later, when talking to Chairestratos' 'doctor'; page 35 below.

⁴⁵ Hunter (1987) 293; cf. Friedrich (1953) 263ff. There is also Eur. *Orestes* 1499 (imitated in Men. *Sik* 270).

⁴⁶ Other instances where the messenger and the clarity of his message are explicitly mentioned: *Septem* 82, *Suppl.* 930-2 (a herald should make a clear report); Soph. *Ant.* 33f., 405; Eur. *Hel.* 1200; *IA* 1540 with a nice touch: 'if my memory does not fail me' (1541f.); Euripides rightly notices that although the

actually, that Euripides can play with the cliché. Inability to be certain of the basic facts that Teukros brings becomes an interesting problem in the plot of Eur. *Helen* (cf. 308). In *Supplices*, Theseus extravagantly talks with tongue in cheek about clear reports from the place of fight: as if the situation allowed watching others fight when one has to be careful to save his own hide! (Cf. 852ff.)

The reason why Daos is forced to infer facts is that the bodies of the soldiers who fell in the battle had been lying in the sun for three days, their faces bloated. πῶς οὖν οἶσθα; (72) Smikrines insists. Daos recognized him by the buckled shield lying on the body. The natives did not take the only *gnorisma* because it was too damaged.

The captain buried the bodies and after a few days' sojourn on Rhodes Daos returned back home. 'That is the whole story', he says. Smikrines shows that the booty has been on his mind all the while: ΣΜ. χρυσοῦς φῆις ἄγειν / ἑξακοσίους; ΔΑ. ἔγωγε. ΣΜ. καὶ ποτήρια; (82f.). Daos grasps the meaning of his questions and hints as much when he calls him κληρονόμε (85). One of Smikrines' most comic and revealing features in the play is his consciously emphatic effort to refute everyone's suspicions that he is a *comic type* with property being all that he could be interested in:

ΣΜ. πῶς; οἶε <μ> ἐρωτᾶν, εἰπέ μοι,
διὰ τοῦτ'; Ἀπολλων· τᾶλλα δ' ἡρπάσθη; (85f.)⁴⁷

Examples of such moral 'bathos' appear throughout the play (cf. 149ff.). Daos continues: all this property that you see, clothes and cloaks in the boxes, even captives, are *yours*: οἰκεῖον (89). Again, Smikrines denies he would be interested in the property and expresses his wish that Kleostratos should have lived. It rings false (Smikrines will use the same words later: 168). In both cases, Daos' assent is brief (ΣΜ. ἐκεῖνος ὥφελε ζῆν. ΔΑ. ὥφελε 90) and he changes the topic, sensing the false ring of Smikrines' wish.⁴⁸ He will not talk about Kleostratos with him, instead, he suggests going inside to console the women in the family of the deceased man.

A hint at the looming danger, the '*periculum fabulae*' comes immediately: εἴτ' ἐντυχεῖν βουλήσομαί τι Δᾶε σοὶ / κατὰ σχολήν (93f.). Smikrines is aware that Daos is the only one who will pay attention to him (163), and he hopes to have a word with him about the current affairs - having learnt enough about him we anticipate this will concern the property Daos has brought.

Similarly, in Plaut. *Casina* two female friends, both wives on familiar terms, say to each other: *mox magis quom otium <et> mihi et tibi erit, / igitur tecum loquar. nunc vale* (214f.) when they want to devise a punishment for their husbands. Smikrines will want to appropriate and control Daos for his own benefit, trying to change the slave's loyalty. His impatience, which will be important later, already shows through his words: κατὰ σχολήν (94) is insensitive in the present situation.

messengers are frequently rather old, their memory is surprisingly impeccable! It is the business of the messengers to know things clearly: when the messenger is in the dark he asks explicitly to be initiated: Eur. *Hel.* 700f. ΑΓ. Μενέλαε, κάμοι πρόσδοτον τῆς ἡδονῆς, / ἣν μανθάνω μὲν καὐτός, οὐ σαφῶς δ' ἔχω.

⁴⁷It seems to me that an oath by Apollo, though common and therefore difficult to define in many cases, may be used when one tries to convince another person that he is telling the truth. The cases where this connotation is clear: *Dysk.* 151f.; *Epit.* 399f.; *Heros* 39; *Samia* 308-10. Note the form [μὰ τὸν Ἀ]πόλλω, ἔγω μὲν οὐ in *Mis.* 433, *Pk.* 328f., *Phasma* 90. Cf. also *Dysk.* 293, *Phasma* 87. On oaths, cf. also below, p. 134 n.1; Feneron (1974); de Kat Eliassen (1975). Bain (1984) with further references.

⁴⁸I can think of another greedy old man who can be lavish with empty promises or charity only because he is certain in the knowledge that his words cannot materialize: Antipho in Plaut. *Stichus* (cf. 510f.).

Smikrines says he will go inside his house (εἴσω παριέναι 95) undoubtedly in order to devise a scheme in order to appropriate the booty. A similar situation occurs in *Samia*. Moschion is not sure how he will be able to come clean to his father about the pregnant Plangon and make him consent to a marriage with a poor neighbour's daughter. He decides to go away and practise his speech:

ἀ]πελθὼν εἰς ἐρημίαν τινὰ
 γυμν]άζομ'; οὐ γὰρ μέτριος ἄγών ἐστί μοι. (*Sam.* 94f.)
 94 τί δ' οὐκ suppl. e.g. Kassel

With a bit of sarcasm, we may comment that Smikrines need not seek a solitary place far away: as an antisocial character, he has his house all for himself to serve the role of Moschion's ἐρημία. Right after Moschion's exit and very near the end of Act I, we learn that Moschion may dispel his worries because his father has already made an agreement with his neighbour that Moschion will marry Plangon (113ff.). We shall see that in *Aspis* Tyche hurries to put Smikrines' ambition in a wider perspective.

To sum up, during this brief scene before the prologue, we have been exposed to a mixture of both the tragic and comic atmosphere⁴⁹ with a unique effect of drawing attention to the boundaries of the genre and especially to the spectators' awareness of the repertoire. The audience, in order to appreciate the play as comedy, need to be aware of the generic requirements and test what they are seeing against this awareness. Not least, the mixture of comic and tragic elements creates a gripping puzzle that requires the attention of the audience until they see things back on the right generic track.

The omniscient goddess: the end of questions, *ne quis erret uostrum*

The sentiment that fortune may quickly change was commonly expressed in the fourth century. It is frequently exemplified, as e.g. in Men. *Georgos*: τὸ τῆς τύχης γὰρ ῥεῦμα μεταπίπτει ταχύ (fr. 2.5). Comedy made fortune and its reversals into a stock working method of the genre, which is obvious, given the nature of its plots.

Uniquely, the obvious working method of the genre becomes very explicitly the principal force in the play by the fact that Menander makes Tyche the *spiritus movens* of *Aspis*. This becomes an almost self-reflexive statement on comedy's working methods.

Before Smikrines expresses his wish to marry the girl, we get a significant piece of information about Kleostratos from the θεὸς προλογίζων. νῦν δ' ἀγνοοῦσι καὶ πλανῶνται (99) says the still unidentified goddess and explains how a friend of Kleostratos' took his shield to fight and fell immediately. ὥς ποικίλον πρᾶγμ' ἐστὶ καὶ πλάνον τύχη (*Kitharistes* fr. 8)!

We may observe that death in comic expositions is sometimes exploited but almost never should it be seen as emotionally marked or emphasized. This fact made the onstage sincere lament of Kleostratos' death very problematic. In contrast, the real death of the man who fell with Kleostratos' shield is passed over quickly and he remains anonymous for us. There is no hint of the bravery or other military qualities of this anonymous man. He is not given any prominence; all that is said of him is that he fell immediately.⁵⁰ Such emotionally neutral deaths do appear in expositions, where their

⁴⁹ Del Corno (1974) 75-81; Goldberg (1980) 27, 29ff.; Hurst (1990) 95-100, 117f.

⁵⁰ Death within the framework of the story may of course occur to bring about a particular situation in a household. Cf. *Epit.* 268: Syros' wife had a baby that died at birth; so *Heros* 30; *Pk.* 145; *Dysk.* 14f. Such information is put in an emotionally unmarked way, e.g. *Ter. Andria* 105f.: 'SI. *Chrysis vicina haec moritur. SO. o factum bene! / besti...*' Deaths that are lamented on comic stage in earnest are those that never actually took place. E.g. Ampelisca's monologue in *Plaut. Rudens* 220ff. is a sincere lament of a

role, just as here, is to be a cog in the mechanism that creates a destabilizing problem. Here it misleads Daos and the two stage households into believing in Kleostratos' death.

οὗτος διημάρτηκεν (110): Daos made a mistake - he was a 'puppet' in Fortune's hands. With Tyche's arrival, we see in retrospect that the very starting point of the play, that is, a plot complication caused in ignorance by a mix up of two persons that leads to Daos' misidentification, is actually typical of the comedy of errors. As she talks about this mistake, we wonder if the goddess has not had her hand in misleading Daos. In fact, it is often Tyche's role that *gnorismata* are preserved in a particular play: εἰ νῦν τι τῶν τούτου σέσωκεν ἡ Τύχη; (Men. *Epit.* 351). Ironically, her help will complicate things: she reverses her own role and *preserves a gnorisma that misleads*.⁵¹ If the enemies had taken the shield away, Daos would not have jumped to conclusions but would instead have started looking for his master. From now on, the audience may view Daos as a more common bearer of the name connected with intrigues and with the generally lighter comic atmosphere.

Ne quis erret uostrum (Plaut. *Trin.* 4), Kleostratos became a captive, just as we suspected (112; 67f.). He lives and will be saved soon (ὅσον οὐδέπω 113). Whatever she meant by 'soon', Kleostratos will not arrive before Daos' charade and the betrothal of Chaireas to Kleostratos' sister. The imprecision need not be important. It can only stress the fact that Tyche will govern the timing of the individuals' entrances and exits in the play.⁵² As we shall see, some characters in the play will also try to appropriate this role of a 'director' hopeful that they can stage other characters' exits and entrances.

Tyche sets the audience straight; only they now have all the information. She does away with the previous mistakes and brings order to the genre. She describes Smikrines' nature in the most explicit terms: not only does this support the audience's suspicion that he is a miser, as his name and the signals he kept sending must have hinted, but it also conceals a hidden preparation for the plausibility of the intrigue. She says:

πονηρίαι δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὅλως
ὑπερπέπαικεν· οὗτος οὔτε συγγενῇ
οὔτε φίλον οἶδεν οὐδὲ τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ
αἰσχρῶν πεφρόντικ' οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ βούλεται
ἔχειν ἅπαντα· τοῦτο γινώσκει μόνον,
καὶ ζῆμι μονότροπος, γραῦν ἔχων διάκονον. (116ff)

He does not care for his next of kin or friends, hopes to own everything, and lives alone. Enough for us to guess that he will shamelessly try to lay his hands on the property brought on stage almost in front of his doorway. It was not exceptional to have completely negative characters in Plautus (*lenones* usually show no redeeming features), but we cannot tell if Plautus anyhow reduced their psychological depths for comic purposes or whether he took what he found in the Greek originals. The fact is that

death of a fellow slave girl, but unlike this play, the audience are in a position to contrast the lament with Arcturus' earlier information at 67ff.

⁵¹ For the dramatic effect, the goddess must get out of her nature for a moment. Similarly Agnoia in *Perikeiromene* goes against her 'nature' when she brings about the *anagnorisis* of the play.

⁵² Contrast Eur. *Hecuba* 141 where ὅσον οὐκ ἤδη covers the span of only 77 lines (until 218). It is common to prepare for someone's arrival and see him arrive within a reasonably short span of time. But situations where a character's arrival is foreshadowed and yet he or she does not appear for a significant time are rare. For (especially) Roman Comedy, cf. Harsh (1935) esp. 25ff., 51ff., 73ff. Soph. *Trachiniae* 199 shows a situation where Herakles' arrival is foreshadowed (ὅψη δ' αὐτὸν αὐτίκ' ἐμφανῆ) though in fact he will not appear for a very long time (he does at 965); not before considerable dramatic action concerning him takes place. Cf. Taplin (1977) 124-26 for Xerxes in Aesch. *Persae*.

Smikrines is one of the most negative characters in Menander.⁵³ His negative features are essential for the plot. Smikrines' impatience and greed will effectively blind him to the intrigue set in motion, and to his own role in the comedy. Also, his wickedness counter-balances the other characters' behaviour: we know that Kleostratos is not dead, but characters within the play do not, and their light-hearted intrigue executed in the course of the play must be motivated by an extremely vicious character for the charade to be ethically tolerable at all. His black-and-white characterization removes the need to give his opponents finer touches; the piece becomes an intrigue play.⁵⁴

'Wealth acquired through *hubris*, 'violence', brings *ate*, 'infatuation, blindness', which is followed by punishment.' Campbell's discussion of Solon's poem (7-32) summarizes the Greek truism that is applicable to the plot of *Aspis*, making Smikrines an unoriginal character in that respect.⁵⁵ We shall soon learn that his interest in shameful gain will become an obstacle to a decent marriage of the *epikleros* girl and we should not therefore disregard the possibility that the spectators may have guessed the train of Smikrines' thoughts and expected him to devise some scheme to get hold of the property.

As noted, his role in the play is somewhat comparable to greedy *lenones* of Plautus, as they are represented for example in *Poenulus*. The pimp Lycus is greedy (*leno...auri cupidus* 179), he will wish to abuse girls in his power for his profit; in the broadest sense he is opposed to a stable marriage and in this respect as antisocial as Smikrines is. In a summary way: *neque peiurior neque peior alter usquam est gentium* (825).

I do not suggest that the type of an old greedy man was influenced by, or developed alongside, the type of *pornoboskos*, whose role in Greek comedy is difficult to assess anyway. It is more probable that the necessities of plot often took advantage of either a pimp or an old man in thwarting the aspirations of a young couple in love whose aspirations form the core of the comic resolution. Such obstacles may be created even by a member of the lover's family: we have a *senex libidinosus* in Plaut. *Casina* or *Mercator*, who is a father of the young lover; in Plaut. *Aulularia* he is a rich and well-meaning uncle. In Men. *Georgos*, the rich farmer Kleainetos wanted to marry a poor girl without any dowry out of pure charitable reasons, but again this effectively upsets the young man's interests. We see that it is not a particular character type that embodies the obstacle to a young man's love interest; rather, a plot situation can sometimes make even a socially 'good' character the obstacle to the resolution.

The place where the servant went, Tyche continues, is the house that belongs to Smikrines' *younger* brother. His age distances him from, or even opposes him to, his elder brother Smikrines. Age is an important characteristic, and we may safely guess that he will be treated more positively than his brother even before she starts talking about him.⁵⁶ He is *χρηστός δὲ τῷ τρόπῳ πάνυ / καὶ πλούσιος* (125f.);⁵⁷ similarly at 130 where he is again called *χρηστός*. She has nothing to say about his proneness to melancholy that

⁵³ Antiphanes fr. 166.5 K-A has a slave's description of a stingy master unsurpassable in *πονηρία*: 'ἄνθρωπος ἀνυπέρβλητος εἰς πονηρίαν'.

⁵⁴ Despite the lack of fine touches, the portrayal of Daos is accepted by some critics as successful. Vysoký (1970) 92: [Daos] 'belongs to the most beautiful characters Menander has ever created, and his presence places this newly discovered comedy amidst [Menander's] most successful ones' (my translation).

⁵⁵ Campbell (1983) 222.

⁵⁶ We shall hear that his name is Chairestratos only at the beginning of Act II (250) - from Smikrines. Another Chairestratos we know of appears in Men. *Eunouchos* and *Epitrepontes*. Cf. also Brown (1987) 198.

⁵⁷ Cf. the nearly same wording in *Sikyoniōs*: ἡγεμὼν χρηστός σφόδρα / καὶ πλούσιος (14f.).

will be essential for the on-the-spur-of-the-moment scheme.⁵⁸ The juxtaposition that follows is revealing, especially now that we know that Kleostratos is alive:

καὶ παρθένου
μῖα πατὴρ ὢν, ὧι κατέλιπεν ἐκπλέων
ὁ μειρακίσκος τὴν ἀδελφήν. (126ff.)

Chairestratos' opposition to his brother is outlined even through the situation in his household: he has a wife and a daughter. When Kleostratos (ὁ μειρακίσκος) sailed away, he left his sister with Chairestratos. By the juxtaposition of a young man and a virgin girl (παρθένου, 126), Tyche unobtrusively paves the way for, and hints at, another domestic resolution in the play: the wedding between Kleostratos and Chairestratos' daughter. Of course, Tyche does not inform us of any particulars of the play's resolution and only concentrates on the main facts (τὰ κεφάλαια, *Dysk.* 45). The audience may, however, wait in anticipation to see if there will be any place devoted to a relationship between the two young persons.

Chairestratos, seeing the fix in which Kleostratos' sister found herself because of her brother's delay, decided on the wedding between her and his son Chaireas.⁵⁹ The wedding was to be today (νυνί 137). Just as at the beginning of the play, so now we hear a serious piece of information that is related to the day of the performance.

Plaut. *Trin.* shows a striking similarity in the intention of a relative (in Plautus only a friendly neighbour) towards another man's daughter and her well-being:

*nunc si ille huc saluos reuenit, reddam suom sibi;
si quid eo fuerit, certe illius filiae,
quae mihi mandatast, habeo dotem unde dem,
ut eam in se dignam condicionem conlocem.* (Plaut. *Trin.* 156ff.)

Now, however, Smikrines will become an obstacle to the wedding. The dowry that Kleostratos intended for a κατάξιος brother-in-law, will prove irresistible and the old miser will want to marry the girl himself. Tyche assures us vaguely that Smikrines' ambition will come to nought. He will only succeed in revealing his true colours to everybody.⁶⁰ Finally, the goddess reveals her name and the function she plays in the *fabula* (τίς εἰμι, πάντων κυρία / τούτων βραβεῦσαι καὶ διοικῆσαι; Τύχη 147f.).⁶¹

⁵⁸ Del Corno (1970b) 102 notices that Menander's prologues generally devote little space to aspects of intrigue to be performed in the play.

⁵⁹ Tyche has nothing to say about the love affair between Chaireas and the girl and only presents the facts as Chairestratos' pragmatic choice. Brown (1993) 198f.

⁶⁰ Everybody in the audience knew the play would end with a marriage or two, but it does not mean the characters on stage should follow this presumption and behave according to it. It is then interesting to see that Tyche does not mention that the play will indeed end with a wedding. In *Dyskolos*, Pan in his unusual role of a matchmaker does not mention there is a marriage happy-ending, even though the theme of romance takes up so much space in his prologue speech. In *Perikeiromene* (despite 128 'this young impetuous blood fell in love with her') the *prologos* again does not mention the marriage that will take place on stage. The θεὸς προλογίζων then obviously did not feel the need to mention explicitly the cliché which such an ending clearly was.

⁶¹ Gutzwiller (2000) 124-26 discusses the metaphorical connection between household management and plot epitomized by the word διοικῆσαι: 'In the *Aspis* Tyche enlivens this metaphorical association, to assert that her authority over the affairs of the *oikos* equates with her authority over the plot.' (126) On Tyche in *Aspis*, see especially: Gutzwiller (2000); Haviland (1984); Holzberg (1974) 110ff.; Konet (1975/76); Lloyd-Jones (1971) 175-95; Zagagi (1994) 143ff.; and especially Vogt-Spira (1992) 75ff.

I find Hunter's conclusions in a different context relevant here. He says: 'In the *Amphitruo*, then, and to a lesser extent in the *Dyskolos*, the prologising god is important not merely for what he says or for his direct intervention in the action, but also because some of the events of the play fall into patterns which we recognise as belonging to that god's sphere.'⁶² No play seems to follow this more truly than *Aspis*. Tyche is directly involved in organizing the play as a divine playwright; characters invoke her as a force that rules our lives, or abuse her as a generic element of tragedy (cf. Daos' use of tragic quotations later during the charade).

Impatient Smikrines comes on stage after Tyche. He inadvertently repeats Tyche's accusation of him as *φιλάργυρος* (149, cp. 123) and denies any such intention. The denial is an ironic follow-up to what Tyche has just said of him.⁶³ It also draws attention to his entrance on stage that in itself reveals his impatient effort to do something about the booty - of course he lacks any knowledge that the goddess moves the play and that he has a clearly prescribed place in it. This ignorance will form part of the humour concentrated in his role and Tyche's answer to his own ambition to control the situation. He self-consciously rejects accusations of being crazed for wealth. He has not even checked the exact amount of the booty because he knows well that they like to call him names. Besides, as he is aware, he can force the slaves to tell him the exact amount anytime.

Through a soliloquy, a character may expose his true feelings and try to establish a sincere rapport with the audience.⁶⁴ In this case, with a bit of stretch, Smikrines seems to show equal insensitivity to the real people in the audience through his frankness when alone, as to the stage characters through his veiled words. His soliloquy makes his greed transparent; he dares to speak more freely than he would in the face of stage characters. For this reason, his words only succeed in distancing him from the spectators.

Smikrines wanted to check the exact amount of the property brought from the expedition. This draws our attention to the fact that the play operates with the irony of having *two* conventional amounts of the dowry for Kleostratos' sister. Jacques' completion of line 35 is almost certain: Kleostratos' booty is worth six hundred gold *staters*. The amount is conventional to an almost striking degree. If one were to waste time in pondering what could happen *exo tou dramatos*, he may conclude that Kleostratos could easily have been on the point of stopping his mercenary career because he had reached the amount that comedy requires, when the Lykians forcefully stepped in. The ironic role of the amount of money for the dowry becomes obvious when we see that Chairestratos prepared an equivalent sum of money as a dowry for Kleostratos' sister (2 talents, equivalent to 600 gold *staters*: 135f.). Tyche repeats the number when she mentions how Kleostratos' property worth 600 gold *staters* (138f.) drew Smikrines' attention.

Smikrines, in the same breath as talking about the property he saw on stage, mentions in a false and sinister way that it is out of the question even to think about a wedding in such circumstances.

τοὺς δὲ γινομένους γάμους
τούτους προειπεῖν βούλομ' αὐτοῖς μὴ ποεῖν.
ἴσως μὲν ἄτοπον καὶ λέγειν· οὐκ ἐν γάμοις

⁶² Hunter (1987) 298.

⁶³ Goldberg (1980) also notes a similar stylistic device used by both Tyche and Smikrines. It consists of a string of emphatic negatives in Tyche's characterization of the old man (117-19) and Smikrines' own denial likewise shaped as another string (149-52).

⁶⁴ That is what Sostrata does in Ter. *Hecyra* 274-280 when she remains alone on stage.

ἐστὶν γὰρ ἥκοντος τοιούτου νῦν λόγου. (158ff.)

The wedding was to be today (νυνί 137) but Smikrines will prevent it from happening, now (νῦν 161) that this news has arrived. He too gives us a temporal context of the events within the performance time. He wants to knock on Kleostratos' door and call Daos out but is anticipated by Daos himself. The slave's entrance on stage at that moment is weakly motivated⁶⁵, but this may have been overlooked given the consistency in the portrayal of sustained gloom that Daos brings to the scene from the opening of the play. Over his shoulder Daos addresses the women in the house and consoles them in their present distress. Why did Menander hesitate to include highly popular door-knocking in this scene? It would have had the advantage of showing Smikrines forcefully asking at the house door for what, he believes, is duly his.

One possible explanation is that only Daos would be available in the house to come to answer the knocking. A slave answering the door and an intruder who would try to impose his will on an unwilling door-keeper, 'to lord it over him', would perhaps threaten to move the scene into an explicitly comic show more quickly than Menander may have wished.⁶⁶

Another explanation offers itself as well and depends on the visual symbol concerning the problem of who controls the stage. In Plaut. *Trinummus*, Lysiteles wants to go to find Charmides inside the stage house and talk to him but the door noise makes him delay his plan:

*is mihi dixit suom erum peregre huc aduenisse Charmidem.
nunc mi is propere conueniundust, ut quae cum eius filio
egi, ei rei fundus pater sit potior. eo. sed fores
hae sonitu suo mihi moram obiciunt incommode.* (Trin. 1121ff.)

He wanted to go inside, but now keeps away from the door. Why is that? The following scene shows that by remaining hidden from sight Lysiteles can keep control of the dialogue that goes on between Charmides and Callicles. So, instead of coming right up to the man he wanted to talk to, Lysiteles waits a bit longer to see what the man is talking about. Such a control of situation cannot possibly be granted to Smikrines in *Aspis*: he too wanted to knock on Chairestratos' door and call Daos out, but right then the door opens and Daos comes out himself. Smikrines is not going to be presented in stage terms as controlling the situation: he does not hide himself from Daos' sight moving further aside in order to see what the slave is going to talk about but will - *in his impatience* - address him directly without delay. In short, Daos comes on stage but the situation does not develop into a conventional staging of the control of space and information. The reason is perfectly compatible with Smikrines' portrayal as an impatient character - much to his own undoing. His impatience forces him to let go of the control.

Smikrines starts the dialogue with the same cliché he used earlier: ὦφελε... ἐκεῖνος...ζῆν (168f., cf. 90). Kleostratos should have remained in charge of this property and should have inherited Smikrines' property as well later. That the old man is only

⁶⁵ Cf. Frost (1988) 24.

⁶⁶ A slightly different point about control of the situation in this particular scene has been made by Brown (1995) 78. I am not suggesting by this that knocking at the door was inherently comic and inappropriate in serious dramas, despite Bond (1963) 59 or Taplin (1977) 105. 'Although it came to be more at home in comedy, I suggest that it should be seen not as an intrinsically comic device...but rather as one that can be used in different ways in different contexts, and in tragedy above all as a way of helping to build up the audience's expectations for the scene that follows.' Brown (2000) 2.

pretending that he was hoping to bequeath his property to Kleostratos must be obvious from his characterization and behaviour up to this moment. Moreover, his choice of words (διοικεῖν 169, κύριος πάντων 171) again moves us back to the irony of Tyche controlling the play, of which Smikrines has no idea.⁶⁷ The old man then expounds what he sees as Chairestratos' cupidity that threatens his own (Smikrines') interests: it angers him that Chairestratos is becoming rich at Smikrines' cost, beyond the limits of moderation (175 οὐδὲ μετριάζει) by preparing to give Kleostratos' sister now (νυνί 176) to god knows whom, treating Smikrines as a slave or *nothos*.

He takes it as threatening his very domestic interests and acts upon this sense of injustice. So at 182ff.: τὴν οὐσίαν / οὐχὶ καταλείψω τὴν ἐμὴν διαρπάσαι τούτοις... Another Smikrines, in Menander's *Epitrepontes*, also expresses his concern over what is happening to his property: ἀλλ' ἡ περιμένω καταφαγεῖν τὴν προῖκά μου / τὸν χρηστὸν αὐτῆς ἄνδρα καὶ λόγους λέγω / περὶ τῶν ἐμαυτοῦ; (1065ff.).

Taking the advice of some acquaintances, Smikrines says falsely, he will marry the girl himself. The law, Smikrines rightly remarks to counter disapproval that he expects, supports such a marriage.⁶⁸ Daos asks leave not to be involved in matters that concern citizens - the free should settle the problems of weddings, blood relations, or inheritance. It is ironic that in fact Daos will be later instrumental in the intrigue that will concern the whole status of the *oikos*.⁶⁹

Back on track

With Tyche's background information, we may look at Daos' initial arrival home without his master as an exaggerated example, blown into a full drama, of a slave arriving home before his master who will eventually reach home as well.⁷⁰

δοκῶ δέ σοι τι πρὸς θεῶν ἀμαρτάνειν; (205) the Athenian Smikrines now asks Daos.⁷¹ With tact, Daos tells him that many things that they consider right are thought wrong where he comes from. It is a fine touch to inform the audience at this stage that Daos is a Phrygian: φρονεῖς ἐμοῦ / βέλτιον εἰκότως (208f.) says he. 'You, of course, have more sense', being an Athenian. I suspect that Daos plays it at a deeper level than just ethnic irony at this point. If it is not too fanciful, Daos may be hinting at 208f. that he is aware of Smikrines' character and his feverish effort to *devise a scheme*.

It is interesting to observe how gradually Menander discloses relevant or less relevant facts about individual *personae*. It is a fine comic touch to have made a

⁶⁷ Goldberg (1980) 36f.

⁶⁸ On *epikleros* law see: MacDowell (1982); Brown (1983); Harrison (1968) 132-38; Karabelias (1970); Lacey (1968) 139-45. Plaut. *Mercator* supports the view that Smikrines acts against what can be seen as the established poetic justice of the genre. At the end of Plautus' play, a bill is proposed by the young men that men over sixty years of age should be forbidden to marry as it would threaten the interests of young men.

⁶⁹ The point presented here, that slaves should not poke their noses in the affairs of the free-born, is mentioned by Menander elsewhere as well (e.g. *Dysk.* 75f.). We find it also in Aristophanes, in the dialogue between Pluto's slave and Xanthias (*Ran.* 738ff.). They mention prying into their masters' private matters as something clearly not for slaves to do, but by mentioning it in that context, we may safely assume that Aristophanes' slaves mischievously point to a common comic practice.

⁷⁰ Sosias in *Pk.* may have been sent home ahead of his master to prepare for his much hoped-for arrival, so too was Pyrrhias in *Sikyonios* (120ff.). In Ar. *Plut.* 627ff. Kario arrives home before his master with the happy news of the master's recovery. He narrates to the master's wife how Wealth regained his sight so that once the protagonists appear (771) we immediately watch a row of festivities not delayed by any more narratives. Finally, in Plaut. *Amph.* 180ff. Sosia was sent ahead from the harbour to narrate Amphitruo's achievements to his wife.

⁷¹ Gutzwiller (2000) 124.

Phrygian slave more tactful, loyal, and righteous than an Athenian freeborn citizen; this may come from Euripides. The description of Phrygians was stereotypically contemptuous: they were seen as effeminate cowards, *κακοὶ Φρύγες* or *timidi Phrygae* (Eur. *Or.* 1111f., 1351, 1448, *Alc.* 675f.; cf. Tertullian *de anima* 20.3). Daos, however, did not shun accompanying his master to the battlefield, nor did he run away with all the property entrusted to his care.⁷² This is striking as barbarian slaves are reputed not to care much about their masters, as is maintained e.g. in *Georg.* 56ff. The ‘manly’ Thracian *τραπεζοποιός* - another ethnic figure on stage, famed for his virility⁷³ - is amazed at Daos’ loyalty (239ff.). Earlier in the play, when the atmosphere was still oppressive, Daos’ ethnic origin was not an issue at all. His loyalty and affiliation to the ‘deceased’ master’s household made him distance himself from the enemy *barbarians*, saying: *λαθόντες τοὺς σκοποὺς / τοὺς ἡμετέρους οἱ βάρβαροι λόφον τινὰ / ἐπίπροσθ’ ἔχοντες ἔμενον* (41ff.).

It is an innovation that next we see the cook *leaving* the house where he was to prepare a wedding feast.⁷⁴ He is lamenting his bad luck in markedly tragic terms.⁷⁵ His language is flowery and inventive, for instance the image of a corpse snatching his money. The cook’s words about the death in the house are not offensive only because we know that no death occurred and the cook’s help will yet be needed. The ‘arrival’ of an imagined corpse forces the cook away, far from the play’s scope.⁷⁶ But his exit here works also as an ironic comment on, and a promise of, the wedding feast that will be mentioned at the end of the play and of which he will be a part: we may assume that when Kleostratos has arrived home, the cook would be called back again and instead of one wedding he will have to take charge of two.⁷⁷

The cook lowers the tension of the previous scenes with some comfortingly conventional humour. He calls his attendant ‘*ἱερόσυλε*’ (227), by a comic reversal, for *not* stealing anything from the house.⁷⁸ Daos’ ethnicity is put to humorous use again. The waiter calls him *ἀπόπληκτος* (239) for not running away with all the booty.⁷⁹ Wherever does he come from? - The answer sounds like a joke compared to Daos’ behaviour up to now: Phrygia.

⁷² For his ethnic character, see: Fantuzzi (1984-86); Goldberg (1980) 35, 128f. with note 8; Long (1979); Sherk (1970); Lasco (1969).

⁷³ In *Samia* 520 Moschion, falsely accused of sleeping with his father’s concubine, is called a Thracian. Nikeratos believes him to be sexually incontinent and it seems Thracians were cited as paragons of sexual prowess and manliness.

⁷⁴ Handley (1970) 10.

⁷⁵ In *Epit.* 610, 631 we see another cook leaving disappointed; in *Mis.* 671 the cook, on what is probably his first appearance, remains exceptionally silent, which is another twist to the convention.

⁷⁶ One of Philemon’s cooks exhibits great comic *ἀλαζονεία*, when he boasts immoderately: *ἀθανασίαν εὖρηκα* (Stratiotes, fr. 82.25 K-A). This probably concerns no more than his culinary *tour de force*. It is impossible to see if the phrase could have been in some way related to the larger context of the plot of that play or not.

⁷⁷ Cf. Men. *Samia* 369ff. Nesselrath (1990) 298. Generally on the type of a comic cook: Dohm (1964); Nesselrath (1990) 297ff. who is right to claim that the type is always connected with a preparation of a feast, often during the resolution of the play. He argues that the cook never exceeds an episodic role.

⁷⁸ Sherk (1970) discusses the proverb applicable for this scene: *Φρὺξ μὴδὲν ἥττων Σπινθάρου*. Just as if following the truth of the proverb, both the Phrygian and Spinther are in this scene seen equal in their silliness: Thracian castigates Daos for not running away with the war booty, the cook tongue-lashes his assistant (named Spinther at 230) for not stealing anything from the house.

⁷⁹ Daos is shown as a loyal slave even in *Dyskolos*: *πιστὸν οἰκέτην θ’ ἓνα / πατρῶιον* (26f.).

On the way to market

Just as the novelty of the cook's departure from the scene is novel, so now we see Smikrines decide that he will go to the market for a very unusual reason. He will try to find his brother Chairestratos and ask him to call off the wedding. The pattern of going to the *agora* or *forum* is often exploited as an optimistic preparation for a feast, mostly for a wedding celebration. Interestingly, it is not Daos but Smikrines who goes to call Chairestratos home. This shows his eagerness to speed things up, and at the same time his 'ignorance' of the generically loaded sign that the market place is.

The pimp in Plaut. *Pseudolus* 168ff. is eager to speed up preparations for his birthday party and he even goes to the *forum* personally. Smikrines' exit in that direction is in striking contrast to a typically happy symbol that usually leads to a comic resolution. One may return home loaded with utensils and foodstuff, a complaint or two about *ἰχθυοπῶλαι*, and frequently also with a garrulous and unbearably inquisitive cook.⁸⁰

Aspis stands that convention on its head: Smikrines goes to the *agora* to fetch Chairestratos and have him call off the wedding now underway (211ff.). The cook's exit from the stage house just then, leaving for good and heading back to the *agora*, nicely complements this sense of a complete reversal of what is usually done on the wedding day.⁸¹

Act II sees on stage Smikrines and two so far unfamiliar characters. Soon Smikrines' partner in conversation is identified as Chairestratos. That Chaireas is with them is not immediately obvious from the text since he does not join their conversation for over thirty lines (not until 284).⁸² Smikrines, just like Daos at the beginning of the previous act, is in the middle of breaking the news of Kleostratos' death to a member of the family. He did not hurry to find his brother only to inform him of Kleostratos' death – rather, the entrance from the *agora* creates a scene comparable to others in comedies where a person brings with him from the *agora* a friend, intriguer, cook – anyone to help with his plans; mostly when the plan concerns wedding preparations. Smikrines' activity reminds us of such a motivation. He asks what his brother thinks of the situation: εἰέν· τί δὴ μοι νῦν λέγεις, Χαιρέστρατε; (250) We know he is not giving Chairestratos a choice. The audience have already heard what Smikrines thinks is appropriate now that the word of Kleostratos' death has arrived: ἴσως μὲν ἄτοπον καὶ λέγειν· οὐκ ἐν γάμοις / ἐστὶν γὰρ ἥκοντος τοιούτου νῦν λόγου (160f.).

Smikrines' 'restaging' of the opening scene of Act I brings into turmoil the wedding preparations in the family – those preparations that should have been symbolized by Chairestratos' optimistic arrival from the *agora* with the provisions. At the same time, Smikrines' own thoughts of the wedding are symbolically foreshadowed here in this scene: he is bringing from the *agora* the man who is essential for the execution of his plan to marry the *epikleros* girl. But Chairestratos tactfully insists that it is essential to be first concerned with the funeral preparations: πρῶτον μὲν, ὦ βέλτιστε, τὰ περὶ τὴν ταφὴν / δεῖ πραγματευθῆναι (251f.). 'It will be done' – Smikrines spares just two words on that topic. Impatiently and insensitively, he goes *in medias res* and warns his brother not to promise the girl to any suitor. Smikrines says that just as Chairestratos has a wife and daughter so he himself now wants to have a family too. Chairestratos can

⁸⁰ Nesselrath (1990) 285f. gives cases of the typical Middle Comedy situations of slaves going to or from the market.

⁸¹ In Plaut. *Trin.* 815 we probably have an originally Roman situation when Megaronides says: *ego sycophantam iam conduco de foro.*

⁸² Jacques (1978) 41f.

only appeal to Smikrines' sense of moderation by pointing out to him his old age.⁸³ He offers to give Smikrines all the war booty if only he lets Chaireas, the boy who grew up with the girl, marry her.⁸⁴

Smikrines does not want to observe the rules of (comic) *decorum*. He is the opposite of what an appropriate and worthy (κατάξιος, cf. 9) groom should be like.⁸⁵ Aware of the possible legal trap in Chairestratos' offer of the booty, he objects that the child born from the marriage between Chaireas and Kleostratos' sister could sue him for the property that legally belongs to the child. Throughout the play, Smikrines is acquainted with the law. This is not only probable and realistic in the case of property and inheritance laws but it also allows Menander a chance to follow the tradition that goes back to Aristophanes and his legally very self-conscious old men (as e.g. Philokleon is in *Vespae*).

Smikrines is legally in the right, leaving Chairestratos no option but to accept his plan; he also asks to have Daos sent to his house to calculate the amount of the booty. Whereas a normal wedding would effect a unification of the stage houses (most explicitly in Ter. *Ad.*), in this play the two stage houses become as remote one from the other as ever. When Smikrines goes back to his own house, Chairestratos is desperate. He hardly manages to stumble to his own house, leaving Chaireas on stage alone. When Chairestratos, Daos and Chaireas are on stage together in the next scene, they consider how best to ward off Smikrines' attack.

The intrigue forced by shameful Smikrines

The intrigue is the most remarkable and popular part of *Aspis*. No wonder: Daos suggests a bold scheme based on staging a tragic charade to fool avaricious Smikrines. This element of the play has therefore drawn much attention. This is a bold example of art imitating art while pretending it imitates life. A subtle commentary on playwriting have been rightly seen behind the tragic show staged by Daos. The intrigue devised by Daos, however, also bears a striking resemblance to the external comic pattern in *Aspis* itself, and therefore the intrigue may also be seen to comment on the dramatic working methods of the comic genre itself.⁸⁶

To make Smikrines lose interest in Kleostratos' booty, Daos thinks up a scheme that entails pretending there has been a death in the house with all the typical tragic embellishments and staging. Apart from the explicit metatheatre of staging a tragic show, the play's aspect of interesting *metaconstruction* becomes obvious. Daos and the intriguers act on the lower level of knowledge control, thinking that they are creating a novel situation, nonexistent and outrageous in its incredible suddenness and comic exaggeration. It is beyond their knowledge that the same 'show' has been staged by Tyche who made the audience aware of the fact at the exposition of the external play. There is the irony of intriguers not having all the facts, of being subsumed in a larger context of dramatic plotting. However, looking at this from a different angle, there is more irony than just not knowing what Tyche is up to. 'Her plot' loses its seriousness and threatens to become conventional by the very intrigue hatched by Daos: the

⁸³ Jacques (1978) 43 compares the ironic parallelism of *Aspis* 257 and 175 with *Samia* 427 and 550.

⁸⁴ Marriage that originates from love is acknowledged at *Dyskolos* 788-90 as bringing stability. Brown (1993) 198f. comments on love and marriage in *Aspis*.

⁸⁵ Young lovers often spare no costs to gain access to their girlfriends. *namque edepol lucrum amare nullum amatorem addecet* (Plaut. *Poen.* 328). Smikrines' only goal in marrying the girl he does not love is financial gain.

⁸⁶ This has been commented upon: Gutzwiller (2000) 122ff., Del Corno (1974) 80, Blänsdorf (1982) 137-141.

intriguers can think of an equally good plot as the *spiritus movens* and this puts Tyche and the whole external comic plot into a humorously embarrassing position.

I find this unusual construction of the play to be the key to the problem of why Menander should not have minded unifying two emotionally very discrepant threads into one play⁸⁷: on the one hand, there is a gloomy beginning of the play with a suggestion of death; on the other, it is Daos' eventual 'forgetting' of the gloomy atmosphere when he becomes fully absorbed in devising and executing the lighter intrigue that pushes this fact to the background.

Invocation of the *spiritus movens*

Before we move on to discuss the nature of the intrigue, let us once more remember that Tyche maintained that she governs all the action in the play. Tyche is an ambiguous entity. In real life, it is common to invoke her as both a principle and a goddess. In this play, she declares herself a rational force that creates, organizes and moves the events of the play as she wishes (with necessary help from the individual characters, as we will see).⁸⁸

Tyche and Venus, Arcturus, Pan, Lar or any other divine power is positively on the side of the 'good' characters, as a character in Menander's *Pallake* makes clear: ἀλλὰ τῶν χρηστῶν ἔχει τιν' ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ θεός (*Pallake* fr. 283 K-A). This is part of the system of comedy's natural appropriation of the universal laws of retribution, reward and punishment where it is due. This plainly strives to fit the satisfying rules of poetic justice into the pattern of perceived real-life forces.⁸⁹

Some of the humour lies precisely in the awareness that it is perfectly common in both real life and drama for Tyche to be mentioned. Here she is not an irrational 'physical' principle of the universe or of dramatic necessity but a sentient goddess capable of 'staging a play'. Whenever a dramatic problem arises, she is invoked by a character. The following fragment, no longer believed to be by Menander⁹⁰ expresses this sentiment nicely:

ὅταν τις ἡμῶν † ἀμέριμνον † ἔχῃ τὸν βίον,

⁸⁷ Cf. Gaiser (1973) 117ff.

⁸⁸ It is not my intention to analyse her role in comedy and real life – that task has been admirably fulfilled by Vogt-Spira (1992). In fact, her concept is of such complexity that in drama it can embrace ambiguous, even opposing descriptions. In this play, for instance, she took care of Kleostratos and saved him for the plot. Elsewhere in a war context, on the contrary, she may be reviled as a nonsentient force: this happens in Apollodoros Carystius' fragment that puts ignorant Tyche in direct connection with war, cf. esp. line 7: ἔστ' ἀγνοοῦσα παντελῶς (*Grammateidiopoios* fr. 5 K-A).

⁸⁹ One gets a different glimpse of the relationship between the god(dess) and his or her protégé in Roman comedy. The examples show that such a relationship was exploited for reasons of irony, to show the god at work and the characters whose patron he is – sometimes *going against* the genre's conventions. I am thinking of the Roman *leno*, the very character most repellent and antagonistic to true love as comic poetic justice conceives of it. He stands in way of love but still prays to the god of his profession. He always loses and the god is presented as standing on the side of the young lovers and their relationship. For example, Lycus, the pimp, in Plaut. *Poenulus* 449ff. is angry that Venus does not accept his sacrifices. As if he wanted the goddess of the profession and therefore the guiding spirit of the play to be on his side. However, Venus shows no interest in him. In *Curculio* Cappadox, the pimp, sees that another important god cares nothing for him (216ff.): Asclepius in fact even inflicts an illness on him. In the end, this will prove essential for the protection of the girl for her real lover. If the pimp had been healthy, he would have by now dispatched the girl to live with someone who would buy her (698ff.). Thus Asclepius saves the girl, the plot, and upholds the poetic justice.

⁹⁰ *Comparatio Menandri et Philistionis* (Comp. II. 12 Jaekel), which no one any longer believes to contain genuine quotations from Menander. Cf. *Testimonium* 74c K-A

οὐκ ἐπικαλεῖται τὴν τύχην εὐδαιμονῶν·
 ὅταν δὲ λύπαις περιπέσῃ καὶ πράγμασιν,
 εὐθὺς προσάπτει τῇ τύχῃ τὴν αἰτίαν.

Daos' sad lament for his unfortunate fate is shaped as a direct address to the goddess at 213ff. From such a good master he finds himself now in Smikrines' hands.⁹¹ Why did he deserve it? Such a mention of Tyche may somehow relieve the tension of the '*periculum fabulae*'. Daos in his frustration virtually puts himself in her hands and we do not doubt that Tyche will actually take care of this man and his problems.⁹²

Another common sentiment connected with Tyche follows when Daos sees the tipsy revellers that make up the chorus. Daos praises their good sense for they enjoy life and the good fortune that can so easily change for the worse. ὅχλον ἄλλον ἀνθρώπων
 προσιόντα τουτονὶ / ὁρῶ μεθύοντων. νοῦν ἔχετε· τὸ τῆς τύχης / ἄδηλον· εὐφραίνεσθ' ὃν
 ἔξεστιν χρόνον (247ff.).

The melancholy sentiment – the flower of youth and its pleasures, in fact the whole of life, last only for a brief span of time – is to be found in numerous passages of ancient Greek poetry. The only sensible solution then is to enjoy life, drink and be happy, for it would be presumptuous to expect happiness to last. Such admonitions are not contained just in melancholy Mimnermos and in the outlook of archaic Greek poetry. The sentiment could be passed off as literary and gnomic; here, however, it gains in impact because the goddess behind the literary cliché also happens to mastermind the play.

The revellers also symbolize the *komastic* mood so typical of the ending of many comedies. Gutzwiller calls the komasts 'prototypically comic - an enactment of license and mirth as a mirror for the audience's pleasure in the play.'⁹³ In that respect, Daos' approval of their behaviour also works as a reminder of the positive ending (feasting and wedding celebrations) that Daos perceives as lost for good now that Kleostratos is thought dead.

Many comedies depict a sudden and satisfactory change in fortune during the course of the play: from good fortune to bad, or, in the case of wicked characters, the reverse. In this play, everyone's eventual fortune depends on how they view the initial situation: for Smikrines, Kleostratos' 'loss' is a gain, *hermaion*, a piece of good luck. The rest of the characters sincerely lament Kleostratos' death because it has destroyed their personal ambitions and aspirations. The misfortune is a blow to their happiness. The characters' reactions thus categorize them for us, and their role in the play becomes obvious through their individual assessments of what Kleostratos' alleged death has caused.

At the most exposed place, his first speech on stage, Chaireas laments his bad luck:

⁹¹ For the wording, compare Phoenicides, *incert.* fr. 4.16 K-A τρίτῳ συνέζευξ' ἡ τύχη με φιλοσόφῳ. The fragment seems to have a metatheatrical reference in the enumeration of stock comic types that a courtesan can encounter by Tyche's working. Tyche, and her whimsical ideas about who meets whom on stage, seem to stand for the playwright himself and his decision making. One may perhaps compare *Dyskolos* 42f.: ἤκο]ντ' ἐπὶ θήραν μετὰ κυνηγέτου τινὸς /]υ, κατὰ τύχην παραβαλόντ' εἰς τὸν τόπον. Again, accidentally Sostratos strayed into this neighbourhood and the accident (κατὰ τύχην) – or good fortune – will be decisive for the later developments of the play. Cf. also *Dysk.* 340

⁹² The irony of lamenting in the face, so to speak, of the *spiritus movens* of the play appears also in *Dyskolos*. Sostratos, the young man in love by Pan's working, says he always addresses the god and prays to him whenever he passes his statue (572f.). One also notes the ironic mention of the *spiritus movens* of the play at *Dyskolos* 346f.

⁹³ Gutzwiller 2000, 127.

οὐδὲ εἰς
τούτων γὰρ οὕτως ἡτύχηκεν ὥς ἐγώ.
ἔρωτι περιπεσὼν γὰρ οὐκ αὐθαιρέτωι... (286ff.)

Kleostratos' apparent death and Smikrines' greed stand in the way of his marriage with a girl he loves. The infatuation is presented as a force that he had no control over: it was sent by a god (Eros, he probably means). The lament portrays him as a passive sufferer of two unwanted 'blows': the first one was the love affair that a god sent him; the second is the present denial of the fulfilment of that love. The choice of the words makes it clear that he is almost a puppet in the hands of gods.⁹⁴

ὤμην: parallelism that paves the way for the intrigue

Before moving on to the execution of the intrigue I want to draw attention to a particular parallelism that can be found in this play, that paves the way for the intrigue. It is important as a comment on how a play should properly be moving in order to reach its resolution, raising questions about the proper development of the play.

Kleostratos' alleged death makes many characters frustrated because their hopes now seem to have been thwarted. The audience note that their expressions of this all seem to have a similar form, and even though they are uttered independently there is a bit of humour in their uniformity. They address the blatant disregard for what the comic play should look like and why it is that it does not follow along the prescribed generic lines.

Plays cannot violate poetic justice and the working rules of the genre, and thus too frequent and too ostentatious laments of the violation of poetic rules can fulfil the function of foreshadowing for us the plot developments. The audience watch a character voice his frustrations, but at the same time they recognize the rules of the genre and wonder how the lamented reality can be reconciled with the required ending. Even if I do not claim the ending should be at all costs dogmatically prescribed, still it needs to satisfy their expectations of, say, a *komastic* ending, a love affair fulfilled in some form of relationship, and so on.

Firstly, as we have observed already, it is Daos' sincere lament that opens the play. It presents a dramatic paradox that seems to violate the rules of a proper comic ending:

ὤμην γὰρ εὐδο[ξο]ῦντα καὶ σωθέντα σε
ἀπὸ στρατείας ἐν βίῳ τ' εὐσχήμονι
ἤδη τὸ λοιπὸν καταβιώσεσθαι τινι,
στρατηγὸν ἢ σύμβουλον ὠνομασμένον,
καὶ τὴν ἀδελφήν, ἥσπερ ἐξώρμας τότε
ἔνεκα, σεαυτοῦ νυμφίῳ καταξίῳι
συννοικεῖν ποθεινὸν ἦκοντ' οἴκαδε... (4ff.)

⁹⁴ We cannot claim that it is Tyche who made Chaireas fall in love but her control of the play in a way makes her responsible for Chaireas' love affair. The question is unimportant, since we have nothing here of the irony that appears in *Dyskolos*. There the youngster attributes his infatuation to Eros, god of love (346f.), instead of giving credit to the god to whom it is due, Pan. The audience have been told that it was in fact Pan's working (39-44). They are thus granted a view that puts the real-life assumptions (here about love and Eros' responsibility for it) into a larger perspective of irony of dramatic knowledge. The audience are like gods who follow the mortals in all their ignorance - the theatrical act and the prologue speaker being suppliers of that larger context of divine knowledge.

Once we realize that the things he had hoped for are too important for poetic justice to be irretrievably lost, we may instead tend to look at his lament as an ironic hint at the future developments in the plot. What other comedies work towards, Daos explicitly excludes as lost for good. The ambiguity of the scene lies in the awareness that for this comedy to work, the seemingly hopeless ending must *necessarily* be reinvented and reinstalled along those very lines that Daos sees now as irretrievably lost.

Another character who questions his role in this play and voices his frustration is the cook. He hoped to fulfil a typical role that is expected of him in New Comedy plots: he was to prepare the wedding feast for the marriage between Kleostratos' sister and Chaireas. Now that the news of Kleostratos' death has arrived, he must conform to the situation that causes him financial harm:

δραχμῶν τριῶν ἦλθον δι' ἡμερῶν δέκα
ἔργον λαβὼν· ὥμην ἔχειν ταύτας· νεκρὸς
ἐλθὼν τις ἐκ Λυκίας ἀφήρηται βίαι... (223ff)

The cook's frustration may ironically hint at the future reversal of his bad fortune: it is not inconceivable that he appears on stage again, during the two weddings at the end of the play (so e.g. Arnott, Jacques, Lloyd-Jones) The weddings do seem to take place off stage, but the cook may narrate them to the audience.⁹⁵

We cannot be sure if Chairestratos used a similar verbal formula to express his frustrations as the characters before him did. It is clear, however, from 278ff. that even he has found all his hopes completely wrecked by the sad accident of Kleostratos' alleged death:

ἐμέ.[ὠιόμην
]εις σὲ μὲν λαβόντα ταύτη[ν
αὐτὸν δ' ἐκέϊνον τὴν ἐμὴν.[
ὕμᾱς καταλείψειν τῆς ἐμαυτοῦ κυρίου.
ἀπαλλαγῆναι τὴν ταχίστην τοῦ βίου
γένοιτό μοι πρὶν ἰδεῖν ἂ μήποτ' ἦλπισα (278ff.)
278f. ὠιόμην / αἰὲν σὲ μὲν λαβόντα ταύτην, Χαιρέα Austin

For the first time we hear explicitly that Chairestratos had hoped for a wedding between his daughter and Kleostratos.⁹⁶ By now, we know that Kleostratos is alive and so the wish is more than just empty words that would no longer matter. They must be taken more seriously.

Chaireas is the next one to lament his fate. In a sharp contrast with Smikrines' insensitivity, he begins by lamenting Kleostratos' fate and then continues lamenting his own: it was not of his free will to fall in love with the girl. He did nothing hasty, he duly asked permission to marry her. ὥμην δὲ μακάριός τις εἶναι τῷ βίῳ (294ff): again for reasons of poetic justice we could not possibly expect the boy to remain unmarried, that is, without poetically justified *μακαρία*. We thus know he will get a wife, even if that in itself is not very interesting: the more interesting problem is *how* this will happen, and the fact that Menander keeps alluding to it throughout.

⁹⁵ He seems a good choice for a speaker to whom we should perhaps ascribe the increased swearing in the fragmentary text of Act V (cf. 527-9).

⁹⁶ Brown (1993) 199 notes the interesting point of how different characters bring different aspects of the relationship between Chaireas and Kleostratos' sister into view.

It is worth pointing out that all of the above-mentioned laments and frustrations point to either a marriage that will not apparently materialize or to a promise of a happy life that so many comedies end with. It is as if the whole verbal parallelism and the repetition of the laments was there for the sake of the audience who can appreciate the paradox of knowing that the genre requires exactly such a happy marriage (or two) and a satisfactory resolution that the characters now deny the possibility of materializing.

Another character who mentions the power of luck on his first entrance is the allegedly dead master Kleostratos when he finally arrives home. ὁ Δᾶος, εὐτυχῶς[(497) immediately introduces him to the audience as the master that Daos thought he had lost. He gives us a new perspective different from the one we got from Daos at the beginning of the play. For the first time Daos' survival and preservation of the booty are seen as *fortunate* by a character other than the greedy Smikrines.⁹⁷

We may now move on to discuss that part of the play that will assure the happy-ending. Part of the charade lies in pretending that a tragedy has happened. Not just 'tragedy' in the sense of a misfortune, but almost a 'tragedy' that exactly follows the conventions of the tragic *genre* that may deal with the occurrence of (alleged) death and subsequent staging of a corpse laid out in front of the doorway. From a different perspective, the comic intrigue in *Aspis* not only imitates a generically tragic situation, but also alludes to dramas that play with the motive, such as Sophocles' *Electra* where a similar stratagem of a false report of death is used.⁹⁸ Finally, tragedy is on the slave's lips. During the charade, 'the play within the play,' Daos uses tragic quotations from familiar and popular plays - he even names the source from which he got them. Thus in the confidence typical of a schemer, he does not feel afraid of unmasking his 'show' by his cold intertextualism.

In the quotations Daos uses, Tyche has her place too, as the goddess revered by tragic playwrights who moves the situation from bad fortune to good fortune:

οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις π[άντ' ἀνὴρ εὐδαιμονεῖ (407, from Eur. fr. 661N²),
τύχη τὰ θνητῶν πράγματ' οὐκ εὐβουλία (411), and again:
ἐν μιᾷ γὰρ ἡμέραι / τὸν εὐτυχῇ τίθησι δυστυχῇ θεός (417f.).

Menander allows Daos to make fun of the principle of so many tragedies, the principle that even forms the basis of this very play – the changeability of fortune. The intrigue itself and the quotations used during it are a humorous comment on the dramatic method, on the prerequisites of the genre. For a moment, it is as if Tyche was subsumed into a metadramatic statement made by Daos, who is right in seeing her conventionalised

⁹⁷ The atmosphere is positively different from the gloomy opening. Kleostratos does, however, get a taste of the initial mood of the play, but on a more positive and much lighter level. The audience know Daos is in the middle of putting on an act to fool everyone uninitiated into the intrigue and this misleads even Kleostratos for a while. He hears from the slave (who does not recognize him yet) that Chairestratos is dead:

ΔΑ. τίνα ζητεῖς; ὁ μ[ὲν γὰρ δεσπότης
τῆς οἰκίας τέθνηκε
ΚΛ. τέθνηκεν; οἷμοι δυ[ο]
καὶ μὴ νόχλει πενθ[οῦσι] (500ff.)
502 ? δυστυχῆς [ΔΑ.] ἄπελθε σύ Austin

This is a very brief joke upon parallel construction. Kleostratos goes through the same situation of painful ignorance that Daos underwent at the beginning of the play. At the same time, Kleostratos does not know that the one in control of the information is misleading him deliberately to achieve a particular goal. The echo of the leitmotiv is brief but at the same time it is humorously precise.

⁹⁸ Gaiser (1973) 119ff. adduces more parallels.

place in drama (both tragedy and comedy). Tyche, the goddess moving this play, becomes a butt of jokes by a character in it! It seems as if a character within the play for a moment laughed with Menander at the way things really work in drama. However, Tyche had the last laugh, it seems, because in a larger context Daos' intrigue did not bring about the happy ending – it was left to Tyche to tie all the knots and have Kleostratos back at home.⁹⁹ Tyche, in the end, must be with you to *win*: οὐδεὶς δὲ νικᾷ μὴ θελούσης τῆς τύχης (adesp. fr. *882K-A).¹⁰⁰

The interesting thing about the intrigue is the natural way in which the intriguers arrive at it as if Tyche helped them stumble upon it. The scheme almost forces itself on the schemers as a self-evident solution.¹⁰¹

When Smikrines went into his house, Chairestratos' depression unexpectedly developed. Verses 282f. show his depressive disposition growing worse and worse in this extreme situation.¹⁰² He probably collapsed in the doorway, leaving Chaireas on stage alone for a short monologue.¹⁰³ Soon, Daos will run to his master's succour, calling even Chaireas to help. This visually prepares for the slave's involvement in saving Chairestratos. It is nothing unusual for a young person in utter distress to express a wish to die.¹⁰⁴ Amusingly enough, it is not the enamoured Chaireas that expresses such a wish here, but an older Chairestratos (282, repeated again at 314). His exaggerated behaviour is rather out of place. It is not even for any unfulfilled love affair of his that Chairestratos feels suicidal. It seems Chairestratos' condition worsens because his own brother's shamelessness destroys the happiness of a young couple and shatters their prospect of a marriage. It is accepted that grief has dangerous effects on health.¹⁰⁵ Such sentiments were put even to a dramatic use. In a fragment of Philemon's we find it expressed as follows:

πολλῶν φύσει τοῖς πᾶσιν αἰτία κακῶν
λύπη· διὰ λύπην καὶ μανία γὰρ γίγνεται
πολλοῖσι καὶ νοσήματ' οὐκ ἰάσιμα... (Philemon *incert.* fr. 106.1ff. K-A)

The staging may emphasize the inappropriateness of such behaviour if it has Chairestratos fainting and collapsing (cf. 299).¹⁰⁶ Moreover, such a collapse may remind the audience of the staging that resembles tragic genre as this fragment makes evident:

καὶ πεσεῖν τι βούλομαι

⁹⁹ Lombard (1971) 139 'The dénouement of the play, however, makes the intrigue redundant. Daos therefore does not influence the outcome of events at all.'

¹⁰⁰ Compare the comments in Plaut. *Pseudolus* 678f.: *centum doctum hominum consilia sola haec deuincit dea, / Fortuna*. The passage continues with a most interesting commentary on mortals' limited knowledge in the context of Tyche's working.

¹⁰¹ Gaiser (1973) 18 suggests Euripides' *Helen* as a model for the intrigue; Lombard (1971) 142 shows that the device of a sham death was much more common.

¹⁰² Cf. the sentiment in Menander's monostichs: οἴμοι, τὸ γὰρ ἄφνω δυστυχεῖν μανίαν ποιεῖ *Mon.* 602 Jäkel.

¹⁰³ Lloyd-Jones (1971) 183 n.20 against Del Corno (1970a); see also Del Corno (1971); Gaiser (1973) 115 n.10.

¹⁰⁴ Del Corno (1974) 79. An example from tragedy: Soph. *Trachiniae* 15f. See also Katsouris (1976a).

¹⁰⁵ Jacques (1978) 49, esp. n.26.

¹⁰⁶ Brown (1987) 194 n. 44 remarks: 'In the world of Greek and Latin Comedy a man is old if he is old enough to have a marriageable son or daughter. If he is old enough to consider marrying, or recently married, he belongs to the younger generation...' By this criterion, Chairestratos is definitely old (even though we know he is younger than Smikrines). Menander seems to like to reverse not only roles but also to play with age. Another person who behaves emotionally, in a way unbecoming his age, is Stratophanes in *Sikyonios* who rather resembles a young man in love.

τραγικὸν πῆσσημα (*adesp.* fr. 159 K-A)

In the next scene, Chairestratos makes it for the stage supported by attendants.¹⁰⁷ Full of black bile, he is unable to control his emotions. He tells Daos of Smikrines' ambition to marry the girl. The slave casts away tact and calls the greedy old man *μιαρώτατος*. From this point on, he becomes a much more active hero of the play pondering how Smikrines is to be beaten: ΔΑ. πῶς ἂν οὖν / τοῦ σφόδρα πονηροῦ περιγένοιτό τις: πάνυ / ἐργῶδες¹⁰⁸. ἐργῶδες μὲν, ἀλλ' ἔνεσθ' ὅμως (315ff.). A man so focused on one thing only, says Daos, will be easy to fool (326f. remind us of Tyche's words at 119f.).¹⁰⁹ Daos' disgust at Smikrines and the old man's insensitivity to the young couple's prospects only to gain shameless profit for himself, arouses Daos' ἐπιμέλεια for the family. He now takes an active approach being no longer the passive person who lamented his fate and reproached Tyche for it. Even his behaviour gains in the features associated with active leading slaves: his reply to Chairestratos 'if you are not thick' (εἰ μὴ πέτρινος εἶ, 353) would sound appropriate in the mouth of a self-confident schemer mocking his slow-witted master.¹¹⁰

Smikrines wanted to have Daos sent to his house – instead, Daos remains on stage engaged with Chairestratos and Chaireas in devising a scheme. Daos is not sent to Smikrines and this clearly hints at who begins at last to control the situation on stage. Chaireas is sent to the *agora* to find his friend who will help them with the ruse. The exit in the direction of the *agora* is optimistic and in a sharp contrast to the earlier entrance from the *agora* (Chairestratos, Smikrines, Chaireas). Things start moving quickly (379 ταχὺ μὲν οὖν) in an optimistic expectation of the scheme.

The ruse, as has been observed, originates from, and interferes with, the given reality within the play. It adds another perspective to the performance, another level to the universe of the play, creating a certain 'real-life' plasticity. Just as at the beginning of the play Daos was mistaken (and still is) about the alleged death of his master, so now when the time comes for the intrigue against Smikrines, we have a mirror situation with small modifications.¹¹¹

The ignorance of dramatic characters moves the play, the audience realize that the characters could just as well say: ἅπαντές ἐσμεν πρὸς τὰ θεῶν ἀβέλτεροι, κούκ ἴσμεν οὐδέν (Anaxandrides, fr. 22 K-A). For the first time in the play, however, Daos is not here an ignorant puppet of the situation that he cannot control because his knowledge is flawed. This time he himself will stage a mock-tragic piece to move the domestic situation in a

¹⁰⁷ Jacques (1978) 51 and Halliwell (1983) have both suggested that the *ekkyklema* was used at *Aspis* 303-87. See further Frost (1988) 29-31. This would not only enhance the sense of watching an earnest tragic situation, but would have impact on evaluating the participation of Chairestratos in the intrigue. See also below, 51.

¹⁰⁸ πάνυ / ἐργῶδες is given to Chairestratos by Arnott (following Lloyd-Jones).

¹⁰⁹ A person whose only thought is to possess everything (and quickly) will be an easy victim. But Menander would not want to lose the irony of fooling a *rational* thinking person. Cf. also Diphilos *incert.* fr. 99 K-A: the mind of an avarice is blind to everything else: ἄρ' ἐστὶν ἀνοητότατον αἰσχροκερδία: / πρὸς τῷ λαβεῖν γὰρ ὣν ὁ νοῦς τὰλλ' οὐχ ὁρᾷ.

¹¹⁰ Bain (1977) 127 is more balanced than me: 'I find it impossible to decide whether Daos says this under his breath with a patient shaking of his head or whether he says the words aloud to Chairestratos' face. Either way would be effective. Daos is a well-behaved slave with a sense of humour. Perhaps if he is speaking aloud he has for the moment lost patience with the slowness of the free man. It would be out of character for him to speak such a line gloatingly like a Plautine slave or some of the cheekier slaves in Menander.' (Cf. also his note 3.)

¹¹¹ Gutzwiller (2000) 120, independently notes: 'in the *Aspis* the comic intrigue, the pseudo-tragedy devised by Daos, is mirrored externally by the comic plot set in force by Tyche.' See also her discussion of a similar pattern in Men. *Epitrepontes*, p. 121ff.

new direction. The intrigue will lie in simulating Chairestratos' death to fool Smikrines.¹¹²

A dramatically ironical parallel is clear from the verbal echoes with the opening of the play. Daos foresees that Smikrines, keen on gain, will surely rush to his downfall completely unaware that he is being fooled. Overall, it will be easy to mislead such a character (*διημαρτηκότ'*, 324), Tyche used a similar word about Daos and his mistaken identification of his master's body (*διημάρτηκεν* 110).

The intrigue occurs to Daos when he sees Chairestratos' depression: he suggests pretending that Chairestratos is dead.¹¹³ This would possibly put Smikrines off Chaireas' girlfriend and instead make him seek to lay his hands on Chairestratos' *epikleros* girl and the property she would inherit from Chairestratos. He will want to marry her and leave Kleostratos' sister to whoever shows interest in her. After such a U-turn Chairestratos will 'rise from the dead' and Smikrines' true colours will be exposed in full view. For the intrigue to be successful, Daos will have to make sure that everyone follows his 'directorial' instructions and that even Smikrines' stage movements conform to Daos' plan: 'we will take care that he (Smikrines) does not come anywhere near the dummy representing your corpse' (359ff.).¹¹⁴

The stage house becomes the stronghold, a kind of fortified bastion for the intrigue, and only those in the house will have detailed knowledge of the facts: the 'patient' will have to remain shut inside, the women in the house will know of the scheme, Smikrines will have to be kept away (cf. 383ff.). This may perhaps hint at the concept of the theatrical backstage: even there everyone may be imagined to be observing what goes on onstage, with full recognition of the situation on stage and control over entrances, exits, even the timing of the delivery of particular lines.

Daos creates a new dramatic character for the play: as part of the charade, a witty impostor will arrive, pretending to be a foreign doctor. Daos asks Chaireas if he knows any doctor who would foot the bill. Chaireas does not, but suggests bringing one of his friends dressed and acting as a foreign doctor. We may reasonably expect a charade with a doctor who does not know his *techne* properly, something along the lines of Doric farce.¹¹⁵

Daos controls the stage exits and entrances and the movement on stage just as Tyche was seen controlling them. He even guesses what Smikrines' movements will be like when he suspects that all Chairestratos' property has come under his control:

τὴν τ' οἰκίαν
πᾶσαν διοικήσει, περίεισι κλειδία
ἔχων, ἐπιβάλλων ταῖς θύραις σημεί', ὄναρ
πλουτῶν. (356ff.)

The fact that the slave can manipulate and even foresee the exits, entrances, and movements on stage, is a visual sign of his control over the intrigue, of being in the

¹¹² Gaiser (1973) 118; Raina (1987) 26-29; Scafuro (1997) 348; Vogt-Spira (1992) 84f.

¹¹³ Cf. below, p. 51.

¹¹⁴ Gutzwiller (2000) 122: 'the language of the play encourages the audience to read the creator of the intrigue, the slave Daos, as an internal version of the comic playwright'. Cf. also p. 128.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Jacques (1998): 'le médecin du Bouclier n'a rien d'une création originale, c'est le point d'aboutissement d'une longue tradition.' We know that Antiphanes, Aristophon, Theopilos, and Philemon all wrote plays called '*Iatros*'. See also Arnott (1996) 431f.; Gigante (1969); Gil and Alfageme (1972); Goldberg (1980) 32; Alfageme (1995).

power to which even his masters must succumb.¹¹⁶ Chairestratos approves of the intrigue and asks what he should be doing. Daos suggests following the plan and... dying ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ.¹¹⁷ The light touch in his speech continues the portrayal of a jesting leading slave. It also reminds us of another Daos - the one in *Georgos*, with his witty, naughty, and jesting conversation with Myrrhine (40ff).

Chairestratos bids the accomplices Daos and Chaireas to keep the plan secret with all determination: ἀλλὰ τηρεῖτ' ἀνδρικῶς / τὸ πρᾶγμα (382f.). We may remember that Daos was earlier labelled ἀνδρόγυνος (242) by the waiter who denigrated his capacity to do anything serious, daring and masculine.¹¹⁸

If the doctor is credible, the charade will prove exciting.¹¹⁹ We are left in anticipation of what the doctor will be like. The intrigue, while still being in preparation, is presented by the schemers as a very unforeseeable enterprise. They cannot, they claim, be certain that the 'sham acting' will be convincing or that the lines will be delivered at the right time and with enough impact. The schemers in such a precarious moment give a semblance of an impromptu play. This sentiment gives vividness to the intrigue, as the here-and-now show that never existed before this moment. It also addresses the instability of the dramatic performance as a whole and gives us a feeling that the play is not a linear event moving from the made-up beginning to the prescribed (compulsory) ending. The intrigue gives it a sense that the direction can change – even get lost. Questions are raised about play-acting. *Nunc ego poeta fiam*, says the schemer Pseudolus in Plautus' eponymous play (404). He sees himself as a dramatic poet who finds the matter in his own inspiration. The protagonist must overcome a serious obstacle and rely only on his ability. He must count on unexpected reversals of fortune or accidents. In short, he envisages a real battle to achieve the desired goal. The preparation for the intrigue concentrates our attention, heightens the sense of danger, and makes us wonder what the execution of the intrigue will be like. How the intrigue comes off, and how it fits in the successful plot, is indeed what influences the audience's appreciation of the performance as a whole. At the end of *Dyskolos* Getas says:

εἰέν. συνησθέντες κατηγωνισμένοις
 ἡμῖν τὸν ἐργώδη γέροντα, φιλοφρόνως
 μειράκια, παῖδες, ἄνδρες ἐπικροτήσατε. (965ff.).

As if the *agon* (κατηγωνισμένοις) and nothing else was of importance in the summing up of the charms of that play! In *Aspis* it is the ruse against Smikrines that likewise should constitute the principal part of the play.

For a similar emphasis on the intrigue in the play, one may compare Eur. *Hecuba* (1258). Hecuba seems to forget for a moment the personal calamities she has suffered during the course of an hour and instead focuses all her attention on revenge. She

¹¹⁶ We can see this graphically in Plaut. *Poenulus*. Agorastocles, the young master in love, even says: *quando Amor iubet / me oboedientem esse seruo liberum*. (447f.) He actually shows this in his movements, as for example when the slave Milphio suggests Agorastocles should go in the house and instruct Collybiscus in his role, he says: *quamquam Cupido in corde uorsatur, tamen / tibi auscultabo* (196f.). When Milphio wants him out of the house, he will again obey (205-8).

¹¹⁷ The formula ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ is not only a humorously incongruous wish before the intrigue. It also hints at Tyche's help, acknowledged in a similar context in Sophocles' tragedy. Orestes in Soph. *Electra* plans his own sham death and in the course of his speech mentions the cliché about the working of Tyche in connection with death when he says: τέθνηκ' Ὀρέστης ἐξ ἀναγκαίας τύχης (48).

¹¹⁸ For the concept of masculine protection of one's house, see below, 84.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Dysk* 889f.: ὦ Πόσειδον, / οἷαν ἔχειν οἶμαι διατριβήν, directly before the revenge that Getas plans on Knemon. Cf. also Plaut. *Trin.* 819.

rejoices at seeing Polymestor punished for his wrongdoing, pushing the deaths of her children into the background of her consciousness. That the play should end with such a strange emphasis on revenge and a successful intrigue despite all the other sentiments that this tragedy depicted, is perhaps more surprising to a modern critic than to a contemporary Greek spectator.

After the choral interlude, Smikrines comes on stage angry with Daos for not bringing him the inventory of the booty despite asking Chairestratos earlier to send him over (274f.). Right before the intrigue Smikrines' remarks must strike the audience as highly ironic: *πολύ τ' ἐμοῦ πεφρόντικε* (392). In an offended way, he complains that Daos did not think much of his order. The reason must be, so he thinks, that Daos sides with Chairestratos' household against Smikrines' interests: *Δᾶος μετὰ τούτων ἐστίν* (393).

The audience saw before the break that this is in fact true, much to Smikrines' harm. It is obvious that the control of information and space that Smikrines aspired to is lost. Smikrines is on stage alone, the house next door is silent and we expect it to explode into the charade any minute now.

After Smikrines has voiced his suspicions concerning Daos' loyalty, Daos, as if on cue, rushes on stage in frenzy.¹²⁰ In a state of pretended excitement, he runs across the stage paying attention not to notice Smikrines. The old man must keep at the slave's heels if he wants to know what has happened. Just as throughout the play Smikrines lacks enough information, so now he is shown as trying to get to the source of the facts and learn from Daos the reason for his wild, 'barbarian' agitation.

Daos begins with an invocation of gods, especially Helios. Tragic heroes often declared their dreams, thoughts, and fears to the Sun-god (e.g. Soph. *Electra* 424) because there was no other way of making them known to the audience and someone else on stage. The poet uses the technique to let others overhear what one would not have said had he known there was someone else present near him. In *Aspis*, Daos *wants* to be overheard, exactly controlling how much Smikrines hears.¹²¹

In the report of Casina's madness (Plaut. *Casina* 620ff.), styled after tragic laments, the scene comes without warning; Pardalisca will therefore later have to explain to spectators what is going on (at 693ff.). In *Aspis*, the charade was prepared for and expected by the audience. Perhaps that is why Daos can continue his fooling and teasing for a longer time than Pardalisca. Unlike him, she immediately answers when the master calls her.

Instead of veiling his information in decent and serious language, Daos goes over the top. He uses polished tragic quotations as only a person detached from the sentiments being expressed here could. The quotations he uses come from the perfectly

¹²⁰ Bain (1977) 175f. argues that we should not be applying realistic criteria to the staging of Daos' entrance here. Dedoussi (1986) tries to explain away the absence in the text of any introductory signs of the fact that the intrigue is about to follow, especially the absence of the comment on the noise of the door. She suggests this staging: 'Smikrines could not hear the sound of the door because it was supposed to be opened only a little and cautiously; then Daos' head appeared, he looked around, saw Smikrines and disappeared momentarily. This silent spying could make things clear to the audience before Daos' sudden appearance, but now there was no time for Smikrines to comment upon the sound of the door.' Surely the playwright does not have to have foolproof motivation for every entrance – especially if the coincidence happens to amuse the spectators or draw attention to the clever weaving of accidents into a well-constructed plot; cf. also below, p. 124ff.

¹²¹ One may compare Menander's *Misogynes* 239 K-A, *Kolax* 46, *Epit.* 525, 631, *Aspis* 399, 529, *Mis.* 686, *Samia* 323, *Sik.* 117, 273, *Fab. Inc.* 25. In *Epit.* 631 Chairestratos (?) comes on stage unaware that Smikrines may overhear him. He very probably laments the situation in the house – where Habrotonon may have shown some supercilious behaviour – and the invocation of Helios could be then very similar to that in *Aspis* (with the only difference that here Daos *intentionally* wants Smikrines to overhear what he has to say.)

familiar *Stheneboia* by Euripides, and *Achilleus Thersitoktonos* by the fourth-century star playwright Chairemon. Aeschylus, Karkinos, Euripides, Chairemon are acknowledged by name. Gutzwiller (2000, 130) notes that at least one of these lines (Eur. *Stheneboia* fr. 661N²) ‘began its afterlife through an initial use as comic parody.’ This increases the comic element in the charade that pretends to be tragedy.

Vysoký¹²² maintains that Daos voices the tragic maxims ‘in order to fool Smikrines and save time for Chairestratos and Chaireas so that they may prepare and execute the cunning plan’ [my translation]. I suspect that he looks at Daos’ motives from a very realistic point of view that is perhaps out of place in a scene of hilarious charade. Chaireas and Chairestratos may equally well be imagined as already following from offstage what goes on onstage, having had enough time to fetch the ‘doctor’ during the choral break. The choral break would no doubt relieve any improbability.

Smikrines in *Epitrepontes* is credited with the knowledge of tragedy by the charcoal burner: τεθέασαι τραγωιδούς, οἶδ’ ὅτι, / καὶ ταῦτα κατέχεις πάντα... (325f.) This Smikrines, too, should be aware of the verses that Daos is using. Indeed, the charade is more hilarious if the fooling is thinly disguised from Smikrines, if the knowledge of the tragic repertoire – that must be expected of the *senex* – threatens to make Smikrines suspicious. And indeed, he is not at first taken in by what goes on around him and he voices his suspicion: γνωμολογεῖς, τρισάθλιε; (414)¹²³ It is funny how Daos treats the tragic repertoire. He uses it openly and blatantly, he adds the sources of the theatrical experience from which he took the lines, some of them highly popular and so the audience may be perhaps imagined as possessing knowledge of this repertoire. The element of a long-drawn-out teasing in *Aspis* is made even more hilarious by showing that there is a danger that Smikrines will recognize that a tragic show is being performed for him, not ‘enacted in earnest’ from the point of view of characters. Smikrines is not stupid and he will not lose his calm easily.

How shall I say it? Your brother is at death’s door.’ - ‘The one who was speaking to me here?’ (ΔΑ. ἀδελφός - ὦ Ζεῦ, πῶς φράσω: - σχεδόν τι σου / τέθνηκεν. ΣΜ. ὁ λαλῶν ἀρτίως ἐνταῦθ’ ἐμοί; 420ff.) Pedantically put, ἀρτίως 421 refers here to a situation some 140 verses earlier (at 278). Indeed, fortune can change quickly in both comedy and tragedy, but *so* quickly?! ‘What happened to him?’ Smikrines asks. Daos retains the superiority that characterizes a trickster and to the series of tragic quotations he adds a catalogue of illnesses that Chairestratos is allegedly beset by all of a sudden. Smikrines is terrified (note his oath by Poseidon at 423 that is often used in moments of utmost shock). Daos ‘consoles’ him with the famous opening line of Euripides’ immensely popular *Orestes*: it seems that his pretence will never end but, on the contrary, keeps increasing.

‘Was the doctor fetched?’ Smikrines asks (cf. 428ff.). ‘No, Chaireas went to fetch one.’ ‘Whom?’ Smikrines wonders with us. At exactly that moment, Chaireas, as if on cue, arrives with the false doctor. Though perfectly well motivated, such an opportune arrival at *exactly* that moment must have an explanation. The only plausible one is that Chaireas observed the situation from offstage with the doctor that he fetched during the choral interlude. Of course, complete realism is not the goal and is not even sought during the rapid tempo of the charade.

¹²² Vysoký (1970) 91.

¹²³ There were impudent Daos’s who, though loyal to their masters, were telling lies and pulling wool over their masters: *Pk.* 267ff.: Δᾶε, πολλάκις μὲν ἤδη πρὸς μ’ ἀπήγγελλας λόγους / οὐκ ἀληθεῖς, ἀλλ’ ἀλαζῶν καὶ θεοῖσιν ἐχθρὸς εἶ. / εἰ δὲ καὶ νυνὶ πλανᾷς με... Smikrines could hint at, and play with, such a conventional characterization of a Daos.

In Soph. *Philoctetes*, Odysseus rushes on stage exactly at the moment when Neoptolemus is overcome with compassion for Philoctetes and deliberates returning the bow to him (975) - and it gives the impression Odysseus was overlooking the situation on stage from offstage. As if the character off-stage listened to what was going on onstage and in an opportune moment burst into full view to partake in the intrigue or abort it. The sudden entrance on stage of another 'director', Lysistrata, at exactly the moment when the Magistrate is asking about her (430), is a similar example of coming out after the imagined 'eaves-dropping from the inside'.¹²⁴

The doctor plausibly hurries right into the house so that Smikrines may think he wishes to help Chairestratos as quickly as possible. From another perspective, this may be a hint that he still needs to be instructed in what to say before confronting Smikrines. His words will echo Daos' list of made up illnesses (339ff. cf. 439ff. and 446)¹²⁵ and this supports the idea that also this meaning may be read into his quick entrance into the stage house along with the other intriguers: Daos and Chaireas (who is again not acknowledged by Smikrines).

The entrance of Daos, Chaireas, and doctor into the house is ironic and meaningful. While everyone goes inside the house, Smikrines cuts a sorry figure waiting outside (cf. *Pk.* 299ff.). His personality helps the intriguers fool him. He does not want to go into Chairestratos' house to see for himself what state his brother is in. He is reasonably afraid that in that house they may suspect him of hidden and ulterior motives and that Chairestratos himself would not like to see him anyway after their mutual row. In this situation, Smikrines is unable to find out the explicit truth, just as at the beginning of the play, no matter how much he may have wanted to learn what *really* happened to Kleostratos, he had to rely on the facts as Daos presented them to him. His anti-social qualities prevent him now from spoiling the dramatic effect and the intrigue by prying into the information that must stay concealed from him. He wants to learn the facts and possess the knowledge that would put him in a better position to judge the situation - but his character is to blame for the fact that he cannot do what he wants.

When the doctor comes back on stage from the house, Smikrines engages him in conversation. 'Is there no chance of recovery?'¹²⁶ Smikrines does not want any cheering up: 'speak the truth!' The doctor says Chairestratos 'is not likely to live' (449f.) But Smikrines gets more than he wanted: the doctor says something like 'you'll never live the same again' (458). Does he mean that once this intrigue is over Smikrines will be doomed to ridicule and contempt? Sham doctors may have tried to lay their hands on money or any other gain. Philemon's *Iatros* (fr. 35 K-A) may hint in that direction if we may hazard a guess by one particular line: καὶ γυλιόν τιν' ἀργυρωμάτων. It is intriguing but unfortunately uncertain whether we should see a connection between a false doctor and a 'walletful of silver plate.' If indeed there was such a connection, then the sham doctor of *Aspis* gains in depth by comparison with that play and perhaps some other as well. A doctor would be in a not so unusual role of helping to fool an old man out of his money - for poetically satisfactory reasons, for once.

¹²⁴ Regardless of this problem, the situation is similar to what happens in Plaut. *Truculentus*. The leading *hetaira*, all dressed up, wishes that her soldier arrived now that she is ready for him: *nunc ecaster adveniat miles velim* (Leo's text, 481). And, indeed, so he does - at exactly that moment! Of course, he was expected, but his arrival just then at the right moment with the *hetaira* ready for him, symbolically makes the courtesan appear as a sort of director of the stage movements of a man subordinated to her. The same impression could underlie the opportune arrival of Chaireas with the false doctor in *Aspis*.

¹²⁵ The list of illnesses that appears in Adespota fr. 910 K-A (πλευρίτιδες, περιπλευμονίαι, φρενίτιδες, / στραγγουρίαι, δυσεντερίαι, ληθαργίαι, / ἐπιληψίαι, σηπεδόνες, ἄλλα μυρία) may seem to support the hypothesis that such catalogues were used for a blatantly comic effect within a comic intrigue.

¹²⁶ I read οὐκ ἔστ' ἵν' ἐλπίς οὐδεμία σωτηρίας (447) with Austin and Arnott as a question from Smikrines.

Smikrines remains cold and calculating in the face of the sudden illness that befell his brother – he even suspects that others behave in a greedy way like himself and are not lamenting the two sudden deaths. Instead, he imagines them as looting all the property that they can lay their hands on in the house. This insensitivity psychologically prepares us for the final stages of humiliation and punishment that Smikrines must suffer. Of this, unfortunately, we know nothing at all.¹²⁷

In Act IV Smikrines must have learnt of Chairestratos' alleged death, and possibly betrothed Kleostratos' sister to Chaireas. I assume, with Arnott, that Smikrines was at that time on stage talking with Chaireas. This would give Menander a chance to show a seeming U-turn in Smikrines' attitude towards the boy: from indifference to the boy who was an obstacle to Smikrines' plans (cf. οὐκ οἶδ' ὅτωι at 177) to apparent goodwill when Chaireas is no longer seen as an impediment to Smikrines' greater ambitions. Perhaps he even added something about wishing the young bridegroom well, giving him the girl so that he may harbour no hard feelings against him, and so on. All this would appear very philanthropic if we did not know of his true intentions. Thinking he could easily become the owner of an even bigger dowry, he will plan to marry an even richer *epikleros* girl than Kleostratos' sister.

Menander seems to have been interested in exploring the humour that comes with a sudden, sometimes seemingly irrational U-turn in a character's fortune or behaviour. Parallels to a barefaced reversal of attitude when the situation has changed can be found in a Roman adaptation of a Menandrian play, *Stichus*. Antipho tries to convince his two daughters that they should leave their absent husbands and look elsewhere for a more profitable match. When in the course of the play the two husbands arrive back home rich after a successful business trip, Antipho changes his attitude so completely and wholeheartedly that it does not escape notice. Epignomus remarks:

*nam iam Antiphonem conueni adfinem meum
cumque eo reueni ex inimicitia in gratiam.
uidete, quaeso, quid potest pecunia:
quoniam bene gesta re rediisse me uidet
magnasque adportauisse diuitias domum,
sine aduocatis ibidem in cercuro in stega,
in amicitiam atque in gratiam convortimus. (408ff.)*

Of the ending of *Aspis* we know little. 527ff. shows lively swearing that may prove a cook is on stage, but the evidence is not clinching. We do learn of the double weddings (γίνεται διπλοῦς γάμος 521), i.e. that of Kleostratos with Chairestratos' daughter and of Chaireas with Kleostratos' sister. Perhaps Daos or some other character who earlier expressed his frustration may now have voiced something along the lines of *Koneiazomenai*:

λελοιδότημ' ἄρ' οὐδ' ἀδικαίως τῇ τύχῃ·
ὥς γὰρ τυφλὴν αὐτὴν κακῶς εἴρηκά που,
νῦν δ' ἐξέσωσέ μ' ὥς εἴποιχ' ὀρώσά τι.

¹²⁷ It may be of some help to compare Onesimos' poking fun at Smikrines in *Epitrepontes*, where he can laugh at Smikrines' expense because the old man does not know the facts: παχύδερμος ἦσθα καὶ σύ, νοῦν ἔχειν δοκῶν (1114). A similar resolution appears in Soph. *Electra*, mentioned here because the play bears many resemblances to *Aspis*. At 1479f. Aigisthos gains ultimate knowledge: οἴμοι, ξυνῆκα τοῦπος· οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ' ὅπως ὅδ' οὐκ Ὀρέστης ἔσθ' ὁ προσφωνῶν ἐμέ. It is conceivable that in *Aspis* Smikrines could in similar words comment on seeing the two 'dead' men come to life.

ἐπόνουν μὲν αὐτό]ς, τοῖς πόνοις δ' εἰργαζόμεν
οὐδὲν πλεον· τούτ]ων γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἐπέτυχον,
εἰ μὴ συνέλαβεν.] ὥστε μηδεὶς, πρὸς θεῶν,
πράττων κακῶς λίαν ἀθυμήσῃ ποτέ·
ἴσως γὰρ ἀγαθοῦ τοῦτο πρόφασις γίνεται. (13ff.)

Arnott's interpretation of the lacunose text seems fitting:

'I've not done right to rail at Lady Luck. I have perhaps abused her, called her blind, but now she's saved me – clearly she can see! I really toiled, but my toils achieved nothing worthwhile. I'd not have gained success without her help. And so let no one, please, ever be too despondent if he fails. That may become an agent of good fortune!'

The weddings to ensue must have been seen a resolution of the plot complications and the tangible proof of victory. It would be a nice (and not uncommon) rounding off of the play if Daos (as the intriguer) devised some farcical ruse (with the cook?) to punish Smikrines now that Kleostratos is at home. The person who exacted punishment from Smikrines may have perhaps concluded it with an admonition similar to what we find in *Dyskolos* (960ff.).¹²⁸

This chapter has brought to the forefront of our attention only some of the aspects that Menandrian plays show in their constantly fascinating interplay of convention and variety.¹²⁹ Throughout his production, so far as we can follow it, Menander seems to have a firm grasp of the overall structure of his play, but also shows a remarkable eye for details, whether of staging, characterization of individual *dramatis personae*, or of implicit communication with the audience by hinting at various levels of, and problems with, 'realism', plausibility and motivation within a comic play.

Aspis, with its neat construction full of mirror scenes, parallel behaviour patterns and unmistakable dramatic statements on the art of creating a drama, shows that New Comedy is an intelligent art form that – in order to pretend to imitate life – does not shun imitating art, tragedy just as other comedies as well.¹³⁰ I shall develop this point further in the following chapters on Menander's stagecraft.

¹²⁸ Gutzwiller (2000) 132 note 76, suggests a 'morally correct' ending; see also Scafuro (1997) 340-45.

¹²⁹ Del Corno (1974) 76: 'Vielfältigkeit der Kunst Menanders.'

¹³⁰ Although I would not go as far as Gutzwiller (2000) 105 who claims that 'Metatheatrical elements in Menander stem from the sustained view of his characters that life is like a tragedy.' Or that 'Tragedy is in fact a mask worn by Menander's comedy, and the audience has a metadramatic experience whenever it focuses on the fact of masking - that is, the duality of the performance and the performed.'

II. Conventions in the theatre of life: Menander's Stagecraft

The scenic presentation is an inseparable part of the theatrical experience: it 'is not an inessential external feature or a gross and incidental encumbrance: it is part and parcel of the playwright's handiwork, and is an inextricable element of his communication and hence of meaning.'¹

As I will show below, aspects of stage business are often of vital importance for the construction of New Comedy plots. It may therefore seem strange that New Comedy as a genre allows the stage space to undergo minimal variation – conventionally it represents façades of two to three buildings opening towards a street. In and out of the buildings unfolds a domestic story of a (usually) Athenian, free-born family. This fixed element of the genre is not always bound to arrest the attention because of its very predictability,² but in fact, plays constantly gain much dramatic interest from unexpected and imaginative uses of the stage. Well-timed arrivals and exits, coincidental overhearings, but even costumes, props, and behaviour often significantly shape the way the plot develops. The tension between a predictable set of stage conventions and a free use of coincidental and surprising stage business are best appreciated by those who come equipped with some expectations about the genre, on which such a tension is a continuous commentary. Much that goes on before our eyes is blatantly arbitrary and coincidental and the texts are vocal about it. All imaginative uses of stage space make us ask in the end questions about the nature of New Comedy plots.

If Aristotle emphasized the role of plot over spectacle in arousing pity and fear (*Poetics* 1453b) he presumably held the same opinion about comedy, *mutatis mutandis*. Menander's plays follow Aristotle's favouring of plot – not by neglecting stagecraft, but by giving it a role to play in *defining* the plot.

I will take up only those aspects of Menander's stagecraft that suit my argument and that will move forward the argument of the preceding chapter, showing how the audience came equipped with certain expectations, ready to have their knowledge of the genre flattered, questioned and enhanced; how Menander played with them, exploring his basic technique of surprise against a New Comedy backdrop of fixed means and resolutions.

I shall limit my analysis especially to the following two broad questions: One way of surprising the audience watching a play move towards its final resolution is to vary the speed and rhythm of stage business leading to, or seemingly away from, the resolution, often with characters voicing complete resignation and acquiescence in face of adversity. The description of feasts, sacrifices, wedding preparations, and so on, offers the best dramatic possibilities for representing in concrete terms a resolution to a play, but the feasting may also serve the opposite context: a character will stop trying to patch up his domestic situation and will instead attempt to forget about everything at a

¹ Taplin (1977) 2.

² It allows us to use generalizations that are valid for a good number of plays. Cf. Wiles (1991) 44: 'the conflict between the two families whose houses are represented by the two doors lies at the heart of the narrative and thematic tensions of the play. Usually this tension is reconciled when the girl who belongs to house A is married to the boy who belongs to house B. The tension between right and left is frequently one of social status.' Bibliography on New Comedy staging is large. A comprehensive treatment of the physical aspect of Menander's theatre is Webster (1962/63), (1956) 22-28; Handley (1970) 18-23; Duckworth (1952) 121-27. Further references in Arnott (2000) 113. New Comedy stage properties have been studied by Dworacki (1969-70) and (1971).

feast with friends and a Habrotonon. Feasting offered many and varied dramatic opportunities and it is therefore no wonder to see it develop into an almost conventional part of the plot. With its commotion it brought variety to the plays, change of mood and tempo, but throughout its various uses it stood as a symbol of the resolution of which a feast will become a part (though it may have originally begun with a different purpose).

The second area (Chapter III) concerns the stage presence of a house as the focal point of all action. Its presence on stage has accumulated meanings that allow the playwright to take short-cuts and fall back on such common knowledge or ironize commonly held assumptions about the dramatic and social nature of an *oikos*.

Before any such discussion, however, it is advisable to make clear where Menander and his audience stand.

Interest in *opsis*

Ancient critics saw theatre as a realistic mirror of life - in its plausible imitation of what life is all about, and in its ethical example: Cicero may well preserve for us a Hellenistic view of comedy as a very realistic kind of *mimesis*, 'a mirror of life.' In Donatus (*de Com.* 5.1) he is quoted as calling comedy '*imitationem vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imaginem veritatis*.'³ The most famous apostrophe that praises Menander's art of imitation is that by Aristophanes of Byzantium (*Test.* 83 K-A) ὦ Μένανδρε καὶ βίε, πότερος ἄρ' ὑμῶν πότερον ἀπεμιμήσατο;⁴ I quote these statements to show that ancient criticism of comedy - even when it used language that might be expected to have a bearing on the visual representation - in fact consistently talks about the plot, types, situations, or behaviour. One may perhaps ascribe this lack of aesthetic terminology to the influence of Aristotle who notably omits ὄψις from his discussion of tragedy.⁵

This may show a remarkable lack of awareness and recognition of drama as a visual spectacle in critical literature, although it is highly improbable that theatre practitioners and spectators ignored this aspect. Aristotle himself insists (even if he does not elaborate on the precept) that a playwright should try to visualize the play in his mind as he is writing.⁶ More importantly, the sheer number of artefacts representing drama in antiquity⁷ may show that the evidence of the critics is misleading for not dealing with this aspect explicitly. For common people many souvenirs made the experience of theatre a lasting one. There were poster-like mosaics in wealthy houses, vases and clay figurines of various quality and price (which would surely conjure up in the mind a vivid pose of a favourite character) and masks too would probably remind those who looked at them of a particular character's typical posture and behaviour on

³ The statement pertains not only to *mimesis* but also to *ethos* - a moral concept that a play presents to a spectator, cf. Richardson (1981) 7.

⁴ Zagagi (1994) 94ff.

⁵ Limiting himself to such cases as the improbable entrance that occurred in Karkinos' play with Amphiaraus' apparently improper entrance (*Poetics* 1455a). Cf. Edmunds (1992); Marzullo (1980) is a useful analysis of Aristotle's reaction against contemporary emphasis on the visual in theatre. See also Taplin (1977) Appendix F, Blume (1991) 3, 75. Janko (1984), who believes in the Aristotelian authorship of the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, sees the deficiency of *Poetics* 'remedied' in the *Tractatus*, Chapter XV, cf. *ibid.*, p. 60, 229ff. In non-representational genres, for example rhetoric, the stylistic appeal to the senses (*ἐνάργεια*) is fully treated by ancient critics. Zanker (1981) 309 suggests that 'Hellenistic literary critics borrowed it from contemporary philosophy and that its use by the Epicureans, with its emphasis on sight, made it particularly attractive to them.' Still, it is not the same as a theory of visual experience.

⁶ *Poetics* 1455a. Aristotle sees competition and spectacle as elements necessarily included for the less discerning audiences (*Politics* 1342a).

⁷ Green (1994) with further bibliography.

stage. In short, even if the contemporary critics, our only extant texts, do not raise the topic of the visual representation (and its importance) and do not operate with terms that would show them as giving importance to this aspect of theatre, it does not necessarily mean that the spectators were blind to it in the whole scheme of the play. The artistic representations must have somehow helped to define and shape the audience's concept of a 'performance.'

Judging by archaeological evidence, we may well suppose that from its beginnings Athenian comedy showed a great interest in representing visually striking exotic or fantastic creatures; anything, in short, that could grip an Athenian spectator watching the performance.⁸ On an ideological level, the *Great Dionysia* was an instrument of self-promotion for a *choregos* who provided ostentatiously extravagant funds for lavish costuming and the overall production.⁹ During the *Great Dionysia* in particular, the city of Athens was on show, having carefully prepared a self-representation that the Athenians themselves wanted to show their visitors. The plays were not merely cultural products; the stage may be likened to the focal point of social life, an *agora*.¹⁰ In the end, performance was about cultural and ideological prestige and it is very nearly impossible to draw a line between the extra-theatrical and artistic motives - in both comedy and tragedy of the fifth century.¹¹

Aspects of stagecraft must have been at the centre of a lively and open debate among theatre practitioners, with the comic genre by its nature most vocal about it. Aristophanes, when criticising Euripides, includes a criticism of Euripides' stagecraft on both cultural and ideological principles. He thinks that Euripides sins by presenting on stage 'inadequate' gestures, props, or costumes. Who in *Ranae* could better voice such a criticism of practical stagecraft than Aeschylus, an epitome of a different, grander, style of theatre:

ΑΙ. ἄλλ', ὦ κακόδαιμον, ἀνάγκη
μεγάλων γνωμῶν καὶ διανοιῶν ἴσα καὶ τὰ ῥήματα τίκτειν.
κἄλλως εἰκὸς τοὺς ἡμιθέους τοῖς ῥήμασι μείζοσι χρῆσθαι·
καὶ γὰρ τοῖς ἱματίοις ἡμῶν χρῶνται πολὺ σεμνοτέροισιν.
ἀμοῦ χρηστῶς καταδείξαντος διελυμήνῳ σύ. ΕΥ. τί δράσας;
ΑΙ. Πρῶτον μὲν τοὺς βασιλεύοντας ῥάκι' ἀμπισχών, ἔν' ἐλεινοὶ
τοῖς ἀνθρώποις φαίνονται εἶναι. ΕΥ. τοῦτ' οὖν ἔβλαψα τί δράσας;
ΑΙ. οὐκ οὖν ἐθέλει γε τριηραρχεῖν πλουτῶν οὐδεὶς διὰ ταῦτα,
ἀλλὰ ῥακίοις περιϊλάμενος κλάει καὶ φησὶ πένεσθαι. (1058-66)¹²

Setting aside the political dimension of the criticism, in terms of dramatic construction, Euripides is shown to be an example of a playwright who used visual signs in a novel, striking, and potentially threatening way, but also in a 'cheap' way, trying to

⁸ Green (1994) 28 'On the early vases we never see normal Athenians: they wear strange garments or headgear, they ride strange creatures like ostriches or dolphins, or they represent non-human creatures like birds or even rivers (we have literary evidence for Cities and Islands).' Stone (1980) 376: 'The choruses of Old Comedy provided the playwrights with their best opportunities to present original and spectacular creations on the Athenian stage: much of the expense involved in comic productions came from the costuming of the twenty-four chorus members.'

⁹ Henderson (1990) 290.

¹⁰ Cf. Arist. *Ach.* 719, 729. The old *Agora* may have had a long connection with performances: Kolb (1981).

¹¹ Of course one must bear in mind that the *Great Dionysia* probably differed in this respect from the more domestic *Lenaia*.

¹² Cf. also *Ach.* 412: τὰ ῥάκι' ἐκ τραγωδίας.

elicit through them all too easily emotions that should stem from plot (Aristotle's *Poet.* 1453b seems to be implicitly attacking Euripides for this).

What proved to have a great impact on later Comedy was Euripides' very effective stress on the discrepancy between the appearances and reality. Euripides can develop in his plays a dramatically effective philosophy based on the insecurity of perception, and its social implications in misjudging a person's character.¹³ It must have represented a part of a social trend of frustrations with discrepancies between status and true nobility of character. The Old Oligarch, a fifth-century voice complains that he can no longer tell by clothes a free-born from a slave.¹⁴

One example will suffice to show what Aristophanes means and how influential Euripides' toying with the visual symbols was. In *Helen*, the playwright presents on stage Menelaos, a great commander but now a shipwrecked general who had to avoid the gaze of the public because he felt ashamed to be seen in his pitiful state:

ὄχλον γὰρ ἐσπεσεῖν ἡισχυνόμην,
[ὥσθ' ἱστορήσαι τὰς ἐμὰς δυσχλαινίας]
κρύπτων ὑπ' αἰδοῦς τὰς τύχας. ὅταν δ' ἀνὴρ
πράξει κακῶς ὑψηλός, εἰς ἀηθίαν
πίπτει κακίῳ τοῦ πάλαι δυσδαίμονος.
χρεῖα δὲ τείρει μ'· οὔτε γὰρ σῆτος πάρα
οὔτ' ἀμφὶ χρωτ' ἐσθῆτες· αὐτὰ δ' εἰκάσαι
πάρεστι ναὸς ἐκβόλοις ἀμπίσχομαι.
πέπλους δὲ τοὺς πρὶν λαμπρά τ' ἀμφιβλήματα
χλιδὰς τε πόντος ἥρπασ'· (415ff.)

His state that was to be carefully hidden from the eyes of Egyptians is shown with almost metatheatrical explicitness to the theatre audience. Euripides gives thereby voice to the sense of discrepancy that the spectators themselves must have felt at seeing a character of heroic stature in an unusually pitiful state wearing only tattered rags. The dramatist was here playing with concepts of Greek culture related to the visual representation. Beauty and ugliness complement a description of a person's pattern of behaviour and status.¹⁵ In drama, this must have been represented by suitable masks and especially lavish costumes. Euripides, however, does away with all the splendid clothes and ornaments that once belonged to Menelaos. As if to forestall questions from the audience accustomed to a more heroic representation of the general, he says the sea took all the past splendour away!

His miserable clothes clearly shape the others' attitude and expectations of Menelaos' behaviour on stage. Euripides shows that a dramatic character is in fact

¹³ Appearances were associated with character already in Homer, cf. Bernsdorff (1992) 115ff. Equally, from Homer onwards, we are reminded that there *are* discrepancies (e.g. *Il.* 3.39ff.). the contrast between appearance and reality is of universal theatrical interest, found in dramatists other than Euripides: Seale (1982) 23 sees it as 'fundamental to Sophocles' way of looking at tragic situations'.

¹⁴ Ps-Xen. *Const. Athen.* I.10: εἰ νόμος ἦν τὸν δοῦλον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐλευθέρου τύπτεσθαι ἢ τὸν μέτοικον ἢ τὸν ἀπελεύθερον, πολλάκις ἂν οἰηθεὶς εἶναι τὸν Ἀθηναῖον δοῦλον ἐπάταξεν ἄν· ἐσθῆτά τε γὰρ οὐδὲν βελτίων ὁ δῆμος αὐτόθι ἢ οἱ δοῦλοι καὶ οἱ μέτοικοι καὶ τὰ εἶδη οὐδὲν βελτίους εἰσίν.

¹⁵ Greek heroes *need* to be beautiful. Homeric heroes are clothed in *κῶδος* by a particular god to achieve what they will, to impose authority and to show that they are above the common crowd. The beauty of a Homeric hero is an aristocratic statement nicely interwoven into the pattern of 'visual' poetry. Conversely, there is gratuitous ugliness in the description of a particularly unpleasant - unaristocratic - character, such as Thersites, whose low social standing, irritating behaviour and physical features go hand in hand (cf. *Iliad* 2.216-19 for the description of his physical features).

unrecognisable from his outward appearance and that his social position can change too easily in a short span of time. Ann Pippin summarizes this aspect of the play:

‘The language, the plot, and the very form of the *Helen* all have been made to express this tension between what is and what only seems to be. Every character suffers from some misapprehension of the truth’¹⁶

Because of his lowly appearance and clothes, the old woman who answered the door did not treat him as would befit his social position but drove Menelaos away from the palace gates as if he was a beggar (ἐνθεν ὥσπερ πτωχὸς ἐξηλαυνόμεν, says Menelaos later at 790). Helen learnt from Theonoe that her husband is somewhere near the island shipwrecked. She longs for his arrival, but when she spots Menelaos, she cannot recognize him owing to his outward appearance:

ἔα, τίς οὗτος; οὐ τί που κρυπτεύομαι
 Πρωτέως ἀσέπτου παιδὸς ἐκ βουλευμάτων;
 οὐχ ὡς δρομαία πῶλος ἢ βάκχη θεοῦ
 τάφῳ ξυνάψω κῶλον; ἄγριος δέ τις
 μορφὴν ὅδ’ ἐστὶν ὅς με θηρᾶται λαβεῖν. (541ff.)

She believes the lowly man in front of her is dangerous, and that he apparently wants to drag her to the king. When Menelaos protests he has no such intention, she explains what made her think of him in such terms:

ME. οὐ κλῶπές ἐσμεν οὐδ’ ὑπηρέται κακῶν.
 ΕΛ. καὶ μὴν στολήν γ’ ἄμορφον ἀμφὶ σῶμ’ ἔχεις. (553f.)

Menelaos’ clothes make him unrecognisable even to his wife. Only after calming down can Helen notice the striking resemblance of the pauper to Menelaos.

ME. Ἐλένη σ’ ὁμοίαν δὴ μάλιστ’ εἶδον, γύναι.
 ΕΛ. ἐγὼ δὲ Μενέλεώι γε σ’ οὐδ’ ἔχω τί φῶ. (563f.)

The problem of not knowing when one is seeing correctly moves through the entire play. Helen herself will have problems persuading Menelaos that she is really none other than his wife: her husband will find it hard to believe her (and his eyes οὐ που φρονῶ μὲν εὔ, τὸ δ’ ὄμμα μου νοσεῖ; 575).

Menander was obviously influenced by this tension between appearance and reality.¹⁷ One fragment of *Georgos* comments on it as follows:

¹⁶ I.e. every one except Theonoe. Pippin (1960) 152. See also Wiles (1997) 169f.

¹⁷ Magistrini (1970) has some good comments on ‘il gioco delle apparenze, tipico di Menandro’ (104). The conflict of appearances and reality features large as the dramatist’s stagecraft tool for moving the plots ahead: sometimes it is developed to such lengths that even seeing a crime ‘with one’s own eyes’ is not enough to discover the truth. Leaving aside the theme of mistaken identity, there are plays where it is the very act of spotting some *scelus* with one’s own eyes that is eventually shown to be a mistake: Ge. *actumst*. So. *eloquere obsecro te quid sit*. Ge. *iam* . . So. *quid “iam,” Geta?* / Ge. *Aeschinus* . . So. *quid is ergo?* Ge. *alienus est ab nostra familia*. So. *hem / perii. quare?* Ge. *amare occepit aliam*. So. *vae miserae mihi!* / Ge. *neque id occulte fert, ab lenone ipsus eripuit palam.* / So. *satin hoc certumst?* Ge. *certum; hisce oculis egomet vidi, Sostrata* (Ter. *Ad.* 325ff.). In fact none of what Geta suspects is true. Plaut. *Miles Gloriosus* 288ff. has a whole comic scene revolve around what a slave saw (and he was right) but he is made to believe he saw wrongly: SC. *atque ego illi aspicio osculantem Philocomasium cum altero / nescio*

εὐκαταφρόνητόν ἐστι, Γοργία, πένης,
 κἂν πάνυ λέγῃ δίκαια· τούτου γὰρ λέγειν
 ἔνεκα μόνου νομίζεθ' οὗτος, τοῦ λαβεῖν,
 καὶ συκοφάντης εὐθὺς ὁ τὸ τριβώνιον
 ἔχων καλεῖται, κἂν ἀδικούμενος τύχῃ. (Georg. fr. 1)

The ethical discourse here is as lively and relevant as in Euripides.¹⁸ However, it is *Dyskolos* that allows us to watch the contrast between appearance and reality developed into an important element of the dramatic structure. By Menander's time comedy worked with more or less conventionalised and recognizable character types. Playing with aberrations from the expected behaviour of a conventional dramatic *persona* seems to indicate the dramatist's conviction that there is more to a character than an external description – he often changes the characteristics of his types following this effective technique of a contrast between outward appearance and the true character.¹⁹

Act Two of *Dyskolos* begins with Gorgias and his slave Daos returning from the fields. Daos has informed Gorgias that a certain young man approached Knemon's daughter, very probably with his mind set on something scandalous. During their conversation, Sostratos, the young man in question, comes on stage:

ΔΑ. μικρὸν δ' ἐπίσχε· οὐ μάτην γὰρ ἤκομεν,
 ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἶπον ἔρχετ' ἀνακάμψας πάλιν.
 ΓΟ. ὁ τὴν χλανίδ' ἔχων; οὗτός ἐστιν ὃν λέγεις;
 ΔΑ. οὗτος. ΓΟ. κακοῦργος εὐθὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ βλέμματος. (255ff.)

It is noteworthy that the first mention goes to Sostratos' *chlanis* – a mark of a well-to-do young man who has the time to spend his days in lazy *περίπατοι*. Gorgias is class-sensitive and it could be that the *chlanis* shaped his impression of Sostratos and his intentions. Just like Helen, in order to correct his opinion he needs to overcome his distrust, come nearer and talk to the person he misjudges (315ff.).

This strategy will be tried later on Knemon but the old man, distrustful of everyone except farmers, will not allow them near himself. How could one then possibly explain to him that the young urban man in a *chlanis* is a suitable match for his daughter? Gorgias rightly remarks σε δ' [ἄγοντ' ἂν] ἴδῃ / σχολὴν τρυφῶντά τ', οὐδ' ὁρῶν γ' ἀνέξεται (356f., and cf. 363ff.). If Knemon sees Sostratos helping Gorgias with the digging, instead of standing idly by in his *chlanis*, he may be persuaded to listen to Sostratos thinking him a poor farmer like himself: νομίσας αὐτουργὸν εἶναι τῷ βίῳ / πένητ' (369f.). And indeed, when at long last Sostratos is allowed near Knemon (in itself a difficult task), the old man goes by visual hints in the appreciation of Sostratos' character:

ΓΟ. προσέλθε σύ.
 ΚΝ. ἐπικέκαυται μέν. γεωργός ἐστι; ΓΟ. καὶ μάλ', ὦ πάτερ·

quo adulescente. PA. quod ego, Sceledre, scelus ex te audio? / SC. profecto uidi. PA. tutin? SC. egomet duobus his oculis meis. / PA. abi, non ueri simile dicis, neque uidisti, etc.

¹⁸ There is of course much talk about true virtue – in an age when values underwent severe scrutinizing. Cf. *Heros*, fr. 3: ἐχρῆν γὰρ εἶναι τὸ καλὸν εὐγενέστατον, / τὸν ἐλεύθερον δὲ πανταχοῦ φρονεῖν μέγα. A *Sik.* fragment (fr. 2) seems relevant but its context is unclear.

¹⁹ Cf. Arnott (1964) 111.

οὐ τρυφῶν οὐδ' οἶος ἀργὸς περιπατεῖν τὴν ἡμέραν... (753ff.)²⁰

Euripidean influence on Menander's dramatic technique is here clearly traceable. A rich man may be a rascal (that is Gorgias' initial sentiment when he spots Sostratos), a poor man may be noble (as Gorgias is throughout: 321ff., 723ff.) and a truly noble person does not change even if the circumstances happen to change.²¹

Stage as an ambiguous picture

With gross generalization we may contrast Aristophanic political comedy and Menandrian domestic drama as a difference between a political memorandum placed in the *agora* to be seen by all, appearing the same no matter at what angle one is looking at it. By contrast, Menander's drama gives an impression of a picture that needs to be read only from a particular angle to be intelligible. What goes on on stage does not look the same to everyone, the interpretation may differ depending on where an onlooker is standing, whether he is blinded by mistakes and biases, and so on. Knowledge is problematised, as is the proper 'reading' of what one sees.

For my purposes the most obvious self-referentiality of a stage tableau that we find in a text of comedy itself, and one that may well reflect the experience of an ancient audience as well, comes from Plautus. *Mostellaria* shows Tranio standing between two old men, Theopropides and Simo, as they all look at Simo's house but only Tranio knows what he is doing. For the spectators' benefit Tranio sneaks in a remark about his own situation on stage (832ff.):

Tr. uiden pictum, ubi ludificat una cornix uolturios duos?

Th. non edepol uideo.

*Tr. at ego uideo. nam inter uolturios duos
cornix astat, ea uolturios duo uicissim uellicat.
quaeso huc ad me specta, cornicem ut conspicere possies.
iam uides ? (Plaut. Mostell. 832ff.)*

The scene continues in this vein until 840. Those who stand in the picture cannot, of course, see it; but Tranio who is in control of the scene can see things from a perspective - as if from that of the audience. The situation in which Tranio finds himself is likened to a picture and indeed, like a picture, it has a comprehensible meaning, that can be 'read' if one steps aside to see not just one detail but the whole thing.²² The simile that likens the stage situation to a picture could well have been in the Greek original by (probably) Philemon. The picture in which Tranio stands can only be properly seen from a certain angle, and not by all in the same way.

²⁰ Strictly speaking, Gorgias does not need Knemon's approval any more and can let Sostratos marry the girl without asking the old man. He does, however, seek Knemon's consent and presents Sostratos to him as an industrious young man worthy of Knemon.

²¹ Cf. Demeas' dig at Chrysis in *Samia*: (ΔΗ) καίτοι πρὸς ἔμ' ἦλθες ἐνθάδε / ἐν σινδονίτῃ, Χρυσί-μανθάνεις; -πάνυ / λιτῶι.. *Samia* 377ff. Demeas contrasts Chrysis' earlier position and her current status, that she is about to lose (cf. *Sik.* fr. 3). Clothes show his generosity: she came to him in 'plain linen dress', now Demeas orders her to take all her belongings, he even adds some servants for good measure. But rich dress often symbolizes a vile courtesan with many suitors (cf. Ter. *Haut.* 247ff.). A truly noble character does not change, however, whether faced with good or bad fortune. Chrysis is such an example. Demeas' mention of her clothes however, seems to imply that with luxury she changed and even went so far as to seduce Moschion.

²² Those who fix their eyes on one thing only are the easiest to trick: *Asp.* 326f.

In an uncomplicated way it conceptualizes the aspect of ignorance and delusion that often motivates the plot and flatters the audience's superior knowledge.

The plays derive much of their dramatic potential from the irony of some characters not being able to read the picture properly. Characters are driven to their tether's end only because of an excellent and imaginative use of the stage that causes them to make misjudgments and mistakes, no matter how rational such errors may seem.

Clarity of vision, or lack of it, often start the play's complications, such as in *Aspis*. Smikrines asks directly whether Daos saw Kleostratos among the dead soldiers. ἐν δὲ τοῖς νεκροῖς / πεπτωκότ' εἶδες τοῦτον; (68f.). The problem is, Daos had a limited view (αὐτὸν μὲν σαφῶς / οὐκ ᾔην ἐπιγινῶναι, 69f.). He could only see his master's shield and naturally believed that the already decaying body beneath (with the face bloated beyond recognition) was Kleostratos. In *Perikeiromene* the visual mistake likewise begins the play.²³ Polemon's slave spotted Glykera and Moschion embracing in the doorway and he immediately reported to his master without trying to discover the truth.

Daos in *Dysk.* sees a young boy coming from the 'incriminating' space, Pan's shrine. Drunk revellers often rape free-born girls in the New Comedy world during a merry festival or party and Sostratos' coming out of the shrine looks too similar. He rushes to the girl, talks to her, then is seen sighing like a typical lover and repeating aloud his resolution to go and engage his slave in this business, hoping everything will be all right (213ff.). Daos' visual mistake (Sostratos does not intend to seduce the girl) will constitute the first complication in the love-theme of the play.²⁴

Talking about seeing

We must stop to discuss an obvious problem of reconstructing 'what' it is that the spectators actually saw.²⁵ The problem will turn out less troublesome than with genres where action may easily stray away from words and where reconstruction is therefore rather elusive.

The spectacle that is (for example) grandiose or incongruous may quite easily overshadow the only part of a play that has come down to us – the lines of text spoken by actors. Where stage action becomes too independent of the lines of preserved text – and we cannot *a priori* exclude this possibility for Menander's plays – our appreciation of the elusive *event* of a performance must be necessarily defective. We must be aware of this danger – more so because of the famous anecdote about Theodorus who apparently always appeared on stage first, not allowing anyone else to perform their parts before him (Arist. *Politics* 1336b). Aristotle laments that at present actors have greater influence on the stage than the poets (Rh. 1403b) and the underlying assumption is that gratuitous flattery of the spectators and unnecessary entertainment for the crowds sneaked in during performances. We also know of fourth-century trends to pep up tragic performances with unnecessarily lavish productions and perhaps corresponding acting styles.²⁶

However much we may wish to visualize the action, the actor's movements, gestures or voice, we are left with the often ambiguous words only. Still, I do not wish to sound sceptical because I believe that we need not exaggerate the role of the scenic 'theatricalities' (in the sense of mere embellishments separated from the action) in the

²³ In cases where it does not serve this plot function, the mistake is quickly over, as for instance in *Mis.* 617ff.

²⁴ The errors stemming from seeing and hearing are put to an effective use in *Samia*, see the discussion below, 96.

²⁵ Wiles (1991) 9ff. discusses the relationship of a text to performance.

²⁶ Cf. above, 4.

case of Menander. The play texts tell us a lot about his working methods and support the view that he was fond of dramatic economy, and that he uses only sparingly dramatic effects that do not move the plot further. It is therefore probable that his stagecraft was similar to his playwriting methods. In that case, most of what needed to be seen by the spectators was connected with the plot. And much information about stage movements was implied by the actor's words.²⁷ In his economical handling of the plot, he does not seem to me to have striven for a stage full of theatricalities without meaning in the overall dramatic plan. Rather, he seems to be putting greatest emphasis on using to the full the possibilities offered by the bare skeleton of the stage houses, variously motivated or accidental entrances and exits, and the characters' communication on stage. As such, I do not think we are groping in the dark when we try to elaborate on his stagecraft skills and working methods.

In general, it seems that Menandrian characters need to refer to the visual aspect of what is happening less frequently than Aristophanic heroes because it is much more part of their everyday experience.²⁸ However, there are problems with the reconstruction of the acting when we have very little to go by in the texts. Thus, to give a simple example of the relationship between text and stage, we cannot know precisely how the actor playing Smikrines' part in *Aspis* enacted at the beginning of the play the character's interest in the newly-arrived booty lying in front of him, and at the same time dissimulated his interest (89f.). Throughout the play he is constantly self-conscious and aware that others find him greedy (cf. 149, 433ff, indirectly at 394ff.). He may therefore take enough care not to reveal himself too obviously. On the other hand, subtleties during exposition cannot be easily understood and so would achieve nothing. In cases such as this, a modern director may apply his own vision and artistic preferences and the production need not suffer either way. It is then clear that elusive individual productions cannot be the goal of this analysis. We must do with what we have: the bare text.

In this particular case it does not help us much. Tyche describes Smikrines' behaviour only vaguely (ὁ γέρων δ' ὁ πάντ' ἀνακρίνων ἀρτίως..., 114) ἀνακρίνων is no more than a neutral allusion to Smikrines' role in the expository dialogue with Daos, closely interrogating Daos and enquiring about the details of Kleostratos' death.²⁹ Daos' reaction seems more revealing. He may be hinting at Smikrines' behaviour on stage when he suddenly remarks, as if in answer to Smikrines' prying into the boxes on stage:

ἰμάτι' ἔνεστ' ἐνταῦθα, χλαμύδες· τουτονὶ

²⁷ Cf. Arnott (2000) 114. But such information was less explicit than in Roman dramas: Bain (1977) 153 comments on the absence of 'stage-directional' phrases in Menander in comparison with Plautus and Terence, cf. also 135ff., 177ff.

²⁸ Mostly, the visual aspect is pointed at only indirectly. However, besides the examples mentioned already, cf. also *Dyskolos* 656ff. and 690, *Samia* 532ff. (though here Nikeratos refers to what he saw *inside* his house). We find, not surprisingly, most textual evidence for representations of the most extreme passions: crying, tearing one's hair and beating breasts (*Asp.* 227f., 344 about off-stage action; *Dysk.* 673ff., *Samia* 406ff., *Sik.* 219ff., 359f., *Epit.* 892ff.); for *mania* and its symptoms such as shouting and talking to oneself while walking at top speed, rash reactions for no obvious reason and out of the blue (prime examples being Knemon in *Dyskolos*, Demeas and Nikeratos in *Samia*). Fear and trembling are also common. Voice and gesticulation undoubtedly supported the portrayal of strong emotions. The Mytilene mosaics, if they represent acting styles of any period at all (for which see Csapo (1999)), show that raised and extended arms often accompanied astonishment and lively gesticulation is often vividly represented in them. Ghiron-Bistagne (1971-74) 247: 'i gesti delle braccia o della mano. ..erano molto importanti nell' arte gestuale, come nella vita quotidiana.' There is a steadily growing literature on acting: see esp. Handley (2002); Green (1997a,b; 2002); Csapo (1993); unrelated to Menander, but relevant for Latin New Comedy is Dodwell (2000) and Graf (1991).

²⁹ Cf. a similar context in *Georgos* 67.

τὸν ὄχλον ὀραῖς οἰκεῖον. (88f.)

But Smikrines immediately denies being interested:

οὐθέν μοι μέλει
τούτων· ἐκείνος ὥφελε ζῆν. (89f.)

This is all we have and it does not help us see just how humorously Smikrines' interest in the booty and a hurried denial of any interest whatsoever, were staged.³⁰ We should note, however, the very early mention of Smikrines' name from Daos' mouth (line 20) that must have prepared an audience familiar with the connotations of the name for a humorous exploitation of his ambiguous behaviour on stage. Because he is named so soon, the audience will not be disturbed by the character's ambiguous reactions. It seems that the name, conventional for the genre, will help explain the humour of Smikrines' remarks (e.g. at 33, 48, 62, 82ff) and his flustered denial of any interest in the booty. Without the awareness of the significances of the name, Smikrines' actions would have to be exaggerated in a modern production; in Menander's theatre they could have been subtler – the name itself, and some mildly phrased action and remarks would be enough for a well-attuned audience.

In stage terms, then, Menander can achieve surprisingly much with very few means thanks to an elaborate delineation of his plots and characters and, equally, thanks to the use of familiar material.

Another example is from *Dyskolos*: since Knemon was introduced and in a sustained manner presented as a misanthrope flying off the handle at the slightest provocation, the sacrificers who come on stage in Act III need not create an unnecessarily rich stage scene for Knemon to go completely mad at them.

The text is again an inadequate guide to what goes on on stage at that time. When Knemon, who is used to the full control of space around him, is driven onto the periphery of the stage by the busy and noisy sacrificers, this scene could have been acted out exploiting its fullest comic and scenic potential. Knemon is a hard-working *agroikos* who loathes leisure and crowds in his way. If the stage then becomes full of sacrificers ignoring him and going at their own pace about approaching Pan (with loud music), Knemon's outrage at being disturbed must have been good theatre. Whether it was played to the extreme, with the happy sacrificers molesting Knemon, or whether they just walked into the shrine, is difficult to say from the preserved text. On paper the scene is short. After the disappearance of the chorus Knemon comes on stage talking back to his maid servant:

KN. γραῦ, τὴν θύραν κλείσας' ἀνοιγε μηδενί,
ἕως ἂν ἔλθω δεῦρ' ἐγὼ πάλιν· σκότους
ἔσται δὲ τοῦτο παντελῶς, ὡς οἶομαι.
<ΜΗΤΗΡ> Πλαγγών, πορεύου θάπτον· ἤδη τεθυκέναι
ἡμᾶς ἔδει. KN. τουτὶ τὸ κακὸν τί βούλεται;
ὄχλος τις. ἄπαγ' ἐς κόρακας. (ΜΗ) αὖλει, Παρθενί,

³⁰ There is preserved a peculiar fragment 'Ελληνίς, οὐκ Ἰβηρίς' (fr. 2) referring to either some wares or women. Was it part of a now lost situation where Smikrines perhaps showed some interest in the captive girls (cf. *παιδίσκας*, 141)? I would not go so far as to claim that he was showing a lecherous interest in them after the fashion of the more explicit *senes libidinosi* found elsewhere. But surely, such a production would become ironical in the face of the later developments of the plot when Smikrines will try to lay his hands on the *παιδίσκη* promised to the much younger Chaireas.

Πανός· σιωπῇι, φασί, τούτωι τῶι θεῶι
οὐ δεῖ προσιέναι. (ΓΕ) νῆ Δί' ἀπεσώθητέ γε.
<KN>³¹ ὦ Ἡράκλεις, ἀηδίας. <ΓΕ> καθήμεθα
χρόνον τοσοῦτον περιμένοντες. (430ff.)

A director may focus this stage action around Pan's altar on stage (cf. οὗτος... ὁ Πάν 311) with the sacrificers' equipment cluttering the stage and standing in Knemon's way. No one pays attention to the old man; Getas' own irritation at the sacrificers' long-overdue arrival is a nice foil to Knemon's indignation. The scene is soon over, and more than the temporary chaos it brought about, it is ultimately Knemon's change of plans that holds our interest. The mere presence of the sacrificers made the old grouch stay at home and disrupt his schedule (and Sostratos' plans). All we may say about the scene is that Menander did not develop (into words) Knemon's collision with the sacrificers, and so they probably did not occupy the stage for a long time. That is, if we believe that all communication on stage was put into words.

The text does allow at least an intimation of the way Knemon's shock was acted out – he was at first turned to the house, giving orders to Simiche and so the shock of what he suddenly saw on stage must have been all the stronger and well exploited by the actor. It bears resemblance to Knemon's first appearance on stage, obviously a dramatic high point. He was absorbed in his monologue about people molesting him everywhere (delivered either in the spectators' direction or just for himself), then he suddenly turns towards his house and finds right before it yet another nuisance of a man!

Inszenierung and the plot

Menander's was a realistic mode of representation and this obviously influenced scenic arrangements. A well-wrought plot, economical, smooth, and plausible, imposes its own rules of stagecraft and *mimesis*. Thus, as already noted, irrelevant or uneconomical 'theatricalities', for instance, can hardly be representative of his theatre; rather, the visual aspect of his dramas will be tightly linked with the plot.

The limits of free will: movements in stage space

Stagecraft shows that characters' achievements depend on uncertain, accidental, sometimes humorously inconsequential action that almost makes them into puppets, who even in their most deliberate actions are strictly bound by their environment.

It is as if a given play was not in the hands of its characters, but some higher powers – playwright, Tyche, Agnoia, or a blind coincidence created by movement in a claustrophobically enclosed stage space. The audience are at the same time flattered with being provided more information than the characters, but they are also misled by false beginnings, when the accidental takes over.

It is one of the more ironic ways of developing the plot by letting a character start on some action (seemingly leading towards a desired resolution) and then suddenly place in his way unexpected obstacles or distractions. They are briefly discussed by Frost who is attuned to their dramatic importance.³²

³¹ In the Oxford text; much better to take it with Arnott as Getas' remark.

³² Frost (1988) 15: 'The visually impressive scene which results when a movement to depart is interrupted by some unexpected external intervention is used to grip the audience's attention and to introduce an important episode.' Of his examples (*ibid.*, note 102), *Dysk.* 181ff, 269ff., *Epit.* 364ff, *Sik.* 169 are relevant for my discussion.

One of the most obvious examples is found in *Dyskolos*. Sostratos plays an eager lover who attempts to win the girl he loves as soon as possible, preferably on this very day. After experiencing Knemon's outburst, he realizes he must rush and fetch his slave Getas who is sure to master the old man. But just when he starts on his journey, the object of his love comes out on stage and Sostratos stops distracted in his tracks:

τὸ μὲν χρόνον γὰρ ἐμποεῖν τῷ πράγματι
ἀποδοκιμάζω. πόλλ' ἐν ἡμέραι μίαι
γένοιτ' ἄν. ἀλλὰ τὴν θύραν πέπληχέ τις. (*Dysk.* 186ff.)

The girl who makes Sostratos act becomes ironically also a delaying technique that stops him from taking action and their meeting will eventually cause the play to move in an unexpected direction. There are some examples that escaped Frost's attention, or he did not enumerate them because they are less clear:

The first concerns the situation on stage at *Dis Exapaton* 29f. Handley (=Sandbach 18f.):

ἀλλ' ἤδη [με] δεῖ
χωρεῖν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνον [ἀλλ' ὁρῶ γὰρ] τ[ουτο]ν

The corrupt text can be read in two ways: either ἐκεῖνον (30) is to be taken as meaning Sostratos' father, or it may mean Sostratos' friend whom he is on the point of confronting (and who would probably clear himself and dispel all misunderstanding). However, Sostratos' father suddenly appears and Sostratos will part with the money he was originally planning to carry to his courtesan.³³ Under such a reading, the arrival of Sostratos' father was an all-complicating circumstance that will necessitate a completely new intrigue to win money from him.

Dyskolos 255f. is another interesting scene:

ΔΑ. μικρὸν δ' ἐπίσχε· οὐ μάτην γὰρ ἤκομεν,
ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἶπον ἔρχετ' ἀνακάμψας πάλιν.

What does ἐπίσχε refer to? Would the slave interrupt his master's lecture on Daos' duties towards the family's next of kin? Daos did not accost the boy when he saw him talk to Gorgias' half-sister and now Gorgias says how Daos should have acted. But in the middle of his lecture Sostratos himself appears on stage again, and so it may be that Daos just stops his master and points at Sostratos.

I find it more attractive to accept Kassel's conjecture for line 247 κόψωμε]ν. It goes well with Daos' terror expressed after the lacuna. Would Gorgias now be trying to knock on Knemon's door and call him out to talk about the protection due to Knemon's daughter? In that case, Daos would be relieved to see that Sostratos comes on stage in the nick of time and the dreaded knocking at Knemon's door would not be necessary. Daos' terror in such case could have been enacted, with the humorous relief when Sostratos is shown to appear.

Basing his conjecture on just one word]γαστυ[, in *Samia* 119, Arnott in his edition (Loeb, vol. iii, 37) guesses that 'Demeas would have delivered a short monologue, perhaps indicating at first an intention to visit town (cf. v. 119), but then changing his mind and exiting into his own house when he saw some tipsy revellers

³³ Cf. the discussion by Handley in his text (*POxy* 4407) on line 30, page 31.

approaching along one of the side entrances.’ It does not seem very plausible, though, that Demeas, just before his door when he returned home at long last, would deliberate going off to the city straight away.

The technique was common enough. Its pattern even featured in an exposition of facts preceding the opening of the play in *Georgos*:

[]ε ὁ μειρακίσκος ἐν ἀγρῶι διετέλει,
 ἔτυχέ τι] συμβεβηκὸς ὃ μ’ ἀπολώλεκε
 ἀπόδη]μον εἰς Κόρινθον ἐπὶ πρᾶξίν τινα·
 κατιῶν ὑ]πὸ νύκτα γινομένους ἑτέρους γάμους (4ff.)

This was not shown, but the narrative resembles the discussed pattern: the young man, intent on talking to the girl’s brother was prevented by his father’s sending him to Corinth first! On his return home his father was again quicker and the boy finds an unwanted wedding that will complicate his life.

Ironies of plot suggested by a stage image

A clever and unexpected use of stage space may give a sense that the direction of the plot can change almost arbitrarily. Such stage effects are primarily good fun, but I believe the sense of arbitrariness is deliberately created also to mock the genre’s own conventions, as if to present life in its variety seemingly without regard for the constrained genre that cannot do otherwise but move towards the predefined ending.

Sometimes one step in the wrong direction could threaten that the mistake would become cleared away prematurely, and the play may humorously laugh at its own cleverness of standing on the brink. If they are not just curiosities for a moderately attentive reader, such situations may prove that the plot was to be viewed not only as a one-time only linear development, but that as the spectator’s knowledge grows, he is asked to review the humour and irony of the previous situations. Examples of this dramatic cleverness are not difficult to find:

Sostratos’ indignation at his girlfriend’s imagined perfidy in *Dis Exapaton* is staged as hesitation about what he should do: he moves towards the *hetaira*’s house to meet her, but suddenly checks himself: ἐ[πὶ πάν]τα γ[ὰρ] εἰ, Σ]ώστρατε· / ἴσως σε πείσει (23 Handley) – he wonders if he should go to see her or not.³⁴ After some deliberation, he decides to hand the money he has brought to his father who appears on stage. (Whether the father came across a Sostratos already intent on handing over the money or whether he was still deliberating whether to go and see his friend is difficult to judge from the text, as I mentioned above.) The lover’s antics in front of a loved one’s door gain a high relevance for the plot, for they seem to mock the thin line between wrong judgment and truth that is not far removed. Inside the *hetaira*’s house Sostratos would have quickly found the proof that his friend was innocent and that the money would be better spent here than in his father’s house.³⁵

³⁴ Plautine Mnesilochus’ monologue (*Bacch.* 500ff.) lacks the subtlety of moving towards the *hetaira*’s door and stepping back. Instead of Sostratos’ *visual* hesitation Plautus offers his audience a Mnesilochus full of *verbal* hesitation and *παρὰ προσδοκίαν* jokes.

³⁵ For this technique, cf. also Ter. *Haut.* 160-7: Menedemus refuses to take part in the festive mood of the *Dionysia* (162) and refuses an invitation to Chremes’ house (where his son is, as we quickly learn from Clitipho: *apud nos est* 181f.). If he had entered the house, the play would have moved in a different direction. Cf. a similar paradigm in *Eunuchus* 534ff.: Chremes refuses to enter Thais’ house and wait there for her while she is away - in the meantime his sister is being raped. I am not saying that his entrance would have saved his sister but I draw attention to this feeling of ‘an occasion having been wasted’ that the audience get when their knowledge of the plot has advanced.

A stage image can be used in a subtler way to forward the plot. Again, with the impression that the scheme is chosen by accident, as a scene from *Aspis* will make obvious. Chairestratos, after a conversation with his brother, shows his utter helplessness and frustration because he cannot marry Chaireas to the *epikleros* girl. He wishes to die and collapses near the doorway. The exact staging is not clear, but he must have stumbled into his house while Chaireas speaks his monologue (284ff.).³⁶ Daos then calls him back on stage and Chairestratos must have come out supported by his attendants. He probably sat down (or was wheeled out on an ἐκκύκλημα³⁷). There is a vertically 'low' Chairestratos and visually 'higher' Daos and Chaireas. Elderly freeborn men on the comic stage usually do not plot. It is Daos who will think of an intrigue to fool Smikrines, and Chaireas will help him by suggesting that they engage his friend's help and dress him up. Chairestratos, however, should not be assumed to be one of the instigators of the scheme - especially if the scheme is to be directed against his brother. Menander gets around this moral dilemma with typical economy. At 305 Chairestratos laments Δᾶε παῖ, κακῶς ἔχω³⁸ as if to excuse himself for not being willing to come out of the house but Daos' exhortation not to leave his friends in a tight spot persuades him to come out. He vents his frustration but it is Daos who comes up with the initiative to set a scheme in motion. At 328f. Chairestratos is resigned to everything: τί οὖν λέγεις; ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅ τι βούλει ποεῖν / ἔτοιμός εἰμι. By being so resigned, he actually lets Daos be the main schemer without himself appearing morally reprehensible to the spectators. He lets Daos take the matter into his hands and the visual aspect of his position exonerates him. Ironically, it is precisely his position on stage that gives Daos an idea of what the scheme should be like. Talk of the corpse that will be brought out before the door (345f.) is clearly stimulated by Chairestratos' prostrate position there at that moment.³⁹ Chaireas, a young man standing above Chairestratos joins in actively developing their scheme: he suggests bringing in a friend of his and dressing him up to act as a false doctor (376ff.).

Variations and contrasts

The stage is a space where the most surprising coincidences occur. Characters' motivations and business on stage in general progress towards a resolution by leaps, and surprising events; or seemingly do not progress at all. I find Menander's creativity at its best not in individual scenes but in their combinations. Surprising episodes are followed by conventional stuff, monologues followed by running, a cook in high spirit is soon asked to leave the house without his pay... In short, the overall architecture uses very successfully variation as a texture that makes the play into a whole created of contrasts, mirror scenes, speed and passivity all placed side by side. The technique brings it about that long and relatively uneventful monologues shedding light on psychology do not oppress but instead are successfully balanced out by visually stimulating spectacle that frequently follows.⁴⁰ Similarly, serious sentiments may be portrayed but they are followed with comic relief impersonated by a cook.⁴¹

³⁶ See the discussion of the staging in Frost (1988) 28-31.

³⁷ So Jacques (1978).

³⁸ Cf. *Dyskolos* 54 where a young man in love (Chairestratos is neither) voices his frustration: σκώπτεις· ἐγὼ δέ, Χαιρέα, κακῶς ἔχω.

³⁹ Cf. Frost (1988) 30, Halliwell (1983) 32.

⁴⁰ Arnott (2000) 118.

⁴¹ Cf. Blundell (1980) 39, Handley (1970) 10f. With Sikon's entrance on stage with the sheep after Sostratos' departure with his mattock for toil, Handley compares two other cooks serving the purpose of comic relief: *Aspis* 216ff. and *Mis.* 270ff. See also Frost (1988) 106 on Samia 283, Dedoussi in *Entretiens* 16 (1970) 31.

Sudden changes of tempo offered the best opportunities for the actor's art to be seen in its variety: whether it be running, shouting, manic anger, fear and amazement, or rather passive resignation, illness, suicidal inclinations, drinking and feasting, waiting for something to happen, and so on. Wiles (1991) 194 claims that 'Comedy preserves an absolute distinction between the servile body and the free body, just as it preserves a distinction between the male body and the female, the young and the old.' This, I think, needs refining precisely in this context. Comedy is certainly aware of these categories, but the genre is also interested in exploring the comic potential of transgressions of the norms, and breaking the codes. A young lover is beset by fear, he crouches on stage, runs away, and so on.⁴² A gentleman like Demeas in *Samia* is driven to an *ekstasis* of his mind, erupting in a *mania*.⁴³ In the same play the slave Parmenon raises his voice when he earnestly encourages his cowardly master Moschion to fight for the girl,⁴⁴ Chrysis reprimands Parmenon for improper behaviour – but she, in turn, is a *pallake*, a woman who cannot become a full-fledged matron. And so, comedy does not destroy the categories Wiles speaks of, but for the sake of variation it does represent characters on stage in various stages of excitement, anger, fear, anguish that seem to blur some of the well-defined social categories of behaviour. The plays boast of portraying the unique situations that happen once in a life-time. The characters' situations are so extraordinary that we hear for instance of crying not only in the frequent cases of women (e.g. *Aspis* 227f., *Dysk.* 673ff., *Samia* 406) but mature men too find themselves in situations so extravagant and demanding that they are reduced to tears (e.g. Kichesias in *Sik.* 359f., or Stratophanes in the same play, 219ff.). Bitter life may lead to an outburst of melancholy and a collapse. There are recurring patterns relying on the vertical contrasts: a contrasting state of submission and passivity is forced on formerly active *personae* by describing them as lying: thus the soldier in *Perikeiromene* κλάει κατακλινείς (174) and Moschion (537ff.) is forced to wait (in vain) for his mother's call.⁴⁵

Movements and speed

Among the means at the dramatist's and actor's disposal in enlivening the performance and varying its tempo, movement is the one best preserved in the texts.

⁴² Young men and slaves are commonly represented thus; e.g. *Mis.* 667, *Pk.* 352ff., *Sam.* 65f., 515, 539.

⁴³ Nikeratos rushing on stage astonished by what he saw inside (532ff.) is clearly following the similar scenes where slaves rush out on stage and report on the shocking events inside the house (Karion in *Epit.* 609f.; Getas in *Mis.* 683ff.; Daos in *Aspis* 399ff.; similar in effect are the two extant running slaves: Pyrrhias in *Dyskolos* 81ff., and in *Sikyonios* 120ff.). Old men must have been represented as trying to run after these slaves who in their agitation did not register the old men's presence on stage (except for the *Aspis* example)..

⁴⁴ *Sam.* 69. Voice must have been an important instrument of an actor then as now. Despite the vast space of the theatre, the actor had to be able to impart individuality to the voices he was impersonating in monologues (cf. Quint. *Inst. Or.* 11.iii.91.), as for instance the actor who played Demeas had to do in his great monologue at the beginning of Act III, *Samia*, or Pyrrhias' monologue in *Dyskolos* (103ff.). *Misoumenos* places heavy requirements on the actors in this respect, see the examples collected by Arnott, Loeb vol. ii, 252. See also Arnott (2000) 115. Aristotle links the voice, the movements of the body and psyche, *de An.*, 420b. Wiles (1991) 220; Del Corno (1990); Rispoli (1996); Vetta (1993).

⁴⁵ Of course, we do not see either on stage in such a position of inactivity. The vocabulary used in both cases could have been however influenced by the staging of passive and immobile characters: there is of course Knemon in *Dyskolos* who is not his old dominant self when he is wheeled out after his fall down the well. His control of the space depends on his ability to keep standing. During the final harangue, he twice moans that there is no one who would help him stand up (914f.; 928f.).⁴⁵ Moreover, the audience may have been familiar with the staging of the opening scene of the famous *Orestes* by Euripides, or his *Hippolytus* or with Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and *Philoctetes*.⁴⁵ Herakles is brought on stage (972) on a litter and laid out to signify the end of a most heroic and active man who is only represented prostrate when the gods send sleep on him and when he is dying.

Movements on the New Comedy stage, as our texts inform us of them, e.g. running, pacing up and down, walking slowly due to old age or fear, or in a measured gentlemanly gait,⁴⁶ imply that an ancient actor was given as much expressiveness in his movements as we would expect from a modern actor - if not even more. Thomas rightly notes that for example the verb *περιπατεῖν* (or the noun *περίπατος*) is used far more frequently in comedy than in any other genre.⁴⁷

Menander uses the verb more frequently than Aristophanes. Its connotations range from light-hearted designation of ridiculous figures in (quasi-)philosophical discussions (e.g. *Mis.* 17) to descriptions of a state of agitation or frustration⁴⁸ – by far the most common meaning in New Comedy.

In *Dyskolos*, when Sostratos is presented to Knemon by Gorgias, one of the evaluative comments on his character goes as follows: οὐ τρυφῶν οὐδ' οἶος ἀργὸς περιπατεῖν τὴν ἡμέραν. 'He's not pampered, not the kind to saunter lazily all day' (755, Arnott's translation). The image of a well-off young man hanging around with nothing to do (and thus easily susceptible to amatory temptations), with plenty of time to come on stage or walk away as he pleases, is important for the good dramatic construction of some comedies.⁴⁹ The sentiment is eloquently put in *Phasma*:

ὅταν δ' ἀγρυπνεῖν εἴπηις, τί σο[ὶ] τὸ δυσχερές;
τὴν αἰτίαν γνώσει. περπατεῖς κ[ατ'] ἀγοράν.
εἰσῆλθες εὐθύς, ἂν κοπιάσῃς τ[ὰ] σκέλη.
μαλακῶς ἐλούσω. πάλιν ἀναστ[ὰς] περιπατεῖς
πρὸς ἡδονήν. ὕπνος αὐτὸς ὁ βί[ος] ἐστὶ σοι.
τὸ πέρας· κακὸν ἔχεις οὐδέν... (34ff., with Arnott's choices of supplements)

The young men are shown having plenty of free time on their hands: Sostratos comes on stage for no particular reason at *Dysk.* 543f. – just to see the girl he loves. Similarly Moschion in *Samia*, well situated thanks to Demeas who adopted him, has plenty of time for lazy sauntering – this will keep him effectively away from the stage during the most dramatic reversal of the domestic situation. He comes back home only in Act Four:

οὐ μὴ δύημι ποθ' ἥλιος. τί δεῖ λέγειν;
ἐπιλέλησθ' ἢ νύξ ἐαυτῆς. ὦ μακρὰς δείλῃς. τρίτον

⁴⁶ Arnott (1996) 445f. with parallels for pacing up and down; for measured gait, see *ibid.* p. 741. Quintilian finds a correlation between status and bodily comportment in Roman drama: 'in fabulis iuvenum, senum, militum, matronarum gravior ingressus est, servi, ancillulae, parasiti, piscatores citatius moventur' Quint., *Inst. Or.* 11.iii.112. Cf. Dodwell's discussion, (2000) 28ff. Again, I repeat that we know of many exceptions, apart from young men running away, we find agitated *matronae* (e.g. Myrrhine in *Georgos* 84f.), slaves acting with authority and dignity (Daos in *Aspis*).

⁴⁷ Thomas (1979) 182. Instances where it described actual behaviour on stage are listed in Thomas (1979) 183, n.19.

⁴⁸ Ar. *Lys.* 709, *Georg.* 85, even *Pk.* 299. It is slaves, young men in love or women who are shown walking up and down the stage in such an agitated state. Mature free men in distress avoid such behaviour: Chairestratos in *Aspis* is on the verge of collapsing from extreme melancholy (299ff. point to his collapse), and Demeas in *Samia* despite utter distress does not walk about the stage at the beginning of Act III. He tries hard to remain calm (see esp. 262ff.) and cannot force himself to believe that Moschion could be the father of Chrysis' baby. His movements show that he does not *want* to become angry (οὐκ ἀγανακτῶν οὐδέπω 271).

⁴⁹ Note also Sostratos' words at *Dysk.* 266. In contrast, in *Epit.* 229 two slaves who should be working are told off by a *senex* for traipsing around presenting cases. Smikrines, the old man, must be surprised by the inappropriateness of slaves doing something typical of leisured freeborn men.

λούσοιμ' ἐλθών· τί γὰρ ἔχοιμ' ἂν ἄλλο ποιεῖν; (428ff.)

If it were not for Nikeratos, who tells him about the expulsion of Chrysis, he would probably turn on his heels and go back downtown to idle away some more time. The verb *περιπατεῖν* is not used, but the sense of 'idleness' is expressed and idle coming and going becomes dramatically effective.

Walking on stage may in itself become humorous, as Thomas notices in connection with *Samia* 587ff.: 'the effect [of the action represented by the verb *περιπατεῖν*] is ... similar to that achieved with the device of the *servus currens*.'⁵⁰ At that place in the play Demeas suggests to his neighbour to 'walk a little with him' so that he may tactfully break to him important news about Moschion and Nikeratos' daughter. Demeas is teasing Nikeratos in a good-natured way while walking around on stage with his neighbour, using a sophisticated mythical parallel to make himself clear. The myth of Danae is humorous and its light touch is fully complemented by what the spectators *see* for themselves on stage.⁵¹ With a less good-natured attitude, an image of such pacing seems to be used of fooling someone or 'leading him up the garden path'.⁵²

It is interesting to note that walking on stage seemed to possess a greater comic potential than running in Menander's comedy. Of course, we frequently hear of running but it is predominantly a signal for fetching someone whose absence from stage is strongly felt, or a promise to return quickly. Sometimes, it probably did not matter whether verbs such as *τρέχω* or *ἀποτρέχω* really signified any running at all.⁵³ Instances where running on stage would have at least a short-term comic effect are few.⁵⁴

Movements on stage obviously add much to balancing or varying a play's rhythm. Quick movements may be intentionally followed by slowing down, or *vice versa*. Thus, near the end of Act I of *Aspis*, 'an air of positive activity is created which forms a marked contrast with the air of gloom and hopelessness earlier in the scene.'⁵⁵ The commotion may appear farcical, as Frost again comments on *Perikeiromene* 310: 'The swift sequence of exits and entrances interlaced with Moschion's self-confident monologues, together with the audience's certainty of his imminent disillusionment, combine to produce a scene bordering on farce.'⁵⁶ It will be noted that the commotion was nicely contrasted with Daos' slow and fearful entrance on stage immediately afterwards (τί τοῦτο, παῖ; / ὥς ὀκνηρῶς μοι προσέρχει, Δᾶε, 316f.).

The changes in tempo are best appreciated in a complete play: I do that in the next section, where I discuss *Dyskolos*.

Tempo and temperament in Menander's *Dyskolos*

I have tried to hint at the stagecraft tools that make Menander's plays dramatically interesting. Though they may make many scenes gripping on their own, still, as said,

⁵⁰ Thomas (1979) 183

⁵¹ *Mis.* 697, and *Pk.* 180 are also cases of one character forcing another to walk around the stage with him.

⁵² Cf. *Pk.* 346, *περιπατεῖν ποεῖς με περίπατον πολύν τινα*.

⁵³ I suspect no running should be assumed e.g. at *Asp.* 217, *Mis.* 519, *Samia* 38, 464, perhaps 393.

⁵⁴ In *Asp.* 410 Daos pretends to be highly agitated during the charade, Smikrines is reduced to running (or walking) after him; Pyrrhias, the *servus currens* in *Dyskolos* is forced to run by an unusual brute, Knemon (81ff., cf. also 465, 585). In *Samia* 569, Demeas, puffing and panting as he is struggling with Nikeratos, shouts at Chrysis to run inside his house where Nikeratos cannot get her. In *Pk.* 1004 Sudhaus' supplement ἐ[φυγ]εν would make Polemon, on hearing that Glykera is coming out with her father, inexplicably flee from the stage whereby creating a light touch at the end of the drama. Conventional are orders to slow slaves to start moving, e.g. οὐ δραμεῖ; *Samia* 202.

⁵⁵ Frost (1988) 31.

⁵⁶ Frost (1988) 92.

Menander is most successful and memorable in the way he joins individual scenes into a cohesive whole. Now is the time to look at a complete play and develop some of the observations made above.

Dyskolos presents itself as a good play for such an examination. One reason is that it contains both the strand of character comedy in Knemon and a typical love plot.⁵⁷ As will be seen, such a combination is bound to depart from a usual course and to offer surprising developments. Knemon is an obvious obstacle for a love plot: as a strong-willed individual seeking isolation he is utterly unsuited for the New Comedy stage that depends so much on communication, meetings, and sociability. His *persona* – independent, busy, and almost ‘antitheatrical’ – raises questions about the nature of the genre and about the stage as the focus of the New Comedy plotting.

The old misanthrope wishes to avoid everyone and be left alone. He is averse to being greeted or greeting others (even Pan is only grudgingly acknowledged: 11f.), to being talked to or even watched. He will be constantly brought on stage against his will: when Pyrrhias paints his picture, we hear of a man busily working on his land from early morning (100f). It is only because of Pyrrhias’ ‘meddling’ that the old man comes on stage at all. Knemon’s very first words make clear his feelings:

εἴτ’ οὐ μακάριος ἦν ὁ Περσεὺς κατὰ δύο
τρόπους ἐκείνος, ὅτι πετηνὸς ἐγένετο
κούδενι συνήντα τῶν βαδιζόντων χαμαί,
εἴθ’ ὅτι τοιοῦτο κτῆμ’ ἐκέκτηθ’ ὦι λίθους
ἅπαντας ἐπόει τοὺς ἐνοχλοῦντας; ὅπερ ἐμοὶ
νυνὶ γένοιτ’ οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀφθονώτερον
λιθίνων γένοιτ’ <ἂν> ἀνδριάντων πανταχοῦ (153ff)

He appropriately wishes for the ultimate apotropaic symbol, Gorgon’s head. The head may conceptualize a theatrical experience⁵⁸ but in Knemon’s hands it would turn all vexatious men, even mere onlookers into stones. Magical shoes would conveniently help him avoid crossing paths with others.⁵⁹ Both communication and meeting are essential for New Comedy stagecraft. Thus when Gorgias offers to introduce the theme of marriage to Knemon, he suggests waiting for him in the fields and raising the topic with him when Knemon reaches his farm (352f, 358f). This is the common way of dealing with all social tasks in New Comedy, but Knemon would have none of this: from his first entrance we know that he would not enjoy others meeting him and talking to him.

It is impossible to launch an intrigue if Knemon aspires to total control over the space that surrounds him. Because of such an ‘antitheatrical’ nature, Knemon’s role in forwarding his daughter’s marriage cannot be essential to the plot. Indeed, he is

⁵⁷ The combination of these two threads is not aesthetically as problematic as Schäfer (1965) 75ff. would have it. See Brown (1992) 8ff, and Anderson (1970) 199.

⁵⁸ Pausanias gives evidence that somewhat later the Gorgon’s face was placed on the walls near the theatre, cf. 1.21.3, 5.12.4, 2.20.7.

⁵⁹ Would the audience see the *visual* humour of Knemon talking about the magical shoes, while he is standing near the Nymphs? A rather recondite version of Perseus’ myth has it that Perseus received his shoes from the Nymphs and then he flew to the Gorgons for Medusa’s head: cf. Pherekydes (*Schol. Apoll. Rhod.* 1515, ed. Wendel (1935) 320) and Apollod. *Bibl.* II. 4.2.2. It is difficult to appreciate how Gorgons that featured in drama helped to propagate the myth. N.B. Kratinos’ *Seriphioi* and Heniochos’ *Gorgones* are comedies that must have dealt with the theme of Gorgons, alongside a number of tragedies touching upon the theme such as Aeschylus’ satyr drama *Phorkides*; *Andromeda* by Euripides, Phrynichus, Sophocles, and Lykophron, Aristias’ *Perseus*, or Euripides’ *Diktys*.

completely outside the love plot until the very end when he involuntarily joins the celebratory party in Pan's shrine. This means that Menander must concentrate on other characters to achieve that. Not surprisingly then, the number of dramatic characters present in the play is above average, and they are the only way of having Knemon's misanthropy constantly recycled throughout the play. His difficult character cannot be easily brought on stage for a long period of time, and he does not fit in well into the area (*δύσκολος πρὸς ἅπαντας, οὐ χαίρων τ' ὄχλῳ* 7) and so the easiest way is for him to affect as many characters as possible:

First, it is Pyrrhias, Sostratos' slave, fleeing Knemon's frenzied attack. After running for three kilometres he stops on stage, only to warn of Knemon's manic behaviour and prepare for his entrance. The old man's looming arrival is enough to scare both Pyrrhias and Chaireas off the stage.⁶⁰ Even Sostratos, eager to meet the girl's father, is not as undaunted in Knemon's face as his youthful infatuation would want him to be.

Secondly, Knemon's hurried return home caused commotion in the house – inept Simiche dropped in the well their only bucket; and as luck would have it, Knemon asked the women to heat some water. This brings on stage Knemon's daughter, distressed at Simiche's likely fate in his hands. Simiche herself appears on stage later (574ff) because Knemon is bawling and looking for her everywhere. She comes on stage fearing for her life (*τί πείσομαι*; 576).

Thirdly, the very presence of the other stage house is symbolic of Knemon's difficult character: there live his ex-wife (17ff), her son Gorgias (724ff), and the family slave Daos (247ff). Knemon's misanthropy drove away his wife, who now leads a poverty-stricken life. They must support themselves through everyday work, with Knemon showing no interest in them. Knemon's extravagant misanthropy will become apparent with just about every other person that appears before him – the procession of Pan worshippers is reviled; Sikon and Getas who dare to knock on his door are rudely driven away.

And lastly, it is his misanthropy that makes it difficult for his daughter to get married since no one would suit Knemon.

Alongside his misanthropy, that keeps him away from the stage, and that prevents him from behaving like a typical New Comedy father, there is another equally important factor that allows Knemon at least to appear on stage from time to time: in shaping his movements, and defining the tempo of the whole play, the concept of hard work and its opposition to leisure is constantly a factor alluded to. Knemon does not wish to meet anyone, and self-imposed drudgery is the only way he can be alone;⁶¹ he appears on stage only when moving between his farm and his house. He spends all day working hard. Gorgias' household is also busy although, unlike Knemon, his family is relatively poor and in their case work is the only way of fighting poverty. The young man has learnt to live without leisure and pleasure.

Because the inhabitants of both the stage houses are hardworking and busy, they are sensitive to intrusion – they would not want to bother others, but do not wish to be distracted from work by others either.⁶² The shrine in between the two houses however carries with it connotations that create significant tensions. It is a place of leisurely

⁶⁰ Frost (1988) 43 well notes 'the omission of a clear exit-line is not frequent in Menander and here the effect is of a hasty retreat as Knemon approaches, a comic turn of events following Chaireas' confident self-eulogy (57bff.).'

⁶¹ As fr. 1 Arnott (if that paraphrase is relevant at all) would seem to imply that: *αὐτὸς ἐμαυτῷ πόνους προσετίθην*.

⁶² That explains the prominence of the term *ὄχλος* and its cognates (7, 8, 157, 166, 199, 232, 374, 405, 432, 458, 491, 693, 750, cf. 747 and Handley's note on 211).

celebrations, of intrusion into the busy, ‘weekday’ atmosphere of the farmers’ village who must view with suspicion urban sacrificial parties carrying with them lavish provisions. Love is only possible on full stomach⁶³, and feasting in the shrine is reserved for those who can afford to spend time on it. In a well-turned phrase, ‘the poor have *sophrosunê* thrust upon them.’⁶⁴ The farmers have no time or means for amatory pursuits, they are not given to pleasure,⁶⁵ in short, they are not *makarioi*.⁶⁶ Menander, by moving the famous shrine of Pan and setting it between two farmers’ houses, clearly intended to bring out the contrasts between such opposed concepts. As early as line 4, γεωργεῖν is juxtaposed to ἱερὸν ἐπιφανές πάνυ in the first intimation of the importance of the coexistence of the two concepts and their typical New Comedy associations.

Indeed, introducing the theme of work as early as Pan’s economical exposition is a highly unusual hint at the prominence of work in this play:

ὁ γέρων δ’ ἔχων τὴν θυγατέρ’ αὐτὸς ζῇι μόνος
καὶ γραῦν θεράπειναν, ξυλοφορῶν σκάπτων τ’, αἰεὶ
πονῶν, ἀπὸ τούτων ἀρξάμενος τῶν γειτόνων
καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς μέχρι Χολαργέων κάτω
μισῶν ἐφεξῆς πάντας. (30ff)

Knemon’s busy schedule will give the play a certain rhythm, a motivation for more than just his exits and entrances. Menander shows an understandable preference for a key theme that would span across the play as a whole. Such a sustained theme is often connected with stage business and the playwright consequently achieves plausible motivation for the characters’ movements on and off the stage. Here, keywords of work and leisure appear to serve such a purpose.

Even though Menander put the theme as early as the prologue, he will not present Knemon in a positive light yet just because he is leading a life of a hard-working farmer – talk of hard work is sandwiched between examples of his extreme misanthropy, and as a result his farming life will hardly induce a shred of sympathy for him.⁶⁷

Work motivates entrances and exits of the characters, even Gorgias’ suggested strategy to tackle Knemon later in the play will be based on the knowledge of Knemon’s daily routine. Because of work, Knemon can be conveniently kept out of sight for long stretches of time, dividing his time between work on his farm and inside the house.

Into such a busy setting arrives all of a sudden Sostratos, a young rich boy with as much leisure as he wants. He was hunting nearby and accidentally (43) reached this place. The boy is not individualized – the hunting expedition makes him, if anything, into a conventional prototype of rich youths. It is as if the boy was chosen accidentally, only because he happened to find himself on the spot.

⁶³ Sentiment voiced in a fragment variously attributed to *Misoumenos* (fr. 12 Arnott) or *Heros* (fr. 10).

⁶⁴ Rosivach (1991) 196.

⁶⁵ Cf. Aristotle’s generalizing comments on the insensitivity to pleasure that attaches to comic *agroikoi*: (οἷους οἱ κωμωδοδιδάσκαλοι παράγουσιν ἀγροίκους): οἱ οὐδὲ τὰ μέτρια καὶ τὰ ἀναγκαῖα πλησιάζουσι τοῖς ἡδέσιν *EE* 1230b19-20.

⁶⁶ The word is used in New Comedy to describe the bliss of winning a beloved girl (*Asp.* 294, *Dysk.* 389, *Mis.* 661, *Sik.* 381, 400) but also to describe the rich (*Cith.* fr. 1.6). Love in comedy is reserved for rich boys. Youths not well off cannot run after girls, but they may be granted an arranged marriage in the end – Gorgias’ situation in *Dyskolos*.

⁶⁷ However, Knemon’s hardworking character will be used as a redeeming trait when it is dramatically needed, cf. Handley (1965) 238 on 603ff.

The first time we see Sostratos he enters stage right with his friend/parasite Chaireas. He arrives on the stage that features two houses flanking a shrine.⁶⁸ Not all three buildings on stage are given the same degree of prominence – Pan’s shrine in the middle, and Knemon’s house on the side, are dramatically more significant throughout than Gorgias’ house.⁶⁹ It is quite probable that Knemon’s house is on the other end of the stage and Sostratos and Chaireas are slowly moving towards it, talking, pointing at Pan’s shrine where the boy spotted Knemon’s daughter. This makes for a more effective show when Pyrrhias comes rushing across the whole stage space. Sostratos does not show any interest in the house on the spectators’ right (as I will be taking it), where Gorgias lives. And he does not acknowledge Pan’s presence either, although he mentions the nymphs. The god is distant for him, and the nymphs are mentioned as a mere topographical marker to explain where he spotted the girl that he immediately fell in love with (51).⁷⁰ Just as here, so throughout, Sostratos will be blind to everyone around him when thinking of or looking at the girl.

The plot moves in such a way that, before Knemon is confronted with the boy’s wish to marry the girl, Sostratos will incur the help of both Gorgias from the house on the right and from Pan from stage centre. He will have to deal with both spaces before Knemon is made to even consider his daughter’s marriage. Sostratos is always intent on meeting the old man and asking him for his daughter’s hand – but for that purpose will have to tour the whole neighbourhood and the offstage farm discarding his urban habits. And even that is not enough: he is intent on meeting up the old man and talking to him, but whether by accident or Pan’s working, he will be constantly kept away from a meaningful conversation with Knemon until the old man is reduced to a passive position on sickbed (and even then, the two do not speak directly).

Echoing Pan’s preceding words, the young lover confesses to his friend Chaireas that he spotted the girl here, and has madly fallen in love at first sight. This sets from the start the tone for his zealous, intuitive behaviour:

XAI. ἐρῶν ἀπῆλθες εὐθύς; ΣΩ. εὐθύς. [XAI] ὥς ταχύ.(52).

⁶⁸ A shrine in addition to the two houses is a typical feature of a number of plays, eg. Plaut. *Aulularia*, *Curculio*, *Rudens*. Williams (1962) 214ff. postulated a shrine of Lykos as part of the setting of the comedy to which Antinoopolis Pap. 55 (fr. adesp. 1096 K-A) belongs. It is now generally assumed that a shrine was not represented on stage in Men. *Phasma*, as Webster and Kahil believed (cf. Turner in *Entretiens*, p. 37 against Kahil with more references). Men. *Hiereia* may have had a shrine of Kybele on stage (so Webster (1974) 150). Mette attempted a list giving the number of the houses/doors on stage in individual plays (1965) 23-35 and (1971-72) 27.

⁶⁹ Ghiron-Bistagne (1971-74) 238 talks about asymmetry typical of Old Comedy: ‘Lo scenario tragico segue quasi sempre una disposizione simmetrica... Invece parecchie rappresentazioni comiche ci hanno dato l’impressione d’una asimmetria, impressione confermata dai testi: nelle *Nuvole* per esempio lo scenario rappresenta due case, l’una normale, quella di Stresiadē, una piccola, quella di Socrate.’ Such asymmetry could have featured in New Comedy settings. Arnott (2000) 116 (on *Samia* 104f.) expects differentiation between Demeas’ social status and Nikeratos’ portrayed in visual terms on their first arrival home: ‘In this play Demeas is portrayed as rich, Nikeratos as comparatively poor. We should accordingly expect Demeas to have several slaves and a lot of baggage, Nikeratos little baggage and fewer slaves – perhaps only one.’ He adopts this into his stage note in the Loeb text (vol. III, p. 33). Could Knemon’s self-imposed life of hard-work, and Gorgias’ poverty be contrasted in visual terms in the façades of their respective houses?

⁷⁰ I do not think he is presented as a chip off the old block, ‘der wahre Sohn seiner bigotten Mutter,’ as suggested by Stoessl (1960) 29 n. 74.

He fell in love at first sight. εὐθύς, by its proximity to ἀπῆλθες, gives an impression of Sostratos' hurried exit from the scene in search of the means to win the girl. Such a hurried exit aimed at moving forward one's intrigue or wish, is found in many plays.⁷¹

From his first entrance onwards, Sostratos is intent on actively moving the play towards his goal, thus fulfilling, it seems, the mighty god's plan in every respect. After the slow-paced prologue speech, it is well to have an energetic character on stage, ready to work hard to win the girl within this day. He will try to use the services of everyone he can to win the girl with utmost speed.⁷² He is bringing with him Chaireas whom he considers a friend, and a practical person too:

ΣΩ. διόπερ ἤκω παραλαβὼν
σὲ πρὸς τὸ πρᾶγμα, καὶ φίλον καὶ πρακτικὸν
κρίνας μάλιστα. (55ff.)

But Chaireas is not as quick to act as Sostratos wanted: he suggests a rational, cool-headed approach as the best option if Sostratos really means to marry the girl. Sostratos, he points out, does not know anything about the girl's character or her family:

γάμον λέγει τις καὶ κόρην ἐλευθέραν·
ἕτερος τίς εἰμ' ἐνταῦθα· πυνθάνομαι γένος,
βίον, τρόπους...(64ff.)

This, though merely self-promotional boasting, is in wonderful contrast to Sostratos' rashness. It of course resembles Menander's technique in other plays – in *Samia*, Demeas has decided to get on with the wedding for his son on the same day he returned home, only to be faced with what he sees as a slow and cool reception.⁷³ Indeed, as Chaireas' words make us stop and realize, the situation is unusual: Sostratos is trying to win a free-born girl, with the only motivation being his acute passion.⁷⁴ Apart from the Panic spell there is nothing of the typical comic emergencies that would require speedy action. The girl is not pregnant or threatened to be abducted by a soldier, or married off to someone else. She is well guarded and so potential rivals do not come near her (cf. 205f.). She is not promised to anyone, nor is an unwelcome wedding waiting for Sostratos at home. Thus, only Pan's spell, and nothing else causes Sostratos to act. Menander is playing with his audience's expectations: Sostratos is portrayed from the start as the man enacting Pan's plan and speeding towards a resolution. In fact, however, Sostratos' fervent activities both on and off stage will be totally ineffectual. The infatuation gives the play a desirable sense of excited flurry that runs against

⁷¹ Smikrines rushes off to the *agora* in *Aspis* 213 (cf. Frost ad loc); Chaireas in the same play will be sent to employ the services of a friend so that their intrigue may feature a false doctor: ταχὺ μὲν οὖν (379), Daos calls after him. *Dysk.* 215ff. and 225ff. are similar.

⁷² Handley (1965) 141 on 57ff.

⁷³ Cf. Arnott (2000) 117 on the role of Parmenon and Nikeratos in building contrast with Demeas' speedy action: 'Demeas is... presented in this scene as demanding rapid action (193, 196, 201f.) with the brusqueness of a drill-sergeant. Here, however, Parmenon and Nikeratos are comically presented as lethargic rather than brisk. Thus before he leaves for market, the slave needs to go back inside first for money and a basket (cf. v. 297), and even when he comes out again he requires further prompting from Demeas before setting out (202). Nikeratos by contrast feels compelled to consult his wife (196-98, 203-205) before he can follow Parmenon to market. These two delaying tactics contrast amusingly with Demeas' insistence on haste.' Just as in *Dyskolos*, the haste will cause many of the plot complications.

⁷⁴ Konstan (1995) 93: 'it is rarely the case that a maiden girl known to be a citizen, and thus eligible for a legitimate marriage is represented as the object of passionate desire.' But see Brown (1993) 189.

Knemon and makes the old man look humorous in the process. Menander has in Sostratos a man trying to penetrate to the very heart of Knemon's house, and it is his action that brings it about that Knemon's interesting personality is brought out into the open for all to see.

In Old and Middle Comedy a single character trait such as Knemon's could carry the play through a series of individual scenes portraying various social situations. In Menander, it is only a love theme that can make the best of the type in a sustained way within a cohesive plot. Knemon has against him a youth blinded by love who keeps trying always new ways of approaching the old man, even if, by his own admission, he cannot easily make out what is the best course of action: ἀλλ' οὐ ράιδιον / <ἐ>ρῶντα συνιδεῖν ἐστὶ τί ποτε συμφέρει (76f.).

It is probably the popularity of character comedy usually associated with pre-Menandrian period that is responsible for the structure of the play. In order to derive humour from Knemon's behaviour we do not see a typical 'pregnancy' motif that becomes more prominent in the genre with time. Here, if Sostratos was represented as a ravisher, the playwright would have to do without Sostratos' blind courage that moves the plot ahead, and Sostratos would change from an ineffectual but eager boy to one whose guilt and shame would make him hesitant to stand up against Knemon.

As it is now, he has nothing to worry about and even Pyrrhias' comic appearance next on stage does not shake his resolution. Pyrrhias interrupts the youths' conversation with a hurried entrance on stage, enhancing even more the tempo of the play. He also brings vivid colour to Pan's brief description of Knemon in the prologue. Pyrrhias is yet another person to suggest that Sostratos should give up. While Chaireas did it in a phlegmatic way, Pyrrhias brings with him the typical humour of a *servus currens*⁷⁵ - he is out of breath, he even got injured on the way as he was running from brutal and dangerous Knemon.⁷⁶ They should both run away as far as possible from Knemon's door (87ff., 123). For the polished Sostratos it is preposterous that Knemon could have possibly behaved in such a way without a good reason. He clearly believes a decent conversation with him is possible and so Pyrrhias' warning will not scare him. Leaving would be cowardice, he affirms (δειλίαν λέγεις 123). His resoluteness is humorous for it seems to be the only driving force for advancing the plot - and so if those around him manage to convince Sostratos to calm down there would be little left to advance the plot any further. When Chaireas too suggests weighing the proper timing (εὐκαιρία 129) and advises to postpone seeing Knemon until he cools down, there is nothing unreasonable about it. Indeed, Knemon could be perhaps less irate when he cools down and more open to hearing out Sostratos. In his present state, it makes no sense to face him. Even if Chaireas speaks from blatant cowardice, what he says makes sense:

ἀλλ' ἔωθεν αὐριον
ἐγὼ πρόσκειμ' αὐτῷ μόνος, τὴν οἰκίαν
ἐπείπερ οἶδα. νῦν δ' ἀπελθὼν οἴκαδε
καὶ σὺ διάτριβε· τοῦτο δ' ἔξει κατὰ τρόπον (131ff.)

⁷⁵ Frost (1988) 42 and Anderson (1970) on the type. Cf. also Csapo (1993) for iconographical evidence.

⁷⁶ Agile Knemon chased Pyrrhias for fifteen stades in steep countryside: this somewhat resembles Pan himself, who πολλάκι δ' ἀργινόεντα διέδραμεν οὐρεα μακρά, / πολλάκι δ' ἐν κνημοῖσι διήλασε θήρας ἐναίρων / ὅξέα δερκόμενος (h. Pan 12-4). Knemon does not slay his victim, 'only' throws earth, stones and pears at him. It is difficult to say how this echo was appreciated and, in fact, whether it was deliberate at all. If it was, then Pyrrhias too may be seen under the special influence of this god, the patron of runners: cf. Borgeaud (1988) 134f.

For the spectator his words reiterate the fact that apart from Sostratos' infatuation there is nothing that is logically moving the play towards meeting Knemon on this day, when the old man has already reached an extreme of anger and cannot be expected to be easily handled.

Knemon's arrival has been marvellously prepared by all the preceding action and with it the tempo culminates.⁷⁷ When Sostratos spots him, he must admit his fear (151f) at seeing a resolute, mad-looking old man, talking to himself. I would not be surprised if Knemon still held an odd wild pear or a stone in his hand that he kept throwing at fleeing Pyrrhias (119f.).

The old man's opposition to the working rules of New Comedy stems from his protective attitude towards his property and the space around it. He is too absorbed in himself to notice some familiar comic constellations as this scene shows⁷⁸:

When Sostratos spots Knemon, to all appearances a madman, he does not leave, but only withdraws a bit.⁷⁹ Clearly, Sostratos moves to the background but it is not possible to decide just where exactly. Does he really move to Knemon's door as Frost sees it?⁸⁰ Or does he 'take refuge at the back of the stage, as far as possible from the door of Knemon's house'?⁸¹ When Knemon spots yet another intruder on his property, he remarks, 'here is another one of them, standing by our door' (167f.), but he may be exaggerating⁸² and Sostratos could be standing nearer the shrine as he would hardly wish to be standing in his way. Yet, his presence near the house is ironic, as inside there lives a young marriageable girl. Knemon does not recognize the danger typically portrayed in New Comedy – a young lover standing in front of a young woman's door, all the more dangerous for the proximity of the shrine symbolizing licentiousness, perhaps also drunken extravagance. He is too absorbed in what he sees as injustice towards himself. He does not see Sostratos as a rich young man about town, but only as a stranger trespassing on his space.

Knemon turns on its head the stage convention that accompanies those who withdraw upon a newcomer's arrival. Out of necessity, they must remain unnoticed and take advantage of all information they may gain from the newcomer. They must watch events on stage unobserved until they decide to come forward and address those at the centre of the stage or leave and consider hatching their intrigue.⁸³ Such a withdrawal is then a mark of control over stage space. Sostratos, however, has no such control because of Knemon's overdeveloped sensitivity to intrusion.⁸⁴ Knemon spots him straight away:

οἷμοι, πάλιν τις οὕτοσὶ πρὸς ταῖς θύραις
ἔστηκεν ἡμῶν. (167ff)

⁷⁷ The technique of creating such suspense appears in earlier tragedy – cf. Seale (1982) 31, Taplin (1977) 297.

⁷⁸ Cf. also comments above, p. 44.

⁷⁹ Frost (1988) 36, with note 7 (on *Georgos* 35) gives examples of similar 'entrance announcements followed by withdrawal to eavesdrop', cf. also Fraenkel (1962) 22f.

⁸⁰ Frost (1988) 44

⁸¹ Arnott in his Loeb edition, 205.

⁸² As his use of the word ὄχλος is exaggerated: examples adduced by Frost (1988) 50f. on 456.

⁸³ Plaut. *Casina* 434ff. is an obvious example. *Georgos* 35 is a bit different, as Daos spots Myrrhine, but I imagine that when he gives orders to Syros to take things inside and adds that they are all for the wedding, Myrrhine could have shown some consternation that drew Daos' attention.

⁸⁴ Sostratos will, however, follow the typical pattern and he will act upon the facts he learns while standing at the back. He acts upon the knowledge he gained – if we mean by that Knemon's almost intractable misanthropy – and when he is left alone on stage, he considers the best course of defeating Knemon by engaging Getas' services.

And from Sostratos' reaction (*ἄρα τυπτήσῃ γέ με*; 168) it is clear that Knemon is enraged. The old man is clearly unusual in voicing his anger at someone who is standing in the background. He will not allow others to make conventional use of the stage space – if that means standing near his door!

Knemon's character therefore threatens to bring many surprising developments into the plot simply because of his opposition to how other characters would like to move the plot.

With Knemon's disappearance in the house the tempo slows down. Sostratos realizes that he was naïve if he believed he could talk to Knemon (145ff). Their 'meeting' is a failure and it seems that Sostratos' strategy of just having a civilized conversation with Knemon cannot win the old man. He discards this approach and decides to use the services of the only man capable of dealing with Knemon. He characterises his slave Getas in terms that make us expect a scheming slave:

οὐ τοῦ τυχόντος, ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, πόνου
τουτὶ τὸ πρᾶγμά <γ> ἀλλὰ συντονωτέρου.
πρόδηλόν ἐστιν. ἄρ' ἐγὼ πορεύσομαι
ἐπὶ τὸν Γέταν τὸν τοῦ πατρός; νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς
ἔγωγ' ἔχει <τι> διάπυρον καὶ πραγμάτων
ἔμπειρός ἐστιν παντοδαπῶν· τὸ δύσκολον
τὸ τοῦδ' ἐκείνος < > ἀπώσεται, οἶδ' ἐγώ.
τὸ μὲν χρόνον γὰρ ἐμποεῖν τῷ πράγματι
ἀποδοκιμάζω. πόλλ' ἐν ἡμέραις μίαι
γένονται ἄν (179ff.)⁸⁵

Now that he has found a way, he returns to his fast-paced tempo and wishes to act quickly, hoping that much could be done within this day (*ἐν ἡμέραις μίαι* 187) and that at least the third man's services will help him. Just now that he has drawn attention to the limits of comic time and wishes to run after Getas he is unexpectedly slowed down again: he is about to leave the stage in search of Getas, when the door of Knemon's stage house opens and the girl who is an object of his love comes out on stage. Sostratos stops and in the girl's presence he temporarily forgets about everything else.

The girl is in a hurry⁸⁶ to get water from the spring in the *Nymphaeum*. With her, we are immediately brought down to the atmosphere of a busy 'weekday'. The girl's appearance, and in fact all entrances on stage from Knemon's house until his fatal fall into the well, are motivated by Knemon's *mania* for constant hard work. If Sostratos spotted the girl crowning the nymphs (before the beginning of the dramatic time), still within the play the atmosphere surrounding Knemon's house is constantly that of routine work. Knemon ordered her to heat water but their bungling nurse had just dropped in the well their (presumably the only one) bucket. The girl's motivation for the well-timed

⁸⁵ Aristotle would disagree: when generalizing about the *physis* of individual nations he describes Northerners (Getas' name implies such an origin) thus: τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ψυχροῖς τόποις ἔθνη καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Εὐρώπην θυμοῦ μὲν ἐστὶ πλήρη, διανοίας δὲ ἐνδεέστερα καὶ τέχνης (*Pol.* 1327b23ff). Of course the philosopher is speaking in general terms, as he tries to link political organization with temperament and Hippocratic teaching (to the overall advantage of the Greeks). Yet, Getas will be truer to this picture than to what Sostratos makes us believe: he will not make an impression for any intrigue against Knemon, but rather for brutal force with which he domesticates him at the end of the play. Cf. Wiles (1991) 169ff for a discussion of an aggressive streak in a Getas' character.

⁸⁶ παίων ἐκείνην. οὐ σχολή ματ[196. Frost (1988) 44 with n.11, remarks that 'the choice of the verb πλήσσειν is probably intended to suggest a hasty entrance.'

entry is indeed humorously extravagant: as the spectators cannot suspect that the nurse's bad day will become a recurring motif that will feature prominently later, they must take the words at face value as a trivial digression. As long as it concerns work, any reason – however inconsequential – is plausible and seems to be fine and the spectators may leave it at that laughing at the unpredictable obstruction and the petty motivation behind it. Sostratos takes advantage of the opportunity and offers to go into the shrine and draw water for the girl.

He enters the shrine with her jug, commenting innocently in a conventional form:

ὦ πολυτίμητοι θεοί,
τίς ἂν ἐμὲ σώσαι δ[αιμό]νων; (202f)

By his own admission, he is beyond salvation. The idiom may be heard in ordinary speech⁸⁷ but in Sostratos' case common words become ironic in their visual significance. He enters the sphere of Pan without realizing the god's power over him. He does not see the god's significance until he finds an opportune feast being given by his mother inside the shrine. He rushes out of the shrine to be quickly near the girl again. The girl makes him blind to Daos' appearance on stage as he comes out of Gorgias' house.⁸⁸

The rather arbitrary entrance of Gorgias' slave is also conveniently motivated by his working routine: he was helping with the house chores long enough (διατρίβω σοι διακονῶν πάλαι 206); now is the time to go and help Gorgias in the fields. Menander prepares a plausible motivation for Daos' entrance, though it is not without its surprises because of its *eukairia*, and because of a certain sense of arbitrariness pointedly mentioned by Daos.

A strange sight unfolds before the slave: from the shrine, a symbol of leisure, and licentiousness, comes a young man and freely accosts a girl who is meanwhile ashamedly retreating to her doorway. He hears the youth, who thinks he is alone on stage, comforting himself (ἔσται κατὰ τρόπον 215) before he runs off for help. It is no wonder that Daos mistakes him for a typical youth who hangs about the house of a young girl and waits for a chance to address her. Thus in a different play:

ἀπὸ ταῦτομάτου δ' ὀφθεῖσ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ θρασυτέρου
ὥσπερ προείρηκ' ὄντος ἐπιμελῶς τ' αἰὲ
φοιτῶντος ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν, ἔτυχ' ἐσπέρας
πέμπουσά ποι θεράπαιναν, ὥς δ' ἐπὶ ταῖς θύραις
αὐτὴν γενομένην εἶδεν, εὐθὺ προσδραμὼν
ἐφίλει, περιέβαλλ'... (Pk. 151ff).

If Sostratos did not *have to* hurry things up this day, here Daos is presented with an emergency that must be tackled and the play thus for the first time gains its speed from the internal complication: the girl must be guarded against the young man clearly bent on corrupting her.⁸⁹ A new thread thus unfolds before the act break.⁹⁰ To show his

⁸⁷ *Adesp.* 1147.38 K-A (*Fab. Inc.* 8.38 Arnott).

⁸⁸ Cf. Frost (1988) 45, 46.

⁸⁹ Cf. Handley's (1965) note on οὗτος προσερρῦη (225).

⁹⁰ Handley (1970) 11 'the pattern of introducing a new development towards the end of an act is a recurrent one in Menander and naturally enough the development is sought by the arrival of a character new to the play or at least to the preceding sequence.' Webster (1974) 75 'The rest of the first act carries the story on to a convenient break and generally ends with a scene pointing across the break.'

epimeleia, Daos decides to act quickly and tell the news to his master – and the audience are led to believe that this complication is going to go against Pan's *epimeleia* (cf. 38):

ἔρμαιον. οὐ μὲν ἀλλὰ <τ>ἀδελφῶι γε δεῖ
αὐτῆς φράσαι με τὴν ταχίστην ταῦθ', ἵνα
ἐν ἐπιμελείαι τῆς κόρης γενώμεθα. (226ff.)

After the choral break, Daos and Gorgias come immediately back from the farm situated nearby. Their just indignation seems to be going to give the play a new direction – will Knemon be confronted about his lack of protection for the girl? Should they succeed in warning Knemon, Getas' role would become even more indispensable. Gorgias seems willing to face fierce Knemon and give him a lesson about guarding the girl's safety. His slave, standing by, is less brave as they move towards Knemon's door (247ff). To his relief, and our surprise, Sostratos is back on stage before they can knock. Sostratos arrives alone, and the reason why Getas is not with him seems just as contrived as that given by the girl on her entrance on stage: his mother needs Getas to help with the preparations for her all-too-customary touring of local shrines. Not only is Getas away from the stage, but he could not even be found when a New Comedy lover needed his services! This is not only humorously anticlimactic but also tongue-in-cheek about the scheming slaves of comedy and their readiness to help their young masters. They side with young lovers, against their 'real' old masters. Mothers often side with their sons too, or are initiated into their sons' love affair. Here neither Sostratos' mother nor the slave seem to have time for Sostratos. It seems that no one can help him on this particular day. Left to his own devices, Sostratos has no other option but the doomed course of action – undaunted, he rushes on stage ready to knock at Knemon's door. His speed and self-assurance must deepen Daos' suspicions that his intentions are all bad. Before Sostratos can knock on Knemon's door, he is politely addressed by Gorgias, the young man whom he has not even registered until now.⁹¹ Gorgias reproaches Sostratos in terms that associate work / leisure with social status:

οὐ δίκαιόν ἐστι γούν
τὴν σὴν σχολὴν τοῖς ἀσχολουμένοις κακὸν
ἡμῖν γενέσθαι. (293ff)

Not only does this warn Sostratos against acting like a typical rich youth who has nothing better to do than seek to corrupt girls, but he also indirectly stresses the very inappropriateness of Sostratos' leisured presence in this place. Everyone from Knemon, his daughter and slave, to Gorgias and Daos, even to Sostratos' mother and the household slave, are busy. Sostratos' leisure is out of place, and as it inconveniences everyone else it cannot aspire to achieve anything on this day. It seems that Sostratos is the only one interested in the traditional working of a New Comedy plot. And while Gorgias is aware of social barriers and constantly raises this issue, Sostratos, as a typical New Comedy lover, is idealistic and blind to such nuances. Gorgias' long moralizing speech (271ff.) is effective: Sostratos, hopeful that much can be done within one day

⁹¹ Wiles (1991) 175 very well remarks on the contrast between the two young men and their unusual place in the play: 'Broad lips, a snub nose, and the dark colouring of one who works in the fields are cited by Pollux as signs of the boor. A mask of this kind makes a natural foil for a city youth with sensitive features and a taste for sexual pleasures. A contrast to this pattern is developed in *Old Cantankerous*, where, despite upbringing, the boor turns out to have a certain moral sensitivity, while the city youth proves able to respect the chastity of an unchaperoned virgin.'

must now stop to listen to a sermon on how leisure of rich men causes an injury to the less well-off. Gorgias is quickly appeased, however, when he hears that Sostratos is not planning to meet the girl but to talk directly to her father (305f.). He sympathizes with the young lover but has no illusions about Knemon and considers the matter doomed to failure (322ff.). Nonetheless, he himself, Gorgias says, would like to see the girl married (354, the text is corrupt here) and he may at least try to consult the matter with Knemon who farms the land next to Gorgias. Of course, Knemon would not even look at a rich young man such as Sostratos, standing idly around (σὲ δ' [ἄγοντ' ἄν] ἴδῃ / σχολὴν τρυφῶντά τ', οὐδ' ὁρῶν γ' ἀνέξεται, 356f., cf. 364).

This leads naturally to a dressing-up ruse⁹² whereby Sostratos will pose as a farmer. Daos quickly offers his own *dikella* to Sostratos, hoping that hard work will break the young man and will cause him to stop coming back here again (371ff). Gorgias and Daos, interrupted in their work, will return to it and Knemon too will soon be on his way to his land, possibly with his daughter as well. If Sostratos works alongside Gorgias, he may be taken for a fellow farmer and Knemon may be persuaded to look at him (356f, 363ff). The 'intrigue' is plausibly based on the routine of work that the villagers follow.

When Gorgias mentions that Knemon (and probably his daughter too) will appear on their way to his farm soon, Sostratos quickly agrees to join Gorgias and Daos, ἔτοιμος πάντα πειθαρχεῖν (370). Sostratos' infatuation with the girl grows as he becomes acutely aware of the purity of her upbringing in isolation from corrupting influences (381ff). But the heavy *dikella* brings him from romantic thoughts back to reality.

ἀλλ' ἡ δίκηλλ' ἄγει τάλαντα τέτταρα
αὕτη· προαπολεῖ μ'. οὐ μαλακιστέον δ' ὅμως,
ἐπεὶ περ ἡργμαὶ καταπονέειν τὸ πρᾶγμ' ἄπαξ. (390ff.)

Sostratos leaves to work with Gorgias and there is not a single character with his hands free. How can such a play move forward? And more importantly, if Knemon does go out of the house and starts for his land, is his conversation with Gorgias and Sostratos – so well planned that it promises some good fun – only going to be reported?

We may expect now Knemon's door to open but before we may ponder too far about all this, we register a surprising entrance on stage of a cook from the side entrance. This is a completely unexpected turn of events, and the cook's companion will cause adequate surprise: it is none other than Getas, earlier unavailable to Sostratos. Getas the would-be schemer cuts a sorry figure, burdened with sacrificial utensils. Sostratos' hardships of love represented by the four-talent *dikella* are contrasted with the pathetic hardships of a slave who has to carry a load fit for four donkeys.⁹³ Getas looks pathetic, but his presence cannot be gratuitous and we may wonder if he, not Sostratos and Gorgias who are detained offstage, is to tackle Knemon and pacify him. This seems plausible as we learn immediately that it is Pan's working that Getas is on stage at all: Sostratos' mother dreamt that her son was chained by Pan and ordered to dig the neighbour's land in full farming outfit (414ff).

It is not clear how the sacrificers will fit into the plot but the dream that Sostratos' mother had and that motivated their arrival must be seen as sent by Pan and thus they are surely a part of Pan's plan. The second act ends on a note of optimism and expectations. After the choral break the expected party of sacrificers appears on stage. Almost simultaneously, Knemon comes out of his house planning to go to the fields at last. We

⁹² Cf. Handley (1965) ad 370.

⁹³ Cf. Handley (1965) ad 390.

believe we see the god finally moving things as they should – Knemon is brought out of the house and the road to the resolution seems better visible. But when he comes out ready to leave for the farm, the noisy crowd of women filing onto stage to the piper's accompaniment, and hurrying into the shrine becomes too much for him.⁹⁴ Knemon's shock at suddenly spotting the party on stage must have been great theatre.

This coincidence is enhanced by the open acknowledgment that the worshippers are coming late.⁹⁵ Ironically, they have come to pray for sparing Sostratos from maltreatment but through their bad timing Knemon will never show up on his farm. The noisy presence of Pan-worshippers makes Knemon suddenly turn on his heels and head for his house instead of going out to the farm where Sostratos has been waiting. They distract him from his work (*ποιοῦσίν γε με / ἄργόν* 442f.), the old man claims. Though we may have had doubts about the effectiveness of the not fully thought-out intrigue on the farm, far from the spectators' eyes, still this decision of Knemon's makes the plot move even further away from the wedding-resolution. In fact, Sostratos and Gorgias have become so far removed from Knemon, that it seems the whole day will pass with nothing happening. Knemon's turning on his heels is an excellent surprise. His decision brings it about that he retreats to the place where no one can reach him. Given his hard-working nature, the chances seem to be that we shall not be seeing him much, perhaps not the whole day!

At this point Pan's worshippers seem to have unwittingly bungled the chances of the resolution, and made Sostratos work on the land all the longer for that. When the flamboyant party enters the shrine, no further action seems imaginable: Sostratos, Gorgias, and Daos are away, working and waiting for Knemon who will never come; the party inside the shrine is busy with the preparations for a sacrifice inside. Only completely unexpected action can salvage such a play from an impasse and bring the plot developments back on the right track.

And yet we see no obvious solution coming: out of the shrine comes Getas, angry at Sikon for having arrived without a suitable pot (*τὸ λεβήτιον*, 456). There is nothing they can do but bother the neighbours. The two farcical door-knocking scenes that follow do not move the plot in any way. They humorously show the impossibility of having Knemon come on stage of his own free will. As late in the play as this, Knemon will vigorously frustrate all attempts at approaching him. The slaves' frustration with Knemon, and with Phyle, moves us smoothly to the next scene where Sostratos returns slowly on stage, tired after working for hours. Even if the link between the previous scene and his entrance is smooth (520f. is picked up by Sostratos at 522) the motivation

⁹⁴ On the composition of the party, see Handley (1965) 208f. Frost (1988) 49 on the suddenness of the appearance of the sacrificers: 'The group is unannounced, which contributes to the surprise effect as they burst suddenly on to the stage bringing noise and bustle: their arrival startles Knemon whose attention is directed away from the stage back into the house as he issues instructions to Simiche.' he adds (p. 50) that Getas' arrival from the shrine 'adds a further element of bustle to the scene.'

⁹⁵ Is ὦ Ἡράκλεις, ἀηδίας (435) spoken by Getas (Arnott), Sikon (ed. pr., Handley (1965)), or Knemon (Sandbach)? No attribution is without its attractions but the choice of Knemon is probably least effective. In his mouth the words would break into the sacrificers' conversation but he is perhaps rather to be imagined overwhelmed by their number and lets them hold the centre stage for a visually interesting scene, himself being pushed to the background. A more active stage presence would probably require stronger words. Only when the party leaves the stage does Knemon start complaining about being interrupted (442ff.). It is difficult to decide between Getas and Sikon. Sikon's presence would add to the number of people on stage (cf. Handley (1965) 207) but an impatient Getas seems a more probable speaker addressing members of Sostratos' family (rather than Sikon who does not know these people and would not comment on their late arrival). Anyway we take it, the effect is humorous because nobody pays attention to Knemon who loses his control over the stage space – it is no longer seen as 'the space in front of his house', but as the space belonging to Pan's shrine.

for Sostratos' entrance is not. He describes how strenuously he had to work and yet Knemon and the girl were nowhere to be seen. There was nothing to do but continue with the same strategy on the next day. Sostratos stopped working and despite his tiredness, he comes back on stage again, just to be near the girl:

ἦκω δ' ἐνθάδε,
διὰ τί μὲν οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν μὰ τοὺς θεούς,
ἔλκ]ει δέ μ' αὐτόματον τὸ πρᾶγμ' εἰς τὸν τόπον (543ff.)

His arrival back on stage shows Sostratos exhausted and out of ideas, yet hopeful that perhaps something would accidentally happen of its own. He seems resigned and for the first time will drift without direction. This is his perhaps least motivated entrance on stage in the play but not without its psychological plausibility and humour: he cannot stay calm and wants to be near the girl. He resembles a distraught lover aimlessly wandering about.⁹⁶ While with Knemon, Gorgias, and Daos, even with Getas and the sacrificial party, the motivation for exits and entrances is secured by their daily routine work or sacrificial duties, Sostratos is an outsider whose movements on stage, far from his home, are only motivated by his infatuation. Until now his love made him actively seek ways of approaching Knemon; now that his only option is procrastination, a real threat of non-action begins to be felt. It is at this stage that Pan's presence becomes felt: suddenly there comes Getas out of the shrine and is spotted by Sostratos. From now on, Sostratos conveniently appropriates part of the stage space without having to run off. His relatives, even the 'scheming slave' Getas, have temporarily made the shrine their *oikos*. On the one hand, it fixes Sostratos in the neighbourhood for the rest of the play, but on the other, it seems to rule out a quiet conversation with Knemon who was already shown averse to their noise and sacrifice habits. Moreover, the young man seizes upon this excellent opportunity and decides to invite Gorgias for the feast, thus giving up attempts to approach Knemon this day. The feast threatens to stop the plot from reaching a resolution and to postpone it until the next day.

The sacrifice that Sostratos' mother started as a way of averting a bad omen of seeing hardworking Sostratos, turns into a sincere pledge of friendship that breaks the social barriers and enhances the motif of reciprocal friendship, pushing the boy's concern about the girl into the background. He believes that if he invites Gorgias and Daos, they will become even more supportive of his cause later. Getas, on whom Sostratos originally counted, is not asked to consider how to overcome Knemon in the meantime; for the duration of the party the old man's house will ironically seem to be forgotten. Getas not only shows little understanding of the situation but the man who was to be the arch-intriguer almost endangers the resolution: he does not want to have Sostratos' friends join the party as Sostratos suggests, although it is their presence there and not on the farm that will be essential for the plot during Knemon's rescue operation. For Gorgias will be seen taking Sostratos along with him when he darts into Knemon's house and saves the old man from death by drowning. If the two young men were to be somewhere else at that time, Sostratos would lose the best chance to come so near Knemon.

The space of the shrine is important not only as a temporary *oikos* for Sostratos' family, but also as a symbol of Sostratos' sincere friendship with Gorgias. In terms of dramatic structure, the invitation to the sacrifice is of utmost importance in the play that

⁹⁶ Very much a cliché of Hellenistic poetry, see Clausen (1994) 308 with examples and further references.

concentrated so much on the symbols of work and leisure and the associated concepts of injustice done to the poor, or the goodwill done by the rich.

For the first time Sostratos notices Pan in whose space he hopes to promote his own cause, the marriage. He addressses the god's altar and does not forget to mention that he always greets the god⁹⁷ even though in reality he was constantly blind to the god's presence. Just as the young man relied on Pyrrhias, Chaireas, Getas, and Gorgias, he now wishes to enlist Pan in his team as well. He prays at the altar and rushes off to invite Gorgias to the sacrificial feast. In the meantime Simiche rushes on stage in distress (574). Knemon's household is still busy with work, and because Simiche's lament concerns a hardly serious mishap, it looks as if the only dramatic potential of this was to remind us that Knemon is busy and that he will probably have no time today to stop and come anywhere near Sostratos. The reason for Simiche's presence on stage is her fear of Knemon: for when she tried to retrieve from the well the bucket that she had dropped, she inadvertently lost there their only mattock as well. As luck would have it, Knemon just wanted to shift some dung (there is no talk of lunch in his household). Knemon comes on stage only to force Simiche back, and much humour is derived from his playing cat and mouse with Sostratos again. This fact is visually emphasized, with Sostratos rushing off just before Knemon's appearance, and coming back soon after Knemon disappears again and will not come out for a very long time. When Sostratos returns, Getas is amazed by what he sees: when he was told that Sostratos would bring with him his friends, he could not have expected that the young master meant local farmers:

ἄγων μεθ' αὐτοῦ τοὺς ἐπικλήτους· ἐργάται
ἐκ τοῦ τόπου τινές εἰσιν. ὃ τῆς ἀτοπίας.
οὗτος τί τούτους δεῦρ' ἄγει νῦν; ἢ πόθεν
γεγονὼς συνήθης; (608ff.)

How could a rich urban boy out hunting meet the busy local farmers and even become friends with them? Getas is puzzled and kept out of the love-thread of the play, not able to rise to the role for which Sostratos had wanted him earlier.

There was much lively action on stage in this act with two door-knocking scenes (456ff.), and yet we are still kept in the dark about what to expect of the play – in one stage house there is Gorgias' mother and Daos alone, in another festivities under progress, and in Knemon's isolated house the inhabitants are best imagined as going on with their hard work. It seems as if the stage space and the plot collapsed into segments with characters living their lives without interest in what goes on next door.

Just after lunch libations are offered – no doubt to Pan of the shrine – before starting the drinking part of the sacrificial feast.⁹⁸ During the libations (as we learn later) Simiche comes out of Knemon's house again (620). Her distraught figure leads us to expect another of the minor domestic misfortunes and it therefore comes as a total surprise that the misfortune is for a change of a serious kind and concerns Knemon who slipped and fell in the well in his courtyard. The serious mishap is relieved by the stage presence of the cook, incensed that Simiche's constant lamenting does not let those in the shrine enjoy themselves and proceed with the libation:

Ἡράκλεις ἄναξ,

⁹⁷ I accept (with Arnott, Sandbach) the papyrus reading that has the present tense here. Others (Barigazzi, Winnington-Ingram, Handley) change it to the future tense.

⁹⁸ On the careful timing of the feast, see especially Lowe (1987) and Arnott (1979).

ἑάσαθ' ἡμᾶς πρὸς θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων
 σπονδὰς ποῆσαι. λοιδορεῖσθε, τύπτετε·
 οἰμῶζετ' ὡς τῆς οἰκίας τῆς ἐκτόπου. 621ff.

The details of Knemon's fall become obvious in Simiche's conversation with Sikon who listens with much satisfaction at this divine retribution, as he sees it, for his earlier maltreatment in Knemon's hands at the old man's door. He does not intend to help Knemon out. Simiche calls out Gorgias' name (ὦ Γοργία, ποῦ γῆς ποτ' εἶ; 635) and is perhaps surprised to see him come instantly out of the shrine, the space that Gorgias rarely visits. Together with Sostratos he hurries into Knemon's house.

The play has taken a surprising turn and it finally puts in perspective all previous exits to and entrances from Knemon's house – especially those that looked contrived: the entrances of Simiche and Knemon's daughter. A totally inaccessible old grouch who could not and would not change his ways no matter who forced him, could only learn a lesson once he has become incapacitated for work. Only now can he realize the folly of trying to depend on himself alone. This lesson could not have been taught to him by anyone else and Menander had to devise a complex web of coincidences that would force him, in the safety of his house and routine work, to become a victim of an extraordinary event.⁹⁹ On retrospection, it is not an instance of a god striking him down in one blow, but a combination of all trivial incidents that met Knemon from the early morning, beginning with Sostratos' slave Pyrrhias who made him return prematurely home and work in the house. Sostratos' efforts from sending Pyrrhias on his mission onwards, effectively caused Knemon to stay at home – and this for a long time looked like a hopeless failure on Sostratos' part, something that nobody could do anything about. The feasting in the shrine only enhanced the sense of failure, giving an air that for today all labour has given way to a meal to celebrate a new friendship. Work motivated all Knemon's movements in stage space and it was his desire not to stop working that eventually taught him the hard way the problematic nature of his lifestyle.

Just when Sostratos and Gorgias gave up on Knemon and postponed meeting him until the next day, the circumstances have allowed them to meet Knemon face to face, but not only that: they have gained an advantage and may count on Knemon's gratitude for saving his life. Sostratos would naturally jump at such an opportunity to meet Knemon at last.

Or so one would think. Menander again surprises his spectators: Sostratos rushes on stage elated and compliments the gods, singling out Demeter and Asklepios by name, on this sudden turn of events:

ἄνδρες, μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα, μὰ τὸν Ἀσκληπιόν,
 μὰ τοὺς θεούς, οὐπόποτ' ἐν τῷμῳ βίῳ
 εὐκαιρότερον ἄνθρωπον ἀποπεπνιγμένον
 ἑώρακα μικροῦ (666ff.)

An oath by these gods is perfectly appropriate under the circumstances.¹⁰⁰ However, notable for his absence in the list is Pan whose hand in this Sostratos fails to see. Moreover, even though Sostratos praises all the gods for this excellent timing, he begins to describe how he stood by the girl and – paid very little attention to Knemon's

⁹⁹ Using the means very close to Pan and the Nymphs: on the ironies of old Knemon becoming an 'involuntary nympholept' cf. Lonsdale (1993) 270f.

¹⁰⁰ Lonsdale (1993) 322f., note 50 notices the similarity between Knemon and the Demeter/Kore myth.

rescue because of that! So far, Sostratos acted from his own initiative, eagerly and in vain. When Pan gives him a chance to do something with real consequences, he almost spoils the offered chance (678ff.). About three times, he says (683), he dropped the rope, sending Knemon back to the bottom of the well – all because he had a chance to look at the object of his love. And now, instead of taking advantage of the opportunity and coming forward to meet Knemon who is unaware of the young man's part in the rescue, he rushes out of the house to tell the audience of his infatuation with the girl. If he had stayed inside, he would have problems restraining himself from kissing her (686f.). Ironically, Pan has put him under such a strong spell that in the loved girl's presence he seems to be forgetting about Knemon, losing yet another chance to arrest the old man's attention.

He needs to cool down a little to realize that. He seems to want to go back inside the house¹⁰¹ but is prevented from entering the house because at that very instant the door opens and Knemon is wheeled out. During Knemon's *apologia pro vita sua*, Sostratos is standing in the background. If it were not for Gorgias who introduced Sostratos to Knemon as his rescuer and a diligent farmer, Knemon would not even bother to look at him. In a truly ironical turn of events, now that Knemon is easily approachable at last, he is, strictly speaking, no longer significant for the love plot. He delegates all authority to Gorgias who naturally does not oppose Sostratos marrying Knemon's daughter. This is one final piece of irony in relation to previous events: Sostratos' delightfully ineffectual activity made him try to approach Knemon a number of times, all in vain. No matter how ineffectual Sostratos was, Gorgias was impressed by his earnest efforts:

οὐ πεπλασμένωι γὰρ ἦθει πρὸς τὸ πρᾶγμ' ἐλήλυθας,
 ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς, καὶ πάντα ποιεῖν ἡξίωσας τοῦ γάμου
 ἔνεκα, τρυφερὸς ὣν δίκηλλαν ἔλαβες, ἔσκαψας, πονεῖν
 ἠθέλησας. ἐν δὲ τούτῳ τῷ μέρει μάλιστ' ἀνὴρ
 δείκνυτ', ἐξισοῦν ἑαυτὸν ὅστις ὑπομένει τινὶ
 εὐπορῶν πένητι· καὶ γὰρ μεταβολὴν οὗτος τύχ[ης]
 ἐγκρατῶς οἶσει. δέδωκας πείραν ἱκανὴν τοῦ τρόπου.
 διαμένοις μόνον τοιοῦτος (764ff)

Thus despite appearances, Sostratos' efforts did, after all, make his pleasant character known to Gorgias and win him the girl.

Knemon's lack of interest in his daughter's bridegroom (752) only confirms that his character is a bit out of place in the love plots of New Comedy. There follows a formulaic gesture of friendship and Gorgias is offered the hand of Sostratos' sister. And yet, these formulaic and expected scenes only make the contrast with Knemon's aloof attitude to New Comedy resolutions all the more obvious. When Sostratos hears that Knemon would not wish to join the party, he knows there is no fighting the old man and nothing can be done (870). Knemon's character precludes a tidy resolution and in this too he stands outside the conventions of the genre. At best, he can be shown on stage as being physically overcome and forced to go by the social norms. But it is obvious that a New Comedy resolution, whereby the bride's and the groom's families become united under the same roof and hold a feast, is too painful for him. There is nothing to do but to bring farcical punishment on him by Getas and Sikon, two typical representatives of the comic genre. Through them New Comedy asserts its victory over an antidramatic old

¹⁰¹ If that is what παρασκευάζομαι δῆ (689) implies.

misanthrope. With all provisions already in the shrine, Knemon himself is the last heavy burden on Getas' shoulders, carried into the shrine for an all-night feast of victory.

Excursus: Feasts and the irony of non-action

Dyskolos ends on a festive note. Knemon is forced to join others in Pan's shrine and celebrate the coming weddings. In fact nearly all comedies end with a promise of a feast of some sort that may serve as a symbol of the resolution: feasting may celebrate an engagement, an arrival of a long-absent relative, or for instance freedom to enjoy at last one's favourite *hetaira's* favours. A feast is thus in some ways a symbol that helps us to conceptualize and visualize the resolution as a goal towards which the plays move. At feasts all worries are overcome, there is no urgent business to take care of, and all join in a holiday mood of companionship. It is a respite from hard work, a victory after all comic *pragmata*.¹⁰²

However, as important as this is for the resolution, there are dramatically more important uses to which feasts may be put within the plays. The plays may already start with some feast embedded in the plot that do not seem connected with the resolution or may even go against it: a man in love may hold a party to drown his melancholy and forget his problems, Sostratos' mother in *Dyskolos* holds a sacrificial party that seems irrelevant to Sostratos, long absent family members may be treated to a welcome-home dinner, or, as in *Georgos*, an unwanted wedding is being prepared inside the house, and so on. Such feasting may become an ironical pointer to the comic resolution and not infrequently feasts that started with a different purpose conveniently turn into the celebration of the comic resolution: *Dyskolos* being a good example of this.

The ever-popular figure of a cook with his knife and boasting, a sheep unwillingly trudging towards a butcher's knife, wine and other provisions all create obvious visual entertainment. They also vary the tempo of action on stage – everyday routine gives way to festive commotion, or it may slow down the solution to the domestic problems when those who are most concerned decide instead of facing problems on escapist drinking with friends. Clearly, then, festivities inserted into the plots may play a special role in relation to the dramatic problem: as the case of *Dyskolos* showed, a character's decision to put off until the next day his efforts to confront Knemon and win his daughter, often teasingly suggests that instead of a steady flow of dramatic events, 'non-action' is about to be given precedence.

There are various reasons for the great role of feasting in the dramaturgy also because a playwright may find them convenient in bringing together characters that could otherwise hardly come together on stage and stay around until they are needed. One thinks of such cases as the feast at the courtesan's house in *Dis Exapaton* where it would have been difficult and uneconomical to create other means of keeping near each other all the characters that must interact. At the courtesan's house, Moschos and Sostratos, two young men, can meet their courtesans, the feast is an opportunity for Lydos, Moschos' tutor, to go in and then cause great misunderstanding when he describes what he saw inside to Sostratos standing in front of the door. There is no need

¹⁰² On feasts, see Arnott (1996) 86ff., ad Alexis fr. 15. '[E]ating and drinking are so firmly fixed in the tradition of Greek comedy that the audience expected to hear about it', Webster (1974) 86. 'These parties, whether they are called sacrifices or marriage feasts or breakfasts (*arista*) or *symposia*, not only carry on the story because things happen at them but set up a time schedule which the audience recognizes and expects to see worked out. The full sequence is purchasing, including hiring of cook; preparations, including not only baskets, cakes, etc., but also cooks borrowing pots from the neighbours; libation and slaughter of animal; eating the animal; *symposion*. It is seen clearest in the *Dyskolos* and the *Samia*.' *ibid.*, cf. 30 n.12.

to have the tutor, Moschos' family, or Sostratos' rival in love occupy a house on stage or nearby. The place where the feasting takes place becomes open even to Sostratos' and Moschos' father and the play reaches a visual resolution when the two old men are persuaded to join their sons at the party that shaped and moved the play throughout. What started as a welcome party for the newly arriving Bacchis, turns into a celebration of the courtesan's companionship with their young lovers, a celebration of the renewed friendship between the two young men, and finally a celebration of the comic mood that pacifies even the two old fathers.

Menander's plays, so far as we can follow them,¹⁰³ often played with the festive mood and the ironic contexts of feasting.

Aspis

If Kleostratos were to arrive, he would undoubtedly be welcomed with a party to celebrate his safe arrival from the army. And his booty would immediately prove handy for his sister's engagement. But Kleostratos is reported dead and instead of a feast a funeral must be considered. As in *Samia*, somber domestic mood clashes with the festive wedding preparations – for when Daos arrives home with the news of death he learns that Kleostratos' sister was just about to be married to Chaireas with the preparations already in full swing. Reported death disables, seemingly for good, the comic resolution (wedding) but even later, and indeed throughout the play, death and wedding continue to be brought up as two opposed but defining symbols of the play. The characters' frustration at the news of death and the expectations of a wedding (required by the audience and the genre) are strangely, almost ironically opposed, adding a very unusual colour to the typical New Comic treatment of feasting and celebrations. Smikrines, eager to lay his hands on Kleostratos' booty, suggests that now that the news of the death has arrived, the wedding of Kleostratos' sister must be called off. However, he immediately considers how to marry the girl himself. Chairestratos, lamenting the sorry end to the wedding plans for Chaireas and Kleostratos' daughter, is on the point of collapse, suggesting the shape for the intrigue against Smikrines. To have the old miser not marry Kleostratos' sister, another death must be announced, with an even richer *epikleros* girl in sight. Amid false reports of Chairestratos' death Smikrines probably brings up the theme of the wedding again – and magnanimously lets Chaireas marry Kleostratos' sister as originally planned. In the lost portions of the play others learn that Kleostratos is alive and they may start the wedding preparations. This and the cook's return may have been designed to create a humorous effect by way of contrast with Smikrines' belief that two deaths took place, especially if he learnt the truth as late as Act V.

Epitrepontes, Perikeiromene

In this play too the feast seems out of place: the cook is invited to prepare it for a party including Charisios, a newly-wed man who inexplicably moved away from his house and wife. Instead of trying to solve his domestic problems the young man seems intent on idling away his time feasting with Habrotonon and friends. As the alleged death in *Aspis*, so here Charisios' resignation seems a very strange beginning that rules out any solution. The feast is from the start felt as a useless, retarding and complicating theme with no bearing on the resolution. It will only make Smikrines more obstinate in his wish to drag his daughter away from the profligate and unfaithful husband.

¹⁰³ It is difficult to guess what was the role of feast in *Kolax* that in fr. 1 mentions a feast in celebration of Aphrodite. Its place in a play focussing on purchased sex could have been significant (cf. Arnott ad loc, Loeb, vol. ii, 159). Likewise, in *Misoumenos* we hear of a coincidence concerning dinner being prepared (?) 979f. but it is difficult to see how it fitted into the plot structure.

Everything seems to have conspired to cause a deadlock and an irrevocable separation of husband and wife.

The feast is a useful grid against which Menander fixes the characters' exits and entrances and the friend's house where it is taking place is an economical arrangement that allows the playwright to bring on stage a number of characters that would otherwise not come together, motivating their appearance when needed. When Onesimos comes out of the house and accidentally spots his master's ring in Syros' hands, it is the feast that motivates his accidental entrance on stage – Onesimos complains that the cook is slow about his work. The setting of the feast seems thus to forward the plot, now that Onesimos recognizes the ring. However, very soon the feast becomes an obstacle that once again threatens to slow down the developments: Onesimos hesitates to talk to his master for the very reason that there are partying guests in the house. The act ends on a low note, as the slave who is in the best position to bring about an *anagnorisis* lets the chance go by. He plans to procrastinate and the act ends with no promise of progress. The next act begins even worse – Onesimos is worried that the ring could actually accuse Charisios of a relationship with a woman other than his wife and such a situation would then completely separate the husband and wife. His deliberation seems thus to block all further developments. But then, Habrotonon comes out of the house and voices her frustration at Charisios who pays her no attention at the feast. The feast was a convenient motivation for Onesimos' entry on stage earlier and it is equally useful now. Habrotonon will learn about the ring and overhear talk of the Tauropolia. Ironically, she was present there and it becomes clear that her role, originally believed to be limited to the presence at the feast, gains in dramaturgical importance. She decides that she will be the link reconnecting husband and wife. First, she must discover if Charisios is really the child's father, and so she proposes to pose as the baby's mother. The feasting has conveniently made Charisios tipsy and so he will blurt out everything by himself, with only little prompting from Habrotonon. Habrotonon's intrigue will change the tempo of the play radically – the mayhem her 'confession' creates in the house is best reflected by the grumbling cook being driven away as the feast is suddenly called off under the unexpected new circumstances.

The feast has a similar delaying effect in *Perikeiromene*. The soldier, having cut Glykera's hair, retreated to an offstage house where he lay down and is now to be imagined crying and pitying himself. This passive approach resembles Charisios' in *Epitrepontes*. Friends try to cheer him up and prepare a feast for him. Ironically, their help will prevent him from taking an active part in the plot (175ff.)! To be kept informed about what goes on at home, he will have to keep sending his slave Sosias on stage.

Neither the soldier nor Glykera seem to want to patch things up: she too moves out of the house and finds protection with Myrrhine next door. Myrrhine has a son and this naturally makes Glykera's motivation for the moving into that house suspect. Moschion himself, being fond of Glykera, is misled to believe that it was because of him that Glykera moved inside their house. We hear that lunch is being prepared inside (307) and Moschion hopes to take advantage of that and make it into a situation resembling feasting with a loved girl. However, Myrrhine will not want her son near the girl and the lunch that Moschion wanted to enjoy in Glykera's presence eventually ends in Daos' mouth while the young man is waiting in another room, hoping to be invited any moment (542ff.). Myrrhine preventing him from coming near the girl and from enacting a symbolic feast, is a powerful image stressing the old woman's sincerity in guarding the girl. Moschion must forget the girl who will never belong to him.

Samia

A different kind of irony finds place in *Samia*: Moschion, Chrysis and Parmenon all wish that Moschion married the girl he loves (71f.) and the wedding preparations under way for most of the play seem an unbelievably smooth fulfilment of that wish. Parmenon wants the wedding to take place this very day, although he recognizes that it will probably take much courage on the young master's part to persuade his father and confess to his guilt. However, the slave along with both the households awaiting the return of Demeas and Nikeratos will be surprised to see that Demeas himself is eager to organize a wedding for his son, preferably on this very day. He plans to marry Moschion to none other than Nikeratos' daughter and will be doing all he can to move on with the wedding. Even when faced with personal problems, he does not slow down but pushes his own problems into the background and finds solace in pleasing Moschion.

Act II starts with startled Demeas who met an unexpected surprise at home – a baby son; but having obtained Moschion's word that he is eager to marry the neighbour's daughter, Demeas leaves the baby aside and will hurry up to organize the preparations (155f.). They keep him from thinking about Chrysis and demanding a frank conversation with her. It seems therefore that as long as the wedding is underway, things will smooth out by themselves, although there is much unease about the shallow quality of the festive mood since none of the mistakes that Demeas entertains can be corrected in this atmosphere.

Demeas thinks that others are delaying the wedding preparations: in a lacunose text we hear that Nikeratos wanted to inform his friends about the wedding (179f.), a reference that is probably to make Nikeratos look like unnecessarily delaying the action. However, Nikeratos soon voices agreement and so not even this small obstacle to the preparations materializes. Therefore there seems to stand absolutely nothing in the way of the resolution – which the wedding preparations are clearly bound to be; *and yet* it is ironical because for once the speed with which the resolution 'threatens' to take place seems to cause that the domestic problems will not have time to come to the surface and that the characters will end up enjoying the final festivities still labouring under severe misapprehensions.

Parmenon earlier doubted that fearful Moschion would be capable of brave action; Moschion had misgivings about Demeas' reaction to 'Chrysis' baby'; and even Demeas thought that Nikeratos would have problems convincing his wife that the wedding should take place this day. Eventually, though, none of these obstacles are relevant.

In other plays discussed above, a feast often worked as a delaying or an ironic presence within the plays. Here, to all appearances, the preparations will smoothly and uneventfully move the play to its finale leaving many questions unanswered – and thus the wedding preparations in *Samia* are similar to the parties delaying the discovery of truth. The quick promise of a smooth resolution in a play where no one is yet ready for it is truly an interesting variation on the theme.

The next act prepares a surprising turn – it was the very preparations for the wedding, and Demeas' zealous approach to it that caused a grave misunderstanding threatening to stop the play, making him disown Moschion and abandon Chrysis. Demeas was rushing everyone up and down, this made the household fret and the baby was forgotten in the ensuing commotion. An old nurse took the baby and calming it she was addressing the boy as Moschion's son. Demeas overhears her and concludes that Chrysis must have seduced Moschion. And yet even now, he does not stop the preparations but pretends that nothing happened. He plans to go on with the wedding for his son while hiding his disappointment with Chrysis who must be thrown out without making his shame public. Because he loves Chrysis, he busies himself with the wedding

preparations that now conceal another meaning – they are to Demeas what the escapist feast in *Epitrepontes* was to Charisios: a way of forgetting about his personal problems. For Moschion's good Demeas has made up his mind to expel Chrysis without giving anyone his reason for it and the play reaches a stiflingly claustrophobic atmosphere with the wedding preparations going on unhindered amidst wailing and crying over Chrysis' sad fate. While in other plays a cook is suddenly rudely thrown out because of a domestic catastrophe, and the feast stops abruptly, here Demeas is forcing everyone to go on with the preparations and he bawls at the cook and forces him to rush inside immediately and – to continue!

The feast created and prolonged serious complications but without it no satisfactory resolution would have been possible: Moschion, unaware of Demeas' thought processes, asks him to bring back Chrysis and have her take part in the wedding. Naturally to Demeas' eyes this is shocking ingratitude. A quarrel with his son that ensues at this point, reveals Demeas' error and Moschion explains to the old man what really happened. The conversation that corrects Demeas' mistake is forced on them by a cleverly moving plot, with the wedding preparations playing a prominent role in it. This construction of the plot succeeds in subverting an almost impossible problem complicated by both the son's cowardice and his father's efforts to hide his suspicions from everybody else.

In the final act, just as the preparations are nearing completion, Moschion of all people sets out to delay the action. He wishes to put on a little act and pretend to be leaving home in order to punish Demeas for his unfounded suspicions. His show gets almost out of control and it threatens to lead the play in a new direction – if it were not for Demeas to salvage the situation. The last obstacle to the smooth wedding was, surprisingly, Moschion himself. The young man in love, putting on a retarding 'act' is a final statement about the play based on the ironies of the all too smooth progress of the wedding feast.

III. The *Oikos* as a Dramatic Space

A thesis devoted to the expectations of the New Comedy audience and the playwright's imaginative response to such expectations may be expected to pass silently over the topic of the stage setting: for, as was already mentioned, if anything is to be seen repeated from play to play it is precisely the stage background representing two or three private houses.¹ How should such a solid backdrop offer a sense of freshness, grip the spectators and invite them to participate again and again in novel stage portrayals of life? I believe Menander's toying with the spectators' familiarity with the fixed meaning of the stage space is indicative of his dramatic technique in general; but while we cannot test with any degree of security the audience's familiarity with the comic genre and, consequently, their responses to innovations in other respects, we are on somewhat firmer ground in assessing their appreciation of, and attitudes to, the dramatic transformation of private and public space about which evidence is abundant.

Dramatic interest in the *oikos*

Of course Greek drama in all its stages showed an interest in exploring the associations of *oikos* and there are seeds of New comedy's preoccupation both in earlier tragedy and Old Comedy.² Fraenkel, among others, noted the similarity of Aristophanes' setting in *Ecclesiazusae* and especially *Clouds* with New Comedy domestic setting,³ all the more striking because 'generally speaking, in early comedy the background does not exist for the audience, unless there is a special reference to it in the dialogue.'⁴ Even art history testifies to a growing interest by the late fifth century in representing the stage doorway.⁵

It would be, incidentally, interesting to know whether it was theatre that shaped the language of earlier myth and gave it the often domesticized touch: In *Samia* we hear of tragic actors speaking how Zeus turned into gold and ἐρρύη / διὰ τέγους καθειργμένην τε παῖδ' ἐμοίχευσέν ποτε (590ff.). It may be that an early image of Danae guarded by dogs in an underground dungeon with brazen doors underwent some change through

¹ Though there are some imaginative or exotic settings moving the plays towards the countryside (Men. *Dysk.*, *Epit.*, *Heros*, Ter./Men. *Haut.*), the sea (Plaut./Diph. *Rudens*, Men. *Leukadia*), and so on, they too, in the end imitate the domestic arrangement of the more typical plays.

² Nesselrath (1993) suggests that it was through parody that Euripides' domestic plots found their way into comedy. That may be partly true, especially in terms of plot; but it also seems clear that the comic stage representing for instance two neighbours' houses (as it does for much of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*) was developing in a freer way independently of the more conservative Euripidean stage arrangement. Aristophanes' lines such as *Thesm.* καπαγορεύετε μήτ' ἐξελεῖν μήτ' ἐκκύψασαν ἀλῶναι (790), and καὶ ἐκ θυρίδος παρακύπτωμεν, τὸ κακὸν ζητεῖτε θεᾶσθαι (797) may hint at stage representations of masculine anxiety (and women's allurements) by the comic genre that would be inappropriate in tragedy. It is a small step from Ar. *Thesm.* 797 to Men. *Pk.* 152f. that is developed into a significant part of this comedy's exposition.

³ Fraenkel (1936) 257f; 'on the whole the opening scene of the *Clouds* has more in common with New Comedy than any other piece of fifth-century drama that we possess', *ibid.* 258. Cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1927) 206 on *Lysistrata*.

⁴ Fraenkel (1936) 260f.

⁵ Green (2001) 54 in discussing the development in Athenian comedy as seen on vases from late fifth century to the third quarter of the fourth notes: 'It is of course very difficult to say from the vases, which inevitably carry single scenes, whether a door-identification is on-going throughout the play, but what we *can* say is that depictions of doors become steadily more common during the period of our sample, that it appears to be a rule that vase-painters do not show them unless they are directly relevant to the action, and therefore that doors (and in consequence the houses that they represent) are growingly intrinsic to the action of the drama.' [Green's emphasis]

treatment on stage. Each of the three great tragedians dealt with the myth and it may not be too wide off the mark to attribute domestication of Danae's imprisonment (e.g. in Soph. *Antigone*: ἐν χαλκοδέτοις αὐλαῖς 945) to its treatment in theatre.⁶

Spectators familiar with at least a few productions of the comic genre are, at least subconsciously, ready to test their familiarity against a new play evolving before them. It would not have been lost on them that comic economy frequently requires that the resolution should be achieved through a 'unification' of both stage households: in, say, a marriage or mutual recognition. How did such awareness shape the audience's expectations of a play that they were about to watch? What can the plot developments be for instance in a play with a well-off house pitted against a poor-looking one when the first character to appear on stage is a rich young man with guilt written all over his face?⁷ Will he act the role of a typical comic seducer of girls and will the poverty of the neighbour's house stand in the way of his happiness? Again, how does a tragic looking slave in Men. *Aspis* with a solemn entourage of captives fit into the stage setting where we perhaps see a garlanded house in preparation for a wedding?

It is not an exaggeration to say that the dramaturgy of New Comedy moved away from earlier character comedy (e.g. the Knemon of *Dyskolos*⁸) towards a comedy of errors with principally good-natured characters not reduced to mere caricatures of character traits. If character comedy follows an individual character, his reasoning, his power to transform stage space after his wishes, no matter how inconsequential, later New Comedy shows a gradual preference for social interactions between a number of characters each aware of his or her place with the importance of the *oikos* growing proportionately. The sense of roundedness in characters comes from their movement in familiar space, in which even the most simple choices provide economical but telling hints of their character. That is, New Comedy in a pronounced way makes use of an equation valid in everyday life between an individual's movement in space, especially around the *oikos*⁹, to their ἦθος.¹⁰

In a society where everyone has an allotted place and restrictions apply to movements beyond it, failure to follow the rules results in questioning the master's authority and masculinity. Du Boulay has interesting remarks on the equations between a woman's place in house and her *ethos*, still valid in a modern Greek village:

'Evidence of infidelity is direct proof of a woman's worthlessness in all other fields, and, conversely, careless behavior about the house and neglect of house

⁶ Hes. fr. 135 MW has a reference to Danae and Zeus, but the mention is brief and unenlightening. Until the fifth century, we have only Pherekydes' evidence to go by (preserved in *scholia in Apoll. Rhod.* 4.1091: ὁ δὲ ἀναχωρήσας εἰς Ἄργος θάλαμον ποιεῖ χαλκοῦν ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ τῆς οἰκίας κατὰ γῆς, ἔνθα τὴν Δανάην εἰσάγει.) From then onwards, cf. Eur. fr. 1132 hypoth. ἦς [sc. Danae] ἐρασθεὶς ὁ Ζεὺς ... χρυσὸς γενόμενος καὶ ῥυεῖς διὰ τοῦ στέγους εἰς τὸν κόλπον τῆς παρθένου ἐγκύμονα ἐποίησεν. Cf. Luc. *Gallus* 13 ἀκούεις δήπου ὡς χρυσίον ἐγένετο καὶ ῥυεῖς διὰ τοῦ τέγους συνῆν τῇ ἀγαπωμένῃ, Ter. *Eun.* 587ff. *animu' gaudebat mihi, / deum sese in hominem convortisse atque in alienas tegulas / venisse clanculum per inpluvium fucum factum mulieri*. The literary evidence for the Danae myth is discussed e.g. in Gantz (1993) 300ff.

⁷ In Men. *Samia*. Rich young men as seducers/rapers of girls: Men. *Kith.*, *Georgos*, *Pk* (if he could), *Epit.*, *Fab. Inc.*, Plaut./ (?Men., ?Alexis) *Aul.*, Ter./Men. *An.*, *Eun.*, *Ad.* Indeed, as Arnott (1981) 226 remarks, Sostratos in Men. *Dysk.* 'is the only one so far to have had an opportunity (at 189 ff.) of raping or seducing an unknown innamorata and then rejected it.'

⁸ *Μισογύνης* or *Ψοφοδεής* are also known to have been written by Menander and, judging by their titles, seem likewise to have had to do with caricatures of character types.

⁹ See MacDowell (1989) for the gradual developments in the meanings of this word.

¹⁰ With some omissions or reductions: in real life, for instance, there were many opportunities for women to participate in outdoor activities, cf. Cohen (1989) 7. Of course, dramatic *oikonomia* is to be seen behind the choice of not giving the whole picture and simply equating a chaste life with staying indoors.

duties are referred back to the basis of a woman's honor and cause aspersions to be cast on her chastity.'¹¹

The simple equation between a woman's behaviour in the allotted space and the higher ethical categories of loyalty to the house and chastity are, as we see, fully embraced by comedy as economical prerequisites for dramatic mistakes.

Getting people on stage sometimes requires overstepping social boundaries or working with them in a particularly clever way. To recover truth, ingenious plotting was required so that characters are allowed to overstep all sorts of social boundaries represented on stage and access knowledge hidden from them (often in the form of *gnorismata*). How to bring out of a house *hidden truths*¹² or even more deeply hidden secrets inside a character's heart? By being hidden from sight they were inaccessible to anyone outside the walls of the house. Often, it will be seen, plots lead to a disclosure of domestic secrets *on stage* as the only juncture where strangers could meet and be confronted with the previously hidden or inaccessible truths. Even the cleverest plotting depends on giving stage presence to hidden secrets of an inaccessible mind or equally inaccessible dark recesses of a house. Let us look in more detail at the codes of behaviour recognized in comedy for women, masters and the young sons.

Treasure in the house: women without protection

In *Perikeiromene* Moschion epitomizes just the type of the dangerous young men against whom girls have to be protected: he is rich, fond of wine, and rash, while Glykera is beautiful. Besides, Polemon, her guardian, was often on military campaigns and thus provided only inadequate protection:

πλουτοῦντα καὶ μεθύοντ' ἀεὶ
ὀρώσ' ἐκείνον, εὐπρεπῇ δὲ καὶ νέαν
ταύτην, βέβαιον δ' οὐθὲν ᾧ κατελείπετο. (*Pk.* 142ff.)

The old woman who found both Glykera and Moschion as exposed babies foresaw the danger in such a constellation and informed Glykera that Moschion was none other than her brother. Just as the old woman had predicted, when an occasion offered itself Moschion did not hesitate but hurried straight up to Glykera and kissed her at the threshold of her house:

ἀπὸ ταῦτομάτου δ' ὀφθεῖσ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ θρασυτέρου
ὥσπερ προείρηκ' ὄντος ἐπιμελῶς τ' ἀεὶ
φοιτῶντος ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν, ἔτυχ' ἐσπέρας
πέμπουσά ποι θεράπαιναν, ὥς δ' ἐπὶ ταῖς θύραις
αὐτὴν γενομένην εἶδεν, εὐθὺ προσδραμὼν
ἐφίλει, περιέβαλλ'... (*Pk.* 151ff.)

By coincidence the slave of Polemon, the soldier with whom Glykera lives, spotted Moschion embracing Glykera in the doorway and he must have noted that she did not resist too much, although he could not know that she was only happy to be holding her long-lost brother. This simple confusion started the dramatic action when

¹¹ Quoted in Cohen (1991) 47.

¹² Post (1940) 423 rightly warns against seeing *gnorismata* as a merely mechanical, unrealistic means of recognition.

Polemon, told of the incident, turned into a jealous brute punishing Glykera by cutting her hair. We see how comedy enjoys contriving statistically improbable coincidences, such as here the proximity of a lost brother to his sister, and how it then inserts them into a chain of credible human reactions. Anyone in Polemon's shoes would suspect Glykera of an illicit affair under the circumstances, not giving even a thought to the chance that Moschion could be her blood relative.

It seems to be taken for granted that women such as Glykera need protection (Polemon was away at the time of the 'incident') since they are constantly exposed to unwanted attention and if they succumb, it is not only their weakness that is to blame, but also the guardian's apparently lax protection.¹³

For instance the simile with Zeus as gold rain used in *Samia* to hint at the rape of Nikeratos' daughter, humorously implies that if due care had been given to the protection of the house, the rain (Moschion) would not have got inside.¹⁴

In *Dyskolos*, Daos and Gorgias, oppressed by poverty, act to stop a rich young man from, so they believe, seducing a freeborn girl. Long before we see Gorgias helping Knemon directly, we see him trying to protect Knemon's household by protecting the old man's daughter. When Daos spotted Sostratos running from Pan's shrine right to Knemon's daughter and then in an elated state running to find help, the slave naturally suspects a plan to seduce the freeborn girl. He laments that the girl is without protection due to Knemon's lack of interest:

ἄκακον κόρην μόνην ἀφείς ἐν ἐρημίαι
ἐᾶς, φυλακὴν οὐδεμίαν, ὥς προσῆκον ἦν,
ποιούμενος. τουτὶ καταμανθάνων ἴσως
οὗτος προσερρύη, νομίζων ὥσπερ εἰ
ἔρμαιον. (*Dysk.* 222ff.)¹⁵

Daos and Gorgias will accost Sostratos – who is on the point of knocking at Knemon's door – in order to stop him from taking from the house what is not his.

Houses of respectable citizens are not open to all. In this they contrast sharply with courtesans' houses that are like public highways where people are free to walk at will.¹⁶ The most frequent and comic intruder prying into the secrets of the house and its reputation is the cook. Euclio in *Aulularia* complains that the cook has made a thoroughfare (*pervium*) out of his house – an image referred to in note 16 to describe a courtesan's 'open' house:

¹³ Cf. for instance *Dysk.* 218ff, Plaut. *Curc.* 15-26. Also, one of the reasons behind Moschion's insistence that Demeas should take Chrysis inside his house was to protect her from other wooers: ἄκοντος αὐτοῦ διελογιζόμεν θ' ὅτι / ἂν μὴ γένηται τῆς ἐταίρας ἐγκρατῆς, / ὑπ' ἀντεραστῶν μεираκίων ἐνοχλήσεται (*Samia* 24ff.). Sosias' mistake in *Perikeiromene* is repeated in *Misoumenos* 216ff. Cf. Woodbury (1978) and Cohen (1991) 148 for a useful discussion of material on the social associations of women standing in front of their own house.

¹⁴ (Δη)... σκόπει, / τοῦ τέγους εἴ σοι μέρος τι ῥεῖ. (Νι) τὸ πλεῖστον. ἀλλὰ τί / τοῦτο πρὸς ἐκεῖν' ἐστί; (*Samia* 592ff). Demeas hints at lack of protection leading to the girl's rape. It is humorous to see that even at this stage, and comfortable in knowledge superior to Nikeratos', Demeas is unaware that the girl was made pregnant not in Nikeratos' but in Demeas' own house!

¹⁵ Cf. Onesimos' words to Smikrines in *Epitrepontes*: οὕτως ἐτήρεις παῖδ' ἐπίγαμον; τοιγαροῦν / τέρασιν ὅμοια πεντάμηνα παιδιά / ἐκτρέφομεν (1115ff).

¹⁶ Plaut. *Curc.* 33ff: PH. *quin leno hic habitat*. PA. *nemo hinc prohibet nec uotat / quin quod palam est uenale, si argentum est, emas. / nemo ire quemquam publica prohibet uia; / dum ne per fundum saeptum facias semitam, / dum ted apstineas nupta, uidua, uirgine, / iuuentute et pueris liberis, ama quid lubet.*

*sceleste homo, qui angulos omnis
mearum aedium et conclauium mihi peruium facitis?* (Plaut. *Aul.* 437f)¹⁷

By the nature of his profession he wants to know the number of people he is to serve and the reason for the celebration. He is at the centre of action when a domestic trouble occurs (ἡ τέθνηκέ τις, εἴτ' ἀποτρέχειν δεῖ μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχοντά με, ἡ τέτοκε τῶν ἔνδον κυοῦσά τις λάθρα, εἴτ' οὐκέτι θύουσ' ἐξαπίνης, ἀλλ' οἴχομαι ἀπιὼν ἐγώ... *Asp.* 216ff) and the sacrifice or the festive meal is suddenly cancelled. He is often represented as a thief¹⁸ and indeed, he steals not only provisions, pots and pans, but by revealing what was to be hidden, he is also a threat to the reputation of the house.

The play that most clearly conflates the images discussed here is Plautus' *Aulularia*. In the house is a young woman in need of protection – but there is also a pot of gold that needs to be guarded from nosy outsiders such as, most obviously a cook.

Euclio, determined not to have anyone discover the secret treasure in his house, is perhaps more explicit than most other masters of the house. While Euclio protects his pot of gold, he is completely unaware that his daughter was raped by a young man nine months ago. Lyconides, the young man who made the girl pregnant, spots on stage Euclio stricken with grief over the loss of his treasure and a wonderful scene of cross-purposes ensues with Euclio thinking of the gold, and Lyconides of the rape (731ff.). The humour of cross-purposes can be pulled off because of an intrinsic similarity of the two crimes. Something inside the house that did not belong to Lyconides was 'taken hold of' (740)¹⁹ to the ruin of Euclio and his children. I quote only the most obvious word-play:

EVC. *quid ego <de te> demerui, adulescens, mali,
quam ob rem ita faceres meque meosque perditum ires liberos?* (735f)

EVC. *quid id ausu's facere ut id quod non tuum esset tangeres?* (740)

EVC. *quid tibi ergo meam me inuito tactiost?*
LY. *quia uini uitio atque amoris feci.* EVC. *homo audacissime,
cum istacum te oratione huc ad me adire ausum, inpudens!
nam si istuc ius est ut tu istuc excusare possies,
luci claro deripiamus aurum matronis palam...* (744ff.)

EVC. *tu illam scibas non tuam esse: non attactam oportuit.*
LY. *ergo quia sum tangere ausus, hau causificor quin eam
ego habeam potissimum.* EVC. *tun habeas me inuito meam?* (754ff.)

Only when Lyconides is asked the impossible: to give back what he has secretly stolen, does the young man begin to suspect that something is amiss. The scene conflates two concepts, helped by the feminine gender of *aula* in Latin.²⁰ Plays about a treasure

¹⁷ Cf. Ter. *Ad.* 912f.

¹⁸ Dohm (1964) 129-35, Wilkins (2000) 401 calls it his 'distinguishing mark'.

¹⁹ Cf. Ter. *Ad.* 686 for *virginem tangere*.

²⁰ Cf. Bain (1992), Arnott (1996) 363 and esp., 862. Arnott follows Bain to show that if the word-play was not originally Plautine, a Greek original (inconclusively identified by Arnott (1996) as Alexis' *Lebes*) could only have had recourse to such words as ὑδρία, χύτρα, or perhaps even κληρονομία.

were frequent in Middle and New Comedy²¹ and although their plots remain in general unclear, there were cases such as *Trinummus* (adaptation of Philemon's *Thesaurus*, cf. lines 18f.) where Callicles was asked to take care of a friend's whole household (*mihi commendauit uirginem gnatum suam/ et rem suam omnem et illum corruptum filium*, Plaut. *Trin.* 113f) and especially the treasure in the house:

CA. *quoniam hinc est profecturus peregre Charmides,*
thensaurum demonstraui mihi in hisce aedibus,
hic in conclauis quodam – sed circumspice.
 ME. *nemost.* CA. *nummorum Philippeum ad tria milia.*
id solus solum per amicitiam et per fidem
flens me opsecrauit suo ne gnato crederem
neu quoquam unde ad eum id posset permanascere.
nunc si ille huc saluos reuenit, reddam suam sibi;
si quid eo fuerit, certe illius filiae,
quae mihi mandatast, habeo dotem unde dem,
ut eam in se dignam condicionem conlocem (Plaut. *Trin.* 149ff)

The treasure in the house was by comic economy guarded partly as a dowry for the marriageable daughter and thus the association between the two concepts was felt even stronger.²² It is clear then, that the reasons for proper protection of the house were always at least partially concerned with the women of the house. Even a woman in a poor house was guarded so that her virginity, at least, could become her 'second' dowry (*quae secunda ei dos erat, / periit: pro virgini dari nuptum non potest* Ter. *Ad.* 345f, cf. Plaut. *Amph.* 839).

Smikrines in *Epitrepontes*, as was mentioned above, keen on protecting his daughter wants to take her back from a disloyal husband. Perhaps by choosing as Pamphile's father a rather parsimonious character, Menander may have wanted to increase the feeling of a waste – both the girl in the house and the dowry are being wasted on a seemingly extravagant and unfaithful husband. In Smikrines' mind the two concepts, the girl's well-being, and the dowry, are naturally conflated into one big lament:

προῖκα δὲ λαβὼν τάλαντα τέτταρ' ἀργύρου
 οὐ τῆς γυναικὸς νενόμιχ' αὐτὸν οἰκέτην
 ἀπόκοιτός ἐστι· πορνοβοσκῶι δώδεκα
 τῆς ἡμέρας δραχμὰς δίδωσι. (Men. *Epit.* 134ff)

Masculine paranoia

However, women cannot be kept under cover in a pot, much as some men may have wished so. Women of comedy must constantly struggle to dispel suspicions of paranoid men. Aristotle is hardly alone in giving voice to a sentiment that places women on a different level from men: they surpass men in passion, shamelessness, deceitfulness,

²¹ Krates II, Anaxandrides, Archedikos, Philemon, Menander, Diphilos, Dioxippos, are known each to have written a play called *Thesaurus*.

²² That is also Lar's reasoning in Plaut. *Aul.* 25-27: *eius* [i.e. filiae Euclionis] *honoris gratia / feci thesaurum ut hic reperiret Euclio, / quo illam facilius nuptum, si uellet, daret.*

and false speech.²³ The male in all animals, on the other hand, is simpler and less cunning²⁴ – this holds good for men above all other *genera*. How then could men hope to catch up with women's tricks? Always one step behind women's cunning, it is left to men to hang onto whatever signs they chance on by accident.

Even though the following example is of a different sort and visual proofs are merely *narrated* not staged, still it provides an example of the dramatist's need to use all visual symbols available for the revelation of character. Clinia in Ter. *Haut.* has not seen his mistress for a long time and he is naturally eager when the chance has come to see her again. He hears two slaves Dromo and Syrus conversing about the girl who is following them but does not appear yet. He overhears Dromo mentioning how *impeditae sunt: ancillarum gregem / ducunt secum* (245f.), Syrus adds a mention of *aurum, vestem* (248) and Clinia must lament the girl's moral decline (*perii, unde illi sunt ancillae?* 246; *vae misero mi, quanta de spe decidi!* 250). His friend Clitipho does not understand:

CLIT. *quid istuc? quae res te sollicitat autem?* CLIN. *rogitas quid siet? viden tu? ancillas aurum vestem, quam ego cum una ancillula hic reliqui, unde esse censes?* (Ter. *Haut.* 251ff)

The mistake is not visual but aural in this case. It shows, however, a typical pattern. It is enough for Clinia to hear of the typical signs of moral deterioration in a woman and he passes judgment without checking the particulars. The pattern of such a quick judgment is popular in comic plays and while in *Heauton Timorumenos* it is only presented through a speech, elsewhere we find it staged as well. To stay with that play: Syrus, who brought the girl and overtook her in arriving, understands the flimsy foundation for Clinia's judgment and goes on to correct his master. Again, it is significant what proofs he, an outsider, can provide for the girl's modesty – he was not with her every day to keep an eye on her behaviour and so the proofs must be rather ingenious: Dromo and he *rushed* inside her house and their unexpected incursion ensured that the girl, taken off her guard, was caught in what was her typical behaviour:

SY. *iam primum omnium, ubi ventum ad aedis est, Dromo pultat fores; anu' quaedam prodit; haec ubi aperuit ostium, continuo hic se coniecit intro, ego consequor; anu' foribus obdit pessulum, ad lanam redit. hic sciri potuit aut nusquam alibi, Clinia, quo studio vitam suam te absente exegerit, ubi de improvisost interventum mulieri. nam ea res dedit tum existumandi copiam cotidianaе vitae consuetudinem, quae quoui(u)sque ingenium ut sit declarat maxume.* (Ter. *Haut.* 274ff.)

Proofs of the girl's innocence derive from finding her weaving diligently (*texentem telam studiose*, 285) and dressed plainly (*mediocriter vestitam...sine auro...capillu'*

²³ In summarizing the difference between men and women: διόπερ γυνή ἀνδρὸς ἐλεημονέστερον καὶ ἀρίδακρυ μᾶλλον, ἔτι δὲ φθονερώτερον καὶ μεμψιμοιρότερον, καὶ φιλολοίδορον μᾶλλον καὶ πληκτικώτερον. ἔστι δὲ καὶ δύσθυμον μᾶλλον τὸ θῆλυ τοῦ ἄρρενος καὶ δύσελπι, καὶ ἀναιδέστερον καὶ ψευδέστερον, εὐαπατητότερον δὲ καὶ μνημονικώτερον... (HA 608ab8ff.)

²⁴ HA 608b3f.: τὰ δ' ἄρρενα ἐναντίως θυμωδέστερα καὶ ἀγριώτερα καὶ ἀπλούστερα καὶ ἥττον ἐπίβουλα.

pexu' prolixus circum caput / reiectu' neglegenter, 286f.). Her slave's negligent dress code is another *magnum signum*:

SY. anus
subtemen nebat. praeterea una ancillula
erat; ea texebat una, pannis obsita,
neglecta, immunda inlucie. CLIT. si haec sunt, Clinia,
vera, ita uti credo, quis te est fortunatior?
scin hanc quam dicit sordidatam et sordidam?
magnum hoc quoque signumst dominam esse extra noxiam,
quom eius tam negleguntur internuntii.
nam disciplinast isdem munerarier
ancillas primum ad dominas qui adfectant viam. (Ter. Haut. 292ff.)

The argument is a little strained: the slave was in rags, and therefore there were no signs of her having been bribed by potential lovers who would wish to approach the mistress. The case shows, however, the lengths to which the rhetoric of chastity and its proofs could be taken. It would obviously not do just to let the girl profess her constant love for Clinia (which she later does, of course) – for without adequate proofs that would be meaningless.²⁵

But if women are so clever, deceitful, and ready to pretend, how can one be sure that the workings of their minds are properly revealed on stage when that is dramatically needed? And how to stage a situation when a clever woman does not want to disclose her secrets? Women are often presented as possessing secret knowledge: Glykera for instance, as just mentioned, knows all along that she is living next to her brother but will keep quiet not to compromise his position:

ἐν γειτόνων δ' οἰκοῦσα τὰδελφοῦ τὸ μὲν
πρᾶγμ' οὐ μεμήνυκ' οὐδ' ἐκεῖνον βούλεται
εἶναι δοκοῦντα λαμπρὸν εἰς μεταλλαγὴν (Pk. 147ff.)

It is difficult to let women speak their minds in the 'public' space on stage simply because it is more difficult for them to appear in it and also because they may have a good reason not to want to divulge their secrets to anyone. In Eur. *Hippolytus* Aphrodite makes it appear as if it was she alone who could open Phaedra's mouth because the woman is adamant in her refusal to divulge the secret weighing heavily on her. Phaedra is intent on hiding her passion from everyone in the house.²⁶

One feasible way was to create 'private', pseudo-domestic space on stage and allow them to explain their motivations through monologues spoken on stage²⁷ and taken by convention as truthful. Such monologues on empty stage are a symbol of a total control of the space, that becomes in a way part of the inside, the private domestic space where there is no fear of prying ears overhearing it. The stage was, needless to say, a space for disclosure, but a dangerous one as accidental overhearing was always a

²⁵ Maraschini (in Cohen (1989) 65), describing Calimera well notes that '[i]t is not enough for a girl to remain chaste, or for a married woman to be a faithful wife: she must, in addition, appear chaste.'

²⁶ Eur. *Hipp.* 39-42. 39ff: *κέντροις ἔρωτος ἢ τάλαιν' ἀπόλλυται / σιγῇ ξύνοιδε δ' οὔτις οἰκετῶν νόσον. / ἀλλ' οὔτι ταύτῃ τόνδ' ἔρωτα χρή πεσεῖν, / δείξω δὲ Θησεῖ πρᾶγμα, κάκφανήσεται.* Aphrodite's workings are more complicated than she intimates at this stage, see Burnett ad loc. Without her action, however, Phaedra's innermost secret would never have been revealed.

²⁷ Such as Sostrata in Ter. *Hecyra* 274ff, or Thais in Ter. *Eun.* 197ff

possibility.²⁸ This little compromise was needed so that women do find their way out of the recesses of the house in a way similar to *gnorismata* originally hidden deep inside the house. Only once women or recognition objects find their way out of the recesses, do secrets of the house transpire and start making sense.

Men and the protection of private space as a sign of masculinity

Man's reputation is connected with masculine, resolute protection of the house and those belonging to it. Crimes and transgressions committed by any member of the household show a lack of respect for his authority. The *kyrios*, in his turn, if he does not act resolutely in dealing with them, gets bad press for being no man. Obviously, it is difficult to be resolute if that meant disclosing internal affairs and endangering family relations and not infrequently men must have preferred discretion. The conflict between speaking out and acting to assert authority on the one hand, and keeping silent to protect the loved ones on the other, are best exemplified in *Samia* (see below, 96).²⁹

Resolute, active protection of domestic interests is masculine while slave-like cowardice, indecisive nature, manic outbursts and passivity are exposed for censure. Masculinity in this wider context is part of a constant negotiation of one's public reputation. Cohen sees the implications of the fact that 'the Greeks considered burglary, theft, and adultery crimes of stealth. But, because (in the Greek view) these offences typically involve a penetration of the house, they inherently risk a violent confrontation between the intruder and the men whose duty requires them to protect the family, the house, and the honor associated with them.' He goes on to quote Hasluck for the effect successful housebreaking has on the reputation in Albania: 'because human life had been endangered and the house's honor tarnished, [housebreaking]... always implied that the men in the house were weak or the womenfolk light.'³⁰ It is obvious then, that it is in the men's interest to protect the house and women who dwell in it and comedy does not break the rules of *decorum*.³¹

Young men and the house

Less restricted in their movements than women, are the young men of comedy. Yet even in their case the dramatist may be eager to define their character through spatial metaphors although it is less easy due to the difficulty of defining proper space for them. Moschion of *Perikeiromene*, hanging about a girl's house intent on spotting her has already been mentioned. Sostratos of *Dyskolos* is mistaken for another such type because his movements *seem* to conform to the Moschion type of a young man.

A clear case of movements supporting a representation of an excessively chaste character appears in Euripides' *Hippolytus*: Euripides is at pains to paint a picture of a chaste Hippolytus uninterested in women and he does it partly through spatial metaphors, especially through the opposition of house and outdoor activities. He avoids the bed of love; instead he is out hunting with Artemis in the woods. He returns home, as he

²⁸ 'Neighbors are basically watchers of their neighbors' behavior', as Cutileiro comments about Portugal Vila Velha (quoted in Cohen (1989) 48), would be a sentiment comprehensible to a Greek audience.

²⁹ Aristotle remarks how difficult it is for men to speak openly about hybris against women and sons of the house, *Rh.* 1373a.

³⁰ Cohen (1989) 112f.; the quotation appears on page 113.

³¹ Cf. Plaut. *Miles Gloriosus* 1168: *ne ille mox uereatur introire in alienam domum*. Part of the intrigue against the braggart soldier will be in having him apprehended with a married woman in her house. The fear that the soldier may not wish to enter the house is directly confronted and a lie is concocted to make him feel free to walk inside. Palaestrio instructed the 'wife' to tell the soldier that the house is part of her dowry and the old man left (divorced her) and went away after divorce.

believes, only for a meal and after that plans to go out again and exercise his horses (Eur. *Hipp.* 108ff.). Even inside the house he is significantly represented as keeping away from Phaedra. While she is fasting herself to death (135ff) he is preparing for a hearty meal. The contrast is upheld by the Chorus in the *parodos* (121ff.) just after Hippolytus and the Pedagogue enter inside the house, singing only about Phaedra's mysterious illness. After the choral ode, both the nurse and the Queen come out of the house – leaving Hippolytus inside. When the young man at last comes out of the house at 601, he bursts out in a rage that blinds him to Phaedra's presence on stage 'somewhere at the side' (Barrett ad loc). At 659ff. he dissociates himself from the house, from staying under the same roof with Phaedra:

νῦν δ' ἐκ δόμων μέν, ἔστ' ἂν ἐκδημῇ χθονὸς
 Θησεύς, ἄπειμι, σίγα δ' ἔξομεν στόμα·
 θεάσομαι δὲ σὺν πατρὸς μολῶν ποδὶ
 πῶς νιν προσόψῃ, καὶ σὺ καὶ δέσποινα σή. (Eur. *Hipp.* 659ff.)

Throughout the scene Hippolytus is ignoring Phaedra.³² This is relevant for Menander's *Samia* where Moschion's avoidance of the house for fear of his father, is implicitly taken by his father to be a moral choice of the kind Hippolytos deliberately made. When his father returns home after a long business trip, Menander seems careful to create a sense that Moschion is not staying inside the house. And when Demeas construes the domestic situation mistakenly and suspects Chrysis of having seduced Moschion, he thinks he understands all of a sudden Moschion's eagerness to marry the neighbour's Plangon:

οὐκ ἐρῶν γάρ, ὥς ἐγὼ
 τότ' ὠιόμην, ἔσπευδεν, ἀλλὰ τήν ἐμήν
 Ἑλένην φυγεῖν βουλόμενος ἔνδοθέν ποτε (Men. *Samia* 335ff.)

From the time Demeas arrived, Moschion was away from the house. For the old man his son's running away is mistakenly read as a sign of his chastity. He is, Demeas believes, fleeing the Helen (or Phaedra, one wants to add) who resides in the house. What he cannot see is that Moschion's reasons are somewhat baser: he is trying to avoid both his father and Nikeratos as well as the consequences that the rape has caused.

Moschion flees from his house and he cannot go to see Plangon either for fear of running into her father. The only option available to him is to flee offstage. Both he and other young men in love are forced to make choices between loyalty to the paternal house and faithfulness to an object of their love. This is more easily stageable than the movements of women and consequently a young man's dilemma is frequently shown on stage in visual terms.

At the beginning of *Georgos* an unnamed young man probably comes on stage from his father's stage house. He is running away from the marriage that awaits him inside. Rather, he wishes to marry the girl who lives next door. The two houses represent his dilemma: to be loyal to one house necessarily means putting down the other. We are unable to follow the plot in its details but even from what is extant it is clear that much is made of this dilemma: note the entrance of Myrrhine and Philinna on the empty stage. They want to protect their house and the (pregnant) girl inside but they see two slaves from next door coming and bringing home everything needed for the wedding. The

³² Cf. Barrett's comment on 661f.

women have to look at it and put up with the apparent disloyalty on the young man's part.

Another play that follows this paradigm of a dilemma visualized in stage space terms is *Andria*, modelled on a Menandrian original. Pamphilus' dilemma concerns his loyalties: should he go against his father (represented by one stage house) or against his girlfriend who lives next door?:

*tot me inpediunt curae, quae meum animum divorsae trahunt:
amor, misericordia huius, nuptiarum sollicitatio,
tum patri pudor, qui me tam leni passus est animo usque adhuc
quae meo quomque animo lubitumst facere. eie ego ut advorser? ei mihi!*
(Ter. *An.* 260ff.)

When Daos suggests that Pamphilus should pretend to be willing to marry Chremes' daughter, Pamphilus again visualizes the dilemma in strong terms: he may end up forever pent up in the wrong house and denied access to Glycerium (cf. *ut ab illa excludar, hoc concluder*, 386). Such a proximity of the two families brings with it not only plot-complicating mistakes but also the frequently employed sentimentality that comes with the portrayal of the feelings that the girlfriend and her household feel when they mistakenly believe the young man is spurning them (cf. 268ff.).

Hecyra presents a similar dilemma: when Pamphilus arrives home and hears of the hatred between his wife and his mother, he is distraught because he will surely find one of them to blame: 299ff.:

*tum matrem ex ea re me aut uxorem in culpa inventurum arbitror;
quod quom ita esse invenero, quid restat nisi porro ut fiam miser?
nam matri ferre iniurias me, Parmeno, pietas iubet;
tum uxori obnoxius sum: ita olim suo me ingenio pertulit,
tot meas iniurias quae numquam in ullo patefecit loco.* (Ter. *Hec.* 299ff.)

Later, when he learns the truth (his wife gave birth to a baby that he does not think could be his), he will still try to claim that he faces this dilemma. He will have to choose between his affection for one house - where his mother lives; or the other with his bride in (cf. 299ff.). But everyone hurries to take away this 'obstacle': Sostrata even offers to move to the country so that she does not stand in the way of the young couple. Let us look at a particularly stageable form of this dilemma:

Vnde egreditur – Terence's examples³³

A character may underscore his moral dilemma by having to choose in visually clear terms between the two stage houses (frequently with father in one, a loved girl in the other). The choice between, for instance, *eusebeia* and *sophrosyne* on the one hand, and *eros* on the other, becomes represented in stage terms and the coming out of an inappropriate stage house is very often developed into broad comedy of confrontation. Terence's *language of space* often coincides with Menandrian techniques. Of course, by choosing a working method of contamination and dual plots he differs from his Greek

³³ Euripides is an interesting precursor: note for instance surprises stemming from arrivals of 'wrong' persons from 'wrong' spaces. Cf. Halleran (1985) 40-2 (examples of entrances of the 'wrong' person), and 42f. (surprises of location, i.e. 'someone moving towards and trying to enter the *skene* door, interrupted by the appearance of another from above', p. 42). see also Arnott (1973).

originals in the amount of space he gives to the treatment of the *oikoi* of all the concerned characters.³⁴

However, notwithstanding such problems, thanks to the extent of Terence's extant plays, it is possible to follow in greater detail the importance of the *oikos* for New Comedy stagecraft. I shall look at places where a character – mostly, but not always, a young man – incriminates himself by exiting from an inappropriate and forbidden stage space while his father or guardian is on stage to see him. The technique is consistently used in most of Terence's plays, and we may assume that Terence here follows Greek playwrights.

Andria

In *Andria*, during the scheme suggested by Davos, Pamphilus pretends to agree to marry Philumena and tries hard to give the impression that he wants to obey his father. Terence uses a visual symbol to enhance the impression of Pamphilus' obedience 424f.:

SI. i nunciam intro, ne in mora, quom opus sit, sies.

PA. eo.

In stage terms, by choosing to go into his father's house, Pamphilus is presented as having resolved the dilemma of which house to choose, in favour of the paternal house. Simo is led to believe that *irae sunt inter Glycerium et gnatum* (552) and Davos corroborates the story when he comes out of Simo's house (cf. 580) where he may be imagined to have been supervising some initial preparations for the 'wedding'.

When the wedding unexpectedly becomes imminent, Pamphilus wants Davos to make up some other plan. They start to panic and no longer play the willing and obedient characters, and Pamphilus disengages himself from his father's wish even in stage terms: he decides to go into Glycerium's house to comfort her (*ego hanc visam*, 708). When Crito comes, even Davos decides to go into Glycerium's house – not to be seen by his old master at present (819).

After a pause Chremes and Simo come on stage. Simo tries hard to convince doubting Chremes that Pamphilus' connections with Glycerium are severed and that the opposite is just envious rumour. Chremes is not convinced and the stage situation shows him right: *em Davom tibi!* (842) he says, pointing to Davos who at that moment suddenly appears from Glycerium's house. Simo cannot comprehend why he is coming out from *there*: *unde egreditur?...quid illud malist?* (843) Davos for a moment freezes and shudders to have been caught coming out of the improper place (*erus est: quid agam?* 846) and so the surprise is mutual. The fact that Pamphilus should be in the house as well comes to Simo as a complete shock (851). Pamphilus, just like Davos, expresses his surprise at seeing Simo on stage when he comes out having been called out (872 *perii, pater est*).

The impropriety of staying at a stigmatized place and being discovered comes closest on the comic stage to a realistic portrayal of an improper behaviour that can be followed in all its incriminating details, and one would imagine that much humour was derived from a poor person's flustering at being caught red-handed. No doubt the actors took advantage of increasing the possibilities for good theatre that such scenes offered.

³⁴ For obvious reasons of contamination, the relationship between Charinus and Philumena in *Andria* cannot be developed in spatial terms. Both Charinus' and Philumena's houses are located offstage. Charinus is not even mentioned among the friends who dined at Chrysis' (cf. 86f.). We do not hear of Charinus running around Philumena's house, and Byrrhia is *not* sent to see what his master's girlfriend is doing, but is rather sent to spy on Pamphilus (cf. 412ff.)!

When Simo learns of the happy turn of events he no longer accuses his son of having acted against his wishes (*domus uxor liberi inventi invito patre*, 891). Instead, he becomes reconciled to Glycerium: *quor non illam huc transferri iubeo?* (952)³⁵ The dilemma that Pamphilus stood before, i.e. which house to prefer, is thus concluded by his father's reconciliatory offer of unifying the two households.

Phormio

Phormio revolves around a marriage that the bridegroom's father Demipho refuses to accept. He wants the girl out of his house (*abduce hanc*, 410) or else he threatens to forbid the house to both his son and his bride (425). Two scenes follow the pattern under discussion: firstly it is a surprise for Chremes when he sees Sophrona come out of Demipho's house: 748 *eho dic mihi quid rei tibist cum familia hac unde exis?*

The second instance is Nausistrata's spotting her husband come out of Demipho's house (795) - the house where he found his daughter and where there are proofs of his illicit affair. And Nausistrata sees him exactly when he leaves that house. Of course the neighbours are friendly and Demipho's house is not an 'improper space' where Chremes would feel awkward to have been caught. And yet there is a metaphor of impropriety in his exit and Nausistrata's notice of the exit: Chremes was not inside with Demipho, he was in the house to meet his daughter - the result of an illicit connection that he would like to keep secret. In the scene Nausistrata's presence clearly makes him uncomfortable (cf. 797) and he can only speak once she goes back home and shuts the door behind her (816).

Hecyra

In *Hecyra* the girl's unaccounted-for hatred of her mother-in-law is visualized in *oikos* terms: if Sostrata ever came for a talk, she would be refused entrance (cf. 181ff.) and eventually the girl decided to go to her mother's place. Sostrata was trying to call her back, even go and see her herself but again would be denied access (188). Laches is sure that the daughter-in-law hates Sostrata: *quid ais? non signi hoc sat est, / quod heri nemo voluit visentem ad eam te intro admittere?* (236f.). Indeed, if the two cannot get on together, he would rather have the girl stay in his house and his wife leave: *quod si scissem illa hic maneret potiu', tu hinc isses foras* (222). The son will opt for the opposite solution later on.³⁶

When Pamphilus arrives, he rushes to see his wife. Parmeno waits outside and the reasoning is ironic: if they saw a slave of Sostrata's around they would have ascribed the guilt for the illness to him (332). He does not know, though we do, that the 'illness' is pregnancy and so Parmeno's musing about the neighbours casting the blame for this particular 'illness' on a slave is rather piquant.

³⁵ Phormio in the eponymous play does not leave the stage in the end through a parodos but enters into Sostrata's house and is treated to a dinner, probably with Sostrata's son too. It nicely spites the old men who not only lost their money but are to lose their food as well (1052-4). In *Stichus* Epignomus, having told Antipho of the acquired fortune, becomes friends again with the old man. *et is [i.e. Antipho] hodie apud me cenat et frater meus* (415). I.e. the *cena* becomes a resolution, it takes place in Epignomus' house from which not a long time ago Antipho wanted to take away his daughter. The order of *cena* giver and receiver is reversed (to point at Antipho's miserly disposition?) - usually the one who arrives home receives a welcome home party, and does not throw one himself. From lines 512ff. we may infer that it would have been more appropriate for Antipho to give a feast *aduenientibus*; Cf. also *Mostellaria* for the sentiment: TH. *quia hodie adueni peregre*. SI. *promisi foras, / ad cenam ne me te uocare censeas* (1004ff.).

³⁶ Ter. *Hec.* 480f.: *segreganda aut mater a me est, Phidippe, aut Philumena. / nunc me pietas matri' potiu' commodum suadet sequi*. He makes this preference obvious when he escapes from them and their questioning into Laches' house (cf. 495).

A case of a surprising entrance from an unexpected place occurs in the scene where Parmeno spots his ex-love Bacchis coming out of his in-laws'! Of course it was highly unusual that a *hetaira* should mix with free born women - and Bacchis says just as much (756ff.); so he naturally wonders what took her there:

*sed quid Bacchidem
ab nostro adfine exeuntem video? quid huic hic est rei? (806f.)*³⁷

Adelphoe

A similar case, given much more prominence than in any other comedy by Terence, may be found in *Adelphoe*. When Demea talks about Ctesipho he never forgets to set him in contrast to his profligate brother who lives in the city. He believes Ctesipho to be in the country: *ruri esse parcum ac sobrium* (95). The future developments show him to have been deluded. The girl was kidnapped for Ctesipho's sake. Aeschinus invites him to 'use' the house while he goes to the forum to pay for her (*tu intro ad illam, Ctesipho* 277; cf. 284f.).

Demea somehow hears that Ctesipho was present when Aeschinus kidnapped the girl. He ironically comments:

*ubi ego illum quaeram? credo abductum in ganeum
aliquo: persuasit ille inpuru', sat scio. (359ff.)*

He is unaware that his son is actually in the stage house having a good time with his girlfriend. Syrus lies that the son is on the farm. Demea heaves a sigh of relief: 402f. *optumest: / metui ne haereret hic*. Later the concealment in the house is even strengthened: at 537ff, Ctesipho runs from on stage into hiding in the house when his father approaches. He begs Syrus not to let his father come in. But just in case he will find himself a solitary room and will lock himself in there with his girl (552).

A surprising meeting occurs at Sostrata's door, an unexpected place: Micio comes out of her house when Aeschinus wants to go in. He had not told his father about his love for Sostrata's daughter yet. *pater hercle est: perii. MI. Aeschine, / AE. quid huic hic negotist?* (637f). The surprise is not doubled as in other comedies: here Micio knows what Aeschinus came for and is ready to forgive him. It is rather the father coming out of that house that needs to be explained. In fact, later, Micio will agree to marry Sostrata and so this could be an ironic foreshadowing for his marriage connections. Of course that was not the intention with which he entered, but the picture of the father coming out of the women's house while the son is on stage has some piquancy about it.

Demea meanwhile, tired after touring the places where Syrus sent him (573ff.) comes on stage and probably sits near Micio's door hoping to see him when he returns (717f.). Surprisingly, Micio then comes out of his own house! *DE. sed eccum ipsum. te iamdudum quaero, Micio* (720). Just as Demea is uninformed about Micio's movements,

³⁷ In *Eunuchus* the humour of 'staying at an improper place' appears in a modified form when Chremes hears that Thais has his long lost sister. He doubtfully asks to be shown a proof (*ubi east?* 747). The answer is unusual: TH. *domi apud me*; only a brief *hem* in reply conceals his shock. Thais calms him down and stresses that regardless of the place she has taken care to guard the girl properly as befits her status. A similar shock of finding one's relative in an improper house follows when Phaedria's father returns and sees Parmeno standing in front of Thais' door. 975 *quem praestolare, Parmeno, hic ante ostium?* Parmeno, under the circumstances, believes he must quickly spit out the truth: *quandam fidicinam amat hic Chaerea*. 985. The father is surprised that Chaerea is actually in town. He is utterly confounded to hear that he is in the *hetaira's* house all tied up and ready to be castrated as an adulterer! He rushes in and, to add insult to injury, finds his son in a eunuch's clothes (1015f.).

so he lacks any knowledge of facts that others possess. He is shocked to hear that Micio agrees to move the girl into his house - but not throw the *psaltria* out! *pro divom fidem! / meretrix et materfamilias una in domo? / MI. quor non?* (746ff.) Micio as a *father*, alas, seems to support such an arrangement!

Syrus has his lies revealed by an inattentive slave Dromo who comes out of the house to say that Ctesipho is calling him inside (776). Demea is astonished that Ctesipho could be inside; *DE. eho carnufex, est Ctesipho intu'? SY. non est* (777ff.). He dashes into Micio's house to see for himself and finds his son inside with the *psaltria*.

Dilemma in *Dis Exapaton*

The extant fragment of *Dis Exapaton* is similar to the plays just discussed and is also particularly interesting for giving us a chance to make comparisons between Menander's and Plautus' vision of stage space and its dramatic importance for the two playwrights.³⁸

The comparison between Menander's efforts to represent a dramatic problem and the Plautine reworking of the original must take into account the rather different structure of Roman comedy. Plautus was forced to mould Greek scenes into a *continuum* to make do without choral breaks³⁹ and this forced him to take Menander's original as a play *text* to be given an original stage life.

Sostratos is led to believe that his friend Moschos perfidiously consorts with the woman Sostratos loves. Sostratos hears that Moschos is *in the hetaira's house* having a good time with her. Moschos' father (11ff.) implores the son's friend:

σ]ὺ δ' ἐκεῖνον ἐκκάλε[ι
]ν, νουθέτει δ' ἐναν[τίον
 αὐτόν τε σῶσον οἰκίαν θ' ὅλην φίλων.⁴⁰ (11ff. Handley)

The old men plead with him as with a family friend. Plautus develops the theme of friendship that must have featured significantly also in Menander (cf. *Bacch.* 386f, 414f, 453, 492). Moschos was doing his friend Sostratos a favour when he agreed to search for his friend's girlfriend; what Sostratos does not know is that Moschos found not only her but also her sister and it is precisely the other sister that both Pistoclerus' father and the pedagogue are talking about. Mnesilochus (Menander's Sostratos) venting his indignation and surprise at his friend's perfidy (for keeping for himself the girl whom Sostratos loves) is misunderstood and applauded by both the old men who believe his chastity has made him angry at his friend's visit to the house of vice. Plautus does not choose to incorporate Menander's more complex delineation of the friends' character

³⁸ For a discussion of the Greek original and its Latin adaptation, cf. Handley (1968); Barsby's edition (1986); Gaiser (1970); Questa (1970). Bain (1979) is most germane to my study. Damen (1992) 205 n.1 gives a comprehensive bibliography.

³⁹ Bain (1979) 22-24. 'Poichè il poeta latino non conosce intervalli del genere, è costretto a far uscire subito Pistoclero dalla casa di Criside-Bacchide, prestandogli qualche parola di circostanza per allungare il discorso, in modo che Sostrato-Mnesiloco possa uscire lui, nel frattempo, dalla casa del padre... A questa inversione delle entrate di Mosco-Pistoclero e Sostrato-Mnesiloco Plauto è stato costretto proprio dall'inesistenza nel suo teatro - come istituzione - di lunghe scene vuote con valore di intervallo tra 'atto' ed 'atto'.' Questa (1970) 201f. Goldberg (1990) argues that there is a musical (not choral) break at this point even in Plautus. I do not think he presents a very strong case for a substantial break of any kind.

⁴⁰ This sentiment, with its clearly tragic overtones, turns into a mere: '*serva tibi sodalem et mihi filium*' in Plautus (*Bacch.* 495). While generally Plautine language can be said to be more expressive than Menander's, here we have an example of a Greek wording that works much better than the Latin one.

and vv. 500ff are omitted in the adaptation. In the original, Moschos is angry with his friend but somewhat exculpates him nonetheless:⁴¹

τὸν δ' ἀβέλτερον
Μόσχον ἐλεῶ. καὶ τὰ μὲν ἔγωγ' ὀργίζομαι,
τὰ δ' οὐκ ἐκέλευον τοῦ γεγονότος αἵτιον
ἀδικήματος νενόμικα, τὴν δ' ἱταμωτάτην
πασῶν ἐκείνην (98ff. Handley)

I adduced this play because a telling difference occurs in the Menandrian and Plautine staging of the visual proof: at *Bacch.* 525 Mnesilochus goes inside his house to hand over the earned money to his father and in the meantime, *on an empty stage*, Pistoclerus comes from the *hetaira's* house. His 'over the shoulder' conversation with Bacchis (526ff.) cannot have been heard by his friend. We have here Pistoclerus who will actually want to visit Mnesilochus at home: *ibo ut uisam huc ad eum, si forte est domi* (529). In fact, they meet as Mnesilochus leaves his house unburdened of the gold.

Menander had the staging itself 'prove' Moschos' guilt before his friend: Moschos comes *out of the hetaira's house* looking for Sostratos who is in fact *on stage* at that moment (102f.): the staged movement from the house itself accuses him in front of his friend.⁴² When they engage in a conversation, Sostratos continues this household metaphor: he says the trouble he met is (107) *ἐνδον*. Although the friends' misunderstanding is quickly removed with none of the delaying comic techniques that enliven Plautus' *Bacchides*.

The scene of the meeting between Moschos and Sostratos in *Dis Exapaton* ends with both young men entering the *hetaira's* house to make sure Moschos is telling the truth. It also works as a visual metaphor for the shift in Sostratos' loyalties: now he will side with *this* house against his father's and this calls for a second scheme to find money for the *hetaira*.

For him and other young men, as for women and for comic masters, the stage house offers economical means of delineating their character and portraying problems in their mutual relationships. I wish to analyze now two plays where the use of stage space is particularly effective.

Partitions and incongruous juxtapositions in *Epitrepontes*

In some respects at least, there is a sense that comedy presents individuals as interacting with each other through semitransparent walls, always from a certain distance, with characters speaking their mind only to themselves and when given their own autonomous space. Final resolutions frequently focus on reintegrating disjointed families under the same roof: a Knemon needs to cross the threshold of Pan's shrine as a final symbol of the breaking of barriers between himself and the society, Smikrines in *Epitrepontes* needs to enter the house and greet his grandchild and the son-in-law from whom he was keen to keep his daughter for much of the play.⁴³

⁴¹ Bain (1979) 26f. Clark (1976) argues that Plautus' arrangement of the material has given more emphasis to the theme of friendship and trust than Menander had given it.

⁴² Of course Sostratos has already heard that he is there.

⁴³ Ludwig (1970) 54, in his hypothetical reconstruction of the Greek original of *Cistellaria* nicely notes how the stage image at the beginning of *Synaristosai* could have possibly borne on the final resolution that lay in the reunification of mother and daughter: 'Selenium und Phanostrata, zu deren Wiedervereinigung das Stück führen sollte, traten... zu Anfang in zwei kontrastierenden Szenen in ihrem verschiedenartigen Milieu vor den beiden Bühnenhäusern auf.'

In *Adelphoe*, Demea suggests the following:

*missa haec face,
hymenaeum turbas lampadas tibicinas,
atque hanc in horto maceriam iube dirui
quantum potest: hac transfer: unam fac domum;
transduce et matrem et familiam omnem ad nos. (906ff.)*

By *nos* he means Micio's house. The unity of the two houses that were separated before is here suggested rather mockingly, as if to subvert the typical comic optimism found at the endings of plays. Micio has his misgivings about having the whole lot of neighbours entertained in his house. Demea stresses that he gives these generous orders so that the two families will become one:

*ego vero iubeo et hac re et aliis omnibus
quam maxume unam facere nos hanc familiam
colere adiuvare adiungere. (925ff.)*

Aeschinus insists too. As the absurd climax of these unificatory efforts Demea suggests that Micio should marry Sostrata – an unusually bold subversion, almost a question mark over the typical comic unification of stage space.

Partitions between characters are depicted in an interesting way in *Epitrepontes* where the recently married husband lives separated from his bride, each occupying one stage house. While Pamphile is spurned and forced to live alone in one stage house, Charisios, her husband, is enjoying the company of friends and *hetairas*, partying inside the other stage house.⁴⁴ The text of the play is poorly preserved, but even in this state it allows us to observe how all sorts of relationships are dramatized by walls erected between a husband and wife, father and daughter, grandfather and grandson, Charisios and his *hetaira* Habrotonon, Habrotonon and Charisios' wife. Further relations were quite certainly developed but they are difficult to evaluate now.

Incongruously juxtaposed characters move side by side in their different spaces. The plot seems to have been built around the clashes between characters who are estranged but their love is not dead and the proximity of the houses in which they live makes it difficult to ignore each other. This is hinted at from the start when Onesimos enters with a cook. They do not go into the master's house, but, strangely, head for the neighbour's door (cf. GS and Wilamowitz-Moellendorff ad loc). Lines 2, 3 could not be made fuller of contrasts:

ΚΑ. οὐχ ὁ τρόφιμός σου πρὸς θεῶν, Ὀνήσιμε,
ὁ νῦν ἔχων <τὴν> Ἀβρότονον τὴν ψάλτριν
ἔγῃμ' ἐναγχος; ΟΝ. πάνυ μὲν οὖν. (fr. 1⁴⁵)

⁴⁴ We do not possess Menander's originals that would show a *hetaira*'s house on stage but – as Ter. *Eunuchus* suggests – he seems to have been fond of staging the danger and irony of freeborn characters moving into inappropriate, corrupting spaces. Pamphila (whose recognition will be part of the resolution) is brought on stage and into the *hetaira*'s house, in itself a meaningful image for a Greek spectator. Ludwig (1968) 172 notes how Terence modified this significant stage event: 'This is an event full of consequence for the whole drama, for it is in the house of Thais that the rape will take place, because of which the happy ending of the play is seriously endangered...[Pamphila] remains by her very silence the centre of attention. In Terence the parasite [contaminated from *Kolax*] upstages her.'

⁴⁵ We now know from the fragment of the hypothesis that the play did start with this fragment: see *POxy* 4020: Parsons (1994).

Charisios is by his own choice staying at the house of his neighbour next door, enjoying the provided feast and a *hetaira*'s company. Onesimos (and the now lost prologue speaker) would have explained this strange behaviour: it was because Onesimos told his master how he had seen his newly-wed wife Pamphile expose a baby that must have been conceived before she married Charisios. Once we are told this, we look forward to seeing just how it will come about that the exposed baby finds his way on stage and his parentage is learnt by all those involved. And how both the parents' involvement in the recognition will be orchestrated now that each is staying in a different stage house, with Charisios seemingly uninterested in anything but the feast, and Pamphile threatened to be soon taken away by her father.

There are many instances of accidental recognitions in the play that depend on timely movements in space by characters who were not expected to come into any contact and it was only through their separation that they could learn hidden truths about themselves and become reunited. Rather than being jarring such coincidences emphasize the fine tension between self-imposed distance and the fact that the stage space does not allow all that much distance, in fact it forces proximity on those who want to be left alone.

The contrast between the wife and a *hetaira* is kept alive for much of the first act, especially by Smikrines (who need not know that the *hetaira* Charisios is enjoying is in fact in Chairestratos' house). The strange position of a wife pitted against a *hetaira* is kept up explicitly as these fragmentary words spoken by Smikrines allow us to see (145f.):

ὁ τρισκακοδ[αίμων ψάλ]τριαν
]σαν γυναῖκα

The contrast between the two women went on:⁴⁶ both verbally but also visually, by allotting each her own space. Smikrines wishes to guard his daughter against the *hetaira*, and it is possible, as Arnott conjectures, that he insulted Habrotonon⁴⁷ and stressed his allegiance to his daughter against the ψάλτρια who should suffer for the domestic disruption, once he has clearly learnt all the facts from his daughter.

There is no point to leave Pamphile alone in the stage house, he believes – and he will do all he can to make her return with him to his home.⁴⁸ Indeed, if Smikrines is not successful, bringing Pamphile out of the house on stage may be thought rather problematic – she would not have any reason to come out on stage occupied now by a cook fretting about Chairestratos' feast, now by the brouhaha caused by Habrotonon's (feigned) motherhood. How can the girl's mind under such circumstances become observable to her husband if she cannot even come out? And yet, her mind must be observed from an objective distance, almost as if the mind itself was yet one more item of *gnorismata* proving her free-born origin (in a moral sense), that, like all *gnorismata*, needs to be brought out of the recesses of the house to be observed by those to whom the inside of the house is inaccessible. For the husband to learn the truth he must be hidden but close by to overhear the facts.

⁴⁶ For what it is worth, the hypothesis to the play too, naturally, presents characters in contrasting pairs, coupling Habrotonon and Pamphile: *POxy.* 4020.11f.

⁴⁷ See his comment that precedes the lines 159f.

⁴⁸ Similar is *Misoumenos* where there is a danger that Demeas may take his daughter Krateia away from Thrasonides (cf. 685ff.). Menandrian *Stichus* repeats the pattern as well (e.g. 17). Cf. Scafuro (1997) 307-26.

The beginning act juxtaposes Charisios' friend Chairestratos and Smikrines, both trying to protect 'their space' in one of the more unusual stagings we know from Menander. We do not know for what reason and with whom Chairestratos entered on stage but it is clear that sometime into their conversation Smikrines arrived, Chairestratos' partner left the stage, and Chairestratos stayed to watch from a secure distance what Charisios' father-in-law came for. Smikrines is fuming when he thinks of the big waste caused by Charisios. Chairestratos throws in an aside confirming Smikrines' calculations (137f., 140f.). How could the scene have been staged? Chairestratos, presumably somewhere in the hiding near his house overhears Smikrines who must have been directing his anger at Charisios of whom he knows that he is away from the house: the groom took the dowry but οὐ τῆς γυναικὸς νενόμιχ' αὐτὸν οἰκέτην. / ἀπόκοιτός ἐστι, (135f.) – but does he know that the son-in-law is in fact in the house next door (cf. GS on 159f., p. 300)? If so, he would have directed some of his indignation at that house with further unnaturalness arising from the fact that he does not notice Chairestratos standing by and commenting on what the old man is saying. A common stage convention would be admittedly stretched to a large extent if he was indeed directing his anger at Chairestratos' house, and even perhaps seemed on the point of going inside (132f.). Smikrines would have to be imagined as acting up his indignation to a humorous extent for Chairestratos presence to be left unnoticed.⁴⁹ Bain observes that lines 140ff: 'a soliloquy followed by a conversation, both elements quite unobserved by Smikrines – which amounts to at least five lines is probably the longest aside passage in Menander.'⁵⁰ Such irregularity must perhaps be accounted for by a special emphasis on the staging of two separate houses with Smikrines shown ignorant of what goes a few steps away from the daughter's house. The loss of text is responsible for some difficulty and we have no way of telling how much Smikrines actually knew. If he was unaware of where Charisios was staying then the humour of the following would be dramatically lowered. Habrotonon comes out saying:

Χαρίσι]ός σε προσμένει, Χαιρέ[στρατε. (142)

It could have been used to let astonished Smikrines learn that Charisios was staying next door.⁵¹ This, however, seems ruled out by the lack of an immediate reaction from Smikrines who must therefore be imagined totally absorbed in his own thoughts. It remains uncertain when Smikrines at last notices Habrotonon. The information remains ultimately irretrievable in the lacuna of some 10 to 30 lines after 146. The scene between Chairestratos and Smikrines, despite its lacunose state, hints at a stage divided between Smikrines on the one side and Chairestratos with Habrotonon on the other, each trying to protect their proper spheres (164, 165f.).

In Act III, just after Habrotonon went inside the house to unleash her scheme, Smikrines arrived on stage and delivered a long monologue (almost all of it is lost). He overhears the cook thrown out of the house mention the incredible news of Charisios and Habrotonon having a baby. The rest of the facts are supplied by Chairestratos who comes on stage next. Smikrines hears of the baby's birth (cf. the preserved 'τέτοκε' at

⁴⁹ Cf. Bain (1977) 110-12, 152.

⁵⁰ Bain (1977) 152.

⁵¹ If such was the case, it would resemble Terence's *Adelphoe*: Dromo comes out of the house, he spots Syrus and bluntly announces that Ctesipho is calling him inside (776). Demea, Ctesipho's father is on stage then, and overhears that Ctesipho is in the house (with a *psaltria*): DE. *eho carnufex, / est Ctesipho intu'?* SY. *non est* (777f.). He dashes into Micio's house to see for himself and finds his son inside with the girl.

639, and 645f.⁵²) and the shocking information will make him even more determined to take his daughter away (655ff). It is noteworthy that the intrigue spun by Habrotonon should not be unleashed on stage on Charisios but on the comically more interesting (and less important) characters of the cook and Smikrines. And here comes a solution to the difficulty of having Pamphile come out on stage: Smikrines comes just on time to learn of ‘Habrotonon’s baby’ and he is understandably outraged. If it were not for Smikrines’ indignation and insistence, it would be impossible to present Pamphile declaring her unchanging love for Charisios. Habrotonon’s intrigue achieves that not only is the father of the baby confirmed, but so is also Pamphile’s loyalty to her husband, during an onstage conversation with her father. Charisios is himself a spectator himself, eavesdropping on the conversation from inside Chairestratos’ house as we learn later (883ff.). Smikrines does not convince his daughter to leave with him. She remains on stage alone and lamenting her wretched situation (τίς ἂν θεῶν τάλαιναν ἐλεήσειέ με; 855) when, again as if on cue, Habrotonon comes out of the other house with the baby for no other reason than that it has been crying. Habrotonon, unaware of Pamphile’s presence, tenderly soothes the baby wondering when he will see his mother (ὦ φίλτατον [τέκνον, πότ’] ὅψει μητέρα; 856). The stage picture shows the irony of the plot – the marriage between Pamphile and Charisios could not have been saved by the solitary efforts of the couple who knew too little about each other. Their recognition is brought about by a dramatically efficient means of putting them in two incongruous spaces. The two spaces come together in the person of Habrotonon accosting Pamphile and handing her Pamphile’s child. Recognizing in Pamphile the ravished girl, the courtesan, of all the people, brings happiness to Pamphile’s house and in a meaningful image crosses its threshold with the mother and her baby. The *hetaira*, who for much of the play symbolized a rupture between Charisios and Pamphile, and who kept the couple separated each in a different house, now symbolically heals their marriage.

Onesimos comes on stage next announcing a strange turn in Charisios’ behaviour who was watching Pamphile from inside the house:

πρὸς ταῖς θύραις γὰρ ἔνδον ἀρτί[ως πολὺν
 χρόνον διακύπτων ἐνδ[ιέτριψ’
 ὁ πατήρ δὲ τῆς νύμφης τι περὶ [τοῦ πράγματος
 ἐλάλει πρὸς ἐκείνην, ὡς ἔοιχ’, ὁ δ’ οἶα μὲν
 ἥλλαττε χρώματ’, ἄνδρες, οὐδ’ εἰπεῖν καλόν.
 “ὦ γλυκυτάτη” δὲ “τῶν λόγων οἶους λέγεις”
 ἀνέκραγε, τὴν κεφαλὴν τ’ ἀνεπάταξε σφόδρα
 αὐτοῦ. πάλιν δὲ διαλιπὼν, “οἶαν λαβὼν
 γυναῖχ’ ὁ μέλεος ἠτύχηκα.” τὸ δὲ πέρας,
 ὡς πάντα διακούσας ἀπῆλθ’ εἴσω ποτέ,
 βρυχηθμὸς ἔνδον, τιλμός, ἔκστασις συχνή. (883ff.)

Perhaps a modern dramatist would prefer Habrotonon and Pamphile not leaving the stage but meeting Charisios so that the couple’s reunion may be enacted on stage. Menander, however, opted for an indirect report detailing Charisios’ reaction to Pamphile’s declaration of loyalty. When the door rattles, Onesimos loses courage and runs away for fear that Charisios may kill him as the principal reason behind the domestic split. Another runaway slave would probably dart offstage, Onesimos, however,

⁵² Cf. also Sandbach’s (highly tentative) supplement: Χα[ρυσίω παῖς γέγονεν ἐκ τῆς ψαλ]τρίας; (621)

gives the convention a twist and runs inside the other (Charisios') stage house.⁵³ This leaves Charisios alone on stage to confess to his own wrongdoing and double standards because it was none other than himself who had raped Pamphile. When he is about to finish his monologue, he spots Onesimos coming out with Habrotonon in tow. They assure the young master that the baby is his and Pamphile's. The emotional reunion between husband and wife was avoided and preference was given to a scene in which the baby's parentage is confirmed.

In the final act Smikrines arrives with Pamphile's nurse Sophrone once again intent on carrying his daughter away from Charisios. He has no idea of the recent developments, the fact made obvious at the door of the house. He is taken off his guard when he finds the door to be, significantly enough, locked (ἡ θύρα παιητέα / κεκλειμένη γάρ ἐστι 1075f.). The door-knocking adds a positively lighter flavour to the scene in which Smikrines' ignorance of facts will become ridiculed.⁵⁴ Onesimos comes out to open the door of the house, yet another shock for Smikrines who surely did not expect to find him in Charisios' house. Onesimos has his fun with Smikrines' slow-wittedness. The old man is ridiculed for having tried to separate the couple and eventually he is invited to enter the house, accept and greet the grandchild:

ON. τὸν δὲ θυγατριδοῦν λαβὼν
ἐνδον πρόσειπε. ΣΜ. θυγατριδοῦν, μαστιγία; (1112f.)

The fact that the child everyone considered Habrotonon's in fact belongs to Pamphile dawns on him very slowly. In the end, however, he enters the house that looked deserted at the beginning of the play, and that now turned into a place of celebration with Habrotonon, the child, Charisios, Onesimos and Smikrines all having to walk through its threshold.

Samia

Unlike *Epitrepontes*, there should be no divisions on the stage of *Samia*: the old men of the two houses are friends, so are the women. Not to forget young Moschion, who hopes to marry his neighbour as soon as his father arrives home. However, the play offers much of interest regarding its stagecraft. The reason for that lies in the barriers that run through Demeas' house, splitting it into two unequal halves: Demeas against everyone else.

Let us look at how the situation in Demeas' house offers opportunities to *show* the dramatic problems of the play in stage terms. The *kyrios* of the house, Demeas, is also a loving father and a partner of a faithful *pallake* Chrysis. In a moment of domestic crisis, he must deliberate how much information he allows out of his house in order to protect those inside against evil influence (embodied by Chrysis, he thinks). His love will not let him act openly and with a resoluteness that a Nikeratos would require of him. Protection of the house becomes a problem because he decides to keep to himself his deluded suspicions and not expose his son to public scrutiny. His silence will, however, make him incomprehensible and his error will be hard to detect, let alone mend. The stage space in the play is symbolic of the independence of individual family members – they

⁵³ Bain (1977) 145-7 makes a strong case for having Onesimos on stage at 587 and during Charisios' monologue.

⁵⁴ On comic door-knocking cf. Brown (1995).

each move almost in seclusion, allowing no one to appreciate their frame of mind.⁵⁵ Only a series of exquisite twists brings father and son to confront each other in a situation that no longer allows escapes. Nothing but stage accidents allow recognition and reconciliation between characters as Menander presents them, moving in solitary spaces and afraid of confrontation.

At the beginning of *Samia* Moschion enters from (most probably) Demeas' house to deliver the prologue in the role of a typical young man in love. Something is weighing him down, but before he begins to explain his misery, he makes clear how his father Demeas showered benefactions on him from early childhood when Demeas adopted him into the house. Thanks to Demeas, Moschion could be generous himself (e.g. τῶν φίλων / τοῖς δεομένοις τὰ μέτρι' ἐπαρκεῖν ἐδυνάμην, 15f). The generous upbringing received in a well-off house may alert the audience to the presence of the house on the other end of stage that belongs to a poorer family. Some in the audience instinctively start to expect a typical love affair to have developed between a rich young man and a poor neighbour's daughter. However, before going into details of his own affair, Moschion brings up the theme of his father's romantic liaison with a Samian *pallake* Chrysis narrated at length in the typical language of New Comedy love affairs: Demeas, having fallen in love with Chrysis, wanted to make the relationship with her stable and so brought her in the house as a signal for those in the house, as for the outsiders. He was at first afraid to bring her in because of Moschion but the son urged him to go with it. Moschion learnt of the affair despite his father's unwillingness:

ἔκρυπτε τοῦτ', ἡσυχύνετ'· ἡσθόμην ἐγὼ
ἄκοντος αὐτοῦ (23f.)

If Menander had wanted to write a play with Demeas' affair as a target of derision, references to Moschion's friends (15f), Chrysis' young suitors (26), even Moschion's service as a commander of the tribe cavalry (ἐφυλάρχησα 15) could well have been made significant – for instance, it could have been shown that through them Moschion learnt of his father's affair with Chrysis, the object of younger suitors. ἡσθόμην ἐγὼ ἄκοντος αὐτοῦ sounds almost like a compressed account of a comic plot against a *senex libidinosus* caught red-handed by his son and his young friends. It was in part, I suspect, to dispel such comic associations, that Moschion quickly shows his approval and understanding for his father's love affair: πρᾶγμ' ἴσως ἀνθρώπινον (22).⁵⁶

Demeas was conscious of young rivals for Chrysis' attention and bringing her in the house was the only way of guarding her as his property. Menander makes Moschion hint at the comic error that will later crop up in the play: the juxtaposition of the mention of young rivals: ἀντεραστῶν μεираκίων (26), and Moschion: δι' ἔμ' ἴσως αἰσχύνεται / λέγ]ω⁵⁷ λαβεῖν ταύτην (27f.) is interesting. Moschion only hints at his father's sensitive and delicate relationship with his son and he denies as early as this speech any comic potential of the father-son rivalry.⁵⁸ Still, the three lines lean heavily towards the comic

⁵⁵ Weissenberger (1991) 421 comments on how both father and son attempt to keep a 'mask' of exemplary behaviour and anything that seems to fall short of that is kept hidden from sight. Cf. Vogt-Spira (1992) 146 on the *Verschleierungsmotiv*.

⁵⁶ Grant (1986) 178 thinks that 'Moschion helped his father in some way to bring his desires to fruition. One of the frequent 'duties' of a young man's friend was to help him in his love affairs.'

⁵⁷ The supplement is Jacques'; εἴσ]ω that appears in Sandbach's *apparatus* is equally satisfactory.

⁵⁸ Keuls (1973) 1 thinks that the father-son topic 'apparently held a special interest for Menander'. See especially Wehrli (1936) 63ff, Treu (1969), Weissenberger (1991), Sherberg (1995) and references in Keuls (1973) 1 n.2.

tradition of mistrust and competition between father and son when a pretty *hetaira* is to be brought near them both. This juxtaposition will be realized into *the* comic error of the play: in his moment of utter crisis of trust, Demeas will be wrongly led to believe that Moschion fathered a child on Chrysis. It is only with hindsight that we may appreciate the subtle interplay between comic tradition and Moschion's simple use of evocative images. Menander seems to be teasingly flashing certain comic cards only to deny them their value, and then suddenly resurrecting them later with a twist.

The entrance from his father's house to deliver the prologue may not be seen significant but in the light of later developments it is revealing: Moschion shows that he does not shun Chrysis and does not mind living under the same roof with her in his father's absence. However, from the moment of Demeas' arrival, he will look for Moschion in vain: the son will not be staying in the house. For dramatic purposes Moschion must be kept running away and even if Demeas does not comment on Moschion's motivation for it, his absence is misread as deliberate and may have added to his mistaken belief that Moschion is on the run from Chrysis and her temptations.

After a lacuna of some 23 or 24 lines, we see Moschion struggling to reveal the incident that led to the rape of his neighbour's daughter (ἡμάρτηκα γάρ 3; ἐκύησεν ἡ παῖς 49). The play seems to be definitely moving away from the father-son rivalry into, we suspect, a familiar pattern of intrigue comedy: his father, we imagine, will probably oppose the marriage with the poor neighbour's daughter. The girl's mother was told of the rape and the focus therefore naturally shifts onto Demeas' house. The neighbours' role becomes naturally reduced – after all, what can the girl do, but wait how Moschion will deal with his own father? No independent role seems intended for the other house. Even the baby is staying from the beginning of the play in Demeas' house. Could it be that Moschion's father will be the dramatically necessary obstacle to this marriage? Such ideas do come to mind, but it is difficult to accommodate them with what we have been told about Demeas' generous disposition. As a man in love himself, Demeas is an understanding man, generously cherishing his relationship with Moschion. Would such a character be a suitable dramatic obstacle to the wedding? It is difficult to see him as a *willing* obstacle to Moschion. Conceivable obstacles are quickly disappearing and it seems that just one is left available – namely that Demeas, on arrival, will become an obstacle through nothing else but his typical generosity: bringing for his adopted son news of a wedding with another bride seems a conceivable option.⁵⁹

It is important to see that Moschion believes himself a good son, repaying all kindness. *Charis*, so characteristic of a relationship between the next of kin and good friends will be used by Moschion to describe theirs:

δι' ἐκεῖνον ἦν ἄνθρωπος. ἀστείαν δ' ὅμως
τούτων χάριν τιν' ἀπεδίδουν· ἦν κόσμος. (17f.)

It is natural that the young man having before his eyes his father's generosity, may be unwilling to confess to raping a poor girl and thus frustrating father's natural hopes of a good marriage.⁶⁰ Demeas' generosity, that underlies all dramatic conflicts in this play, suddenly comes to the fore: Moschion acutely feels it needs to be repaid and so he is naturally ashamed to be found in a situation when for the first time he cannot do

⁵⁹ In Ter. *Phormio*, for example, Chremes arrives from Lemnos full of hopes that he can have his daughter married to Antipho (e.g. 670f).

⁶⁰ Keuls (1973) 9 and n. 27, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1935) 417 and n. 4.

precisely that. It is the first serious failing, although the rape is presented as an almost natural consequence of the circumstances:

Samian Chrysis, we are told, was accepted into the house and the neighbourhood. She got on well with the women of the house next door being treated almost as Demeas' full-fledged wife. The women of the two households often visited each other and even the rape of the neighbour's girl happened nowhere else than in Demeas' house, turned topsy-turvy during the festive *Adonia*.

Menander could have chosen any out-door festival that took his fancy and so the circumstances rather show Moschion as not too typical a seducer, in order to stress the relationship of trust with his generous father by showing this as an accidental error. The Adonis festival under Moschion's very nose rendered Moschion incapable of resistance. Noteworthy is the detail that Moschion includes as another hint at his serious disposition: ἐξ ἀγροῦ δὴ καταδραμὼν (38). In the description of himself before the rape he appeals to the rhetoric of chastity: he was given to farm work generally used in comedy to imply chaste life away from urban leisure and amatory pursuits.⁶¹ But even farm work did not make him fall asleep – such was the uncharacteristic noise in the house. He became an involuntary spectator and his fall was inevitable.

To a young man making his father proud⁶² and used to public prestige (cf. λαμπρῶς 15) it is no easy thing putting *explicitly* what happened next:

ὁκνῶ λέγειν τὰ λοιπ', ἴσως δ' αἰσχύνομαι
οἷς] οὐδὲν ὄφελός ἐσθ'· ὅμως αἰσχύνομαι. (47f.)

He promised the girl's mother to marry the girl on his father's return home. However, in dealing with his father, Moschion, until now inexperienced at dissembling, will be disastrously inept: he will try hard to save his face by avoiding the problems on stage and if forced to confront them, he will resort to a good deal of insincerity.

In a gap of some 26-27 lines Moschion ended his speech, and probably went in the direction of the harbour to meet his slave Parmenon. Chrysis comes on stage next, her motives for doing so are lost with her lines – options are many: the baby may have been crying, she may have wanted to see if Parmenon was back already, she may have wanted to visit the neighbours. Virtue and proximity created friendships, just as in real life.⁶³ Free movement between the two stage houses was even used as a visual metaphor to describe a *voluntary* nature of friendships: though being a *pallake*, Chrysis' position in *Samia* is subtly shown validated by the women of the neighbourhood who freely meet with her. Virtue is assumed necessary for a friendship and the freeborn women's acceptance of Chrysis means she poses no threat, and is consequently elevated almost to the status accorded to proper wives.

φ]ιλανθρώπως δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς
Σαμί]αν διέκειθ' ἢ τῆς κόρης μήτηρ, τὰ τε
πλεῖ]στ' ἦν παρ' αὐταῖς ἦδε, καὶ πάλιν ποτὲ

⁶¹ The contrast between urban leisure and hard farm work is developed for instance in Ter. *Adelphoe* where it serves to contrast the *ethos* of both Micio and Demea, and the two sons in their care. Demea believes his son Ctesipho to be the serious one of the two: he is, Demeas claims, on the farm: *ruri esse parcum ac sobrium* (95) while Aeschinus, his brother living in town, was just rumoured to break into a pimp's house.

⁶² A frequently stressed moral duty, see examples in Arnott (1981) 217.

⁶³ Dem. 55.23: τῆς γὰρ μητρὸς τῆς ἐμῆς χρωμένης τῇ τούτων μητρὶ πρὶν τούτους ἐπιχειρῆσαι με συκοφαντεῖν, καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλας ἀφικνουμένων, οἷον εἰκὸς ἅμα μὲν ἀμφοτέρων οἰκουσῶν ἐν ἀγρῷ καὶ γειτνιωσῶν.

αὐται παρ' ἡμῖν (*Samia* 35f.)⁶⁴

At 77ff, Moschion asks her if she is ready to keep up the agreed pretense and claim to be the mother of Plangon's baby.⁶⁵ She is fearless, confident in Demeas' love being no weaker than Moschion's:

ἐρᾶι γάρ, ὦ βέλτιστε, κακῆϊνος κακῶς,
οὐχ ἥττον ἢ σύ (81f).

Thus, before we even see Demeas, both Moschion and Chrysis have been shown expressing their appreciation of him.⁶⁶ Demeas was generous both to Moschion and Chrysis and allowed them both almost as much authority in the house as he enjoyed himself. They both appreciate it, but do not show their appreciation to Demeas' face; partly because Demeas himself feels uneasy about disclosing his own feelings and does not give them a chance to disclose theirs. Demeas will be cast in a position that emasculates him. His very generosity will lead to the seeming loss of his authority in his own house when he sees his *pallake*, his son, and then the whole household, Parmenon and the womenfolk, take lightly his authority; he will feel almost on the verge of being thrown out of the house, to his neighbour his behaviour will seem unbefitting a real man. He must, it seems, undergo this ordeal, in order to be reassured of the mutual love in the house and everyone's appreciation of his authority.

With the news of his father approaching, Moschion loses courage and the theme of courage and manliness is given its first relevance. In an unusual social twist, he needs to be exhorted by a slave to act like a man!

ἀλλ' ὅπως ἔσει
ἀνδρεῖος εὐθύς τ' ἐμβαλεῖς περὶ τοῦ γάμου
λόγον. (63f.)

He is afraid to the point of crouching and weeping by the door of the house where he promised the girl's mother he would marry her.

(Μο) αἰσχύνομαι τὸν πατέρα. (Πα) τήν δὲ παρθένον
ἣν ἡδίκηκας τήν τε ταύτης μητέρα
ὅπως⁶⁷ - τρέμεις, ἀνδρόγυνε... (67ff)

ἤδη, πεπαῦσθαι τουτονὶ πρὸς ταῖς θύραις
κλάοντα ταύταις, μηδ' ἐκεῖν' ἀμνημονεῖν

⁶⁴ Blume (1974) 21 suggests that Chrysis' first entrance on stage could have been motivated by a wish to visit her friends next door. This would most explicitly represent in front of the audience the friendship between the women of the two houses and their unity in secretive knowledge hidden from the two old men. This is of course only attractive guesswork as Chrysis could just as well be coming out only to see if Parmeno and Moschion haven't returned yet from the harbour. On free movement allowed neighbours, cf. Knemon's indignation in *Dyskolos*: ἀνδροφύνα θηρί· εὐθὺς ὥσπερ πρὸς φίλον / κόπτουσιν (481f.).

⁶⁵ The view taken by most scholars is that Chrysis herself gave birth to a baby that died (or was exposed?). Cf. most recently Arnott (1998) 39 (with references to previous discussions). Jacques (1971) xlii n.3 well compares *Epitrepontes* 267ff: Syros' wife reared the exposed baby after her own child died.

⁶⁶ Cf. Weissenberger (1991) 418.

⁶⁷ See Arnott (1998) 40 for discussion and references to previous attempts at correction. He suggests πῶς οὐ.

ὧν ὥμοσεν· θύειν, στεφανοῦσθαι, σησαμῆν
κόπτειν παρελθών· αὐτὸς οὐχ ἱκανὰς ἔχειν
προφάσεις δοκῶ σοι; (72ff)

Who is in control of the situation, father or son? Free-born Moschion lacks courage and needs to be exhorted to manliness by a slave and by fearless Chrysis. They agree to follow a scheme that would buy them time before Moschion confesses to his father. This includes pretending that Chrysis is the mother of the baby. Before the fathers arrive, they are shown to be victims of an intrigue, not capable of controlling the domestic situation. The concepts of masculinity and authority will be developed through control of space and the consequent control of knowledge.

When Demeas and Nikeratos arrive, their bright mood and ignorance of the serious matters that have arisen behind their backs, seem to cast them in a position of stock targets of the brewing intrigue. However, Menander is at pains to keep us in suspense about who is in fact in control of the stage: and he proves this by balancing out the old men's ignorance with their authority as *kyrioi* of their houses moving the play in the direction which they want.

Even though they are ignorant of what goes on behind their backs they are not made into simple comic fools: as two *kyrioi*, they start a subject that leaves the intriguers unguarded. In their authority as heads of their houses they raise a topic of the wedding between Moschion and Nikeratos' daughter.⁶⁸ Eventually, it is their decision and the speed with which they put it into action that keep the intriguers inside the house gasping for air. And yet, in a Menandrian manner, our experience is constantly a mixture of emotions with no party shown as gaining an upper hand. The two *kyrioi* assert their role, with everyone running around at their command, but the old men are at the same time shown to be ignorant of what goes on in their houses.⁶⁹ Such an arrangement brilliantly brings to surface the essential problem of the play, that is, the lack of communication between the two groups. Not only during the intrigue when they are naturally split into two parties, but also in everyday life, when none of them opens up his mind and instead of being open they just move in parallel spaces.

Before the end of an act Menander often introduces characters who will prove to be obstacles to a smooth plot⁷⁰ and it must be interesting to see that Demeas and Nikeratos are in fact not against the wedding. He and his neighbour went inside their respective houses. Moschion was not in, we saw him run away, in order to prepare himself for a duel with his father. Demeas comes out of the house at the beginning of Act II angry, as must have been expected, because he found Chrysis inside with 'her' baby. Demeas finds that she did not expose the baby but kept him even though she must have been aware that Demeas would be against such an arrangement.

Chrysis seemed to have acted with authority that did not belong to her. Demeas will act to recover it. He is aware of Moschion's place in the house and will wish to throw her out. Instead of a reunion to be celebrated with festivities, comic characters frequently arrive home to face unexpected domestic problems that only emphasize how important it is to keep under control the whole house. More than in real life, in dramatic life those who control space, also control access to information, conversely, those like

⁶⁸ The reasons for Demeas' choice of Nikeratos' daughter for his son are not clear. They could have found a reason during their trip abroad (Keuls (1973) 10) or Demeas may become impressed with a girl brought up in a poor house under strict Nikeratos free from exposure to temptation (Lloyd-Jones (1972) 143). Such a reason would be pleasantly ironic.

⁶⁹ Cf. Stoessl (1973) 22.

⁷⁰ Cf. Damen's examples and references (1992) 207 n.7.

Smikrines in *Epitrepontes*, who leave the stage risk losing control over what goes on on stage.⁷¹ A lengthy absence from the stage or home city allows time for loss of control over stage space and crucial information. Theopropides in *Mostellaria* returns home full of hopes of a nice welcome (*credo exspectatus ueniam familiaribus* 441) but long absence made him ignorant of the latest developments and he is made to flee away when told that his house is haunted. In *Perikeiromene*, Polemon returns from a military campaign to hear of Glykera's improper behaviour with a young man from the neighbourhood: ὡ τῆς πικρᾶς ἐπιδημίας (360), comments his slave on the stressful return. Demipho in *Phormio*, talking about a man returning from abroad, ostensibly exaggerates but he is not far off target in describing the whole tradition of comic home arrivals:

*quam ob rem omnis, quom secundae res sunt maxume, tum maxume
meditari secum oportet quo pacto advorsam aerumnam ferant,
pericla damna exsilia: peregre rediens semper cogitet
aut filii peccatum aut uxori' mortem aut morbum filiae
communia esse haec, fieri posse, ut ne quid animo sit novom;
quidquid praeter spem eveniat, omne id deputare esse in lucro* (241ff.)⁷²

We hope that after an open confrontation between Demeas and Chrysis, the misunderstanding will be cleared. We are disappointed: Moschion comes in from offstage and through a series of insincere and artificial arguments he persuades his father to keep Chrysis. The arrangement is unpleasantly precarious and nothing is solved.

Moschion forgot all about preparing a convincing speech while he was away. His mind wandered off and he spent the time daydreaming about his wedding. This absorption will make him blind to his father's presence on stage. When he becomes aware of him he is startled but Demeas too was engrossed in his own thoughts. Demeas is deeply concerned about his relationship with Chrysis while Moschion thinks only of his desire to marry. His insincere arguments remind us of the comic conflict between the young and old, as represented through a comic clash between clever and rich young men using rhetoric and their simpleminded, easy-to-fool old fathers. Unfortunately, the text becomes lacunose when we see Demeas move from the theme of Chrysis to the new topic of Moschion's wedding that must have been the ultimate reason for dropping the subject of Chrysis' baby. Demeas is shown to forget or put aside his own problems and concentrate on a wedding for Moschion. The desired marriage with Plangon falls into Moschion's lap suddenly and without the young man's least effort. Demeas' new act of generosity makes the young man even less willing to come clean about the baby's parentage. Ironically, the wedding that was the ultimate goal, all too easily comes true, and, what is worse, in fact proves an unpleasant element in that it prevents Demeas from quietly talking to Chrysis, and it also lulls Moschion into believing that perhaps all will be well even if he postpones his confession to a more convenient time.

The wedding that was to be a resolution turns instead into an element detaining Demeas from discovering the truth. He is running around and orchestrating everyone else's movements with the speed of a whirlwind. In dramaturgical respects, this

⁷¹ In *Misoumenos*, Getas runs to fetch his master Thrasonides who needs to be informed of the happy event of Krateia's reunion with her father. When the slave leaves the stage (638), however, Demeas learns from Krateia about her suspicion that none other than Thrasonides killed her brother. With this information, their attitude naturally changes and Thrasonides cannot comprehend it. He arrives on stage full of hopes that Demeas will give him his daughter in marriage, only to be shocked at the unusually mulish resistance from both Krateia and Demeas (cf. 685ff).

⁷² Cf. also *Phormio* 611. See also Goldberg (1980) 109f., Wright (1974) 138-51.

resembles plays where protagonists cease from finding the truth and instead of trying to clear their misunderstandings, idle away their time drowning their frustration in wine and feasting.

For Demeas part of the agitation may come from his efforts to forget Chrysis. It is interesting that again Demeas is shown as a man fully in control of the situation because it is he who suggested a wedding, yet at the same time a comic side of the matter resurfaces as well: ἂν διδῶσ' οὗτοι γαμεῖς (150 Arnott) spoken by Demeas gently hints at the old man's lack of knowledge about the two households' plans thought out in his absence. When Demeas congratulates the abstract *automaton* on the happy coincidence, it resembles the frequent tag found at the resolution of comedies.⁷³ It is an effective way of teasing the audience by putting it in Act II before any complication has even occurred!

ταῦτόματόν ἐστιν ὡς ἔοικέ που θεὸς
σώζει τε πολλὰ τῶν ἀοράτων πραγμάτων·
ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐκ εἰδὼς ἔχον[τα τουτονὶ
ἐρωτικῶς, ταῦ[τ' (163ff)

Demeas calls Nikeratos out, and tries to fix the wedding on this day. Besides his own reasons, he believes that it will take Nikeratos some time to persuade his wife (200f.).⁷⁴ His rush will become dramatically important and so it helps to make it more obvious by contrast with the unhurried Nikeratos and Parmenon. Nikeratos would opt for a more reasonable timing (176) but eventually gives in. Likewise Parmenon (189ff), who is totally unaware of what is going on around him, does not perform with the desired speed. All this is meant to prepare us for the troubles that Demeas' rushing will create.

Things move at the tempo Demeas sets and as Parmenon leaves the house we are given a glimpse of the bafflement that must have been felt inside the house as a result of Demeas' unsuspected and very sudden decision to have Moschion marry (198f). Similarly, Nikeratos on coming out of his house throws a significant comment about his wife who was quizzing him about the events (203ff., the text is uncertain).

Demeas' generosity makes him literally *run* after his duties: ἤδη τρέχω (154). Even if the verb could be used for a wide spectrum of agitated movement, it is clear that Demeas' eagerness to speed things up causes some chaos in the house. This finds an interesting parallel in a much more difficult Knemon in *Dyskolos*: there too, Knemon arrived home early and ordered his female slave and daughter to heat some water (193f.). He was not expected home so early, and so even the trivial order was enough to throw the house into confusion that was eventually to snowball into near-tragic proportions. Demeas rushing his household will fulfil the same dramaturgical role. He makes all his slaves busy with the suddenly ordered preparations; so much so that the baby is left forgotten crying. If at the start we suspected that it was Demeas' generosity that could have been imagined to stand in way of Moschion's wedding, now we see that his generosity propels the house into action and that in fact it will be the cause of the dramatic complication slowly gaining momentum. The matter is as yet invisible because of its initial triviality.

⁷³ Cf. for instance Men. *Epit.* 1107f and the discussions in Jachmann (1931) 3ff and Fraenkel (1960) 115 n.2 on Plaut. *Rudens* 1191ff.

⁷⁴ Cf. Stoessl (1973) 26.

Act III, however, brings a sudden reversal – Demeas comes on stage very slowly (ἡσυχῇ πάνυ 263) in visible contrast to his earlier mood and tempo: only recently (ἀρτίως 212) it was all plain sailing, everyone acted on his authority and quickly went about their business in the house:

ἐγίνετ' ἀμέλει πάνθ' ἐτοίμως, τὸ δὲ τάχος
τῶν πραττομένων ταραχὴν τιν' αὐτοῖς ἐνεπόει,
ὅπερ εἰκός. (223ff)

As is typical for Menander, another tone sneaks into this description of Demeas' authority. Demeas is the *kyrios* and no one disobeys him – how could they if they all wished for the wedding to come true anyway. And it is precisely in Demeas' description of the readiness and smoothness with which the preparations were instantly undertaken that we are given another hint at the difference in the knowledge Demeas possesses and the secret shared by the rest of the house. Menander again mixes emotions by making Demeas a nice man moving the house around but left completely unaware of their motivation. He was generously trying to help with the preparations, he walked inside the pantry and while he stood there unnoticed, he happened to overhear Moschion's old nurse soothe the baby in the room next door. The nurse did not know that Demeas was in the house and so she freely addressed the baby as Moschion's son. The whole house watched their mouths in Demeas' presence and there was no way for Demeas to pry out the secret from the group while they kept together. He remains unobserved and on leaving the room he himself pretends to have heard nothing. He puts on an act and slowly walks out of the house full of intriguers. Demeas has no reason to doubt the old woman's veracity as she was thought she was alone with the baby:

ἐμέ τ' οὐδὲν εἶδυι' ἔνδον ὄντ', ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ
εἶναι νομίσασα τοῦ λαλεῖν... (240f)

πάλιν δ', ἐπειδὴν τὴν λέγουσαν καταμάθω
τίτθην ἐκείνου πρῶτον οὖσαν, εἴτ' ἐμοῦ
λάβθαι λέγουσαν. (275ff)

It is a terrible blow to hear Moschion mentioned as the baby's father. How could the boy, who was until this day *κόσμιος* and *εὐσεβέστατος* be believed to have done anything like that?

Moreover, as he walked out, he saw Chrysis with the baby at her breast (265f.). Menander is at pains to show that even a reasonable man may be trapped by circumstances.⁷⁵ If he were a rash 'manly' lover like the soldier Polemon in *Perikeiromene*, he would not wait for any further proofs but would act in justified rage.⁷⁶ But while Polemon caused grave offence by the act, Demeas, if he sought confrontation, could have quickly discovered the truth if he acted with appropriate resolution and questioned both the nurse and Chrysis. However, the greatness of the suspected crime and his love for Moschion make him attempt to save as much as possible and he comes out of the house as calm as possible hoping to examine the matter on his own. In a

⁷⁵ Demeas did not act unreasonably, under the circumstances, cf. Blundell (1980) 36. Woman with milk was a powerful *tekmerion* that she has born a child: references in Scafuro (1997) 264 n.54.

⁷⁶ West (1991) 17 well contrasts Demeas with the rash Theseus in Eur. *Hippolytus*, the play that offers significant parallels: Katsouris (1975) 131ff, Jäkel (1982), West (1991) 17ff.

sudden reversal, the master of the house is reduced to dissimulation and pretence in his own house. He cannot bring himself to express the conclusion that offers itself naturally, rather, he walks out of the house where everyone is a potential enemy and creates his own domestic private space on stage with the audience as umpires of the logic of his reasoning: τὸ πρᾶγμα δ' εἰς μέσον φέρω (270) he says. This is obviously necessary to reveal the nature of his mistake and the basis for it. There was no other way to disclose what happened inside the house especially since no one else noticed that Demeas had overheard the nurse. Menander had to have him reveal the secret to the audience even though it is Demeas' nature to keep his thoughts to himself, not revealing them to Chrysis, Moschion, Parmenon or Nikeratos. His monologue before the audience must be taken as something that does not compromise Demeas' attempt to keep secret from the public everything he saw inside.⁷⁷

When Demeas arrived, Moschion was not at home: he was at some solitary place intent on practising his welcome speech. When the two eventually met in Act II, Moschion again would not go into the house not wanting to stand in the way of wedding preparations (he exits at 161f.). In Demeas' eyes, therefore, Moschion's constant absence from the house is taken to mean that Moschion abstains from staying under the same roof with a disloyal Helen. 'He does not love the girl, as I naively thought' - for that would be too great a coincidence, we may continue his train of thoughts - 'but merely wanted to flee my Helen.' (335f.)

Demeas seeks to investigate on his own. By coincidence, he spots the slave Parmenon coming from the market with a cook. Parmenon if anyone must be well informed because of the slave's inborn nosiness:

τοῦτον γὰρ οὐδέν, ὥς ἐγῶμαι, λανθάνοι
τοιούτον ἂν πραττόμενον ἔργον ἔστι γὰρ
περίεργος, εἴ τις ἄλλος (298ff)

Demeas counts on Parmenon to play the 'stock' role of a nosy comic slave and confronts him as a stern master would confront an intriguing slave. Although Demeas has heard enough, he has no proof against Parmenon and so he must test the slave with generalities. Demeas approaches Parmenon pretending he knows all and accuses the slave of taking part in a plot against him (συγκρύπτεις τι πρὸς μ', ἥισθημαι 308).

Parmenon believes that Demeas has hit upon the truth about the intrigue and admits that Moschion really is the father of the baby and that an intrigue was attempted to keep it from Demeas. Why, Parmenon has no time to add:

(Πα) ἔστι, δέσποτ', ἀλλὰ λανθάνειν.
(Δη) τί "λανθάνειν"; ἱμάντα παίδων τις δότω. (320f)

The *kyrios* is duly angry at such a bold admission that they wanted to keep it secret from Demeas. Now Demeas must be a man, acting resolutely, not enslaved by love:

οὐ γὰρ περιέσται. Δημέα, νῦν ἄνδρα χρὴ
εἶναί σ'· ἐπιλαθοῦ τοῦ πόθου, πέπαυσ' ἐρῶν,

⁷⁷ Kraus (1934) 68: 'das Publikum ein rein ideeller Partner ist, dem keine Realität in der Welt des Stückes entspricht: seinen Nachbarn etwa oder Vorübergehenden auf der Straße würde Demeas sein vermeintliches Mißgeschick gewiß nicht so brühwarm erzählen.' Hofmeister (1997) 297 sees Demeas' address as a sign of Demeas' privileging them over his 'enemies.'

καὶ τὰτύχημα μὲν τὸ γεγονὸς κρύφθ' ὅσον
 ἔνεστι διὰ τὸν ὕόν, ἐκ τῆς δ' οἰκίας
 ἐπὶ κεφαλὴν ἐς κόρακας ὥσον τὴν καλὴν
 Σαμίαν (349ff)

If it were not for Parmenon's unabashed admission Demeas would not perhaps have felt the need to reassert his authority so rashly. Demeas makes up his mind outside the house – while inside he must keep on a mask of pretence in a complete reversal of the use of domestic space. Resolute to throw Chrysis and the baby out of the house, he now rushes inside. His outburst throws the house yet again into disbelief and chaos. Chrysis will later voice everyone's shock at his incomprehensible behaviour: at first he was calm about her keeping the baby, and it was only gradually that did he became mad (412ff). How irrational of him to first order Chrysis to organize the wedding, and then just as the cook arrived, he threw the woman out in what amounted to a 'divorce'!⁷⁸ Demeas is made to appear even more incomprehensible since, under the circumstances, it would be usual to stop the wedding preparations and – also typically enough – throw the cook out with all his pots and pans. Instead, Chrysis goes out and the cook is ordered *back inside* to continue with the preparations as before.

Chrysis, the baby, and the nurse stand on stage while inside both stage houses wedding preparations continue uninterrupted. Nikeratos' arrival from the *agora* with a sheep is after the cook's presence the second element to keep Chrysis' domestic tragedy securely within the comic context. She finds protection in the house of Nikeratos, who comforts her with a comically simplistic explanation of Demeas' behaviour. In effect, the baby returns to his true mother and the women of the two households become united. Their force is made obvious when at the beginning of Act IV Nikeratos comes out on stage. He is speaking back to his wife (421) who must be imagined urging him to confront Demeas. As he moves across the stage, just before knocking he spots Moschion coming from the city entrance. 'You are here but don't know what's going on?' Nikeratos asks incredulously (τὰνθάδ' ἀγνοῶν πάρει; 433). Moschion's ignorance was allowed by absence from stage. Of course, had he been around, he would not have allowed Chrysis' expulsion.

Just as Nikeratos at the beginning of the act (421) came out of his house speaking to his wife, so later Demeas (440) enters with his words directed to the lamenting women inside his house. Amid all this domestic misfortune, Demeas prays to Apollo to be able to keep his emotions to himself:

μέλλω γὰρ ποεῖν
 τοὺς γάμους, ἄνδρες, καταπιὼν τὴν χολήν· τήρ[ει δὲ σύ,
 δέσποτ', αὐτὸς ἵνα γένωμαι μὴ 'πίδηλος μηδ[ενί,
 ἀλλὰ τὸν ὑμέναιον αἰδεῖν εἰσανάγκασόν με σύ. (446ff)

For Moschion's sake, he will force himself to sing a wedding hymn. The wedding that is a typical resolution and reassertion of the master's authority in the house, is given an entirely different 'feel'. Of course, if Demeas' indulgence were to continue in this

⁷⁸ As far as there can be one, given that Chrysis was a *pallake*. Scafuro (1997) 262 and n.53. Expulsion as a comic theme is hinted at e.g. in Plaut. *Miles* 977, Ter. *Phormio* 410, Ter. *Hec.* (e.g.) 222. Cf. the fragment of *Concha* in Frassinetti (1955), an Atellana by L. Pomponius Bononiensis: *vos istic manete: eliminabo extra aedis coniugem*. Context is unknown but it looks like a rather farcical execution of the motif (note the address to some bystanders).

way, it would end in total disaster for Chrysis and the baby, not to mention the mistrust that would only grow between Demeas and his son. Either Demeas is somehow made to disclose his wrong suspicions or the rest of the household will never be able to correct his unsuspected views. How can the man who prays to be able to keep a happy mask both inside the house and outside, be naturally made to air his wildest suspicions?

As will be seen, just as in the scene with Parmenon, he will become enraged only when faced with the seemingly barefaced disregard for his authority. Demeas surely hoped for discretion and silent pact between father and son, but strangely Moschion starts to protest and threaten Demeas' position when he learns of Chrysis' expulsion. Until now Demeas had every right to believe himself and Moschion united against the rest of the ungrateful womenfolk inside the house (who do not hide their sadness over Chrysis' expulsion). Now, Demeas is saddened to see that Moschion's allegiance lies elsewhere: δεινὸν ἤδη συναδικεῖ μ' οὗτος (456). Demeas is left alone; he appeals to Nikeratos the only friend who seems on his side.⁷⁹ Moschion still does not realize Demeas' suspicions about him and Chrysis, and he can only appeal to Demeas' sense of *decorum*:

τί τ]οὺς φίλους
προσδοκᾷς εἶναι πυθομένους; (458f.)

This must make Demeas even angrier – is his son really interested just in empty *decorum* and, worse, is his *kosmiotes* only a show for strangers? No matter how much he loved Chrysis, Demeas said good-bye to her – but to lose Moschion now is an altogether different thing and he is beside himself when he sees his son betraying his authority and trust by taking Chrysis' side:

(Δη) τοῦθ', ὁρᾷ[θ', ὑ]περβολή·
τοῦτο τῶν δεινῶν ἐκείνων δεινότερον (461f.)

Moschion does not appreciate the situation and confident in Demeas' generosity at the worst possible time, he asks Nikeratos to tell Chrysis to come back. Demeas protests but Moschion asks it as a favour.

(Μο) ἀλλ' ἀνάγκη, πάτερ. (Δη) ἀνάγκη; τῶν ἐμῶν οὐ κύριος
ἔσομ' ἐγώ; (Μο) ταύτην ἐμοὶ δὸς τὴν χάριν. (Δη) ποίαν χάριν;
οἶον ἀξιόις μ' ἀπελθεῖν αὐτὸν ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας
καταλιπόνθ' ὑμᾶς δύο ὄντας. τοὺς γάμους ἔα ποεῖν,
τοὺς γάμους ἔα με ποιεῖν, ἂν ἔχῃς νοῦν. (467ff)

Moschion shows trust in Demeas' generosity and he cannot be blamed for not revealing the baby's parentage to Demeas now – simply because he does not know that is what Demeas' *melancholia* is all about. Demeas could of course never grant his son the favour he is asked. And when told 'he must' do it, Demeas openly brings up the topic of who is the *kyrios* here: τῶν ἐμῶν οὐ κύριος ἔσομ' ἐγώ; What Moschion asks for would reduce him to an emasculated slave-like position as he would have to suffer the seducer sharing Chrysis with himself under the same roof, an impossible arrangement.

⁷⁹ Hofmeister (1997) 299-303 is not convincing when he claims that Demeas has a 'flawed' relationship with Nikeratos and that the two are not 'real' friends.

Does Moschion dare to ask him to vacate the house and leave the young man alone in the house with Chrysis? The old man believes Moschion to have turned into his enemy now who *συνόμνυται τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἐχθροῖς* (474f). Demeas still tries to avoid being open in his accusations and not only because Nikeratos is on stage but also because it is his way of talking to Moschion. He indicates to Moschion that he knows that the young man is the father of the baby – but only after moving away from Nikeratos. In the face of the still unsuspecting Moschion, Demeas is reduced to shouting and throwing away last shreds of *decorum*. Without restraint he asks his son to tell Nikeratos who the mother of the baby is:

(Δη) ὦ Ζεῦ, τοῦ θράσους. ἐναντίον
 δὴ σ' ἐρωτῶ τῶν παρόντων· ἐκ τίνος τὸ παιδίον
 ἐστὶ σοι; Νικηράτῳ τοῦτ' εἶπον, εἰ μὴ σοι δοκεῖ
 δεινὸν <εἶναι.> (487f)

That is the last thing Moschion would want to do. The play thus seems hopelessly stuck – Moschion is the father of the baby but he cannot open his mouth and confess who the mother is in front of the raped girl's father. His silence, however, is taken for admission of his guilt. And it must make quite a nice contrast for Demeas: the boy who dared to tell him in his face that the deed was rather trivial, is standing silent in front of Nikeratos! Again, Moschion earlier praised as *κόσμιος* to strangers seems indeed more ashamed of an outsider than of his own father! Menander once again uses stagecraft to add to the false image of Moschion.

Needless to say, Nikeratos begins to suspect the same thing as Demeas and he shudders in horror that his daughter was to be married to such a depraved and sexually incontinent man. His outburst is unstoppable and threatens to reveal the crime to public scrutiny. Demeas was trying to avoid a public show and he now turns to Moschion with a reproach that their secret is out because of Moschion's unreasonable behaviour (500).

A simpler Nikeratos is angry with Demeas for lack of spirit:

(Νι) ἀνδράποδ[ον εἶ, Δημέα.
 εἰ γὰρ ἐμὸν ἦ[σχυνε λέ]κτρον, οὐκ ἂν εἰς ἄλλον ποτὲ
 ὕβρις οὐδ' ἡ συγ[κλ]ιθεῖσα· παλλακὴν δ' ἂν αὖριον
 πρῶτος ἀνθρώπων ἐπώλουν, συναποκηρύττων ἅμα
 ὕόν, ὥστε μηθὲν εἶναι μήτε κουρεῖον κενόν,
 μὴ στοάν, καθημένους δὲ πάντας ἐξ ἑωθινοῦ
 περὶ ἐμοῦ λαλεῖν λέγοντας ὡς ἀνὴρ Νικήρατος
 γέγον' ἐπεξελθὼν δικαίως τῷ φόνῳ. (506f)

As Gomme-Sandbach note, 'a man without spirit can be said to think of himself as an ἀνδράποδον' (GS ad 506); but surely Nikeratos also implies that Demeas did not exercise his authority as the head of the household, as a resolute *kyrios*, as a man who would care about his reputation in the eyes of other men. Nikeratos makes it clear he would have made short shrift of both Chrysis and Moschion so that no man could say he behaved irresolutely.

Andreia was for others to judge.⁸⁰ For Nikeratos acting like a man means acting openly, resolutely, and it eventually holds a promise of public recognition. However,

⁸⁰ Cf. Rosen and Sluiter (2003) 8.

when we hear Nikeratos scolding Demeas for lack of manliness, we are again reminded of the problem of manliness and how Parmenon exhorted Moschion to behave in a manly way. Had Moschion obeyed and fearlessly owned up to the rape, all the complications could have been avoided.

Demeas asks Nikeratos as a friend (518) to throw Chrysis out of his house and Nikeratos need not be told twice. This is the third time the expulsion theme has been raised – Moschion averted Demeas' first attempt to throw Chrysis out, and now he is present to set things straight when Chrysis is threatened with the third expulsion. The situation has reached a breaking point and Menander does well to speed things up towards a resolution by a triple recognition: firstly, Moschion begins to fathom the extent of Demeas' suspicions (ἄρτι γὰρ τὸ πρᾶγμα κατανοῶ 522) which was impossible so long as Demeas wanted them to remain secret. This, in turn, elicits a strong denial from Moschion – none of what Demeas suspected was true. With Nikeratos gone into the house, Moschion confesses to having raped Nikeratos' daughter and to playing a little intrigue by suggesting that the baby was Chrysis' when in fact it was Plangon's:

(Mo) ἔστι τῆς Νικηράτου
θυγατρός, ἐξ ἐμοῦ. λαθεῖν δὲ τοῦτ' ἐβουλόμην ἐγώ (528f)

A third recognition occurs offstage: Nikeratos rushed inside to drag Chrysis out but his abrupt entry caused the womenfolk to be caught red-handed. Nikeratos could see his daughter with the baby feeding him at her breast. As often, *gnorismata* had to change place and move to a position from which they were visible and accessible for the first time so that people could read them. In this play the role of *gnorismata* suffers an interesting alteration for the simple fact that it was in Moschion's power to reveal everything. The fact that even in such a play *gnorismata* will play a role goes a long way to describe the unusual circumstances towards which Moschion's cowardice hijacked the play. The dramatic situation has reached such a point of confusion that there was a possibility that Moschion's confession could have been taken as a final attempt to save his hide by telling lies. Without an objective proof in the form of *gnorismata*, Demeas' trust in Moschion would not have perhaps automatically returned. Demeas sees his mistake and duly apologizes to his son.

Just as Parmenon earlier was the comic substitute for Demeas' anger, so now Nikeratos becomes the comic butt who mirrors Demeas' earlier lack of knowledge on a lighter level. This comicalization of a previously serious problem by transferring it on a comically exploitable character seems a stock feature of Menander's drama to lighten up the mood. It surely is more effective than to harm the relationship between Moschion and Demeas by robust comedy, if Menander rather relegates the comic element to the scene with Nikeratos. There is also another reason for having Nikeratos undergo a humorous teasing: the light touch makes sure that the problem of the rape will not keep the mood serious for unnecessarily long. Menander can inject some farcical humour into Nikeratos' ignorance – something he would not want to do in Demeas' case. How different the depiction is can be seen from having uninformed Nikeratos rushing inside his house and outside again repeatedly. He, a self-professed epitome of manliness, is comical for his ignorance in which he fights the women keeping united against him. When Chrysis comes hurriedly out, the baby in her arms, manly Nikeratos must be restrained by Demeas from hurting her. Blind *andreia* is questioned and problematized but it allows Demeas a chance to return to a role of *kyrios* again when he calls Chrysis back inside his house. A reader will be justly baffled by the lack of attention given to

Chrysis after Demeas has learnt the truth about her innocence.⁸¹ Her return into Demeas' household, if it were not so swift and carried out against the farcical background of the two old men panting and struggling, would have been a perfect reenactment of the passage towards reunion which other comedies offer⁸² but Menander does away with it, and only briefly shows us Chrysis again at the very end, significantly in the role of a quasi-wife when she is called out to welcome Moschion's bride: the privilege given to real wives.⁸³

The women of the two houses will be surprised to see Chrysis back in Demeas' house, and that the two old gentlemen have drawn a full circle – from friendship to fist-fighting and back. The two old men return to their respective houses at the end of the act in a completely different state of mind and all seems well at last.

In Act V it is Moschion's turn to show an incomprehensible and sudden change of mind. True reversal from bad to good fortune is a reason good enough for Glykera to forgive Polemon's rashness in *Perikeiromene* (cf. 1021ff.). However, unlike Polemon, who is the bad guy there (and who is clearly repentant for his error), it is impossible to find a single culpable character in *Samia* and in that respect the fifth act can move in a rather arbitrary direction any way as the poet wishes. If Moschion tries to manoeuvre his father into the culprit for his unfounded suspicions, with astonishing freedom and good sense Demeas does not become a prototype of a farcical comical target. Demeas is not treated as a comic fool who needs to be overcome at the end of the play. Instead, he is the one to come out victorious in the final battle of words. And if previously (Act II), we were given a hint of a typical comic conflict between a clever young orator and his simplistic father, here it is Demeas who delivers a great speech against which Moschion cannot protest. Was then the reason for this act to make Moschion look sillier?⁸⁴ He does not seem to appreciate Demeas' utterly reasonable behaviour, nor has he any comment about Chrysis. Or was the goal no more than to show that Moschion still trusts in

⁸¹ Cf. e.g. Fantham (1975) 66 'Chrysis gets nothing more than a gruff 'Come over here, Chrysis, ...run on in, then!' when he lets her into the house to escape the frantic Niceratos. For the dramatist it would seem her problems and her honour were of no more concern, his real interest is the man-to-man relationship of Demeas and his adopted son, and Chrysis once back in the household is forgotten.'

⁸² And it matters little if the marriage passage is staged or just narrated. Compare Men. *Perikeiromene*: Doris says to Polemon: 'good news, she [Glykera] is coming back to you' (ΠΟ. τί ἐστὶ, Δωρὶ φιλότατη; / ΔΩ. ἀγαθὰ πορεύσεθ' ὡς σέ, 989f.): and no more need be said or staged of Glykera's return. Similarly, in *Misoumenos* 431 (=961 Arnott), Getas comes out of Kleinias' house with the news for Thrasonides: 'they are offering you the girl you love in marriage' (διδόασί σοι γυναῖκα) and after this happy news Demeas appears on stage to perform an ἐγγύη. The finale does not feature Krateia's movement back to Thrasonides' house - there is just a promise of a celebratory dinner and the wedding will take place the following day.

⁸³ Redfield (1982) 189: 'The wedding is the special task of the mothers (cf. Eur. Alc. 317)...The mother of the bride follows the wedding procession with a torch,... on arrival they are met by the mother of the groom, also with torches.' We do not know how much of this was felt necessary to be represented on stage in this particular play. It is noteworthy, however, that Chrysis' appearance in the doorway means to represent not only normalisation of the relationship with Demeas but also her inauguration onto a higher relationship with Moschion, as her role so closely resembles that of the groom's mother.

⁸⁴ Weissenberger (1991) 432 n.54 argues against a purely burlesque nature of the act (on which, see Zagagi (1988) 196 n.8). However, his analysis does not provide real clues to the mood of the act. For Weissenberger (and cf. others' opinions listed, 433 n.55) it is important that Moschion at last does something actively and on his own – although he knows that it will not make father happy and this becomes a chance for both of them to rebuild their relationship on a more solid basis. But again, does the ending *show* any promise of a new beginning? Moschion does not seem any wiser at the end of the play for that to be true. Besides, both he and his father were privately aware of the other's gratitude and generosity; it was rather their communication that needed help but Moschion does not seem to have learnt any new lesson here.

Demeas' generosity to the extent that he can afford to test his father with a childish lesson?

This act offers an example of the use of stage space typical for spurned lovers: an effort to enter the stage house and provoke the cold person inside into action. Moschion orders Parmenon to fetch him a cloak and sword (*Samia* 659, cf. *Pk.* 354). He has decided that by pretending to go into exile he will teach his father a lesson.⁸⁵ He believes that will stop Demeas from such suspicions in the future (εἰς τὰ λοιπὰ γὰρ / φυλάξεθ' οὗτος μηθὲν εἰς μ' ἀγνωμονεῖν 636f). Such language is sometimes used to explain the broad humour of punishment scenes in the final acts: the likes of Knemon or Smikrines must be bent and taught how to behave.⁸⁶ Moschion expects his father to come out, realize the son's injured feelings and beg him to stay. The soldier in *Misoumenos* had similar expectations: to be invited back into the house by the girl he loves (already at 23ff.). However, it sits oddly in this play as Demeas has done very little to deserve such a treatment and also because Moschion shows no traces of contrition for the problems he caused both households.

Demeas admits his mistake but also rightly reproaches Moschion for harshness: Demeas tried as much as he could to keep his suspicions to himself, while Moschion showed no such restraint and is disclosing Demeas' error publicly: οὐχὶ τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἔθηκα φανερόν ἐπιχαίρειν· σὺ δὲ / τὴν ἐμὴν ἀμαρτίαν νῦν ἐκφέρεις καὶ μάρτυρας / ἐπ' ἐμὲ τῆς ἐμῆς ἀνοίας λαμβάνεις (706f).

Moschion cannot react thanks to Nikeratos' timely arrival. This act is either a poor attempt at incorporating a traditionally light ending to an unusual play paying little attention to what went before, or we have here a deliberate twist to such comic endings – Moschion does not control the behaviour of anyone else during the scene, the ruse fails and ends on a very bland note, and Demeas' apology in the middle of it is throughout utterly convincing. One feels that this act is emotionally much more complex than anything a reductive analysis may offer and part of it may lie in our not getting the mood right because we are unable to grasp fully the nuances of Moschion's behaviour here.

This and the previous chapter showed some of the extent to which movement in stage space helped describe individual characters by alluding both to everyday 'real life' practice and the accumulated experience of the comic genre itself. At the same time, unchanging stage space of comedy was shown to have been put to a varied use in describing women, old masters, and young men, and as the prime vehicle for clever plots whereby even an open street could come to reveal in various forms the deepest recesses of the characters' secretive minds.

⁸⁵ The motif is discussed by Zagagi (1988) 194f.

⁸⁶ Cf. *Dysk.* 903ff: κηδεύομεν γὰρ αὐτῶι / οἰκέλος ἡμῖν γίνετ'· εἰ δ' ἔσται τοιοῦτος αἰεὶ, / ἔργον ὑπενεγκεῖν, πῶς γὰρ οὐ; *Epit.* 1110: αὐθις δ' ὅπως μὴ λήψομαί σε, Σμικρίνη, / προπετῇ λέγω σοι... *Asp.* 537ff may suggest a similarly motivated punishment of Smikrines:]αν τε κόπτῃι πολλάκις /]υτῶι κοσμιώτερον ποῶ /]ῃρ ἐστὶ μοι τρόπον τινά... *Pk.* 1016ff is relevant as an example of a man who learnt his lesson well and will watch his behaviour in the future.

IV. Familiar games and the poet's voice in self-advertisement

Real life and conventions

Speaking one's mind in the street is not very natural, but the sentiments given voice are very human and convincing. Beginning with the behaviour on stage, there are many such points of contact in the genre between convention and a convincing resemblance of real life. The genre's realism seems to be accepted from the start as operating within certain assumed limits. In this final chapter I shall refine and somewhat sum up the theme of my thesis by exploring the paradoxes that this entails. The audience, apart from their familiarity with the genre brought with them a natural desire to see something new that was worked into an adequately intricate plot, with the hopes for the final product to be plausible (realistic), fresh and original but familiar at the same time.

Unlike the New Comedy world, real life is unpredictable, things do not always end up as desired or take too long to accomplish, and it is normally difficult to gain enough detachment to appreciate one's situation at any given moment in life. This variety refuses all attempts at categorization: Philemon (fr. 93 K-A) has an unnamed character commenting in this vein: there are as many types of behaviour as there are men. And while to each animal Prometheus gave a specific code of behaviour (κατὰ γένη φύσιν μίαν 93.3 K-A), men's behaviour cannot be reduced to any simple pattern:

ἡμῶν δ' ὅσα καὶ τὰ σώματ' ἐστὶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν
καθ' ἐνός, τοσούτους ἔστι καὶ τρόπους ἰδεῖν (Phil. fr. 93.10f. K-A)

To represent such variety could not have possibly been the artistic goal of any New Comedy playwright and the fact that this sentiment features in Philemon should alert us to the possibility that it was exploited for a particular comic effect, perhaps with dramatic irony intended. And yet Menander, working in this genre, is known to have been praised as one who *omnem vitae imaginem expressit*.¹ Aristophanes of Byzantium praised him in equally famous words (ὦ Μένανδρε καὶ βίε, πότερος ἄρ' ὑμῶν πότερον ἀπεμιμήσατο; *Test.* 83 K-A) and one must therefore conclude that the conventional tools and self-imposed limitations of the genre were probably ignored as not diminishing that experience of 'real life'.

I shall suggest that (ironically) playing precisely with the stock material of comedy helped Menander achieve a sense of novelty and realism. Characters, and situations in which they found themselves, looked similar in most plays but Menander could surprise with a touch of unusual individualization, with a clever use of accidents, timing, and variations in tempo that could at any time change the course of action. He could moreover enhance the realism of the performance by playfully suggesting that dramatic performances were mere fiction, pretending that only what goes on on the stage at the moment is 'for real'. To achieve all this, dramatic canon, and recognizable dramatic conventions could work as 'the other' against which a new play redefined itself in various ways, for instance by seemingly discarding the trite, but in fact cleverly using

¹ Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.i.69: '*ita omnem vitae imaginem expressit, tanta in eo inveniendi copia et eloquendi facultas, ita est omnibus rebus personis affectibus accommodatus.*' Comments on the nature of Menander's realism appear in most studies of the author, see e.g. Zagagi (1994) 94ff., Arnott (1968), Del Corno (1996).

and modifying the canon into a new experience. Such a game must have been of particular interest to the audience: they knew what outcome to expect, what general behaviour would characterize what *dramatis personae*, and so on, but they were constantly kept in the dark about the particulars. The timing, say, or any other surprises in store for them were all built around the spectators' very familiarity with what should come next.

Moreover, if the dual nature of the genre – that posed as reality but used stock techniques to represent it – is cleverly used, it can allow the playwright effective comments on his art and his own sophistication without disturbing the illusion that his *dramatis personae* speak and act fully in character. This naturally requires audience participation and therefore it is advisable to stop to look at the audience's familiarity with the genre.

The audience and its interest in drama

The New Comedy playwright thus seeks to create a convincing image of real life with all its unpredictability, but he is also moving along certain well-defined generic lines and, as has just been remarked, this tension allows him to play a little game with his spectators' expectations. For this to make sense to them, spectators needed to be acquainted with the genre. Of course, fourth-century audiences were exposed to a massive output of new dramas, both comedies and tragedies.² 'Tragedy was never cultivated with more enthusiasm than during the fourth century' and some of the plays gained as much fame as the already canonical fifth-century plays.³ Surely behind the dismissive remarks of the philosophers about the depraved common tastes of the spectators and their negative influence on the contemporary playwrights, there lies an acknowledgment of the spectators' interest in the dramatic productions and lively participation in the dramatic events.⁴ The sheer mass of productions that the audiences were exposed to must have created among them connoisseurs who watched the plays with a certain horizon of expectations.⁵ We have evidence for the increased fondness for theatrical artefacts in the fourth century⁶ and for the growing fame and importance of the actors.⁷ If this was not enough to suggest a serious interest in theatre, comic parody, literary debates within the plays, and even explicit playing with the concept of writing a play⁸ should alert us to the possibility that technical aspects of the theatre were becoming widely recognized by the spectators before Menander began his career.

Intensive literary polemic was a feature of both Old and Middle Comedy⁹ and indeed the very competitive context in which much of Greek literature was produced shaped the awareness of strictly defined rules embedded in each particular genre. Competition required a certain technical standard, and comedy (Old and Middle) was particularly prone to appeals to such standards before its audience.

² For instance the tragic poet Karkinos is credited with 160 plays, Astydamas with even more (240: Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 20f.). For the period of Middle Comedy, we have the figure of 617 comedies (Anon. *De comoedia* II 52ff. Kaibel, III 45ff. Koster.) or by a different estimate (Athenaeus 8.336d) over 800. The output of plays by New Comedy playwrights must have been equally vast, with the numbers only for Menander variously given as 105, 108 or 109 (Men. *Test.* 1, 3, 46, and 63.).

³ Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 20. Cf. Easterling (1993), (1997) 212 with note 6.

⁴ Cf. e.g. Plato *Leg.* 659a-c, Arist. *Poet.* 1451b37, *Pol.* 1341b15. For the discussion of Aristotle's and Plato's views of theatocracy see Wallace (1997) with further references.

⁵ There is much stimulating work in this area. Seminal are Jauss (1982a,b) and Iser (1978).

⁶ Green (1994) 76 ff.

⁷ Arist. *Rh.* 1403b33 claims that actors have gained more power than the playwrights. Wallace (1997) 108.

⁸ Cf. Rosen (2000).

⁹ Oliva (1968).

It is naturally difficult to state precisely how widespread the awareness of the technicalities of the dramatic genres was. We have some evidence but it is hardly neutral:¹⁰ a prologue speaker in Antiphanes' comedy *Poiesis* (fr. 189 K-A) humorously exaggerates when (s)he says a tragic poet has an easy task because it is enough for him to drop a name and the spectators are sure to know the direction a play will take. In the case of comedies, it is argued, the plot has to be thought up anew every single time:

μακάριόν ἐστιν ἡ τραγωιδία
 ποίημα κατὰ πάντ', εἴ γε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι
 ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἰσιν ἐγνωρισμένοι,
 πρὶν καί τιν' εἰπεῖν· ὥσθ' ὑπομνήσαι μόνον
 δεῖ τὸν ποιητήν. Οἰδίπουν γὰρ † φῶ
 τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντ' ἴσασιν· ὁ πατήρ Λάιος,
 μήτηρ Ἰοκάστη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες τίνες,
 τί πείσεθ' οὗτος, τί πεποίηκεν· ἂν πάλιν
 εἴπηι τις Ἀλκμέωνα, καὶ τὰ παιδία
 πάντ' εὐθύς εἴρηχ', ὅτι μανεῖς ἀπέκτονε
 τὴν μητέρ', ἀγανακτῶν δ' Ἄδραστος εὐθέως
 ἥξει πάλιν τ' ἄπεισι — x — ∪ —
 <ἔπει>θ' ὅταν μὴθὲν δύνωντ' εἰπεῖν ἔτι,
 κομιδῇ δ' ἀπειρήκωσιν ἐν τοῖς δράμασιν,
 αἵρουσιν ὥσπερ δάκτυλον τὴν μηχανήν,
 καὶ τοῖς θεωμένοισιν ἀποχρώντως ἔχει.
 ἡμῖν δὲ ταῦτ' οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ πάντα δεῖ
 εὐρεῖν, ὀνόματα καινά, — x — ∪ —
 x — ∪ — κἄπειτα τὰ † διωικημένα
 πρότερον, τὰ νῦν παρόντα, τὴν καταστροφὴν,
 τὴν εἰσβολήν· ἂν ἔν τι τούτων παραλίπηι
 Χρέμης τις ἢ Φεῖδων τις, ἐκσυρίττεται·
 Πηλεῖ δὲ πάντ' ἔξεστι καὶ Τεύκρῳ ποιεῖν (Antiph. fr. 189 K-A)

On the other hand, Aristotle suggests that even the most famous tragic subjects were known only to a limited number of spectators (*Poet.* 1451b25). Both pronouncements are made within a particular argumentative context and they need not be taken as mutually exclusive.¹¹ Clearly there must have been differences in the perception of theatre and in the spectators' expectations that depended on their individual interests, education, social status and various more elusive elements. Given the differences in the education of the spectators – between, in Aristotle's words, the hired workers, mechanics and the like on the one hand and the educated spectators on the other (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1342a19ff.), it would indeed be difficult to insist that everyone in the audience recognized, say, an echo of Euripides' *Orestes* in the 'messenger-speech' of Menander's *Sikyonios* (176ff.).¹²

¹⁰ Handley (1989) 160; Oliva (1968) 35-7; Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 275f.

¹¹ Elsewhere (*Rh.* 1416b27), Aristotle claims that some famous stories – he mentions Achilles' deeds – are generally known.

¹² Even though we know that Eur. *Orestes* was a particularly successful play in the fourth century. Cf. Willink (1986) lxiii, Arnott (1986). Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 28-34 discusses Euripides' popularity in the fourth century. There were, incidentally, poets whose plays were meant to be circulated and read by educated readers (Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1413b, Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 8) and they presumably made

It is probable that not all in the audience were aware of, say, the influence of dramatic tradition on Menander's comedy. On the other hand it must be stressed that to notice at least the repetitiveness of many comic patterns requires no great learning.

All is familiar...

Becoming acquainted with only a couple of New Comedy plays makes one attuned to the genre's familiar settings, characters and resolutions. Some repetitiveness was openly acknowledged: Terence can claim, without a trace of censure, that there is no big difference between the *argumentum* of Menander's *Andria* and *Perinthia*:

*Menander fecit Andriam et Perinthiam.
qui utramvis recte norit ambas noverit:
non ita dissimili sunt argumento, [s]et tamen
dissimili oratione sunt factae ac stilo. (Ter. Andria 9ff.)*

Terence selects, and perhaps twists, his evidence for a particular rhetorical effect but his statement must have struck his spectators as containing a grain of truth if they were to sympathize with his line of argument.¹³

If we consider that Menander wrote over a hundred plays within thirty-odd years of his career – three plays a year on average – we need not doubt that a compromise had to be struck between originality and recycling: as if Menander had to face the basic problem of which part to concentrate on and make stand out. The rest could rely on dramatic shorthands. However, even these dramatic shorthands could very economically conceal their staleness and even give a sense of freshness with a few strokes that would turn the pattern on its head or tease the spectators with the timing of its execution. A poet may, for instance, work against a familiar 'grid' that smoothly moves his plot, but then suddenly surprise his knowledgeable audience with a few strokes. The general esthetic attitude had been around for some time:

*ἡγοῦμαι δ' οὕτως ἂν μεγίστην ἐπίδοσιν λαμβάνειν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τέχνας καὶ τὴν περὶ
τοὺς λόγους φιλοσοφίαν, εἴ τις θαυμάζοι καὶ τιμῶη μὴ τοὺς πρώτους τῶν ἔργων
ἀρχομένους, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἄρισθ' ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐξεργαζομένους, μηδὲ τοὺς περὶ τούτων
ζητοῦντας λέγειν, περὶ ὧν μηδεὶς πρότερον εἶρηκεν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς οὕτως ἐπισταμένους
εἰπεῖν ὥς οὐδεὶς ἂν ἄλλος δύναιτο. (Isocr. Panegyricus 10)*

Aristotle praises Euripides for improving a verse of Aeschylus' with a single word (*Poet.* 1458a18) and this type of literary emulation is wholeheartedly embraced by comic poets who frequently appropriated while giving an impression of improving on their models, often Euripides himself: an anonymous comic poet speaking about a line from Euripides' *Orestes* (v. 234) elaborates:

*ὁ πρῶτος εἰπὼν "μεταβολὴ πάντων γλυκύ"
οὐχ ὑγίαινε, δέσποτ'· ἐκ μὲν γὰρ κόπου
γλυκεῖ' ἀνάπαυσις, ἐξ ἀλυσίας δ' ὕδωρ
ἦν δ' ἐκ πλουσίου*

different requirements on their target audience but it is futile to speculate how reading public influenced other poets whose prime motive was to win a dramatic competition.

¹³ Donatus, commenting on line 10, seems to be suggesting something different from Terence. See Arnott (1994) 70 who warns against taking Terence's words at face value.

πτωχὸν γενέσθαι, μεταβολὴ μέν, ἡδὺ δ' οὐ.
ὥστ' οὐχὶ πάντων ἐστὶ μεταβολὴ γλυκύ (fr. adesp. 859 K-A)

Impertinent slaves are best suited to show off their erudition in classics and point out how the high-flown *dicta* fail to reflect the 'real' life. A case of trivial nit-picking at the immensely popular *Orestes* may hint at the possibility that a significant part of the play's plot or perhaps an intrigue had to do with the popular theme of reversal in fortune. But I would like to see all this pointing at *prota heuremata* and their inventors – a staple joke eventually¹⁴ – as indicative in a more general way of the rhetorical strategy of referring to tradition, canon, predecessors and a deliberate effort to improve upon them.

It is most probably a hen-pecked husband who pronounces the following lines in a fragment by Eubulus:

κακὸς

κακῶς ἀπόλοιθ' ὅστις γυναικα δεύτερος
ἔγηνε· τὸν γὰρ πρῶτον οὐκ ἐρῶ κακῶς.
ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἦν ἄπειρος, οἶμαι, τοῦ κακοῦ,
ὁ δ' οἶον ἦν γυνὴ κακὸν πεπυσμένος, etc. (Eub. fr. 115 K-A)

By the time of Menander, the joke becomes a little tired, but it is still used nonetheless:

ἐξώλης ἀπόλοιθ' ὅστις ποτὲ

ὁ πρῶτος ἦν γήμας, ἔπειθ' ὁ δεύτερος,
εἶθ' ὁ τρίτος, εἶθ' ὁ τέταρτος, εἶθ' ὁ μεταγενής (Men. fr. 119 K-A)

It is not just a reference to an accursed *protos heuretes* of marriage, but also a punning reference to all other familiar jokes of the similar nature. Improving on a predecessor, writing as if in reaction to something rather than coming up with a wholly original play, was one way of producing fast and with economy, leaving enough space for the most interesting scenes. Of course, as each unhappy husband identified himself as belonging to the long tradition of men paying the price for the invention of marriage, every improvement on the joke also drew attention to earlier treatments and the poet's cleverness in surpassing them. Goldhill (1991) 221 well comments on 'the archetypal comic appropriation - which purloins in order to mark its own superiority, the *Aufhebung* of the practice of others, only to remake the joke by the parodic repetition with a difference.'

I shall return to this below, showing how a clever appropriation of the stock material may make it seem novel or at least better executed, and thus perhaps also subtly drawing attention to the creative process itself and the playwright's inventiveness in particular. However, let us return to the discussion of the self-enclosed world of New Comedy where everything necessarily looks similar.¹⁵ A brief mention here and there of tradition is not all it is about: with the appearance of *Dyskolos*, Görler (1961) quickly noted the striking similarity, down to some minor details, of a scene in it to Terence's

¹⁴ Euripides also has the first instance of this: see Barrett on *Hipp.* 407. See the references to comedy in Arnott (1996) 122 on Alexis 27 K-A and Dohm (1964) 130. The ancient critics were interested in the literature on *prota heuremata*: Taplin (1977) 438 n 2; and Nisbet-Hubbard (1970) on Hor. *Od.* i. 3.12. *Περὶ εὐρημάτων* treatises were written by Aristotle, Heracleides Ponticus (cf. Diog. Laert. V 88) and others; Stemplinger (1912) 10f.; Leo (1912) 151ff., Fairweather (1983) 320.

¹⁵ Cf. Sandbach (1977) 62, Konstan (1995) 195f. n.49.

Eunuchus. His examination of the evidence led him to conclude: ‘...Nicht nur gleiche Handlungsschemen hat Menander mehrfach in verschiedener Weise verwandt. Mindestens einmal hat er dies Spiel so weit getrieben, daß er eine ganze Szene einer Komödie in einer anderen nachgebildet und trotzdem beiden Szenen durch die unterschiedlichen Charaktere und die unterschiedliche Stellung im dramatischen Ablauf einen völlig verschiedenen Stimmungsgehalt gegeben hat.’¹⁶ We may be certain that if we had more of Menander, we would find even more proofs of the recycling of the same material and this fact would not be lost on the audience.

Dyskolos* vs. *Eunuchus

Görler (1961), as noted, finds interesting parallels between Act V of *Eunuchus* and Act II of *Dyskolos*. In *Eunuchus*, Thais castigates her servant Pythias for not having guarded the girl under their protection more closely. The slaves’ lack of care gave Chaerea a chance to rape the virgin. This chastisement parallels the situation in *Dyskolos* 233ff, where Daos is similarly rebuked by his master Gorgias for not having taken greater care to protect Gorgias’ half-sister from a stranger’s advances. After the dialogue, in both plays the ‘seducer’ now comes on stage and delivers a monologue without noticing the other two persons. While both Gorgias and Thais are eventually convinced by the young man’s pleading and help him, the slaves in both plays are sarcastic towards the youngsters. Even if this basic pattern is similar, we notice that the scenes serve different purposes at different points in the two plays: Chaerea did in fact commit the crime of which he is accused, but at the end of the play there is no room for retardation and the atmosphere does not become too serious. In the early scene of *Dyskolos* Sostratos has neither committed the crime nor has any intention to do so; therefore Gorgias’ misguided moralizing may be developed into a serious speech, humorously off the mark, without any danger that the spectators’ opinion of Sostratos would become unfavourable.

Dyskolos belongs to an early stage of Menander’s career, yet compared to the other scene it shows freshness and even irony in the way that pattern is used. Unless one scene is directly modeled on the other, it seems unavoidable to conclude that Menander must have approached some scenes – such as this one which we may call, say, the ‘exposure of a rapist’ – as a pattern that could be conveniently borrowed from play to play, adjusting details to a particular place in a given plot. Sometimes he perhaps created whole plays out of such basic scene patterns and – one almost wants to say – out of a few basic *keywords*. Even if spectators were not aware of the particular similarities between *Dyskolos* and the Greek original of *Eunuchus*, some set scenes of the kind shown by Görler very probably existed. Naturally, similarities may have also brought about (unintentionally?) ironic differences but it is impossible to be certain about how these could have been appreciated by spectators without clear signposts.

Let us look for instance at the role of the clothes of the two young men: Chaerea earlier left the stage in search of a place where he could get rid of his eunuch’s outfit. He comes back on stage in the same clothes because he could not change at his friend Antipho’s since both Antipho’s parents were in. Sostratos comes on stage after a similarly futile mission – he went home looking for Getas but the slave was not in. Both the young men return on stage because their missions failed.¹⁷ It is interesting that even details such as the two young men’s clothes are used to move the plot in mutually ironic

¹⁶ Arnott (1997a) 74 briefly comments on the similar wording of Men. *Perik* 1024-26 and Ter. *Haut.* 156ff. and opines that ‘Menander’s productivity may well have led him to adopt similar solutions in more than one play.’ See also Arnott (1964) 232ff. and Williams, T. (1962) 221ff.

¹⁷ Görler (1961) 301.

ways. Chaerea's humorously jarring outfit becomes a good motivation for his exit and later an opportune reentrance on stage, and for some sarcastic comments about inappropriate clothes borrowed from a eunuch. Against this, Sostratos wears a respectable *chlanis* – but he too is taken for a lesser man by the same token! In his case, the *chlanis* as a mark of a rich man comes close to incriminating him as a soft urban boy. Gorgias suggests he should take it off, or else Knemon will not even look at him. The *chlanis* as a symbol of a rich, leisurely urban man needs to be hidden from the hard-working Knemon or else the intrigue against him will never even start. Thus while in *Eunuchus* the costume was part of the scheme that enabled Chaerea to rape the girl, in *Dyskolos* the *chlanis* is an obstacle to any stratagem to win Knemon. Here too, however, it is taken as a proof of the young man's innate softness and laziness, a symbol as pregnant in meaning as the eunuch's clothes.

Sometimes, as in *Samia* to be noted briefly below, it is naturally difficult to say if the irony caused by comparison with other plays is anyhow meaningful for the spectators. It could be if the motif being invoked was familiar enough and still fresh in their minds. If there were memorable plays before *Samia* that used the following motif, then we may be right to suggest that Menander in his play offered his audience a seemingly typical motif and allowed them to recognize its traditional value, only to surprise them by deviating from it, and then by surprising them again by an ironic use he finds for it, after all:

Samian *pallake* performing an Adonis festival

In a fragment by Diphilos, a boastful cook holds a lengthy sermon about the type of guests he serves. He concludes:

οὐ δὲ νῦν σ' ἄγω,
πορνείῳ ἐστὶ, πολυτελῶς Ἀδώνια
ἄγουσ' ἑταῖρα μεθ' ἑτέρων πορνῶν. (*Zographos*, fr. 42.38ff. K-A).

Would our appreciation of Menander's *Samia* be enriched if we considered the tradition behind the motif of a courtesan giving an Adonis festival? Chrysis looks back at the tradition in some respects, but also, in a novel way, she is far removed from the world of courtesans, she is a *pallake* now enjoying a 'near-maternal' status and her celebration of the festival noticeably included free-born, respectable women from the neighbourhood who often come to visit her. To a spectator aware of earlier treatment,¹⁸ Moschion's narration could have sounded 'problematic':

ἐξ ἀγροῦ δὴ καταδραμών,
ὥς ἔτυ]χ[έ] γ', εἰς Ἀδώνι' αὐτὰς κατέλαβον
συνηγμένας ἐνθάδε πρὸς ἡμᾶς μετὰ τινων
ἄλλω]ν γυναικῶν (38ff.)

Chrysis lives with Demeas in a steady relationship. She has even made friends with the freeborn women from her neighbourhood. They represent the social class that would not tolerate her if she did not behave like a free woman and Demeas' 'wife' (in ethical terms they validate her status of Demeas' partner, even if she can never aspire to

¹⁸ Cf. also Diphilos, fr. 49 K-A (open to question), the title of Philippides' comedy *Adoniazousai*. Leo (1912) 174. I am not suggesting that the festival was held *only* by courtesans (the evidence of *Samia* itself proves the opposite): cf. Winkler (1990) 199-202.

rise to a formalised relationship with him before the law). And yet, the image of a courtesan celebrating the festival (as seen e.g. in Diphilos' depiction) resurfaces as the plot of *Samia* develops. Demeas is gradually made to fall into a grave error that causes him to look at Chrysis as an unscrupulous courtesan who seduced a weak young man. Her status and morality become questioned and this aspect of the plot may be seen to have been subtly foreshadowed by the expository detail of her celebrating the Adonis festival.

If she stayed in the house, Demeas is led to believe, the threat to young Moschion's well-being would be too great. The house would gain in connotations not different from the *porneion* mentioned in Diphilos. We know tantalizingly little about Diphilos' play or any other plays that used the motif, but it cannot be ruled out that Menander inserted the detail about the festival frequently associated with courtesans in order to deepen – for a significant moment at least – the problematic nature of Chrysis' status.

Before an *anagnorisis*

Formal elements were reinvented, enlarged or just repeated without much innovation – and comic poets are definitely not loath to adopt the latter approach either,¹⁹ not even in such climactic scenes as family reunions. In a rather formalized way those who are to meet for the first time in such a long time, heave a sigh and wonder where the relatives may be – and as if on cue they come into contact with the long-lost ones:

(Αβρ) ἔξειμ' ἔχουσα· κλαυμυρίζεται, τάλαν,
 πάλαι γάρ· οὐκ οἶδ' ὅ τι κακὸν πέπονθέ μοι.
 (Πα) τίς ἂν θεῶν τάλαιναν ἐλεήσειέ με;
 Ἀβρ. ὦ φίλτατον [τέκνον, πότ'] ὄψεαι μητέρα;
 καὶ[] (Πα) πορεύσομαι.
 (Αβρ) μικρόν, γύναι, πρόσμεινον. (*Epit.* 853ff.)

The baby was crying for some time and made Habrotonon come out to soothe it, wondering how much longer the baby will have to do without its real mother. Just at that moment Habrotonon is made aware of Pamphile's presence on stage, recognizing in her the mother of the baby.

Straightforwardly similar is a scene in Ter. *Phormio* 727ff. (not based on Menander). Chremes wonders where he can find his Lemnian daughter who disappeared without a trace (*ubi illas nunc ego reperire possim cogito*, Ter. *Phorm.* 727) and just then he spots Sophrona and recognizes in her the lost daughter's nurse (she is wondering herself where the girl's father may be):

CH. *certe edepol, nisi me animu' fallit aut parum prospiciunt oculi,*
meae nutricem gnatae video. SO. *neque ille investigatur, CH. quid ago?*
 SO. *qui est pater eius.* CH. *adeo, maneo dum haec quae loquitur mage cognosco?*
 SO. *quodsi eum nunc reperire possim, nil est quod verear.* (Ter. *Phorm.* 735ff.)

¹⁹ Sosikrates (?3rd c.) has a character in his *Parakatatheke* comment on the humour of burdening someone unaccustomed to manual work with a heavy δίκηλλα: ὅταν γάρ, οἶμαι, λευκὸς ἄνθρωπος, παχύς, / ἀργός, λάβη δίκηλλαν, εἰωθὼς τρυφᾶν, / πεντεστάτηρον, γίγνεται τὸ πνεῦμ' ἄνω. (fr. 1 K-A). I would like to see it as a tantalizing piece of evidence for a continuation of minute verbal (and plot?) echoes that go back to the previous century (similarities with Men. *Dyskolos* are interesting indeed: 355ff., 390, 754f., 764ff.).

Just when the hardships reach their maximum and Sophrona laments the situation, the recognition with Chremes takes place.

I shall note below how the *anagnorisis* undergoes an original modification in *Sikyonios* but it is interesting to note that the same repetitiveness noted in other plays occurs in fact inside the novel treatment of *Sikyonios* as well. Kichesias' reopened wound makes him lament about the loss of his daughter and the family slave - and lo, Dromon appears in the doorway of the stage house. Kichesias, taken for an exquisite actor by Theron, dramatically faints on the spot.

A somewhat similar pattern is found in Ter. *Andria*: Crito, comes to Athens to claim inheritance from Chrysis. He spots Mysis and asks: *quid Glycerium? iam hic suos parentis repperit?* (Ter. *An.* 806) It matters to him whether or not Glycerium has recovered her citizenship: for if not, she may still be considered Chrysis' sister and he would have problems making a claim on Chrysis' inheritance. He goes inside with Mysis, a scene intervenes, and when he comes out next, he wants to defend Glycerium from accusations that she is not an Athenian (Ter. *An.* 904). He meets there Crito and Simo and all three inadvertently discover the truth about Glycerium's origin.

One could go on collecting more examples of recurring patterns. However a bare catalogue would do no justice to Menander's art.²⁰ Throughout the thesis I wished to show how through a combination of various elements of surprise, irony, and multidimensional structuring, Menander gave even recurring episodes a sense of fresh originality.

Unlike in Aristophanes, poetic self-advertisement could not depend on laughing at the conventional tools of their trade. Nothing would be achieved with the strategy displayed in *Nubes* where the rehashing of motives is equated with cheating the audience.²¹ One's own originality in the genre had to be alluded to without criticising the rivals' material that was in all essentials common to all New Comedy poets. That, I suggest, could explain the frequent recourse to 'intensification' as a strategy of poetic defense: instead of advertising their novelty, poets began to advertise the *degree* to which their work was unusual.

Intensification of difficulties

To advertise a clever plot, poets put in their characters' mouths remarks on its unusual nature²² and on the difficult obstacles that stand in the way of a resolution. The

²⁰ Ancient criticism noticed the dramatists' recycling of the same material. On Menander (and Sophocles) we have Πορφυρίου ἀπὸ τοῦ α' τῆς φιλολόγου ἀκροάσεως: ὅπου γε καὶ Μένανδρος τῆς ἀρρωστίας ταύτης ἐπλήσθη, ὃν ἡρέμα μὲν ἤλεγξε διὰ τὸ ἄγαν αὐτὸν φιλεῖν Ἀριστοφάνης ὁ γραμματικὸς ἐν ταῖς παραλλήλοις αὐτοῦ τε καὶ ἀφ' ὧν ἔκλεψεν ἐκλογαῖς; Λατῖνος δὲ ἐξ βιβλίου, ἃ ἐπέγραψε Περὶ τῶν οὐκ ἰδίων Μενάνδρου, τὸ πλῆθος αὐτοῦ τῶν κλοπῶν ἐξέφηγε· καθάπερ ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεὺς Φιλόστρατος Περὶ τῆς τοῦ Σοφοκλέους κλοπῆς πραγματείαν κατεβάλετο. Καικίλιος δὲ ὥς τι μέγα πεφωρακῶς ὅλον δράμα ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος Ἀντιφάνους τὸν Οἰωνιστὴν μεταγράψαι φησὶ τὸν Μένανδρον εἰς τὸν Δεισιδαίμονα, in Eusebios, *Pr. evan.* X 3, 12. 465d. Cf. *Men. Test.* 76, 81 K-A and Zagagi (1994) 17. It is clear from this that Aristophanes of Byzantium was interested in Menander's debts to earlier literature although the title of his treatise was probably not as condemnatory as Porphyrios has preserved it for us: αἱ Παράλληλοι αὐτοῦ [i.e. Μενάνδρου] τε καὶ ἀφ' ὧν ἔκλεψεν ἐκλογαί. Latinus, a less discerning critic, is said to have come up with six books of evidence that Menander was a plagiarist. And we have Caecilius' claim that Menander stole the whole play Οἰωνιστῆς written by Antiphanes and took it into his Δεισιδαίμων. This could indicate a refashioning of an old play and bringing it on stage under Menander's name - that is how Stemplinger (1912) 23 understands Athen. III 127bc. Alternatively, it could have been a simple case of one author deliberately imitating the other.

²¹ οὐδ' ὑμᾶς ζητῶ ἔξαπατᾶν δις καὶ τρίς ταῦτ' εἰσάγων, / ἀλλ' αἰεὶ καινὰς ιδέας εἰσφέρων σοφίζομαι, / οὐδὲν ἀλλήλαισιν ὁμοίας καὶ πάσας δεξιὰς (Ar. *Nub.* 546ff.). Redfield (1990) 315ff.: 'quite probably this claim to novelty is itself generic and all the poets of Old Comedy claimed to be the only ones with new ideas.'

²² E.g. *Sam.* 564-6.

‘no-one-like-him-has-ever-lived’ sort of extravagant phrasing seems to be ‘selling’ a particular play by stressing its originality, thus in an efficient way making the audience receptive of what will come next. For instance, even though the misanthrope was a frequent object of derision on stage – and possibly more so at the early stage of Menander’s career (when *Dyskolos* was performed), we still hear Gorgias say about Knemon:

ταύτηι πατήρ
 ἔσθ’ οἷος οὐδεὶς γέγονεν οὔτε τῶν πάλαι
 ἄνθρωπος οὔτε τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς. (*Dysk.* 323ff.)

The point is to focus the audience, and to have them wonder how such ‘uniquely’²³ intractable characters are to be won over. Extraordinary efforts are clearly called for:

οὐ τοῦ τυχόντος, ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, πόνου
 τουτὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα <γ> ἀλλὰ συντονωτέρου.
 πρόδηλόν ἐστιν. (179ff.)

Characters fall into despair and ‘antidramatic’ resignation before an unshakeable Knemon or Smikrines and plays reach an apparent deadlock. The playwright plays with his audience, as if suggesting that he has created such a character that within one day nothing can defeat him. As if almost suggesting: while other plays manage to finish within the given period, this play is of no such ‘flat’ nature.

Chaireas’ suggestion goes in this direction: εὖ τοῦτ’ ἴσθ’ ὅτι / πρὸς πάντα πράγματ’ ἐστὶ πρακτικώτερον / εὐκαιρία (*Dysk.* 127ff.) and he suggests coming back tomorrow early in the morning: ἀλλ’ ἔωθεν αὔριον / ἐγὼ πρόσκειμ’ αὐτῷ μόνος, τὴν οἰκίαν / ἐπείπερ οἶδα. νῦν δ’ ἀπελθὼν οἴκαδε / καὶ σὺ διάτριβε... (*Dysk.* 131ff.) Pyrrhias too nods in approval. Even Sostratos who is against delay in this matter, is eventually faced with no option but to postpone things until the next day (*Dysk.* 539ff.). The dramatic problem seems almost intractable with no solution in sight.

In tragedy and earlier comedy there was a sense of *real* danger if things misfire. Dicaeopolis speaks of his plan to venture a private peace treaty as: ἐργάσομαί τι δεινὸν ἔργον καὶ μέγα (*Ar. Ach.* 128) and such it was. Likewise, to give only one tragic example, Euripides’ *Orestes* opens with a most dangerous situation facing the protagonist:

κυρία δ’ ἦδ’ ἡμέρα
 ἐν ᾗ διοίσει ψῆφον Ἀργείων πόλις,
 εἰ χρὴ θανεῖν νῶ λευσίμῳ πετρώματι... (*Eur. Or.* 48ff.)²⁴

New Comedy could not boast such dramatic dangers, yet it clothed its pettier problems in similar language: ἂν θεὸς θέλῃ / οὐκ ἂν ἀπολοίμην (*Men. fr.* 43 K-A).²⁵ Young men in love were frequently driven to despair and emphasized the plight in which

²³ *Μονότροπος* was written by Phrynichos, Anaxilas, and Ophelios; *Τίμων* by Antiphanes, and *Δύσκολος* by Mnesimachos. And equally so, Smikrines of *Aspis* was probably not the first in the tradition of comic misers, yet Tyche is categorical about him: πονηρίαι δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὅλως / ὑπερπέπαικεν (*Men. Asp.* 116f.).

²⁴ Three years before *Orestes* (*Ar. Thesm.* and *Lys.* were probably staged in 411, *Orestes* in 408: cf. Σ on 371) Euripides himself appears on stage pressed to act to save his life: Εὔ. Τῇδε θῆμέρα κριθήσεται / εἴτ’ ἔστ’ ἔτι ζῶν εἴτ’ ἀπόλωλ’ Εὐριπίδης. (*Ar. Thesm.* 75ff.)

²⁵ The original, according to Donatus, for *Ter. An.* 611.

they found themselves under seemingly hopeless circumstances. Success in love was all they lived for:

νῦν ἢ μακάριον ἢ τρισαθλιώτατον
 δείξεις με τῶν ζώντων ἀπάντων γεγονότα.
 εἰ μὴ γὰρ οὗτος δοκιμάσει με, κυρίως
 δώσει τε ταύτην, οἴχεται Θρασωνίδης (*Mis.* 260ff. Sandbach, 661ff. Arnott)

The only characters in physical danger were slaves threatened with hard work in the mills. If slaves find themselves in a particularly dangerous position - and stress the mess they are in, it only goes to advertise their capacity for scheming and finding a way out of difficult situations. Tranio's boast in Plaut. *Mostellaria* is just one example of self-praise put in particularly extravagant terms:

*Alexandrum magnum atque Agathoclem aiunt maxumas
 duo res gessisse; quid mihi fiet tertio,
 qui solus facio facinora immortalia? etc.* (Plaut. *Most.* 775ff.)

Such advertisements could make the spectators appreciate all the more cleverly constructed plots that deal – in a plausible way – with uniquely intractable obstacles.

Despite difficulties, 'of themselves things will come'

There is ample evidence that well-constructed plot was valued highly in the fourth-century.²⁶ Not least of all there is the famous anecdote about Menander preserved in Plutarch. When someone questioned him about the newest play, whether or not he would be able to finish it in time for the approaching Dionysia, the playwright answered yes: νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς, ἔγωγε πεποίηκα τὴν κωμωιδίαν. ὠκονόμηται γὰρ ἡ διάθεσις, δεῖ δ' αὐτῇ τὰ στιχίδια ἐπᾶναι.²⁷ All that remained, he says, was to put the plot quickly into lines. The story obviously does no justice to Menander's exquisite use of language²⁸ or the delineation of his characters, but one does not expect that much either from a simple riposte.²⁹

Menander's plots are often an exploration of the limits of comic possibilities that nonetheless land the spectators at the expected goal without a trace of artificiality. He intensifies the dramatic experience, especially the danger and obstacles in the way of resolution, but at the same time puts much care into showing that the plot is running smoothly, without tricks that would disqualify him as a dramatist.

As remarked, through the 'no-one-like-him-ever-lived...' kind of intensification the poet places his spectators in a receptive mood, having them wonder how a hopeless situation can be saved within one hour or so allotted to the performance. And the smooth running plot of the end product should, ideally, make the audience respond adequately, preferably in something like this:

numquam ecastor ullo die risi adaeque,

²⁶ See Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 18ff.

²⁷ Plut. *Moral.* 347E (*Test.* 70 K-A)

²⁸ Frequently discussed and appreciated. The starting point is Sandbach (1970), Katsouris has a monography on it (1975b).

²⁹ For Aristotle care about plot-construction is more important than delineation of character (*Arist. Poet.* 1450a23-26). Could it be a hint about the origin of the anecdote?

neque hoc quod relicuom est plus risuram opinor. (Plaut. *Casina* 857f):

Aristotle warned against episodic plays (Arist. *Poet.* 1451b-52a) and his choice of a successful plot is Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos*. The ideal plot should move on 'by itself.' Teiresias in that play implicitly voices what Aristotle approves of: ἥξει γὰρ αὐτά, κὰν ἐγὼ σιγῇ στέγω (Soph. *OT* 341). 'Of themselves things will come.' He refuses to act for he has trust in the god who will achieve everything even if mortals were to oppose him. Apollo is enough (ἱκανὸς Ἀπόλλων ὧ τάδ' ἐκπρᾶξαι μέλει, Soph. *OT* 377).³⁰

The prime example of a clever and smooth plot among Menander's plays is found in *Epitrepontes*. The initial situation is completely hopeless and the individual characters' stance makes any progress difficult. What force can achieve a happy resolution and restore to each other the separated husband and wife? Against gods of tragedy stands a new but no less potent force: it is coincidence, inexplicable and even ironic, a clever mechanism depending on seemingly insignificant parts fitting together in a surprising way. Menander brings about the resolution with the help of all stage movements, however accidental, so that the husband may recognize his wife's loyalty and chastity, although they live separated from each other. Their reunification is expected but we are shown that even though the husband and wife live near each other, nothing but a very lucky series of cleverly assembled accidents can bring them back together: (a) Smikrines, Pamphile's father intent on taking her away from her profligate husband, comes out of Pamphile's house to find himself settling a dispute over recognition tokens and who of the two strangers will keep them. He is involved in protecting his grandson of whose existence he has no idea until Act V. Syros' (or Syriskos') victory in the dispute allows for the baby's *gnorismata* to be left untouched. A sense of coincidence is created when his opponent Daos leaves the stage and Syros orders his wife to enter Chairestratos' house who is, so we hear, Syros' master (376ff)! Were we prepared for this in the prologue or is it a totally surprising twist? He at last has a close look at the things Daos was refusing to hand over and Smikrines' justice allowed him to keep. (b) He could have walked inside with his wife. Instead, we have him on stage going through the things when suddenly Onesimos walks out of Chairestratos' house complaining about the cook's lack of zeal for the party. He recognizes the ring Syros is examining. There was in fact nothing to prevent Menander from orchestrating the meeting inside Chairestratos' house with Onesimos coming out later to narrate the unusual coincidence. However, in the present play Menander seems at pains to increase the sense of coincidence. Onesimos' entrance seems designed to give a sense of being accidental and almost petty; besides, it is clear that the ring leaves the bag only for a while – and will go back in it once Syros has made sure what items are included.³¹ If he entered the house he would not want to go through the items inside amid the noise of the partying guests and before a cook (taken by comedy to amount to a thief); the stage space is the only suitable place to inspect the items. After that, the baby will be brought into Chairestratos' house where Charisios – his true father – is staying and whose parentage needs to be ascertained. (c) Habrotonon's timing too is nothing but arbitrary and accidental: she is on her way away from the house because, she says, Charisios has been strangely cold to her all the time. She will accidentally overhear Onesimos'

³⁰ Compare the sentiment in Terence: *equidem plus hodie boni / feci imprudens quam sciens ante hunc diem umquam* (Ter. *Hec.* 879f.).

³¹ When Syros orders his wife to take the things inside to Chairestratos (σὺ δὲ ταυτί, γύναι, / λαβοῦσα πρὸς τὸν τρόφιμον ἐνθάδ' εἰσφερε / Χαιρέστρατον, 376ff.) we should not imagine him planning to entrust them to Chairestratos. Everything seems to show that Syros plans to keep the baby and fight for his rights by guarding the trinkets.

conversation with Syros about his master Charisios losing the ring now in Syros' possession at the Tauropolia last year. Another coincidence follows and we hear that Habrotonon was in fact at the Tauropolia then and even saw a ravished girl who could be the mother of the baby. The play is made to move further only because Habrotonon overheard the slaves' conversation, because she was present at the festival playing for women who were friends with, of all the people, the ravished girl, and because now Charisios, still pining for his wife, left Habrotonon alone at the feast. Only through accumulated coincidences concerning Charisios is she able to act. In order to find out whether it is indeed Charisios who raped the girl she saw at the festival, she will pretend to be the mother of the baby. With her scheme she walks back inside the house. (d) Habrotonon's pretence will create much confusion. Perhaps it was amidst such noise that the baby started to cry and she took it to her arms and left the house. Again a coincidental meeting, caused by nothing more than a crying baby, follows and Habrotonon recognizes the woman whom she saw ravished at the Tauropolia festival. With the baby clothed in recognizable embroidery she addresses Pamphile, the girl whom she had no easy way to locate and whom Smikrines threatened to take away from the stage house for good any moment. (e) Charisios, perhaps to be imagined as worried how Pamphile will take the news of the baby born to Habrotonon is eavesdropping on her conversation with Smikrines – the only moment when Pamphile could have an opportunity to declare her faithfulness to Charisios. It must have been the last straw for Smikrines to hear of Charisios' baby apparently conceived by a courtesan as he brings his daughter on stage to try to convince her with strong arguments. The husband recognizes the true character of his spurned wife when from a distance he overhears her conversation with Smikrines. Of course a simple confrontation between husband and wife would have revealed as much, but by the fact that the crisis made him eavesdrop on his wife like a stranger from the neighbour's house, her confession looks more objective than any profession of love in front of him would (for that could be interpreted as a false attempt to save her position).

What could possibly be realistic about this dependence on elaborate coincidence, one may well ask. And why Menander, instead of silently passing over the technique, actually draws attention to the element of arbitrariness in the behaviour of the play's characters? It seems to me that he draws attention to the coincidental and the arbitrary in order to emphasize the indispensable nature of every single cog in his plot mechanism. True, such an accumulation of happy coincidences does not happen in real life every day³², but it is not downright implausible either due to (at least a semblance of) motivation for everything that happens on stage.

Coincidence is a technical solution to the genre's limitations and requirements. It creates a sense of novelty, irony, and surprise for the spectators who, like the characters, are often kept in the dark about the timing and the meaning of such coincidences. The tragic vision of Euripides must have appealed to Menander who seems to have moulded the Euripidean technique to suit the comic world. Burnett comments:

³² Just two examples of characters who make us ponder about their extremely good luck: *ego hodie, neque speravi neque credidi: / is inproviso filiam inueni tamen; / et eam de genere summo adolescenti dabo / ingenuo, Atheniensi et cognato meo.* (Plaut. *Rudens* 1195-98).

Similarly Sostratos boasting about 'his' achievement makes us aware of in fact how lucky he was: οὐδενὸς χρὴ πράγματος / τὸν εὖ φρονοῦνθ' ὅλως ἀπογνῶναί ποτε. / ἄλωτὰ γίνετ' ἐπιμελείαι καὶ πόνωι / ἅπαντ'. ἐγὼ τούτου παράδειγμα νῦν φέρω / ἐν ἡμέραι μιᾷ κατείργασμαι γάμον / ὃν οὐδ' ἂν εἰς ποτ' ᾔετ' ἀνθρώπων ὅλως. (Men. *Dysk.* 860ff.)

‘[Tragedy] had made the blindness of men one of its principal tenets, and tragic irony, the device for conveying this blindness, had become the chief stylistic ornament of the classic stage. It was an elegant and indispensable tool, but irony had a major flaw as a teacher of humility, since it depended upon the creation of a knowing audience. The spectator who joined the poet in marvelling over the blindness of an Oedipus forgot to see himself in the blind man, for irony appreciated had made him feel as all-knowing as a god. Again and again the plays told of the dangers of misconstruing human strength and knowledge while their own inner symmetries were yet an encouragement to complacency. Euripides, who loved the effects of verbal irony, seems to have felt this paradox, and he developed in his mixed plays a set of counter-devices that would force the spectator from his omniscient throne. The multiplicity of their action allowed him to build terrifying structures of living contradictions, while the familiarity of each of their parts permitted a calculated disappointment of expectations. The known could be altered by mutation and distortion until the audience was forced to join the principals in their baffled groping.’³³

New Comedy poets must have been aware of the ambiguous nature of coincidence and its place in their cleverly constructed plots. At times they could even have some fun with their own sincerity in plausibly motivating characters and action as the two examples below will show.

Asked what takes him, an infrequent guest, to Athens Crito comes up with an answer sounding almost perfunctory:

CH. quid tu Athenas insolens? CR. evenit. (Andria 907)

This is the man who holds the key to *anagnorisis* and happy ending and he is not given a more plausible reason? There is a sense of inept motivation and weakly veiled arbitrariness in his reply. But it serves its purpose: naturally paranoid Simo suspects that Crito is a hoax, part of a scheme to fool him – for indeed his reason for arrival is highly unusual and thus suspicious:

*itane adtemperate evenit, hodie in ipsis nuptiis
ut veniret, ant(e) hac numquam? est vero huic credundum, Chreme. (Andria 916f.)*

In fact, however, the *deus ex machina* Crito had a good reason to come to Athens only he probably did not want to confess that he arrived with the intention of checking the possibility of inheriting from deceased Thais. He saw that Glycerium was still being considered Thais’ sister and so there would have been no point in pressing his claim. It is important to note that by replying in such a perfunctory way Simo feels he is a cheat (*sycophanta* 919). Crito is offended and in anger he blurts out all the surprising facts that he knows and that would have otherwise remained hidden. Of course Simo will not be persuaded and dismisses Crito’s narration (*fabulam inceptat* 925). Ironically Chremes, who is on stage as well, takes Crito’s story seriously and thanks to that discovers his long-lost daughter. The resolution is accidental as frequently happens, but it gets an unusual twist in the paranoid Simo’s doubts about Crito’s identity and his all too opportune arrival thus serving as an ironical comment about the (necessary) *deus ex machina* of this play.

³³ Burnett (1971) 15.

Another character commenting in an interestingly ironic way about the genre's required ending is Chremes in Terence's *Phormio*. He praises gods for seeing to it that things took an auspicious turn without his involvement:

*CH. di vostram fidem, quam saepe forte temere
eveniunt quae non audeas optare! offendi adveniens
quicum volebam et ut volebam conlocatam amari:
quod nos ambo opere maxumo dabamus operam ut fieret,
sine nostra cura, maxuma sua cura solu' fecit.* (Ter. *Phormio* 757ff.)

Chremes *must* find his daughter who grew up on Lemnos with her mother - the two women hidden from Chremes' Athenian wife. In order to keep the secret from his Athenian wife he wants to find the girl and marry her to his nephew Antipho. That is the only way the girl's father may be kept secret. If she were to marry anyone else, naturally her father would have to be identified and Chremes would be placed in a difficult position. In short, he *needs* to have his nephew married to his Lemnian daughter. However, he comes home to see that Antipho has already married some girl and all hope is lost!

By a stroke of good luck for Chremes, Antipho in fact married the very girl Chremes wanted for him: for when Chremes went to Lemnos he could not locate his local wife and daughter there as they were already in Athens looking for him. The girl's beauty attracted none other than Chremes' nephew Antipho. Phormio the trickster suggests to the young man an intrigue that enables him to marry her, much to the annoyance of both Antipho's father and Chremes, who believes (ignorant of the newly-wed girl's identity) that he has now lost for good a chance to marry off his Lemnian daughter in silence. Once the identity of the girl is revealed, however, Chremes is naturally jubilant. His self-congratulatory tone seems to be hijacking the play built around the problems of the young man and his 'love at first sight' into a cheating husband's petty wish-fulfilment. The author of the play has clearly had good fun with the old man *and* with the meaning of the happy ending of the play. Praise of the outcome put in the mouth of the one man who was most interested in having the plot conform to the New Comedy type is an excellent stroke.

In-jokes for those who know how the genre works do not seem to disturb the pretence because they are spoken in character – by a paranoid man like Simo who jumps at the slightest suggestion of foul play, or by a cheating husband like Chremes whose position makes him appreciate the coincidences that save his hide.³⁴ Let us look at them a bit more, for they are an interesting comment on the genre and its tools. It is especially tragic 'fiction' that seems to play an important role in the game.

Swift finish: and joking about it all

Bain excluded comic allusions to tragedy from his examination of illusion-breaking elements because '[t]ragedy, its plots, characters, situations and conventions form a natural topic of conversation at Athens at almost any period... There exists in such references and comparisons no tension between real life and the play.'³⁵ He is right to say that on the obvious level there are no breaks of 'illusion' and that is all he was trying to prove; but implicitly at least, it must have been seen as dramatically ironic to

³⁴ Or so he thinks: his wife does learn of his past after all (cf. 1005ff.).

³⁵ Bain (1977) 213 and note 3.

hear about tragic parallels to comic situations. Gutzwiller³⁶ recently even suggested that ‘Menander’s plays invite metadramatic readings in which the plot develops through the struggles of characters to impose on themselves and others tragic readings of their comic situation.’

The pattern identified by Gutzwiller extends well beyond theatre, though: tragedy, its diction and motifs, was pragmatically (ab)used in real life, most obviously by orators. One hears of defendants quoting legends before the jurors in order to amuse them:

οἱ δὲ λέγουσιν μύθους ἡμῖν, οἱ δ’ Αἰσώπου τι γέλοιοι·
οἱ δὲ σκώπτουσ’, ἔν’ ἐγὼ γελάσω καὶ τὸν θυμὸν καταθῶμαι (Ar. *Vesp.* 566f.)³⁷

Tragedy is presumably the source and the medium for the *μῦθοι* here and it is interesting to find it next to Aesop’s funny stories or jokes.³⁸ Pathetic, artful, or just amusing language had a pragmatic role in swaying the jurors. Bain’s point is then valid – when for instance Syros, a *deinos* rhetor in *Epitrepontes* (cf. 236) alludes to a tragic precedent for the very situation he is in, he does copy real life practice:

τεθέασαι τραγωιδούς, οἷδ’ ὅτι,
καὶ ταῦτα κατέχεις πάντα. Νηλέα τινὰ
Πελίαν τ’ ἐκείνους εὔρε πρεσβύτης ἀνὴρ
αἰπόλος, ἔχων οἷαν ἐγὼ νῦν διφθέραν (Men. *Epit.* 325ff.)³⁹

Such allusions to tragedy are to be expected especially when copying courtroom practice.⁴⁰ Yet tragedy also provided precedents whose invocation may have served one particular pragmatic purpose: namely, by a quick identification of a tragic precedent, an intricate plot could smoothly speed to a resolution without getting bogged down in small points, or an uncomfortable situation could have been humorously passed off as having a venerable tragic pedigree. This allowed Menander to have it both ways: he could use interesting themes with a theatrical appeal, even those that would be rather uncomfortable in real life, and at the same time he did not have to worry with overloading his already complex plays, especially near the end, when he could just point his finger at familiar precedents for reference. Thus Onesimos in *Epitrepontes* mockingly threatens to quote a whole speech from *Auge* if Smikrines does not begin to catch up with the domestic developments. A repetitive scene with Onesimos explaining to Smikrines what the audience already knew was not an option; instead, Onesimos has his fun with Smikrines by alluding to the more elevated situation in Euripides’ *Auge* as a precedent for what happened under the old man’s nose.

“ἡ φύσις ἐβούλεθ’, ἧι νόμων οὐδὲν μέλει·

³⁶ Gutzwiller (2000) 105f.

³⁷ Tragic pathos, both accepted and criticised, and citations from tragic plays abound in fourth-century orators: cf. e.g. Demosthenes 18.13, 19.189, 245f., Hyperides 1.12, 4.26.

³⁸ If all this does not persuade the jurors, more pathetic means are employed: children will be dragged by hand into court, they will prostrate themselves and ‘bleat’ with one accord: τὰ δὲ συγκύψανθ’ ἅμα βληχᾶται (570ff., MacDowell’s text). ἅμα raises their behaviour to a level of a premeditated ‘stage-act.’

³⁹ He is alluding to one of the three famous poets: either Sophocles (fr. 648ff.: ‘*veri simillimum*,’ Radt (1977) 463) or Astydamos II (60 F 5c, Snell, with *Test.* 1) or Karkinos (70 F 4 Snell).

⁴⁰ Or appealing to the magnitude of the situation at hand. Thus Daos, pretending a tragic outburst in *Aspis*, intends to fool Smikrines into believing that Chairestratos is about to die: δεῖ τραγωιδῆσαι πάθος ἀλλοῖον, he says (*Asp.* 329f.) and goes about the business giving even the sources of his sententious lines (*Asp.* 414, 417, 427). The two old men in *Samia* are another example. In their case tragic grandiloquence is an adequate expression for their stupefaction at Moschion’s apparently atrocious crime (*Sam.* 325, 495).

γυνή δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ τῷδ' ἔφυ." τί μῶρος εἶ;
 τραγικὴν ἐρῶ σοι ῥῆσιν ἐξ Αὔγης ὅλην
 ἂν μή ποτ' αἴσθῃ, Σμικρίνη. (1123ff.)

The play shares some ground with Eur. *Auge*, but the similarities cannot have been far-reaching.⁴¹ By alluding to a dramatic precedent, certain detachment is made possible almost with a hint at the theatrical necessity of what happened. This comes in handy when the poet wants to speed things up, create a festive atmosphere, and so on. Naturally, also in situations such as rape – which was not an easy topic in real life, though a staple motif in comedy. Invoking a tragic precedent for the rape may work to make the crime seem less problematic. For instance Demes in *Samia* has to inform his neighbour of the fact that it was Moschion who raped her and the style he uses is full of wit:

οὐκ ἀκήκοας λεγόντων, εἰπέ μοι, Νικήρατε,
 τῶν τραγωιδῶν ὡς γενόμενος χρυσὸς ὁ Ζεὺς ἐρρύη
 διὰ τέγους καθειργμένην τε παῖδ' ἐμοίχευσέν ποτε;
 (Ni) εἶτα δὴ τί τοῦτο; (Δη) ἴσως δεῖ πάντα προσδοκᾶν; σκόπει,
 τοῦ τέγους εἴ σοι μέρος τι ῥεῖ. (Ni) τὸ πλεῖστον. ἀλλὰ τί
 τοῦτο πρὸς ἐκεῖν' ἐστί; (Δη) τότε μὲν γίνεθ' ὁ Ζεὺς χρυσίον,
 τότε δ' ὕδωρ. ὁρᾷς ἐκείνου τοῦργον ἐστίν. ὡς ταχὺ
 εὕρομεν. (Men. *Sam.* 589ff.)

Demeas' light tone, devaluing the rain of gold of tragedy to mere rainwater, would be inappropriate in real life but comedy becomes for a moment suspended in its own world so that a sense of closure may be achieved. Quoting a tragic precedent and observing that it is applicable, makes the situation a little surreal and as such it can be handled with economy and irony.

Economy of presentation, I believe, is the reason for such invocations, and it is for the same reason that Menander may allude also to specifically comic situations and stock types. Complex plots required that some characters should arrive on stage unexpected and although costume and occasionally props could identify them immediately, the effect is frequently reinforced by hinting at the tradition behind the particular type. This is mostly the case with cooks, parasites or other characters who go without a mention from a prologue speaker.

The first entrance of the cook in *Aspis* is a case in point (see also Chapter I above, 21). Unusually enough, he is first seen walking away from the stage house seemingly leaving for good, it seems. He cannot start with any of the typical cook jokes but he introduces himself by referring to his place in some recognizable comic situations (216ff.).

There must have been some cases where comparison with predecessors verged on metatheatre by *explicitly* drawing attention to the *comic* stock types. In adesp. fr. 1093 K-A (P. Heidelberg 184 fr. 11) a cook is seen talking about the representation of his colleagues on comic stage and feels sorry for their pathetic way of pinching insignificant bits and pieces of food:

ἐπέ]ρχεται δ[ἐ πο]λλάκις, νή τοὺς θεοὺς,
 ἐ]π' ἅν θεωρῶ[ν] τυγχάνω κωμωιδίαν
 ὅ]που [μ]άγειρός ἐστιν, ἐλεεῖν τὴν τέχνην

⁴¹ Anderson (1982) on discrepancies between the two plays.

καὶ τ[ὸ] γένος ἡμῶν, εἰ τοιαῦτα κλέπτομεν.
 ἔ]στι γὰρ ὀνείδη καὶ [ψό]χος· κρεαίδια
 δύ' ἐξ ἐνὸς ποιοῦσι καὶ χορδῆς τόμους
 ἐκ το]ῦ μέσου κλέπτουσι καὶ ταύτην πάλιν
 ἐ]πάγουσι, κὰν ταῖς σφογγιαῖς ἐλάιδια
 οἱ]γόμελί τ' ἐκφέρουσι καὶ κακὰς τύχας
 ατ[.].αβουσι.:: τιμμεστι τοῦ λαβεῖν
 σ]ὺ δὲ δὴ τί, πρὸς τῆς Ἑστίας; :: ἐνὸς δύο
 ἀ]μέλει.....εδυγαρ[.]πιβας καλῶς, etc. (adesp. fr. 1093.221ff. K-A)

Here, a comic cook claims superiority over his fellow cooks in a way that directly draws attention to previous dramatic treatment.⁴² He may well be referring to the comic type in a preparation for his own, better *techne* but it is difficult to guess how big a role the conceited promise played.

Similarly in *Perikeiromene* Daos is introduced by his young master Moschion as a cheeky slave often caught lying in the past:

Δᾶε, πολλάκις μὲν ἤδη πρὸς μ' ἀπήγγελκας λόγους
 οὐκ ἀληθεῖς, ἀλλ' ἀλαζῶν καὶ θεοῖσιν ἐχθρὸς εἶ.
 εἰ δὲ καὶ νυνὶ πλανᾷς με – (Pk. 267ff.)

This introduces a familiar figure but also prepares the audience for a subtle variation: a young master is often helped by his slave in his love affair and Daos may be expected to act similarly. In fact, the young Moschion's slave will play a mischievous trickster, the role more typical for him when dealing with old masters. It helps, therefore, if from the beginning we see Daos' mischievous nature towards Moschion emphasized.

The predictability of the behaviour of particular character types allowed for a quick introduction by references to comic conventions and recognition of typical comic types was of significant help in moving plays plausibly ahead.⁴³ Simo in Ter. *Andria*, when suspecting foul play from his servant, offers by way of proof only: 'I know you' (*quia te noram* 502) and the playwright may count on the audience aware of the behaviour of typical comic slaves. Just as spectators came to expect certain behaviour from comic types, so too characters on stage consider, say, slaves, courtesans and soldiers as endowed with recognizable character traits. The following *argumentum ad hominem* is plausible not because all soldiers were like that but because spectators were aware of the theatrical tradition of such soldiers and the plausibility that this soldier would be no different⁴⁴:

Δω. δυστυχής,
 ἥτις στρατιώτην ἔλαβεν ἄνδρα. παράνομοι
 ἅπαντες, οὐδὲν πιστόν. ὦ κεκτημένη,
 ὥς ἄδικα πάσχεις. (Pk. 185ff.)

⁴² For the suggestion that the fragment is by Menander, see Austin (1973) 252 and Jacques (1963) 55 n.3. Blass (quoted in Sandbach's Oxford text) suggested Philemon. For a discussion see Bain (1977) 217ff. On the treatment of comic types, see Leo (1912) 131ff.

⁴³ Thierfelder (1936) 324 ff. on stock types and characters. Intriguers, for instance, often count on predictable reactions of those who are to be fooled: intrigues are plausible because characters on stage base their judgment on their past experiences (*exo tou dramatos*) and such experiences deliberately coincide with the spectators' awareness of particular comic types and their typical behaviour.

⁴⁴ See the bibliography given above, 8 n.30.

There is much dramatic irony stemming from the fact that the soldier in *Perikeiromene* is *not* a typical *miles gloriosus*, silly, boastful and forceful with girls.⁴⁵ He is novel, reinvented for an original plot, and the audience is made to realize it by characters such as Doris who mistake him for a typical comic soldier. Spectators naturally expected comic types to behave in the ways in which comedy consistently presented them and the playwright may take advantage of this. In *Dyskolos* Sostratos' friend, mentioned already by Pan (*Dysk.* 42), and boasting at length about his ability and speed in finding quick solutions to his patrons' romantic infatuations (*Dysk.* 57ff.) seems to suggest the role of a helpful friend for Sostratos – only for us to see that this preparation for a *parasitos* was in fact a red herring: the man runs off at top speed at the first intimation of danger. The same game of expectations is repeated anew when Sostratos wishes to pit his rascally slave against Knemon. He speaks of his plan to fetch Getas, whom he believes capable of dealing with the difficult old man:

ἔχει <τι> διάπυρον καὶ πραγμάτων
ἐμπειρός ἐστιν παντοδαπῶν· τὸ δύσκολον
τὸ τοῦδ' ἐκείνος < > ἀπώσεται, οἶδ' ἐγώ. (*Dysk.* 183ff.)

If we expect the play to move towards a clash between a scheming slave and Knemon, the next scene must come as a surprise for we learn that Getas was not in when Sostratos was looking for him (259). Sostratos' mother, it transpires, needed him for something else. The promise of bringing on stage a scheming slave ends in a seeming anticlimax with the excuse humorously weak – as if a blatant joke on the spectators' expectations.⁴⁶

Intriguers – πανοῦργοι who spell out the workings of the game

By far the most obvious characters to spell out comic patterns are intriguers because they are ready to perform little posing acts that look remarkably similar to what comedy uses in earnest. A character in Xenarchos' comedy claims that fishmonger's tricks are far cleverer than anything an armchair playwright may come up with:

οἱ μὲν ποιηταὶ λήρως εἰσιν· οὐδὲ ἐν
καινὸν γὰρ εὐρίσκουσιν, ἀλλὰ μεταφέρει
ἕκαστος αὐτῶν ταῦτ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω.
τῶν δ' ἰχθυοπωλῶν φιλοσοφώτερον γένος
οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν οὐδὲ μᾶλλον ἀνόσιον.

⁴⁵ For other examples, see Arnott (1979) 353ff. Schäfer (1965) 91ff.

⁴⁶ We get an impression that any excuse will do. Cf. Plaut. *Cas.* 64-6 for the kind of joke used here. Needless to say, Menander surprises his spectators when Getas *does* appear on stage (402) and the promise of a scheme against Knemon is renewed – but there quickly follows a third surprise and Getas is shown as completely helpless in the face of enraged Knemon (456). For Sostratos' endeavour, therefore, Getas is of little help. And yet, Menander returns to the initial promise and has Getas (with Sikon) punish Knemon in the charade of Act V. Similarly teasing is Ter. *An.* 69ff. Simo expected his son to fall prey to the courtesan Thais' allurements, but he is proved wrong and the boy becomes a paragon of virtue in his father's eyes. Unlike his friends, and unlike the compic type to which he belongs, he apparently resisted all temptation. Eventually, Chrysis died and Sosia is pleased that the danger of temptation passed the young master by (*o factum bene! / beati; ei metui a Chryside* 105f.). For a while we may stop and admire that a new paradigm seems to have replaced the traditional treatment of young men. As the plot develops, however, we hear that the young man did fall in love with a girl in Chrysis' house and his behaviour thus after all fulfils what is generally expected of a comic young man. Cf. also Bain (1987), Ireland (1983), Katsouris (1976c).

ἐπεὶ γὰρ αὐτοῖς οὐκέτ' ἔστ' ἐξουσία
 ῥαίνειν, ἀπείρηται δὲ τοῦτο τῶι νόμῳ,
 εἰς τις θεοῖσιν ἐχθρὸς ἄνθρωπος πάνυ
 ξηραιομένους ὥς εἶδε τοὺς ἰχθύς, μάχην
 ἐποίησ' ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐξεπίτηδες εὖ πάνυ.
 ἦσαν δὲ πληγαί, καιρίαν δ' εἰληφέναι
 δόξας καταπίπτει καὶ λιποψυχεῖν δοκῶν
 ἔκειτο μετὰ τῶν ἰχθύων. βοᾷ δέ τις
 “ὔδωρ <ὔδωρ.>” ὃ δ' εὐθὺς ἐξάρας πρόχουν
 τῶν ὁμοτέχνων τις τοῦ μὲν ἀκαρῇ παντελῶς
 κατέχεε, κατὰ τῶν ἰχθύων δ' ἀπαξάπαν.
 εἴποις γ' ἂν αὐτοὺς ἀρτίως ἠλωκέναι (Xen. *Porphyra*, fr. 7 K-A)

The little show staged by the fishmongers and claimed, all too explicitly, to outdo anything produced by poets, is however only too similar to comic charades: the monologue describes a little theatrical act (δόξας καταπίπτει καὶ λιποψυχεῖν δοκῶν) and as sometimes happens on both tragic and comic stage the ‘actor’ faints and someone calls for water (βοᾷ δέ τις ‘ὔδωρ <ὔδωρ.>’, cf. Men. *Sik.* 363f., Ar. *Vesp.* 995). The danger of a *panourgōs* intriguer lies precisely in that he is capable of *anything*, even speaking about his own theatrical methods with cool detachment, enhancing the present experience at the cost of the ‘fictional’ dramas. What is performed in earnest (*seuerum et serium*) in other plays becomes mere fun (*per iocum*) open to an analytical examination and an almost ironical comment. The contrast and confusion of the two concepts is very explicit in Plautus’ *Poenulus*, based on Alexis’ *Karchedonios*:

MILPHIO. *opino hercle hodie, quod ego dixi per iocum,
 id euenturum esse et seuerum et serium,
 ut haec inueniantur hodie esse huius filiae.* (Plaut. *Poen.* 1169ff.)

What by Milphio was meant as no more than an arbitrary joke⁴⁷ turned out as ‘real’ in the play’s universe. Even a New Comedy playwright no doubt saw much humorous potential in the tension between the universe of the created play and the disclosure of the comic experience that intriguers offered.⁴⁸ They give a sense that a present play is not scripted but is ‘real life’ itself, while tricks borrowed from tragedy or comedy denigrate other plays to the level of ‘fiction’. I shall provide two examples.

Sikyonios, and the problem of comic sincerity in recovering Philoumene’s eligibility for marriage

Theron’s intrigue in *Sikyonios* toys with the necessity for a satisfactory and typical New Comedy ending. Stratophanes, believed a Sicyonian, is in love with Philoumene whom he bought from pirates in Caria some time ago (2ff.). But how to make the girl eligible for marriage with Stratophanes? This familiar dramatic problem turns into a developed scene of generic self-irony. Theron, Stratophanes’ ingenious parasite, tries in a rather unclear passage to convince Stratophanes to agree to a scheme by which a

⁴⁷ The intrigue is sometimes presented as a joke: as in Ter. *Eun.* (CH. *dixti pulchre*... PA. *iocabar equidem*. 376, 378), Plaut. *Mostellaria*, *Mercator*, *Poenulus*, etc. Blänsdorf (1982) *passim*.

⁴⁸ Thierfelder (1936) 330, judging by Latin evidence concludes: ‘Menander besonders der der terenzischen, also späteren Stücke, [hat] gern Gelegenheit zur Ironisierung der auch von ihm eifrig angewandten Klischees der Technik ergriffen, grundsätzlich im gleichen Geiste wie andere Dichter in früher erwähnten Fällen, nur teils verwegener, und zugleich graziöser, teils ernsthafter.’

witness is to be found who would *perjure* himself and claim that Philoumene is a free-born girl, thus removing the obstacle that lies in the way of the marriage.

τί δὴ τὸ κακ]όν ποτ' ἐστίν; οὕτω μαρτυρεῖν
 μάρτυρα] τοιοῦτον ἂν τις εὔροι πολλαχοῦ
 ἐνταῦθ' ἐ]ν ἄστει τοῦδ'· Ἐλευσίς ἐστι, καὶ
 πανήγ]υρίς που. τίς νοήσει, πρὸς θεῶν;
 εἰ συνδρα]μεῖται δῆμος, εἰς τις οὐ ταχὺ
 τὴν παῖδ'] ἀφελκύσαιτ' ἄν. (Men. Sic. 55ff.⁴⁹)

The prologue speaker would have told the audience that the girl is indeed a freeborn Athenian (cf. l. 2) as she must be if the play is to reach any meaningful resolution. The audience acquainted with the genre would realize that the majority of New Comedy intrigues are directed at removing obstacles in the way of the lovers' (re)union and that often it is the seemingly inappropriate origin that forms an obstacle to such a resolution.⁵⁰

The dramatic necessity for such an ending turned into an ironic statement about plotting which required an undoubtedly contrived way to reach the satisfactory resolution. Theron's intrigue addresses a typical comic problem, but Theron himself becomes a victim of ignorance when what he devised *per iocum* begins a life of its own (as something *seuerum et serium*). Like Xenarchos' fishmongers allegedly cleverer than poets, Theron's intrigue finds a mightier rival in 'real life'. Act V (312ff.) brings dangerously close together the scheme and the 'real-life' of the play. Theron brings on stage a man whom he wishes to convince to play the part of a witness⁵¹ who would confirm that Philoumene is a free-born Athenian citizen. The situation gets out of control when poor Kichesias refuses to make a financial profit out of perjury. He must have found the task unpalatable, not least because he himself knew how it was to lose a daughter...Theron, on hearing that, believes that the old man instead of playing a witness wishes to play the part of the girl's very father and the schemer admits this beats his own scheme. Theron the parasite does not for a while believe that Kichesias is serious and takes it that the impecunious (what a fine touch!) Kichesias easily slipped into the role asked of him. The situation results in splendid irony from the moment that the impostor brings an unsuspecting old man and tries to teach him the role that the old man knows only too well already:

ΚΙ οὐκ εἰς τὸν ὄλεθρον – <ΘΗ> χαλεπὸς ἦσθα. ΚΙ –ἀποφθερεῖ
 ἀπ' ἐμοῦ; Κιχησίαν σὺ τοιοῦθ' ὑπέλαβες
 ἔργον ποήσειν ἢ λαβεῖν ἂν παρά τινος
 ἀργύριον. ΘΗ. ἀδίκου πράγματος.⁵² ΚΙ Κιχησίαν;

⁴⁹ Following Arnott's text in the lacunae.

⁵⁰ Dieterle (1980) 38-42 gives the summary charts that make clear the predominance of (re)unions of lovers as the most obvious goal of comic intrigues. In the following plays such a (re)union requires the removal of the obstacle of one partner's inadequate origin through an *anagnorisis*: Plaut. *Casina*, *Curculio*, *Poenulus*, Ter. *Andria*, *Haut.*, *Eunuchus*, *Phormio*. Good evidence of how frequent this motif is can be found in the mistake some critics were led to make when parts of Men. *Samia* first appeared. It was believed that the same motif of *anagnorisis* had to be used in the play to allow for the reunion of the lovers Demeas and Chrysis, with Chrysis' status as a courtesan proved false by some evidence. Only further papyrus finds proved such guessing to have been wrong, misled as it was by a sentimental sympathy with Chrysis (no working courtesans is in fact known to be Athenian born). See Lloyd-Jones (1972).

⁵¹ I follow the interpretation of GS ad 312 (and Belardinelli ad loc.).

⁵² I follow Arnott's lively distribution of parts.

Σκαμβωνίδην γενόμενον; ΘΗ. εὖ γ' ἄρ' ὑπέλαβες;
τούτου με πρᾶξαι μισθὸν αὐτοῦ, μηκέτι
ὦν ἔλεγον ἄρτι. ΚΙ. τοῦ τίνος; ΘΗ. Κιχησίας
Σκαμβωνίδης γε - πολὺ σὺ βέλτιον λέγεις.
νοεῖν τι φαίνει τὸν τύπον τοῦ πράγματος.
οὗτος γενοῦ· καὶ σιμὸς εἴ γὰρ ἀπὸ τύχης
καὶ μικρός, οἷον ἔλεγεν ὁ θεράπων τότε.
ΚΙ. γέρων ὅς εἰμι γέγονα. ΘΗ. πρόσθες “θυγάτριον
Ἀλῆθεν ἀπολέσας σεαυτοῦ τετραετές-”
ΚΙ. Δρόμωνά τ' οἰκέτην ἀπολέσας. ΘΗ. εὖ πάνυ·
“ἄρπασθὲν ὑπὸ ληιστῶν.” ΚΙ. ἀνέμνησας πάθους
τὸν ἄθλιόν με καὶ φθορᾶς⁵³ οἰκτρᾶς ἐμοί.
ΘΗ. ἄριστα· τοῦτον διαφύλαττε τὸν τρόπον
τό τ' ἐπιδακρύειν. ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος σφόδρα. (Sik. 343ff.)

Theron wants to create something that, on reflection, must be there in the play somewhere *in earnest* for the drama to reach a satisfactory resolution. Menander could well have brought on stage a different Kichesias with any perfunctory purpose and have him coincidentally become reunited with his daughter. However, through Theron we are treated to a travesty of the theme before reaching the *de rigueur* recognition scene. An audience aware of the only possible generic resolution available in this play (foretold in the prologue) must realize the explicit irony of the intrigue and the freshness with which Menander reached the required anagnorisis after all. We perhaps associate such scenes that can laugh at generic requirements more with Plautus – and indeed comparison with very similar *Poenulus* (1100ff.) is unavoidable.⁵⁴

Habrotonon and the scripts for raped girls

Another character who takes a detached view of typical comic material is Habrotonon in *Epitrepontes*. In order to find the true parents of the foundling baby, she devises a scheme that entails her posing as the baby's mother. To succeed, she must play the part of a raped girl, but she knows what they usually say, and should not have problems sounding plausible as she seems acquainted with their situations⁵⁵:

ABP. θέασ', Ὀνήσιμε,
ἂν συναρέσῃ σοι τοῦμόν ἐνθύμημ' ἄρα.
ἐμὸν ποιήσομαι τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτ' ἐγώ,
τὸν δακτύλιον λαβοῦσά τ' εἴσω τουτονὶ
εἴσειμι πρὸς ἐκεῖνον. ΟΝ. λέγ' ὃ λέγεις· ἄρτι γὰρ
νοῶ. ABP. κατιδὼν μ' ἔχουσιν ἀνακρινεῖ πόθεν
εἴληφα. φήσω “Ταυροπολίοις παρθένος
ἔτ' οὔσα”, τὰ τ' ἐκείνηι γενόμενα πάντ' ἐμὰ
ποουμένη· τὰ πλεῖστα δ' αὐτῶν οἶδ' ἐγώ.
ΟΝ. ἄριστά γ' ἀνθρώπων. ABP. ἐὰν οἰκεῖον ἦι
αὐτῶι τὸ πρᾶγμα δ', εὐθὺς ἥξει φερόμενος

⁵³ v. 358: †θυρᾶς†: θυγατρὸς Barigazzi, Post: φθορᾶς Arnott.

⁵⁴ Gratwick (1982) 101ff. presents a strong case for Menander's *Sikyonios* as the model for Plautus' *Poenulus* scene.

⁵⁵ Men. *Heros* (e.g. 74ff.) could have contained something like a narration of the circumstances of Myrrhine's rape but, admittedly, fr. δεζ→ is too lacunose to be certain.

ἐπὶ τὸν ἔλεγχον καὶ μεθύων γε νῦν ἐρεῖ
 πρότερος ἅπαντα καὶ προπετῶς· ἃ δ' ἂν λέγῃ
 προσομολογήσω τοῦ διαμαρτεῖν μηδὲ ἐν
 προτέρα λέγουσα. ON. ὑπέρευγε νῆ τὸν Ἥλιον.
 ABP. τὰ κοινὰ ταυτὶ δ' ἀκκιοῦμαι τῶι λόγῳ
 τοῦ μὴ διαμαρτεῖν· “ὥς ἀναιδὴς ἦσθα καὶ
 ἰταμός τις”. ON. εὖγε. ABP. κατέβαλες δέ μ' ὥς σφόδρα·
 ἱμάτια δ' οἱ ἀπώλεσ' ἢ τάλαιν' ἐγώ”
 φήσω. πρὸ τούτου δ' ἔνδον αὐτὸ βούλομαι
 λαβοῦσα κλαῦσαι καὶ φιλῆσαι καὶ πόθεν
 ἔλαβεν ἐρωτᾶν τὴν ἔχουσαν. ON. Ἡράκλεις.
 ABP. τὸ πέρας δὲ πάντων, “παιδίον τοίνυν” ἐρῶ
 “ἐστ' ἢ γεγονός σοι”, καὶ τὸ νῦν εὐρημένον
 δείξω. ON. πανούργως καὶ κακοήθως, Ἀβρότονον.
 ABP. ἂν δ' ἐξετασθῇ ταῦτα καὶ φανῇ πατήρ
 ὢν οὗτος αὐτοῦ, τὴν κόρην ζητήσομεν
 κατὰ σχολήν. (Men. *Epit.* 511ff.)

Habrotonon is intent on imitating τὰ κοινὰ - things commonly said by ravished girls, playing faithfully a part of a ravished girl – a strikingly self-conscious arrangement in the comic universe, and the more humorous for that. Admittedly, she does not reach anything like the explicitness of a Ballio in Plautus' *Pseudolus*.⁵⁶ It is this subtlety that distances Menander from both Aristophanes and Plautus. Moreover, I wish to suggest that even with much subtler and implicit means Menander can in fact achieve the same effect as his more metatheatrical colleagues.⁵⁷

Because of such subtlety, Aelius Aristides ignores him completely in his *Περὶ τοῦ παραφθέγματος*, conceived with a specific purpose to defend a piece of incidental self-praise (*παράφθεγμα*) in his hymn to Athena.⁵⁸ When that remark caused offence, the rhetor set out to assemble examples from major literary genres to show how authorial self-praise pervaded most of them. Significantly enough, New Comedy finds no place in his list.⁵⁹ This could mean either that it was non-existent for him or that the genre simply did not provide examples explicit and useful enough for Aristides' rhetorical purposes; nothing that would approach the explicitness of a 'dramatic *parabasis*' to which he at one point compares his *paraphthegma*.

⁵⁶ *Nugas theatri; uerba quae in comoediis solent lenoni dici, quae pueri sciunt: malum et scelestum et peiurum aibat esse me* (Plaut. *Pseudolus* 1081-83). On explicit mentions of plays and players in Terence and Plautus, see Knapp (1919).

⁵⁷ Studies examining metatheatre in Menander, notably Stockert (1997) and Gutzwiller (2000), are interesting but not utterly clinching for the very reason of Menander's subtlety. My example to show this would be cases where either an intriguer spelling out his scheme, or his listeners, comment on it with an oath by Dionysos – how can we be certain that it has anything to do with acknowledging a theatrical nature of the suggested intrigue? Cases such as *Sik.* 80-2 and *Dysk.* 346f. spring to mind, but is the oath by Dionysos really meant to hint at the theatrical connections of the god (e.g. Ar. *Nub.* 519)? Or is it just a conversational tag such as is not infrequently found elsewhere (Ar. *Av.* 1370, Men. *Sam.* 112; Ar. *Nub.* 90f., cf. 108)? On Menander's subtle characterization of characters through their use of oaths, see de Kat Eliassen (1975); Feneron (1974); Bain (1984). I am not sure there is any sound methodology to help with such problems where lack of material limits our knowledge. Nor is it certain that any increase in Menandrian finds would help us greatly here.

⁵⁸ See the discussion in Rutherford (1995).

⁵⁹ Rutherford (1995) 196.

Leaving aside the problematic case of tragedy,⁶⁰ we know that Old Comedy does allow room for the poet's voice to be heard: for instance, in *Peace* (736ff.) Aristophanes expresses a most confident self-praise, a wish to appropriate *kleos* (cf. κλεινότητος, 737) and primacy (πρῶτος 739, 743) for raising an over-conventionalized genre from repeatedly staged stock types (Ἡρακλέας, 741) onto a higher level of *techne* (τέχνην μεγάλην ἡμῶν). Goldhill goes further and identifies as 'part of [Old] comedy's discourse ... a marked self-awareness and self-projection of its own fictionality.'⁶¹ If we had more of Middle and New Comedy, we would be better placed to see how the dialogue between poets and their audience had to accommodate the gradual loss of the *parabasis* and keep within the bounds of prologues and epilogues.⁶² However, I hope to have at least sketched the trends recoverable in the preserved play texts. The New Comedy poet had the advantage that he could take into account his audience's awareness of the genre and play with its self-enclosed similarities as a way of commenting on his art and his place in the tradition. I suggest therefore, that Menander could address his audience as effectively as Aristophanes had done before through more explicit means. In the end it all depended on the spectator: the fonder he was of the genre, the more attuned he could become to the many layers of meaning hidden in the sentimental stories of everyday life.

Sympotic *kleos*

The genre became different things to different people, but highly pleasurable to them all. When Theognis promises Kynos immortality, he develops the most obvious social image that can constitute and perpetuate his fame with future generations, the *symposium*:

ῥηϊδίως· θοίνης δὲ καὶ εἰλαπίνῃσι παρέσσημι
ἐν πάσαις, πολλῶν κείμενος ἐν στόμασιν (239f.)

Likewise, Aristophanes judges the poet Karkinos famous by the fact that his songs are sung at the *symposia* (*Eq.* 529f.).⁶³ Our discussion of Menander's works must therefore end with Plutarch's testimony. Menander, as Plutarch bears witness, gained prestige and *kleos* from subsequent generations of Greeks who would quote speeches from him at gentlemen's *symposia*: μᾶλλον ἂν οὔνου χωρὶς ἢ Μενάνδρου διακυβερνῆσαι τὸν πότον.⁶⁴ By Plutarch's time at least, Menander did become part of the canon and acquired the status equal to that of his illustrious tragic model, never to lose his prestige. It is ironic that with his rising fame knowledge and appreciation of the subtlety of his plots began to wane for good.

⁶⁰ Plutarch, for one, insists that Euripides (along with Pindar) actually does insert his own praise into his plays: φορτικωτάτῃ κέχρηται μεγαλαυχία τῷ συγκαταπλέκειν τοῖς τραγωδουμένοις πάθεσι καὶ πράγμασι μηδὲν προσήκοντα τὸν περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγον (Plut. *Mor.* 539 b-c). On the problem of tragic *parabasis*, cf. Bain (1975) 14ff. Of course, I do not touch here on the eloquence of veiled comments about a tragic poet's art such as Eur. *Ion* 507ff. and pronouncements referring to songs and dance: Henrichs (1994-95), Bain (1977) 210, Wilson and Taplin (1993/94).

⁶¹ Goldhill (1991) 186.

⁶² Probably references in comedy to rival poets and general discussions about literature were not restricted to the *parabasis*: fr. adesp. 1008 K-A raises an interesting question of whether such references and literary discussions were not commoner than we think. Arnott (1985) asks a hypothetical question about whether the kind of prologues we know from Terence did not in fact appear in some of his lost Greek originals. See Leo (1912) 238ff.

⁶³ Evidence collected in Csapo (1999) 158f. with note 18.

⁶⁴ Plut. *quaest. conv.* VII 8, 3; Men. *Test.* 104 K-A.

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Menander and the Expectations of his Audience

Abstract of DPhil Thesis

Hilary 2004

How can a dramatist writing in a highly conventional genre ‘imitate life’? I develop various aspects of the hypothesis that the stereotypes of New Comedy were put to a varied dramatic use through being questioned, reacted against, or commented upon – always in ways that eventually upheld them in such an intricate and polyphonous process that spectators’ demand for novelty was fully satisfied. The thesis contains four larger sections; each is in a different way a commentary on the extant plays and their conventions.

Ch. I. **‘Techniques of foreshadowing and character presentation in Menander’s *Aspis* in the light of Greek dramatic traditions’** In a running commentary on the chosen play I explore the problems of the spectators’ expectations of what a newly staged play should be like, as they are shaped by the familiarity with the generic rules. The question of genre and its boundaries is particularly pronounced in this play since it chose Tragedy to carry its comic meaning.

Ch. II. **‘Conventions in the theatre of life: Menander’s Stagecraft’** and Ch. III. **‘The Oikos as a Dramatic Space’** Even in the conventionally fixed stage space Menander could recreate miniatures symbolic of real life experiences. Through exquisite plotting, he could allow his spectators an insight into the deep recesses of the house and the minds of its inhabitants. I show how fixed and unchanging setting becomes a dynamic force in moving Menander’s plots ahead.

Ch. IV. **‘Familiar games and the poet’s voice in self-advertisement.’** How can a New Comedy playwright advertise and ‘sell’ to his audience a play if he works in a genre that does not destroy its *Fiktion der Handlung*? This highly conventional genre can, I claim, through both embracing and problematising its very conventionality express itself with irony and subtlety that is at least as effective as open self-praise by poets in comic genres that allow it.