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I

E. W. HANDLEY

The conventions of the comic stage  
and their exploitation by Menander



## THE CONVENTIONS OF THE COMIC STAGE AND THEIR EXPLOITATION BY MENANDER

I tried to keep in mind that in a play, from time to time, something should happen; that the audience should be kept in the constant expectation that something is going to happen; and that when it does happen, it should be different, but not too different, from what the audience had been led to expect.

T. S. ELIOT, *Poetry and Drama*<sup>1</sup>

Near the end of Act II of Menander's *Dyskolos*, the young hero, equipped with a borrowed mattock, sets off for a bout of hard work in the fields, hoping to meet and impress the misanthropic father of the girl he loves. The stage is left empty. Enter a cook, dragging after him a sheep, and cursing it as he goes. The sight of an angry man in a muddle with an animal is universal enough as a source of amusement to have its effect on audiences nearly two-and-a-half thousand years later, even if many of them have met the name of Menander for the first time when they decided to buy their tickets, and are not accustomed to being catered for by men who bring the meal on the hoof. The classical scholar in the audience is in a different position. He knows that *mageiroi* are quite a well-documented character-type in fourth-century comedy, thanks in part to the material collected by Athenaeus for his *Deipnosophistai*; back in his study, he can put a hand to a considerable bibliography of the topic, quoting parallels for the action and for points in the language, and perhaps invoking a visual aid or two from terracotta statuettes of men with animals<sup>2</sup>. In such ways, in spite of

<sup>1</sup> *The Theodore Spencer Memorial Lecture*, Harvard University, November 21, 1950 (London, Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> As for instance in my *Dyskolos of Menander* (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 199 f.



our very fragmentary knowledge of Greek Comedy in the two generations between the last of Aristophanes and the first of Menander, it becomes plain from sheer repetition that certain elements in Menander's comedies are in some sense conventional or traditional. That is to say that, whatever their status in relation to contemporary reality, their appeal to a theatrically conscious audience in Menander's own time is compounded with the effect they have as traditional or conventional elements in drama. In other words, the very appearance on stage of a man with an animal who is recognizably a *mageiros* creates certain expectations with which the dramatist must reckon.

The dramatist's reckoning may lead him in several ways. He may, for instance, attempt to outdo the convention by making his own treatment brighter and better, rather in the mood of Plautus, when he makes a slave boast that he has secured his young master a royal and golden fortune, and has no time for your Parmenos and Syruses with their frauds of two or three minas<sup>1</sup>. Or he may exploit the convention more subtly, realizing that he can recreate an expected pattern of words or action with no great displacement of effort; and then, perhaps with equal economy, marking a point or two of difference from the image in the detail of his own treatment. He may also want to link such a motif into a chain of expectation, giving the audience a hint in advance that such and such a thing is to happen, and then using it, when it does, to create further anticipation for something else. This seems rather closer to the doctrine which Eliot's words recall to us, and rather more like Menander; for it is, perhaps, by infusing the apparently

<sup>1</sup> Chrysalus at *Ba.* 645-50: it is amusing that in Menander's original he had the common name Syros, as appears from the Oxyrhynchus fragments of *Δις ἐξαπατῶν* discussed in my lecture *Menander and Plautus: a study in comparison* (London, H. K. Lewis, 1968).

familiar with the tension created by context and structure that he achieves some of his most successful dramatic effects.

Leading on from our example of something very familiar in Comedy, I should like to suggest recurrent motifs as one general heading under which we can consider conventions of the comic stage. Given New Comedy's links by descent from both the major forms of fifth-century drama, and the continuing influence of classical tragedy as well as earlier comedy, it is clear that exploitation of tragic as well as of comic motif may enter into this. Equally clearly, one could consider Menander's use of conventional topics in speeches and dialogue under a related heading. All this, at one end of the scale, could involve, or lead into, discussion of his use of conventions of language, even of metre and metrical forms; at the other end, it might run into questions about his approach to character-portraiture and plot-construction. Although I shall suggest that the critic of ancient comedy should beware of drawing lines too firmly between different departments of the comic playwright's art, there does seem to be here a group of conventions which can go together for our purposes as literary conventions, and reflect the point that comedy is a species of literature.

A second class (the order of enumeration is not supposed to be important), may be made of conventions which are to do with theatrical performance: conventions springing from the physical character of the theatre for which Menander wrote; the conventions of costumes and masks, in so far as we recognize them as established in his time; conventions in the use of a limited number of actors (however limited we think it was), and in the actual stage-management of action and spectacle in so far as we can reconstruct these visual elements from the available texts and illustrations left to us from Antiquity.

Thirdly, in a kind of drama which has had from Antiquity onwards a much treasured reputation for realism, there is a

special sense of convention which comes in when we ask questions about the status of the comic representation in relation to real life; as when we ask how far events in plays are supposed to make sense in terms of real time and place, or how far the economic facts about characters' lives are 'true' facts, with precise counterparts in the world outside the play, as opposed to facts only acceptable in a fictional context and with a conventional sense.

It might be objected that so comprehensive a scheme would allow us to turn the discussion to anything in Menander. That is, in fact, the idea. Comic poets of the fifth century, one recalls, sometimes took conscious pride in their novelties, and decried stock jokes and themes, even, as it might be, in the act of using them. At the opposite pole, Terence (admittedly in the course of a rather speciously angled answer to a literary controversy) was prepared to assert that the comic poet has no novelty left open to him<sup>1</sup>. The same is sometimes said nowadays about plots for novels. Yet they go on being published in quantity. Thus, whatever value one wants to put on sheer innovation in any particular form of creative activity, it is obvious that with some, at all events from the consumer's point of view, the pleasures of familiarity are considerable; and if there were any danger of our underrating this, the immense development of certain forms of drama as entertainment for mass audiences through cinema, sound radio, and television would rapidly rescue us. There are mass audiences not only for canonical types of screen play, for example Westerns and detective stories, each with its many familiar conventions of setting, characterization and incident, but also for the more extreme case which depends on the kind of frequent and regular access to the

<sup>1</sup> Novelties: e.g. Cratinus, *Odysses* 145K.; Pherekrates, *Korianno* 79K.; Ar. *Clouds* 547 ἀλλ' αἰεὶ καινὰς ἰδέας εἰσφέρων σοφίζομαι. Stock jokes: e.g. Ar. *Peace* 739 ff., *Clouds* 538 ff. and scholia, *Frogs* 1 ff. Terence: *Eun.* 41.

same audience which modern communications make possible: namely, the serial, consisting of a long sequence of more-or-less self-contained pieces of action in which the same principal characters go on appearing, and may take on, for their audiences, a curiously real and ageless existence of their own—the ideal child who never grows up, the ideal friend whose lasting idiosyncracies seem to give a ground bass of permanence in contrast to one's own shifting moods and affairs. Noticeably, the very fixity of convention which can be exploited to hold the audiences for which it was created is also something which can make a whole genre acceptable in a quite new environment: thus the 'Western' idiom is known and liked by some large number of Europeans for whom the Old West of the United States is even more of a fictional entity than it must be for many of the present inhabitants of those lands. This is a factor which it may be interesting to remember when one considers the long life and the popularity of Menandrian comedy in places far removed from the Athens in which it evolved. And such analogies, however imprecise they may be, could also lead our discussions to reopen that old topic on Menandrian comedy, perhaps especially favoured by those who find it unattractive—how closely drawn are its conventions of subject, in terms of the range of human experiences which it reflects?

I have one more general observation to offer. Whatever opinion he may wish to express of the literary, dramatic or other value of Menandrian comedy, the critic who tries to appreciate and explain the means by which it achieves its effects is in a certain difficulty of presentation and perspective. It is difficult to avoid going on much too long; it is difficult to avoid sounding either hopelessly trivial or hopelessly over-refined, and the experience must in some sense be akin to that of the experts who try to say (though no doubt with batteries of statistical data) why one advertisement is imme-



diately appealing and successful, and another not too different is an utter flop. It is perhaps even more related to the experience one has in the presence of a superbly successful comic performance by a star with a genius for delivery, timing, gesture and expression, when one asks: 'Could I explain how it was done, and why it was done like that?' The answer, I suppose, is that there is nothing improper in wanting to know, but one must not expect the attempt to find out to be as enjoyable as the original reaction.

Let us return to our cook with his sheep. Even a simple incident can be used to illustrate the basic point that a single event in a play can simultaneously involve a number of dramatic conventions, some of them latent, in that they are accepted without special consciousness as part of the normal means of communication between dramatist and audience; others not so, in that, on the given occasion, a special and conscious use is made of them. Thus both dramatist and audience neglect the fact that, being someone in a play, the cook is wearing tights like a comic actor and unlike a real cook. He is recognized as a cook on sight, so far as we know, by his mask, and perhaps his cook's knife or other standard details of costume. This time the point does matter, and typically, it is reinforced by what he says, most directly in referring to himself as 'the *mageiros*' and to the place where he is as 'the Nymphaion where we are to sacrifice' (399-401). Moreover, he is given a variant on one of the very familiar stock-in-trade jokes of cook scenes, the word for to chop or cut up, κόπτω or κατακόπτω (in this case the latter), with its slang sense of giving someone a thoroughly unpleasant experience, as by hacking at him with criticism or battering him with sheer conversational boredom: this time, with all the struggle they have had, the notion is that the sheep has had the cook under the chopper: he is hauling it along 'like a boat up a beach'. Thus both visual and verbal conventions play their part simultaneously,

and variants on both add, or seem to add, a spice of new interest.

Suppose we approach from another angle. The stage building, that place of many uses, is accepted as representing somewhere in a remote valley in the mountains of the Northern Attic borders for the very good reason that Menander has made it clear in advance that that is where the play is happening<sup>1</sup>. The point is gently reinforced by making the cook say '*fortunately* here it is' (he has come a long way, and his loaded companion Getas is trailing behind), and by inventing the notion that when carried over the shoulders, as animals commonly were and are in Greece, the sheep held up the march by reaching for leaves to eat on the way (400, 394 ff). Is one surprised to see a figure so commonly associated with town life in so remote a place? No : because we have already been told, in a context where the information had the air of an incidental detail, that Sostratos' mother is a woman who goes all round the district making sacrifices, and had sent Getas to hire a *mageiros* for one of her pious excursions (259 ff.). Do we worry about where the cook came from, to be fetched to so remote a place in time to sacrifice and cook for a mid-day meal? No : because the precise details do not enter into the matter. The general rule seems to be that provided the realities of place and time are not so conspicuously violated as to make the action ludicrous for that reason, the dramatist can expect to carry the audience with him in a little convenient stretching. If the cook was supposed to live in or near Athens (where, not surprisingly, he boasts of having an extensive practice), Getas would be supposed to have had a journey of around 25 miles since early morning to fetch him and bring him back (393 n.). The point of this meticulous organization of detail is not of course, that it is some kind of private game between the dramatist and his

<sup>1</sup> I f. : see *Dyskolos of Menander* 20 ff. with further references.

more scholarly admirers, but that, if the audience is to be relaxed and properly attentive to the effect being created, they must be given just enough information to carry on their interest without irrelevant surprises; and loose ends which may distract them from the main business in hand must be tied in or tucked out of sight. A puzzled or distracted spectator is, for the moment of being puzzled or distracted, a lost one <sup>1</sup>.

Perhaps we can now extend our analysis a little further and make some comparisons. The whole comic episode of the entry of the cook in the *Dyskolos* makes an immediate contrast with the mood of romantic resolution given by Sostratos' departure with his mattock for toil and hot sun. Similarly in the *Misoumenos*, the moment of Thrasonides' resolve to confront the father of the girl he loves is succeeded by the entry of Kleinias with a cook, giving instructions on a very familiar topic—the number of guests to be catered for, and on the need for speed <sup>2</sup>; in the *Aspis*, the moment in the first act when Daos makes a stand against Smikrines' determination to have his rights over the girl and the estate that goes with her is brought sharply up against—not the arrival of a cook, but the departure of one, from the household which was to celebrate a wedding and is now plunged in sorrow. Once again, familiar topics appear: theft, in the form of reproach to his assistant for failure to capitalize on the situation by filling the oil-bottle on the way out, rivalry between cook and *trapezopoios*, and, once more, a form of the *κόπτω*-joke <sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The point is nicely put at the beginning of G. H. GELLIE's paper 'Motivation in Sophocles' in *BICS* 11 (1964) 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> *Misoumenos*, POxy 2656, 270 ff.: 'number of guests' motif as (e.g.) *Sam.* 287 ff. and Straton, *Phoenikides* [PAGE, *Lit. Pap.* 57] 6; 'hurry' motif as (e.g.) *Epitr.* 206 [below, p. 14, n. 2] and *Dysk.* 943 σπουδῇ γὰρ ἦν.

<sup>3</sup> *Aspis* 216 ff.: theft, e.g. Euphron, *Adelphoi* 1K.; PAGE, *Lit. Pap.* 59 (b) with TREU, *Philologus* 102 (1958) 215 ff.; P. *Aul.* 553 f.; *trapezopoios*, *Dysk.* 646 and n., H. DOHM, *Mageiros* (Munich, 1964) 82 f. On the *κόπτω*-joke,

Now one effect of these three scenes, placed as they are, is to bring the action down from a high point to which it has developed, and carry the act to a swift close on a new note: six lines are spent on this in *Misoumenos*; 34 in *Dyskolos*; the same, perhaps one or two more, in *Aspis*. 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 often brought by the arrival of a character new to the play, or new at least to the preceding sequence. For example, *Samia*, Act I, at 96, say about 30 lines from the end, Moschion has resolved to steel his nerves and go off and rehearse the social and ceremonial business for the wedding of which he is so nervous. Enter the two old gentlemen Demeas and Nikeratos, with their travellers' talk of the Black Sea, from which they turn, apparently casually, to the topic of the wedding which their return home has brought to mind. Or *Epitrepontes*, Act II, at the end of the Arbitration, at 206, enter Onesimos, 37 lines from the end of the Act: a brief reference to the slowness of the cook (it is because things are so slow that he has time to step outside), and then he notices that the ring which is just being looked at and talked about is the one his master once lost. Or *Sikyonios*, Act III, at about 120, some 30 lines from the end, enter Pyrrhias with the vital news, and the evidence, of Stratophanes' true parentage, on which the next stage of the action is to turn. Or, from Act IV, *Dyskolos* 775, after the climax of Knemon's major speech and Sostratos' betrothal, enter Kallippides, required for the next stage, but at this moment with his mind on being late for the party, just nine lines from the end of the act; *Aspis* 491, some 30 lines from the end, enter Kleostratos, who is thought by

see below p. 15 with n. 2; and on the funeral feast (233) note Hegesippos, *Adelphoi* 1K., 10 ff. and Anaxippos, *Enkalyptomenos* 1K., 40 ff., quoted together by ДОНМ, *op. cit.* 78.



all but the audience to have died in battle by the river Xanthos in Lycia.

Thus if one function of the three cook-scenes which led us into this topic is to bring contrast and end the act on a lighter plane of comedy, the varied sample of instances we have taken from elsewhere suggests that their placing is unlikely to be an accident in the purely structural sense, but has something to do with Menander's use of the convention of act-breaks in relation to the progress of an action. We are, of course, exceedingly ill-informed about what happened in the breaks. Tradition enacts that the first entry of the chorus may have special treatment, even if it is almost or wholly disregarded as an entity elsewhere: thus, in the *Plutus*, in addition to providing that the chorus shall have some sort of performance before 325 (and probably, in composing the play, he had no need to think what sort), Aristophanes also devised a parodos for which the chorus is in character, and a special dance, parodying the *Cyclops* of Philoxenos, which they are to do with Karion before they come to their conventional XOPOY<sup>1</sup>. This is the tradition which Menander preserves in his formulaic announcements of the chorus's first entry at the end of Act I, and we can digress to note two special variants: *Dyskolos*, where the drunken young men are given a special character, either as 'paean-singers', if, like myself, one is stiff-necked enough to hold on to the text; or as 'followers of Pan', by an easy and attractive conjecture; and *Aspis*, where they are not simply 'a crowd' but 'another crowd'—the audience has seen one crowd already in the procession of captives led home by Daos, and, it may be, Menander is not merely

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *CQ* n.s. 3 (1953) 55-61, esp. 59 n. 4, and W. J. W. KOSTER, *Autour d'un manuscrit d'Aristophane écrit par Démétrius Triclinius* (Groningen, 1957) 117 ff., with further references. Doubts over the textual history and significance of XOPOY in the *Plutus* need not radically affect our use of the play here to illustrate a kind of episodic structure.

alluding to this, but marking the contrast of mood and spectacle which he has created in this play<sup>1</sup>. What interests us, here, however, is a particular kind of plot-planning in relation to the discontinuity given by the breaks. Such a break may simply be treated as an interlude between episodes. An extreme case would be the breaks between episodes at the end of the *Plutus*, after 958, for instance, if it is right to think that the chorus performed there. But the break can have more of a dramatic function if something is done by the shape of the action or the words of the dialogue to create expectation for what will come after it, and it may then be used to mark a lapse of dramatic time, as in the *Plutus* after 626, where a night passes during which Plutus incubates in the temple of Asklepios. With a play of integrated structure, such as the *Dyskolos*, the problem, I take it, is to use the breaks as part of the design, so that they give intervals in the continuous action, but not destructive ones. Hence the tendency, there and elsewhere, to achieve a compromise between break and continuity by introducing a diversity of action near the break.

The content of our three short cook-scenes takes on another interest when viewed in this light. Let us take *Misoumenos* first. If these six lines were a fragment, we should perhaps only dare to observe that someone was instructing a cook in a not very surprising way: 'There's one stranger to entertain, cook, and myself, and for third, a girl of mine—if she's come in, for Heaven's sake: I'm worried about that myself. If not, just him: I shall be after her all over town. But come on in, cook, and make your motto Speed'. We have enough to know that what we are getting, in the rather simpler visual terms of the cinema,

<sup>1</sup> *Dysk.* 230; *Asp.* 247, cf. 88 f. The reference back to the procession of captives is doubtful, because *ἄλλον ἄλλον* may mean (i) 'another *ἄλλος*' as opposed to the present *ἄλλος* of cook and company (cf. Knemon at *Dysk.* 166) or (ii) 'others, a crowd' (cf. LSJ s.v. *ἄλλος* II. 8).

is a quite different camera angle on two of the principals. The word ξένος, which in the context of dinner-party means 'guest' has a particular function in this play in relation to Demeas, the stranger arrived from Cyprus. It has appeared prominently before; it will soon come in again, when, a few lines from the beginning of the new act, Kleinias asks Getas 'Has a *xenos* just come into your house?' and the verbal link helps the theme to take up again<sup>1</sup>. One could offer a contrast with what must be a near-minimal use of cook-motif at the end of Act II of *Epitrepontes*, which we mentioned just now: there of course, the main interest is on the discovery which Onesimos is to make about the ring, and it is the ring which makes the verbal link with the next act; the cook is not only not silent, but does not even show his face. Even so, words are not wasted. In eight of them, Menander shifts the focus of attention to Charisios' side of the story, suggests a motive for his character's entrance, and (as with the progress of the sacrifice and party through the *Dyskolos*) uses the reference to the meal to keep a time scale of the action going: English can only match in syllables, not words: 'No-one ever saw a slower cook: this time yesterday they'd been having their wine for hours'<sup>2</sup>. If this sounds, as it may, like a bad case of over-interpretation, the test is to put in some other form of words instead: 'I suppose I might as well go and sit on the porch for five minutes'. For many playwrights, that would have been quite good enough.

The effect of the new angle, as well as that of thematic contrast, is clear to see in the *Aspis* cook scene, and Menander's choice from the available store of conventional detail has clearly been made with that in mind. By putting

<sup>1</sup> *Mis.* 286, recalling 270, 273, and (more remotely) *POxy* 2657, 24, 27, 31 (*Menander and Plautus*, p. 20 n. 8).

<sup>2</sup> *Epitr.* 206: cf. T. B. L. WEBSTER, 'Menander: Production and Imagination', *Bull. Rylands Library* 45 (1962) 235-272, at pp. 268 ff.

the death of Kleainetos so prominently to the fore at the opening of the play, and by providing him with an uncle of extremely grasping unpleasantness, Menander sets himself a problem which could well be pondered by those who expect comedy be to all jokes. Accordingly, just as this essentially serious theme is handled with an eye alert for the relieving humour of the human weaknesses which show through, so also the predominantly comic tailpiece with the cook has links and contrasts with the serious themes to give them perspective. For Daos, the situation has brought grief at the loss of his master, and of his own prospect of a comfortable retirement in old age. Grief comes to Kleainetos' sister, who was about to be married with a beneficent dowry from the nicer uncle, and for the women of the household preparing for the wedding. Instead of having a brother who could have endowed her handsomely from the spoils of his campaigns, she is an heiress, which could be a most unenviable position for a young woman to be in<sup>1</sup>. There is very perfunctory grief from Smikrines, as head of the family and with all the wealth now capable of being grasped. Now we are to have a cook's eye view: annoyance at losing his contract through the arrival of 'some corpse from Lycia', fury that the distraction of the women in their grief has not been exploited as an opportunity to steal oil; the thought the *trapezopoios* will come in to cater for the funeral feast; then, whether from the *trapezopoios* as the manuscript has it, or from the cook continuing, the play on κόπτω: the women are beating their breasts—'I shall be κοπτόμενος just like you if I don't get a drachma'<sup>2</sup>. Finally, there is contempt for the loyal Daos, who has brought all the wealth home and not

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, on *Dysk.* 729-739, where the Attic law of inheritance is part of the background to Knemon's provision for his family, but is not an explicit issue as in *Aspis* and some other plays.

<sup>2</sup> If, as in B, the *trapezopoios* is the speaker at 233-235, the effect will be a little like that of the verbal echo at *Dysk.* 520-521. See further on *Dysk.* 397 f.



made off with it. A Phrygian, is he? Thracians, especially Getai, are the real men, not half-men like that. The joke on the slave's nationality (without dramatic context a conventional one, even if nicely turned) has an extra point from the fact that Daos has just turned his nationality to a quite different use in declining to help Smikrines' plans to get the estate: 'I am Phrygian' he argues (a people who proverbially saw things the wrong way round) 'and a slave: you must not expect me to see things the same way as you do, or to help you in legal affairs which are above my station.' We do not know if the cook came back in the lost part of the play. He has served his purpose well here. He leaves at the end of the Act, as the chorus of revellers appear, and the next Act takes up from Smikrines' exit immediately preceding the incident.

A difference with the *Dyskolos* is, of course, that there the cook has a substantial part. A good deal has been said about him elsewhere, and we can take the remaining points we need from his entrance scene very briefly. The detail of his opening speech we have already considered. By the design of this play, two lines of action, each touched off by Pan, converge in the neighbourhood of the Nymphaion at Phyle. Sostratos has been made to fall in love with Knemon's daughter; the rest of the family is brought as a result of a dream in which Pan appeared to the young man's superstitious mother. The cook and the household slave Getas, complaining about their mission and discussing the omen which sent it, are part of the mechanism for bringing the two lines of action together. They show Sostratos' mother's superstitions in a different light from that which we had from her son. They talk of her dream; dreams are by no means a novel topic in drama, but this one has the excellent comic effect that its apparently alarming content refers in fact to the bout of digging for which the audience has just seen Sostratos leave. They talk of getting things

ready, and their words, and the theme, will be echoed when the action is resumed the other side of the act-break, though not without the diversity of a sudden appearance by Knemon.

The topic of linking and transition over the act-break is one which could well be pursued further. Before we move on to something quite different, it will be useful to mention one passage as a control on our observations, namely the Oxyrhynchus  $\Delta\lambda\varsigma \epsilon\acute{\xi}\alpha\pi\alpha\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$ <sup>1</sup>. The pattern we have been considering is present. A very interesting sequence of action (of which we have an idea from Plautus' *Bacchides*), has put Sostratos in the position of being asked to reprove a trusted friend for being involved in an affair with someone who, to the best of his knowledge, is waiting for *him*. This turns him to the notion of handing over to his father the money he had proposed to divert in order to further the affair. Enter the father, some 34 lines from the end of the act. They go off to transfer the money :  $\chi\omicron\phi\omicron\upsilon$ . Re-enter the same pair, and the theme of the conversation re-opens. After 27 lines of the new act, exit father. Sostratos returns to reflect on the girl and the friend who, as he thinks, have betrayed him. Eleven-and-a-half more lines of soliloquy, resuming with the aid of a verbal echo from where we left off, and enter the friend. Now here it is much more difficult to get a clear idea of the function of the scenes on either side of the act-break, because much of the content is lost by damage, and we do not have the relevant part of the rest of the design except in Plautus' version. It is, however a point of some interest that Plautus, who had no concern to arrange

<sup>1</sup> What is said here depends on the reconstruction and interpretation set out in *Menander and Plautus*. The arrival of Sostratos' father at ii. 18 (= 30) is inferred from the remains of the pronouns  $\epsilon\chi\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu\omicron\nu$  and  $\tau[\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron]\nu\iota$  in that line; his exit at iii. 28 (= 90) is given by  $\tau\alpha\tilde{\upsilon}[\tau'] \acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\mu\iota \pi\rho\omicron\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\gamma\omicron\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu / [\pi\rho]\acute{\alpha}\tau\tau[\omicron\nu] \delta\tau\iota \pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\tau\eta\varsigma \acute{\alpha}[\lambda]\omicron \delta\acute{\epsilon}\delta\omicron\tau\alpha\iota \tau\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\tau\omicron \sigma\omicron\iota (\pi\rho\alpha\tau\tau\epsilon\iota\varsigma \text{ pap.})$ . For a fuller discussion of Plautus' treatment of his original, see Questa's paper in this volume.

the action round a break, eliminated the two scenes, had the transfer of money made in a rapid off-stage transaction, and refashioned the move between stages of the action by conventions of his own.

One interesting effect which is given by a structure of exits and entrances such as we have been considering, is, perhaps, that of offsetting the fixity of the actual stage setting. Menander had little scope, so far as we know, for more than some quite simple alterations to the background for a country as opposed to a town play, and nothing of the flexibility and capacity for realism of a conventional modern theatre, not to speak of the infinitely more flexible capacities of the film-maker. As an aside to this, it is quite possibly true that the need for scenic effects grows with the capacity to produce them, and one has seen modern plays, or modern productions, where the urge for scenic variety is of positive dramatic detriment, where the imagination can do better with less artificial aid. None the less, Menandrian drama has means for conveying the character of a setting, and for distracting attention from its fixity by action and words; and there are occasions when something which should happen indoors is needed for public presentation to the audience, or when something important happens off stage and cannot be staged because to do so, rather than presenting it through narrative or dialogue, would be impracticable or uneconomical.

A very simple device which can be used to extend the stage momentarily to the inside of a house (if we may put it like that) is the device of having a character talk back through the open door as he is leaving. This convention is so common that it is normally completely latent (as we have called the cook's tights). So in the *Δις ἑξαπατῶν* (102) Moschion, whom the audience cannot have seen for some time, enters from the house of the twin sisters saying 'So he's heard I'm here—where on earth is he?' This is apparently

enough for Menander's audience to reconnect with the situation. Plautus, adapting the passage and using the same device, evidently thought his audience should have more. It comes out as (*Ba.* 526): 'I will put your instructions before everything else, Bacchis, to look for Mnesilochus and bring him with me to you. I am surprised indeed at his delay if the message from me has reached him. I will go to his house here and see if he is at home'. Another example might be the case of the bibulous midwife, for which we depend in part on Terence's version of *Andria*. 481, the midwife Lesbia comes out of the house giving instructions to an old woman Archylis at the door. The incident is known to be Menandrian, since we have the Greek for part of the instructions—Terence, not untypically, has simplified some of the detail. The primary dramatic point is to confirm to the audience that Pamphilus' baby son is now born. Simo, standing outside, remarks 'she didn't say face-to-face what should be done with the girl after the birth, but after she'd come out, shouting back inside from the road. Oh, Davus, do you think so little of me? Do you really think I'm a man you can set about tricking so openly?' He thinks that the whole thing is a put-up job, purely for his benefit, to convince him that there is a baby when there is not. Now if the midwife is to say anything at all that the audience hear, outside is where she must say it. The dramatist perfectly well could have let her give her instructions on leaving, and have made no more of it; but he chooses, in this instance, to play with the convention by making someone on stage give it a 'real-life' value. But once attention is drawn to the behaviour of the midwife, it needs some sort of naturalistic motivation, or the audience will share the viewpoint of Simo and wonder why she is behaving like that. That, I believe, is why, when we first heard of the midwife, at 228 ff., she was given a character which is perfectly conventional for an old woman, but usefully relevant to the incident we are



discussing : she is, were were told ' imprudent and fond of a drop of drink ', and the Archylis, with whom she has her doorstep conversation, we know of as a drinking companion of hers (232). It is partly because of this unostentatious preparation for the incident that I incline to think the design of it was Menander's rather than Terence's <sup>1</sup>.

The same principle of ' special use when needed ' can be seen to apply to conventional details of setting or costume. The altar to Apollo Agyieus at the house door is an expected part of a setting which can be ignored if and when it is not wanted. But it comes into special use in the *Samia*, at 444 ff., when Demeas appeals to his Apollo to help him carry through the wedding and sing a good wedding song in spite of himself and the feelings he wants to conceal. Or, in the *Dyskolos*, there is nothing surprising in the fact that a rich and elegant young man like Sostratos should go out hunting wearing a *chlanis*. But in a country context, it makes him conspicuous for what he is, he is ' the man in the *chlanis* ' when seen by Gorgias at 257, and Menander still has more use of the point to make later <sup>2</sup>.

A somewhat more difficult exercise with conventions is given in the *Dyskolos* by the staging of Knemon's major speech. The old man has been badly shaken by his experience in the well, and wants to call the family to his bedside for what is, in effect, his will and testament. He has himself

<sup>1</sup> This is to be read as a tentative view of a passage which has provoked plenty of diverse and interesting discussion over the years : if nothing else, it could well illustrate the difficulty of arriving at critical agreement on so delicate a matter as comic technique from the limited and perplexed evidence we often need to use. See especially H. MARTI, *Untersuchungen zur dramatischen Technik bei Plautus und Terenz* (Diss. Zurich ; publ. Winterthur, Schellenberg, 1959) 71 f. and *Lustrum* 8 (1963, publ. 1964) 57 f., together with brief comments by SHIPP (1960) ad loc., and, among earlier work, A. W. GOMME, *Essays in Greek History and Literature* (Oxford, 1937) 260 n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Sam.* 449 f. ἀλλά τὸν ὑμέναιον ἔδειν εἰσανάγκασόν με σύ / οἶον οὐκ ἄριστ' ἔγωγ' ἔν, ὥς ἔχω νῦν· ἀλλὰ τί; , with Webster's conjectural restoration of 450, *BICS* 16 (1969) at p. 105 ; on Sostratos and his *chlanis*, see *Dysk.* 257 n.

carried outside. Menander does not attempt to motivate that naturalistically. Instead, he treats Knemon like a stricken hero of tragedy, perhaps underlining the point with an echo of Euripides' *Hippolytus* at the beginning of the scene, and alluding to the convention when Knemon asks to be 'wheeled in' at the end of it<sup>1</sup>. If this case is valid, it belongs to the class of uses of tragic convention for special effects. That class, as has often been pointed out, is in itself a compound one; for certain kinds of borrowing from tragedy are by Menander's time so well established in the comic tradition as to be, in some sense, part of the fabric, while others seem to represent fresh inspiration. Thus it is conventional in New Comedy, as earlier, for the tone to rise to that of high poetry when characters express specially strong emotions, and there is a whole range of effects from actual quotation through kinds of parody or adapted quotation to the much less pointed kind of effect which is given by a choice of elevated rather than strictly poetic words, or by the effect of tragic strictness in the verse—all of which effects could no doubt be underlined by voice and gesture. So much is common ground, though one may well argue about the nature of the tragic allusion in any particular context; one may well find that it is compounded of several elements, visual as well as verbal; and that Menander, on the whole, is less interested than Aristophanes in the purely laughable or satirical possibilities of the incongruity between the foreground comic situation and the background tragic one, and more interested in gaining an extra dimension to his comic action by referring it implicitly to a classic standard. A slight, but I think possible case of the compounding of verbal and visual elements, which I have thought of as reminding that of Knemon in bed, would be the entry of his daughter at *Dyskolos* 189: in distress—οἷμοι τάλαινα τῶν

<sup>1</sup> *Dysk.* 690, 692 and 758 with nn.

ἐμῶν ἐγὼ κακῶν—and carrying a water-pot, she recalls the Euripidean Electra; and if the audience took the point, they will have had an extra dimension to the comic situation, and an extra touch of amusement when Sostratos says of her ἐλευθερίως γέ πως / ἄγροικός ἐστιν (201 f.). There is no such doubt about the allusion to the messenger speech of the *Orestes* in the long narrative by the man from Eleusis at *Sikyonios* 176 ff., for it is clearly given by reminiscence of Euripides' own words; but the function of the speech in relation to dramatic convention and dramatic effect is a much more speculative topic. The debate over the slave Dromon and the girl Philoumene was evidently to be a major feature of the plot. To stage it in full, even if resources in actors could have permitted that, would have taken a great deal of time and would have been uneconomical of effect. And so the scene is carried elsewhere in imagination by dramatic narrative, which has the great capacity of being able to select, and to call on the imagination to supply what the eyes do not. An extreme case of the vivid and important, but unstageable, would of course be Daos' long narrative of the Lycian campaign and the death of Kleainetos at the beginning of the *Aspis*. But there are also vivid and impressive narratives of more domestic scenes, which might somehow have been presented in direct action. Such is Demeas' long narrative, beginning Act III of the *Samia* (206 ff.), in which he tells of the wedding preparations in his house, and how he overheard a conversation about the baby which has aroused a suspicion he will not voice. The further dramatic point here is that the personality of the narrator itself enters into the effect, and may in turn be illuminated by the way in which he tells his story. In the *Sikyonios* speech, Menander learnt from Euripides to let the narrator characterize himself at the start, so that we have some impression of the quality of our outside witness which we can test by what he says; precisely because he is in the position of an outside witness,

his descriptions of the characters we know already give an extra dimension of interest, just as, on a small scale, the action we examined in the three short cook-scenes has an indirect value in relation to our other knowledge of the situation. In the *Aspis* and the *Samia*, we already know enough of the narrator for the story to help build up a portrait of him as well as of what he is telling. A further variant on this technique of indirect presentation is given by the *Misoumenos*, when at 284 ff. Getas paces round the stage narrating to himself and turning over in mind the quarrel he has witnessed between Demeas and Krateia and his master Thrasonides. Here we have not only the extra dimension of a slave's eye view of the matter, but the further comic effect of a very puzzled Kleinias pacing after the slave and cutting in with comments on Getas' recollection.

Returning now to the *Sikyonios* speech, we can be clear that there is much more point to it than some kind of diluted Euripidean echo. I should like to think that the Euripidean echo does two things other than give the audience the pleasure of recognizing the allusion. I should like to think that it points to the analogy of situation between the slave and the girl and the heroic Electra and Orestes; and that it does something to justify dramatically the very long uninterrupted speech, by placing it in a dramatic tradition of descriptions of assemblies of which the *Orestes* was a classic case, one which had already made its dramatic influence felt before Menander wrote this play, and continued to be remembered because the *Orestes* continued to be a popular classic<sup>1</sup>.

The question then is, when Menander gives a hint that he is writing in a convention untypical of his usual manner, is this a sign that the normal criteria of realistic presentation do not apply? The point could be considered not only of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *BICS* 12 (1965) 47 ff.



scenes explicitly in the tragic manner, but of the ending of the *Dyskolos*, where several critics have wondered about the relation of the farcical ragging of Knemon to the carefully constructed and not wholly unsympathetic portrait of the character which the play has built up: part of the answer may be given by the change of convention which comes with iambic tetrameter lines delivered to flute-accompaniment<sup>1</sup>. An opposite problem of convention, perhaps, is presented by the opening of the *Aspis*: how can a death in the family be comic? Clearly it would not be if the opening were handled entirely naturalistically, and without the aid of any expectations created by convention. But just as the ending of the *Dyskolos* depends for its effect in part on the tradition of farcical revel at the ends of comedies, so the opening of the *Aspis* depends in part on the long tradition of surprise openings, of teasing the audience's expectations, as Aristophanes sometimes does, before explaining the truth in a prologue speech deferred until after the opening scene. It is consistent with this tradition, perhaps, that the first event should be a spectacle, that of the procession of the old paidagogos carrying his master's shattered shield; the captives and booty; and—the diversifying element—Smikrines in attendance. One wonders if the effect was heightened by the implied comparison with tragic spectacle, and it may be worth remembering that according to a scholiast on Euripides, *Orestes* 57, productions of the play of which he knew were augmented at the beginning by a procession in which Helen arrived with the spoils of Troy. The campaign narrative is also something with a respectable literary pedigree, and therefore a conventional value as well as its actual one: it is interesting that its counterpart in the

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, *Dyskolos of Menander*, pp. 283 ff.; W. G. ARNOTT, *Greece and Rome* 10 (1963) 140 ff.; A. SCHÄFER, *Menanders Dyskolos: Untersuchungen zur dramatischen Technik* (Diss. Berlin, publ. Meisenheim am Glan, Hain, 1965 = *Beitr. z. klass. Phil.*, Heft 14), 66 ff.

*Amphitruo* (203 ff.) is treated in the grand martial manner by Plautus, and that Menander's narrative concerns the affairs of an ordinary soldier, not a king, and as seen by the elderly ex-tutor—which is the best approach to a military servant that can be made by this not-very-well-off young man who has become a mercenary in order to provide a decent dowry for the sister in his care. If consistently elevated in tone, or consistently natural, the opening would lack comic effect. Its working depends partly on the audience's built-in willingness to be surprised at the start of the play, and partly on the blend of conventions, with the added interest of the insincerity of Smikrines' grief gradually showing through and turning at the end of the scene into naked but disclaimed self-interest. The prologue-speaker, Tyche, makes sure that true perspective is given, and she herself reminds the audience of the force of convention when she begins: 'If something unpleasant really had happened to them, I, a goddess, would not have been likely to follow': she would, perhaps, have removed herself from the scene of misfortune and grief, like a latter-day Artemis leaving the deathbed of Hippolytus (1437 ff.).

Beginning from what seemed to me some of the most obvious conventional material in comedy, I have tried to show something of the complexities which arise when we try to translate our observations of recurrent themes and stage-practices and so on into an evaluation of dramatic effect. The overall result, if one can dare to suggest it from such a miscellany of instances, is that in Menandrian comedy it is not so much what happens that matters, but how. That is why, I suppose, plot-summaries such as one reads in text-books often sound so extremely trivial and novelettish. It is, of course, easy to say that his subject-matter is too closely confined to love-affairs and family relationships, but, whether rightly or not, these *oikeia pragmata* are things which a large part of mankind are preoccupied in for a large part of their

time, and it is not necessarily reprehensible to weave them into amusing and sometimes, perhaps, genuinely enlightening patterns. What seems to distinguish the use of conventions such as we have been considering is not only the novelty that is given them by an unconventional selection, or an unconventional context, but the general sense of design which calculates the ingredients of comic appeal with an instinct both for immediate effect and for dramatic structure. Worlds apart in many ways, Menander might almost have said of himself with Pindar : καιρὸν εἰ φθέγγαιο, πολλῶν πείρατα συντανύσαις / ἐν βραχεῖ, μείων ἔπεται μῶμος ἀνθρώπων, ἀπὸ γὰρ κόρος ἀμβλύνει / αἰανῆς ταχείας ἐλπίδας.

## DISCUSSION

*M. Turner*: I should to congratulate M. Handley on giving not lists or bare statements of theatrical practice, but a psychological interpretation of the significance and utility of conventions founded on an analysis of the complex way in which the audience would take them. A question which immediately springs to mind is whether all members of the audience would share the same preconceptions, sensitivity and education. Would they all or even many of them make the comparison of the *κώρα* in *Dysk.* 189 ff. with Electra in Euripides (a fairly recondite allusion)? On this point more needs to be said.

I also wish to comment on the most interesting analysis of Menander's timing of new developments or the entry of new characters just before the end of an act (i.e. the break marked *XOPOY*). The ancient theatre lacked a curtain. Therefore the climax of an action could not easily come at the break itself. In fact the climax seems to come shortly before such breaks. If one takes the house-doors of the houses on a Greek stage as answering in function to a curtain, one can trace great play made with them. Characters wish to call someone else from inside (the mocking scenes, such as *Dysk.* 456 ff. and often); or to obtain entry; or to shut someone out, as in *Samia* 398 Austin, where Demeas' *ἔσταθι* to Chrysis, her maids and her baby, attempting to come in again, makes the whole scene graphic and visual. But the "climax" is followed by Niceratus' discovery of Chrysis; and when he gives her shelter in his own house, the way is paved for further development. In the interval supposed by *XOPOY* the action may continue to ferment, and repetition of narrative of events to the audience can be avoided.

*M. Ludwig*: Ich möchte an zwei von Herrn Turner angeschnittene Probleme anknüpfen.



1. Das Publikum, das Menanders Komödien sah, hatte natürlich keinen einheitlichen Charakter. Es liesse sich grob in zwei Klassen einteilen: auf der einen Seite der naive Zuhörer, der dem Bühnengeschehen unmittelbar mit Auge und Ohr folgt und sich von ihm gefangen nehmen lässt. Das ist sicher die Mehrzahl und in manchen Augenblicken sind es vielleicht alle. Dieser « naive » Zuhörer achtet nicht auf die Konventionen der Bühne, ist sich ihrer im Augenblick nicht bewusst (selbst wenn er sie sich bei anderer Gelegenheit klar machen kann). Er bangt immer wieder um den Helden und ist über das Ende im Ungewissen, obwohl er bisher in jedem anderen Stück den Helden am Ende hat siegen sehen. Er genießt und würdigt nicht das Spiel zwischen traditioneller Konvention und dem eigentümlichen neuartigen Dreh, den der Dichter dieser Konvention abgewonnen hat. Dieser Blickwinkel ist der des erfindenden Dichters und der des reflektierenden, distanzierten, kritischen Zuhörers. Das sind zwei verschiedene Weisen, dem Stück zu folgen. Das Stück kann deshalb auch vom Philologen in verschiedenen Ebenen interpretiert werden. Vielleicht kann man sagen, dass dem « naiven » Zuhörer die Konvention als solche immer erst dann bewusst wird, wenn der Dichter ausdrücklich mit dieser Konvention spielt, sich über sie lustig macht, sie durch Illusionsbruch als Konvention herausstellt. Die beiden Interpretationsebenen sind möglich, obwohl der « naive » und der « kritische » Zuhörer selbst Abstraktionen sind, und in Wirklichkeit diese Typen kaum rein vorkommen.

2. Der Hinweis auf die Einleitung einer neuen Entwicklung am Ende eines Aktes durch Auftreten einer neuen Person oder durch Einführung eines neuen Motivs war sehr interessant. An sich bedeutet die Bildung von Akten ja gerade die Bildung von Szenengruppen mit einer relativ geschlossenen Handlungseinheit. Die Tendenz geht hier in Richtung auf gesonderte, in sich geschlossene Teile. Aber es bleiben Teile eines Ganzen. Es bedarf einer Verbindung, eines Bindeglieds zwischen ihnen. Die Einführung eines neuen Moments kurz vor Aktende stellt ein Gegen-

gift gegen die Grundtendenz, die überhaupt zu den « Akten » führte, dar. Das « neue Moment » darf allerdings nicht zu stark hervortreten, da die an sich gewünschte Einheit der einzelnen Akte dadurch zerbrochen würde und der dramaturgische Gewinn wieder verloren ginge. Diskontinuität und Kontinuität müssen im richtigen Verhältnis zueinander stehen. Wie behandelt im übrigen Euripides seine « Aktschlüsse »? Findet sich auch bei ihm ein « neues Moment » in Herrn Handleys Sinn öfters vor dem Ende eines Episodion?

*M. Handley*: The point about different sorts of people in the audience is a very good one, and there are, I think, a number of passages in Comedy which suggest that dramatists were well aware of the different demands and capacities they tried to satisfy. One might think of the parabasis of Aristophanes' *Clouds* (518 ff.) on intellectual comedy and low comedy, or of the jokes about the audience and their books in the *Frogs*, which Professor Turner has discussed (*Athenian Books* ... (London H. K. Lewis, 1952) 21 ff.); but I have in mind especially Aristophanes' appeal to both σοφοί and ἡδέως γελῶντες in the same play at *Eccl.* 1155 ff. I should like to suppose, but cannot claim to prove, that we have a similar appeal in Menander in the fragment *POxy* 1239 (cf. *BICS* 12 (1965) 62 n. 22; C. Corbato, *Studi Menandrei* (Trieste, 1965) 89 ff.).

Granted, however, that successful comic poets must have known their audience's capabilities quite well, it remains worth asking how far a given comic effect can appeal to different levels of appreciation at once.

*M. Turner*: In connection with Herr Ludwig's reference to Euripides, it is interesting to note that the phrase ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ (which, in effect, means "during the course of this play") had certainly been used in this sense in tragedy, and especially in Euripides (so e.g. *Hippol.* 21-2, and see also the references collected by E. W. Handley on *Dysk.* 186 ff.). Apart from *Dysk.* 187 and 864, we can now trace this phrase in Menander in *Karche-*

*donios*, POxy 2654,8; *Samia* 709; *Aspis* 417 (where it is quoted from Karkinos).

*M. Questa*: La relazione del collega Handley ed il dotto intervento del collega Ludwig hanno toccato punti molto importanti. Il problema del 'distacco' di un poeta, specialmente di un poeta di teatro, rispetto ai mezzi tecnici da lui stesso usati (mi riferisco specialmente a questioni d'intreccio e di determinate 'scene fisse', come quelle di ἀναγνώρισμοί) si pone per molti autori comici. Aristofane fa già ironia sull' ἀρχαία al principio delle *Ranae*; senza dubbio Menandro ironizza la tipologia della νέα, per es. negli ἀναγνώρισμοί del *Sikyonios* (v. 357 sgg.) e della *Perikeiromene* (v. 349 sgg.). Anche Plauto (per es. *Bacch.* 1072-1075) scherza su quanto il pubblico si aspetta da lui ed egli a bella posta non gli dà ('scena del trionfo' nelle *Bacchides*, probabilmente 'anticipata' — con doppia ironia in tal caso — nel grande *canticum* di Crisalo: v. 925 sgg.). La consuetudine di ironizzare su certe situazioni fisse riappare in un tipo di teatro che si ricollega a temi della νέα attraverso la *palliata*: l'opera buffa del Settecento italiano e del primo Ottocento (fino a Rossini), senza escludere il *Singspiel* (*Entführung* e *Zauberflöte* di Mozart, per es.). Ironia musicale non ha risparmiato Rossini (*Turco in Italia*; *Italiana in Algeri*), la cui azione può sembrare una curiosa *contaminatio* di *Rudens* ['motivo del naufragio'] e *Miles* o ... *Elena* di Euripide [motivo della 'fuga per mare']; III atto del *Barbiere*, dove Figaro ironizza, quasi *extra fabulam*, su Rosina e il Conte che non si decidono a fuggire: ironia, qui sul 'tema della fuga', e siamo ancora al *Miles*! Ma, come ha detto giustamente Ludwig, queste sono riflessioni di dotti, di filologi, o considerazioni che solo uno spettatore colto può fare, e anche questi le fa *dopo* lo spettacolo, quasi sempre. Ad ogni modo è certo che quanto più un pubblico è colto e soprattutto abituato a un certo tipo di spettacolo, tanto più *avverte* intuitivamente (anche se non coglie subito razionalmente) il gioco allusivo e, diciamo, la strizzata d'occhio del poeta. Occorrerà distinguere, quindi, tra pubblico e pubblico. Per es. il

pubblico di Terenzio (o meglio, quella minoranza di spettatori per cui sembrano idealmente scritte le commedie di quest'autore) è presupposto come perfettamente cosciente della fissità di personaggi e scene nella *palliata* (cfr. *Heaut.* 35 sgg. ; *Eun.* 19 sgg. ed il passo dell' *Andria* che citiamo appresso). E se non il suo pubblico, certo Terenzio ha quello che vorrei definire ' possesso strutturale ' degli intrecci della *véα-palliata* (cf. *Andria* vv. 9-12 : *Menander fecit Andriam et Perinthiam : qui utramvis recte nouit, ambas nouerit* ecc.). Terenzio adattò al teatro latino commedie greche quando la produzione teatrale greca era conclusa da un pezzo, ed egli ha sì di fronte a sé una miniera ricchissima da scavare, ma una miniera che non si accresce più (lo stesso atteggiamento è già sensibile nel prologo dei *Captiui*, vv. 53 sgg. e non è senza preannunci nella stessa *véα* : vedi quanto osservato dal Bianco in *Riv. cult. class. e med.* 1961, p. 91 sgg. a proposito del fr. 60 dei *GLP* di Page). Terenzio ha il senso delle ' funzioni ' dei personaggi nella trama di una commedia. Non a caso ho citato una parola tipica degli studi di Wladimir Propp sulla fiaba (*Morfologia della fiaba*, trad. ital., Torino 1967). Partendo dalla fissità degli intrecci e delle « funzioni » di questo o quel tipo comico (*leno*, *uirgo*, *meretrix*, *senex*, *adulescens*, in tutte le specificazioni a noi note da Polluce) possiamo da un lato intendere il ' distacco ' e l' ' ironia ' dei poeti stessi, dall'altro tentare uno studio in base a nuovi criteri — quello delle ' funzioni ' appunto — capace di sviluppi interessanti, anche in rapporto alla questione della *contaminatio*. Come primo esempio, e sia pure nell'ambito di altro genere letterario, si veda l'esame strutturale che F. della Corte ha fatto del tema del *perfidus hospes* (*Mélanges Renard*, Bruxelles 1969, pp. 312-321).

*Mlle Dedoussi* : When the cook first comes in with Parmenon at *Samia* 282 ff. Austin, his entry has the effect of lowering the emotional temperature. To Demeas this is annoying, it causes delay in unfolding of the action, but it brings the traditional joke of the cook to the audience. Similarly the traditional jokes



connected with the parasite at *Dysk.* 58 ff. are annoying to Sostratus, but amusing to the audience.

*M. Handley* : In the *Dyskolos* the delay is dramatically important because the play is about a young man in a hurry.

*Mlle Dedoussi* : When the cook enters the second time, at *Samia* 356 Austin (where Wilamowitz refused to allow him to participate in a three-cornered exchange), the delay prolongs the tension of the scene.

*M. Turner* : In this case the "delay" has a different dramatic effect. Demeas is a man in inner torment, and he cannot finish what he is determined to do, to expel Chrysis.

*M. Handley* : One has the impression that even when Menander does use traditional motifs to introduce a character (as with Chaireas in the *Dyskolos*) he still uses them very economically. Comparison with fragments of other poets suggests that such economy was far from universal among his rivals and contemporaries. Yet caution is necessary here, for our fragments lack context, and we cannot be sure how far their detail was functional or how far its apparently greater scale was in place in a whole play. Latin analogies (for example, the cook scene in Plautus, *Pseudolus* 790-893) give some sort of control and suggest that traditional material was sometimes developed for its own sake much more than in the Menander we have so far. But there is always the possibility of expansion by the Latin poet to reckon with, even the possibility of interpolation by Greek actors before the version was made (cf. *Menander and Plautus* 17 f. with n. 18, quoting Webster, *Hellenistic poetry and Art* 263, 268 ff.).

*M. Sandbach* : The cook of comedy is traditionally loquacious, and is often listened to with apparent respect by the slave who has hired him. Menander has hinted at the loquacity in *Samia* 287-292 Austin, and in the phrase *ικανὸς γὰρ εἰ λαλῶν κατακόψαι πάντα πράγματα*. Parmenon, however, is not ready to let this

cook have his way, but cuts him short and stands up to him (292-5). He is pleased with himself and his self-satisfaction is further expressed by the orders he shouts back to Chrysis through the door when he returns from depositing the basket. Is « banging » the door as he comes out another sign of insolent self-confidence? Then the ground opens under his feet when Demeas says "Listen now, Parmenon : there are a lot of reasons why I don't want to give you a flogging." The scene with the cook is part of the preparation for this reversal.

*M. Ludwig* : Mich würde noch eine andere Frage interessieren. Im Blick auf die Bühnenhandlung, also auf das, was auf der Bühne geschieht, könnte man die Szenen einteilen in Sprech- und in Handlungsszenen. « Sprechszenen » wären solche, in denen Personen auf die Bühne kommen und miteinander sprechen ; « Handlungsszenen » würden Szenen genannt, in denen die Personen darüber hinaus eine sichtbare Handlung vollbringen (z.B. ein Opferschaf auf die Bühne tragen). Das Ursprüngliche und bei Aristophanes vorherrschende dürfte die « Handlungsszene » sein. Eine längere Folge reiner Sprechszenen wird dem Publikum leicht zu langweilig. Welchen Raum nehmen eigentlich Sprechszenen in diesem Sinn bei Menander ein? Wie umfangreich sind, proportional gesehen, die Handlungsszenen? Wobei die Handlungsszenen natürlich noch mehr oder weniger äussere Handlung enthalten können. Liesse sich von einer Konvention sprechen, immer wieder eine Handlungsszene einzufügen? Oder sind die Sprechszenen immer noch in der Minderheit? Wieviel äussere Bühnenhandlung konnte das Publikum bei Menander erwarten? Wie verhalten sich Sprache und Aktion? War mindestens ein lebendes Tier auf der Bühne sozusagen ein *must* für ein ordentliches Stück?

*M. Handley* : Professor Ludwig's distinction might work out interestingly if we began from the special case of exposition scenes at the beginning of a play, where one may pass quite suddenly from the dialogue of exposition to the beginning of part of the

action, indeed to some particular piece of stage action which would qualify the scene as a *Handlungsszene* in Professor Ludwig's sense. Exposition can however include another element, that of display; and I have sometimes used the term "display-scene" for places where this element is prominent. It is of course very prominent in the opening of Plautus, *Mostellaria*; and in the "make-up" scene, which displays both situation and characters, verbal as well as visual effects are present.

*Curculio* and *Dyskolos*, where the opening is similar in design, both have their element of "display", but—from the point of view of advancing the action—these two plays both proceed more economically than *Mostellaria*. A difference, of course, is that the serenade-motif of *Curculio* lends itself to visual display rather more readily than the opening of *Dyskolos*.

So far as exposition is concerned, the distinction we have in mind seems to be like that of Terence in the *Adelphoe* (23 ff.): *senes qui primi uenienti partem aperient / in agendo partem ostendent*.

*M. Reverdin*: La première représentation moderne du *Dyskolos*, à Genève, en 1959, a mis en valeur les scènes où l'action tient plus de rôle que la parole. Cette représentation a été donnée en plein air, dans un théâtre construit à l'antique, avec cavea, gradins, parodoi, scène, la nature — en l'occurrence le parc de la Grande-Boissière — formant le fond du décor. Les photographies qui illustrent la plaquette publiée en souvenir de cette « première » (*Cnémon le Misanthrope, comédie de Ménandre*. Version française de la première représentation moderne, accompagnée de la musique de scène et de quinze planches hors texte. Editions du « Journal de Genève », 1960) permettent de se rendre compte de ce qu'elle fut.

Orner un autel de guirlandes, faire paraître devant les spectateurs des animaux, dresser les tables d'un banquet, rassembler les convives, tout cela prend du temps, constitue en fait des sortes d'intermèdes entre les scènes parlées; les uns correspondent aux intermèdes choraux; d'autres se situent à l'intérieur d'un acte.

Premier éditeur, Victor Martin a eu le privilège d'être invité à la plupart des représentations du *Dyskolos* dans les années qui ont suivi sa publication. Une chose l'avait frappé : certaines de ces représentations, en particulier celle d'Epidaure, en 1960, n'avaient duré qu'à peine plus d'une demi-heure. Chœurs et scènes d'action sans paroles ou avec peu de paroles avaient été sacrifiés. La pièce sortait défigurée de cette expérience qu'on est tenté de qualifier de barbare; réduite aux dimensions d'un lever de rideau, elle portait peu sur le public.

Ailleurs, au théâtre romain d'Augst, par exemple, où le *Dyskolos* fut joué, en allemand et en vers, avec masques, à l'occasion du cinquième centenaire de l'Université de Bâle, la représentation avait duré près de deux heures, et le succès n'avait été été que moyen: le rythme de l'action était visiblement trop lent.

Parlant de ces diverses expériences, Victor Martin, pour autant que je me souvienne de mes conversations avec lui, insistait sur la fonction à ses yeux importante des scènes qui font appel aux yeux du spectateur plus qu'à ses oreilles ou à son entendement. Un cuisinier poussant devant lui une brebis récalcitrante, pour peu qu'il soit un bon acteur, tient plusieurs minutes le public en haleine, sans prononcer mot, et la pièce, agrémentée de tels spectacles, les uns grotesques, les autres attendrissants, devient plus familière et plaît davantage.

J'ai le sentiment qu'en lisant Ménandre, nous devons laisser notre imagination créer ces images sans lesquelles la pièce manquerait de couleur. Le texte, d'ailleurs, nous y invite constamment : nous sommes enclins à nous laisser griser par la langue ; n'oublions pas pour autant les « tableaux vivants », ni les intermèdes lyriques, qui donnaient à la comédie son équilibre.

*Mme Kabil* : En ce qui concerne l'action scénique des comédies de Ménandre, par opposition aux monologues narrant un événement, les documents figurés me semblent bien indiquer que certains épisodes, que l'on croyait jusqu'ici racontés, étaient en fait joués. Je pense particulièrement à la scène par laquelle s'ouvraient



les *Synaristosai*. La mosaïque de Mytilène, (Pl. II) et celle de Dioscouridès, (Pl. III), nous apprennent qu'une réunion de trois femmes, prenant leur petit déjeuner, et auprès desquelles se tenait un petit serviteur muet, devait probablement constituer le début de la pièce. Je reste persuadée que cette scène muette était vue par les spectateurs avant que les personnages ne se lèvent et ne se mettent à parler. Il en va de même, je crois, pour le *Phasma* ; la scène d'apparition de l'acte II, figurée sur les mosaïques de Mytilène, ne me paraît pas être une scène simplement *racontée* : elle était vraisemblablement représentée : la jeune fille apparaît dans une embrasure, devant le jeune homme (qui l'a déjà vue une première fois) et devant son père (qui la voit pour la première fois). Je me rends bien compte qu'il est malaisé d'expliquer cette apparition du point de vue scénique, mais la difficulté ne me semble pas insurmontable.

Ces « tableaux vivants » avaient certainement une grande importance chez Ménandre. On peut encore citer le « setting » du *Dyskolos* (qu'on pourrait rapprocher de certaines fresques de Boscoreale, avec un petit sanctuaire rupestre, entre deux maisons) : certainement très pittoresque, il devait frapper les spectateurs.

Par ailleurs, M. Handley a eu raison d'attirer notre attention sur la scène du *Dyskolos* où l'animal récalcitrant fait son apparition comique sur scène.

*M. Sandbach* : If the scene at the table was represented on the stage in *Synaristosai*, the actors need not have walked on to take their seats in the tableau vivant. Although there was no curtain, there may have been screens behind which they took up their position and which were removed by stagehands at the beginning of the play. Dover is inclined to believe that Socrates' pupils, supposedly indoors, were so concealed in the *Clouds* (ed. lxxv) and the same device might have been used at the beginning of that play to reveal Strepsiades and his son in bed.

*M. Questa* : La scena del banchetto poteva senz'altro essere rappresentata sulla strada. È una convenzione scenica accettata

dal pubblico antico, che rende possibili situazioni come quella della *Mostellaria* (vv. 157-312), in cui la *toilette* della cortigiana Filematio, assistita dalla vecchia ancella Scafa, avviene sulla strada, per l'appunto, sì che il giovane innamorato Filolachete può vederla e commentarne le fasi. Aggiungo che, pur non essendo la cosa decisiva, il titolo a participio presente (Συναριστῶσαι) fa pensare che la scena del banchetto venisse in qualche modo presentata direttamente agli spettatori.

*M. Turner* : M<sup>me</sup> Kahil has put her case very eloquently, and I must admit the dramatic impact of a version of Menander's *Phasma* in which the movements through the passage and through the wall could be presented visually to the audience. But the case for the other view seems to me too strong. It is based on

1. The positive difficulty of showing in *front face* a passage giving communication through a party wall between two houses, the two (front) doors of which face the audience. A very special surrealist perspective would be called for if one supposed the party wall somehow to be folded outwards, so that it could be presented in a central position to the spectators. The idea that such a passage could be so shown is, however, held by Professor Webster not to be inconceivable, since the passage was disguised as a *shrine* ; and it is a shrine which occupies the central position in the scenic arrangement of the *Dyskolos*.

2. Demeas' monologue at the opening of *Samia* Act III tells of what he heard from his "hiding-place" in the ταμειῖον of his house : he is describing what took place indoors in the house. It would not have been beyond the wit of Menander to arrange these events out of doors in the street. But their natural locale is indoors, and it seems to me that Menander accepts that fact and in his virtuoso description of the scene writes so as to make the audience accept a description as entirely natural. Similarly in the new, as yet unpublished, Oxyrhynchus fragments of *Phasma*, I would see a *report* (i.e. not a visual presentation) of the way the young man used the opportunities of being alone with the girl

who came innocently through the concealed passage. I have argued the whole case in *GRBS X* (1969), pp. 307 sqq. "The *Phasma* of Menander."

*M. Ludwig*: Mir scheint, dass in den *Synaristosai* / *Cistellaria* eine spezielle Schwierigkeit besteht. In der plautinischen *Cistellaria* ist das *prandium* vorbei, als der Text beginnt (es wird im Praeteritum von ihm gesprochen). Das Dioskorides-Bild stellt die drei Frauen beim ἄριστον dar. Das stellt zunächst vor die Alternative: a) erst Plautus hat das Mahl von der Bühne weggenommen und ins Praeteritum versetzt, bei Menander begann das Stück mit dem Mahl; b) Plautus hat den Beginn des Stückes in dieser Hinsicht nicht verändert. Die Wahrscheinlichkeit spricht für b) (M. Turner weist bestätigend hin auf Men. fr. 385 Koe). Wie ist dann aber das Dioskorides-Bild zu verstehen? Ich dachte früher an die Darstellung einer Szene, die so nie auf der Bühne zu sehen war, die man sich aber als der sichtbaren Bühnenhandlung vorausgehend vorstellen konnte. Dioskorides hätte dann etwas gemalt, was nur in der Imagination des Zuhörers existierte, evoziert durch die rückweisenden Worte des gesprochenen Szenenbeginns. Oder wie soll man sich sonst das Dilemma erklären? Bot der Beginn des Stückes einen Blick ins Innere des Hauses, wo die Frauen beim ἄριστον sassen, worauf sie herauskamen (M<sup>me</sup> Kahil)? Oder war der Tisch auf der Strasse vor dem Haus aufgebaut, zu Beginn nahmen die Frauen dort Platz, nach einem dialoglosen Bild standen die Frauen auf und sprachen miteinander (M. Handley)? War das Bild der speisenden Frauern zuerst durch eine Kulisse verdeckt, die zu Beginn entfernt wurde (M. Sandbach)? Das Präsens Συναριστῶσαι (M. Questa) ist wegen Περιχειρομένη nicht entscheidend.

*M<sup>me</sup> Kahil*: On vient d'évoquer des difficultés d'ordre scénique. Pour la scène des *Synaristosai*, il n'y a en fait pas de difficulté si on admet que la scène se passe à l'intérieur de la maison et qu'on la voit par la *porte ouverte* (et c'est l'hypothèse que me paraît

suggérer la présence de bandes de couleurs dégradées sur la mosaïque de Dioscouridès) ; si la scène se passe dans la rue, la difficulté n'est pas insurmontable (comparons la scène de toilette de la *Mostellaria*) ; mais on doit, en ce cas, expliquer le cadre de la mosaïque de Dioscouridès. Pour le *Phasma*, le problème est plus complexe ; il faut que le *passage* entre les deux maisons, passage par lequel apparaît la jeune fille, soit visible pour les spectateurs. Mais je ne crois pas que, pour la scène hellénistique, cette difficulté ait été insurmontable. Enfin, à l'appui de ma thèse, je voudrais insister sur le fait que les tableaux de Mytilène semblent bien reproduire des moments de *l'action* et même des événements capitaux (c'est le cas pour la *Samia* et les *Epitrepontes*, que nous connaissons le mieux), et non pas des épisodes rapportés.

*M. Handley* : The inference that the meal was finished when the play began in Menander's version, as well as in Plautus's, will be strengthened if we admit the genuineness of the line ascribed to the beginning of *Synaristosai* by Thierfelder, *Studi Urbinati* n.s. B 35 (1961) 113 ff. (= adesp. 421 K. ; Meineke V. 1, p. ccclxix) :

ἐγὼ μὲν ἡρίστησα, νῆ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν,  
μάλ' ἡδέως.

I should still think it possible that the play began with a silent tableau of the end of the meal. By some modern standards it would be odd for actors to walk on and sit down at a table at the opening of a play—but hardly odd to an audience whose theatrical traditions included (for instance) the opening of Euripides, *Orestes*, where, before the play begins, two actors have to appear and take up their positions at the outer door of the palace : Orestes lying asleep, Electra watching over him.

*M. Questa* : Ancora una domanda : un personaggio, uscito per andare all'agorà, può essere supposto, dopo la fine di un atto, come ritornato a casa senza riapparire sulla scena ?



*M. Handley*: This is a difficult question to answer in general terms. But judging from extant plays in Greek, the convention appears to be that when characters are seen to leave the stage, they re-enter by the same way, equally visibly to the audience. If, in Menander, it were necessary for someone to enter or leave unseen, one would expect some explanation or motivation to be provided, as is done, for instance, in Plautus, *Mostellaria*, when Tranio makes it clear that he has taken the two young men and their girls out by a back way (1044 ff.), so that the appearance of Callidamates from a wing entrance at 1122 is no surprise. At *Aspis* 391 ff. Austin, one might suppose that Daos has (notionally) taken the *apographe* to Smikrines during the act break, but a likelier explanation is that Smikrines is speaking ironically.

*M. Wehrli*: Die Behandlung des Überkommenen in einer so stark traditionsgebundenen Kunst wie derjenigen Menanders ist geeignet, Grenzen und Möglichkeiten der Neugestaltung aufzuweisen. Von der neuen Funktion, welche Menander den formellen Bühnenkonventionen zuwies, ist gesprochen worden. Er stellte sie in den Dienst einer dramatischen Geschlossenheit, welche die Episodenhaftigkeit der früheren Komödie weit hinter sich lässt. Ebenso erhielten mimenhafte Nebenfiguren wie der Koch oder der Sklave eine neue Sinnggebung, sei es im Dienste der dramatischen Spannung oder des Kontrastes zu den differenzierteren Hauptfiguren, soweit sie mehr als eine Konzession an ein schlichtes Publikum waren. Die Untersuchung all dieser Neuerungen stellt uns vor die Frage, wie weit sie die gattungsgeschichtliche Kontinuität wahrten. Bekanntlich hat die antike Theorie Menander, genauer gesprochen die Dichter der Nea überhaupt an Euripides angeschlossen, was den Tatbestand allerdings zu sehr vereinfacht. Die tragischen Einflüsse mochten noch so stark sein, vollständig haben sie die Komödie sich selbst nie entfremdet. Travestierende Anleihen machten bei der Tragödie schon die Dichter der Archaia, und mit Reminiszenzen an sie treibt noch Menander ein heiteres Spiel. Dem Vorbild ihrer früher

vollendeten Schwestergattung verdankt die Komödie, dass sie zu formeller Einheit gelangte, und ohne zahlreiche motivische Anregungen von deren Seite wäre die thematische Vertiefung ihres Spiels nicht denkbar. Wie sich durch alle Verwandlungen hindurch die Hauptelemente der alten Komödienstruktur mit dem Liebesmotiv behaupteten, wäre in Einzeluntersuchungen darzulegen.

*M. Handley*: We can probably agree, in general, in finding several kinds of influence from Tragedy in New Comedy. Some elements, perhaps beginning from parody, seem so much at home in comedy by Menander's time that they can be thought of as part of the fabric. But the fifth-century tragedians continue to be influential in Menander's time, I take it, because the classics were still produced on the stage, read, and studied, and could give poets fresh inspiration. Thus tragedy itself gives one kind of continuity. An interesting set of illustrations of this process comes from what we could call "dramatic devices"—for instance, the formulae by which a chorus is introduced, and the similar sets of words which characters use when they "stand aside" to watch some new development (Fraenkel, *De med. et nov. com.* (Göttingen, 1912) 71; *Beobachtungen zu Aristophanes* (Rome, 1962) 24). None the less, the fact that the famous messenger speech in the *Orestes* was, by Menander's time, part of a dramatic tradition did not prevent him from making fresh use of it as background for his major speech in *Sikyônios*. As to discontinuity (still within the same field of tragic influence on comedy), it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves of the contrast between Aristophanes' recognition scene in the *Knights* (1232 ff.) and any of Menander's recognition scenes. The effect of an author's use of tragedy can be quite different even when the ingredients are similar; and in a wider context too the gradation of difference within continuity is surely one of the fascinations of the study of motif.

*Mlle Dedoussi*: *Paratragoedia*, as we know it in Aristophanes, is not to be found in Menander. The relation of tragedy to the

comedy of Menander, and the use of tragedy by Menander are rather complicated. In the case of recognition scenes, like the one in the *Perikeiromene*, there is no *paratragoedia*. The subject of this scene comes from tragedy and with the subject comes the tragic vocabulary also. The scene is serious and the tone is elevated by the poetic vocabulary.

*M. Wehrli*: Welche Urbanität und Verinnerlichung der Ethopoie Menander in der *Samia* erreicht hat, lässt sich aufs schönste dem Monolog des Demeas ablesen. Die Worte, mit denen er seiner Reue Ausdruck gibt, haben in den erhaltenen Texten der neuen Komödie nicht ihresgleichen. Motivgeschichtlich gesehen, ist der Auftritt aus der Umgestaltung einer herkömmlichen Szene hervorgegangen, denn Demeas macht sich selber zum Vorwurf, was sonst der Alte von seinem Widersacher zu hören bekommt.