

New Perspectives on Postclassical Comedy

Pierides

Studies in Greek and Latin Literature

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Pierides
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Volume II:

**New Perspectives
on Postclassical Comedy**

Edited by

Antonis K. Petrides and Sophia Papaioannou

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P U B L I S H I N G

New Perspectives on Postclassical Comedy,
Edited by Antonis K. Petrides and Sophia Papaioannou

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In grateful memory of

Colin François Lloyd Austin (1941-2010)

The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it
(William James)

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PREFACE

This project originated in a series of discussions between the editors in the summer of 2007 in Nicosia, Cyprus, where we both resided at the time. Intrigued and excited by the strides in the discoveries of new fragments of post-classical comedies and particularly Menander's plays in the last twenty years, we nonetheless had to admit that the surge in productivity was lacking a comprehensive assessment of the big picture with respect to the orientation and status of current research in the field. We also acknowledged that the thought of creating not so much another Companion to Menander but a showcase of the significant new approaches to New Comedy, the fresh perspectives which had brought so much improvement in the way 21-st century scholars appreciate the genre, had been circling our minds independently much earlier. Still, the idea may never have come to fruition, had it not been communicated to Professor Stratis Kyriakidis, one of the editors of CSP's *Pierides* series. It was immediately showered with sweeping enthusiasm and encouragement, such as we both personally have experienced, time and again, by this unfailingly supportive mentor. Professor Philip Hardie was no less eager to endorse the project and effectively facilitate the publication process.

Over the three years that this volume was in preparation, we incurred considerable debts and profited from the assistance and generosity of many individuals and institutions. Special thanks are first due to the anonymous readers of CSP and the *Pierides* series for their numerous invaluable suggestions and incisive comments.

Professor Colin Austin would be the protagonist of this performance's cast, had it not been for a harsh intervention of Tyche. That notwithstanding, he remained a steadfast supporter of both the project and the people involved in it to the very end. The news of his death reached us on the very week the final version of the manuscript received the imprimatur—a fact that only accentuated our great sorrow. We believe that he would have enjoyed this book and we were looking forward to the comments of the scholar who more than anyone else contributed to the ever-growing appreciation of postclassical drama nowadays. The dedication of the volume to his memory can convey only a small fraction of our deep respect and gratitude.

Demetris Beroutsos, Stephanos Efthymiadis (Open University of Cyprus), Ioanna Hadjicosti (Open University of Cyprus), Richard Hunter

(Trinity College, Cambridge), Ioannis M. Konstantakos (University of Athens), Theodoros Stephanopoulos (University of Patras) and Antonis Tsakmakis (University of Cyprus) read parts of the volume and offered invaluable advice, or assisted us otherwise in the often exigent business of setting up a collective volume.

We have been fortunate to labour alongside four distinguished specialists of Menander and Greek Comedy; from initial approaches, exchanges of first ideas and outlines, through the formulation of the final drafts of their chapters, we enjoyed working with all four colleagues and learned a lot from them. The Open University of Cyprus, the University of Athens, Trinity College, Cambridge, the British School at Athens and the American School of Classical Studies in Athens have provided grants as well as the congenial environment necessary for academic research. Antonis' wife Erika hosted numerous συμπόσια in their Nicosia home, which allowed the idea of the book to ferment and grow. After all Menander has always been best with dessert and wine.

There is one more person who deserves very special thanks for all the extremely meticulous work she did proofreading this volume over and over again and saving us from numerous mistakes. She wants to remain anonymous. "Thank you" is very pale to express the gratitude we feel.

This book is intended not only for the specialist New Comedy scholar but also for the advanced graduate and undergraduate student working in the fields of Classics and Cultural History. All long quotations of Greek and Latin are translated.

Nicosia & Athens, September 2010

Note on the Text of Menander

Menander's plays are quoted from the following editions:

Dyskolos: Sandbach 1990

Aspis: Jacques 1998

Dis Exapaton: Arnott 1979

Epitrepontes: Martina 1997

Misoumenos: Arnott 1996b

Perikeiromene: Arnott 1996b

Samia: Arnott 2000

Sikyonioidi: Blanchard 2009

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SOPHIA PAPAIOANNOU (BA University of Crete; PhD University of Texas at Austin) is Assistant Professor of Latin Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is the author of *Epic Succession and Dissension: Ovid, Metamorphoses 13.623-14.582, and the Reinvention of the Aeneid* (2005); of *Redesigning Achilles: The 'Recycling' of the Epic Cycle in Ovid, Metamorphoses 12.1-13.620* (2007); and, most recently, of *Plautus, Miles Gloriosus. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* [Greek title: Πλάυτος, Ο Καυχησιάρης Στρατιώτης (*Miles Gloriosus*). Εισαγωγή-Μετάφραση-Σχόλια] (2009), the first annotated edition of Plautus' play since 1963, and the first translation of the play in Greek. Current projects include the edition of the first Greek translation of Ovid's *Amores* by Christos Christovassilis in the early 1920s; and a book-length study on Epic Orality in Vergil's *Aeneid*.

INTRODUCTION

NEW COMEDY UNDER NEW LIGHT

ANTONIS K. PETRIDES
AND SOPHIA PAPAIOANNOU

New Comedy, chiefly Menander, has virtually re-emerged from the *tenebrae* thanks to the spectacular papyrological discoveries of late 19th and 20th centuries. The unfolding of those discoveries is a thrilling story, eloquently related by **HORST-DIETER BLUME** in Chapter One of the present volume (“Menander: The Text and its Restoration”). First and foremost, it is a story of triumph: between that infelicitous moment in late antiquity when Menander’s texts stopped being copied and the celebrated publication of the *Membrana Petropolitana* by Viktor Jernstedt in 1891 barely more than a glimpse of Menander’s work was available, and this only to a limited number of experts.

Composed in 1893, C. P. Cavafy’s sonnet *Θεατής Δυσαρεστημένος* (“Displeased Theatregoer”), for all its multiple other reverberations, provides a taste of the sensational exhilaration that Menander’s belated rediscovery caused.¹ The poem, itself dramatic in form and set in a supposed Roman theatre during a “Menandrian” performance, is deliciously ironic, as it jibes at the “barbarian” who was once but apparently no longer indispensable for getting to Menander:

“Απέρχομαι, απέρχομαι. Μη κράτει με.
Της αηδίας και ανίας είμαι θύμα.”
“Πλην μείν’ ολίγον χάριν του Μενάνδρου. Κρίμα
τόσον να στερηθής.” “Υβρίζεις, άτιμε.

”Μένανδρος είναι ταύτα τα λογίδια,
άξεστοι στίχοι και παιδαριώδες ρήμα;

¹ Cavafy celebrated the re-emergence of Herodas, too, in his much less competent “Οι μμιάμβοι του Ηρώδου” (1892).

Ἄφες ν' ἀπέλθω του θεάτρου παραχρήμα
 και λυτρωθεῖς να στρέψω εις τα ἴδια.

”Της Ρώμης ο αἴρ σ' ἐφθειρεν εντελώς.
 Ἀντί να κατακρίνης, επαινεις δειλώς
 κ' επευφημεις τον βάρβαρον — πώς λέγεται;

”Γαβρέντιος, Τερέντιος; — ὅστις απλώς
 διά Λατίνων ατελλάνας ων καλός,
 την δόξαν του Μενάνδρου μας ορέγεται.”

“I am leaving, leaving. Do not hold me back.
 I'm a martyr to ennui and to revulsion.”
 “But stay a while for Menander's sake.
 What a pity if you miss it.” “You insult me.

Menander's are they, then, these weak *données*,
 these unpolished verses, this childish speech?
 Let me leave this theater straightaway
 that I may go home—with no little relief.

The Roman air has ruined you utterly.
 Instead of condemning, you timidly
 acclaim, applaud this uncouth—what's his name?

Gavrence, Terence?—whose only talent
 is for composing those Latin Atellans;
 yet nonetheless he hungers for Menander's fame.”
 (transl. D. Mendelsohn)

The *Membrana* was but a thrifty foretaste of the feasts to ensue (hence perhaps the smug bitterness of the *persona's* tone). Cavafy would soon witness greater discoveries than that, even closer to home. We do not know what his final verdict was about Menander. We do know, however, that among *scholars*, unsurprisingly, the initial excitement was swiftly tempered by apprehension. Too much was at stake;² after all, the “golden Menander” (Μένανδρος ὁ χρυσοῦς, test. 126 K.-A.) was regarded by ancient scholars as a playwright and poet of the highest rank, renowned for his realistic portrayal of life and his skilful portrait of character.³

² Cf. Lever 1959/60.

³ Testimonia 83-167 K.-A. collect all known ancient judgements on Menander's merit. Among them stands out testimonium 119 (an extract from Phrynichus), which betrays the kind of animosity which eventually consigned Menander to near

Menander's reputation in fact took a definite hit, and sympathetic critics soon found themselves in the defensive, as the recovered texts to the minds of many failed to live up to the hype. Dissatisfaction with the *redivivus* Menander could materialise into a hailstorm of bitter disappointment as late in time as 1990. The following extract from Peter Green's *Alexander to Actium* is the pinnacle of that trend:

“The moralizing asides thrown in *to give these puffball plays extra weight* should not blind us to the fact that they were *the precise ancient equivalents of modern situation comedies or soap operas*. A contemporary reader may find some difficulty in appreciating the reasons for the high status Menander, for instance, enjoyed throughout antiquity (though not, interestingly, during his lifetime). [...] Obviously, Hellenistic society was not chiefly remarkable for kidnappings, coincidental rape, and contrived happy resolutions. What, then, did Aristophanes of Byzantium mean when he praised Menander for so skilfully imitating life? The compliment cannot but strike us as paradoxical, since to our way of thinking Menander's plays are remarkably formulaic and artificial. [...] What stirred admiration for Menander was the (to us, gingerly) way in which he set about broaching [social and literary] conventions, to put on stage something at least approaching life as it was actually lived, some features of everyday Athenian existence. To borrow a phrase from Dr. Johnson, *it was not so much that he did it well as that he did it at all*”.⁴

Unquestionably, Peter Green's diatribe is an isolated echo of bygone critical extremism. Too much water has already run under the scholarly bridge for Menander to still be considered, so mercilessly, a frivolous maker of “puffball plays”. Yet, the Menander-chapter in Green's otherwise magisterial book remains indicative of a series of diehard prejudices which lingered in New Comedy criticism for too long, misjudgements by which younger generations of scholars were beleaguered and to which they reacted with a vengeance.

One striking such notion, for instance, is that fourth-century theatre, including Comedy, was an era of decadent mannerism, rhetorical sentimentalism, and inane recycling of conventions—a fallacy rarely questioned by scholars until a groundbreaking 1993 article by Pat Easterling entitled “The end of an era?”⁵ This belief went hand in hand

oblivion for almost two millennia: οὐχ ὀρώ, μὰ τὸν Ἡρακλέα, τί πάσχουσιν οἱ τὸν Μένανδρον μέγαν ἄγοντες καὶ αἶροντες ὑπὲρ τὸ ἐλληνικὸν ἅπαν. On Atticist disapproval of Menander, see Horst-Dieter Blume's chapter in this volume.

⁴ Green 1990, 67. All the emphases are ours.

⁵ Easterling 1993.

with the idea that, in an era of crisis for the democratic polis culture, Menander's choice was to cultivate an "apolitical" genre of comedy. New Comedy was routinely taken as a comedy of the *vita privata*, which consciously eschewed the great public issues, inasmuch as the individual was increasingly estranged from politics ("political disenchantment", Green calls it).⁶ The aura of introversion that enveloped New Comedy was encouraged also, we hear, by an intrageneric trend, at play already from the beginning of the fourth century, to steer clear of too explicit references to topical matters. New Comedy was reduced to a mere fantastical and inconsequential boy-meets-girl scenario. The ideological purchase of this scenario and the conspicuous "marriage imperative" which drove it to an end was routinely missed.

Furthermore, Green evinces the insistent tendency to gauge Menander's Comedy not in its own right, but against superficially akin but ultimately dissimilar analogues, such as the Comedy of Manners.⁷ Such tendency was often almost mechanical even among the best critics. Compare, for example, Geoffrey Arnott's definition of *character* in Menander with that of *humour* in the Comedy of Manners by William Congreve (1670-1729). For Arnott, character in Menander is "the sum of a person's idiosyncrasies in speech and behaviour, an externally viewed set of matching characteristics that slot into a conventional pattern like the tesserae of a mosaic".⁸ For William Congreve, correspondingly, humour, that is, the constitution of bodily fluids which conditions human personality, was "a singular and unavoidable manner of doing or saying anything, peculiar and natural to one man only, by which his speech and action are distinguished from those of other men".⁹ Arnott's view on its own, of course, obviously stems from T.B.L. Webster's earlier description of New Comedy character as "a mosaic-like addition of small characteristics".¹⁰ The similarities between the three are, I think, uncanny and the conceptual genealogies clear. Even to the eyes of the most astute and appreciative scholars Menander's characters often needed the more or

⁶ Green 1990, 52.

⁷ Cf. Green 1990, 66: "What emerges—something wholly predictable in the light of political and social developments—is new to Greek literature: the private comedy of manners". See also Post 1934. The "defence" of Menander by Post is interesting, inasmuch as it arguably constitutes implicit acceptance of the fact that Menander did not write comedy as "sophisticated" as his Comedy of Manners counterparts.

⁸ Arnott 1979, xxxii.

⁹ Congreve 1696 at McMillin ²1997, 475.

¹⁰ Webster 1974, 44.

less implicit juxtaposition to their supposed kin, the fops and rakes of Wycherley, Congreve or Molière, to make full sense. No wonder that, pushing it a step further, less competent or sympathetic critics than Arnott or Webster also found them to pale in comparison.

After all, even the first cousins of Menander's characters, Plautus' uproarious and extravagant vagabonds, were found to be livelier, looser, and more perceptibly *funny*. To the minds of many Menander still seems to have diluted the comic *vis* of Aristophanes,¹¹ while the resurfaced specimens do not even vindicate his supposed *atout*, "realism", i.e. being true to the life of the late-classical and Hellenistic *polis*. Bespeaking a distinct modern uneasiness towards this strand of comic discourse is perhaps the fact that Menander, even his complete or almost complete plays, never became the favourite of modern theatre practitioners.¹² Menander's comedy for a long time seemed almost too earnest and sentimental to be truly relished. Exposing this, Stephen Halliwell even entitled an earlier version of his seminal essay on Menander's humour with the provocative phrase: "What is there to laugh about in Menander?"¹³ Halliwell's intent was of course thoroughly revisionist, as he showed that humour in Menander could capitalise on subtler mechanisms than the obvious laugh-out-loud banter, namely on manipulating the perspectives of internal and external audiences (a technique he terms "perspectivism"). Halliwell clinched the point that Menander's comedy can still be worthy of its name without being side-splittingly hilarious, by being even ambivalent in terms of its psychological impact. The fact alone, however, that in 2007 the Comic in Menander could still represent a "problem", because it is not entirely commensurable with known standards of "funniness", speaks volumes as to the ever growing urgency for new perspectives on the comedy of postclassical times.

Eventually it was all a matter (obviously) of sound texts and (less obviously) of adequate hermeneutic tools. A pantheon of towering scholarly figures deserve credit for establishing and explicating Menander's texts mainly in the cardinal 1960s and 1970s, the exciting time in which Menandrian Studies were truly established as a field with a strong

¹¹ For an apologia on behalf of Menander against this accusation, see Post 1931. Suggestively, Post more guards Menander against unfavourable identification with Terence, the *dimidiatus Menander*, rather than sets him straight against earlier comic tradition.

¹² A complete study of Menander's *Nachleben* on the modern stage is still a *desideratum*.

¹³ See Halliwell 2007 and Halliwell 2008, 388-428.

groundwork of editions, commentaries, monographs, and articles on all aspects of Menander's theatrical art.¹⁴ The relative stabilisation of the texts in this period and the comprehensive studies which saw the light of day as a result were foundational for anything that followed suit. However, it is the central claim of this book that in terms of hermeneutics it was actually the 1980s that ushered in an era of new intellectual vigour. From the 1980s onwards, a number of new approaches inspired mainly by semiotics, structuralism, intertextuality, performance criticism, reception theory, cultural poetics, ideology, and gender studies virtually revolutionised criticism on New Comedy, Greek as well as Roman. The objective of this volume is to showcase a representative, though admittedly not exhaustive sample of such new perspectives on the Comedy of postclassical times and to imply routes for further exploration of this genre.

The individual contributions in this volume approach New Comedy as theatrical performance, but also as a dynamic player in the socio-political discourses of the polis culture that gave birth to it. The chapters highlight continuities as well as discontinuities with the cultural and literary past of Athens and the Greek world, but mostly emphasise the progressiveness of New Comedy as a genre and its importance for the nascent culture of Hellenism. The chapters, with the exception of Blume's introductory one, are dual in nature: expositional of a method, but also practical examples of it. They are arranged in a fashion which underlines the major theoretical underpinnings of New Comedy studies, as they are being developed in the present: Cultural Studies (Konstan and Lape), Intertextuality and Performance (Petrides and Omitowaju), Reception (Papaioannou).

DAVID KONSTAN'S "Menander and Cultural Studies" sets off with a survey of this field from its early establishment in University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies to its modern multifarious ramifications. Konstan himself, with a series of articles now collected in his *Roman Comedy* (1983) and *Greek Comedy and Ideology* (1995), was among the pioneers of introducing Cultural Studies into the study of New Comedy. Cultural Studies, the postmodern inter-discipline par excellence, ushered into the study of Menander, Plautus, and Terence a whole arsenal of new hermeneutic tools mustered from the full array of social and political sciences. The development was pivotal, arguably one of those "egg of Columbus" moments in the history of scholarship, in which so simple and so retrospectively obvious intellectual shifts make such difference in the evolution of a field. The areas of inquiry central to

¹⁴ Full bibliography, up to 1995, in Katsouris 1995.

Cultural Studies are practically identical with the categories mostly at stake at least in the comedy of Menander: social class, civic status, gender, and age as loaded determinants of social position and identity. Cultural Studies exposed the densely overdetermined character of Menander's deceptively simple and mundane plots, revealing, for example, how in Konstan's own words, "the romantic complication that constitutes the surface plot of a Menandrian Comedy may lie athwart an alternative story line based on tensions of class and status". It was so simple yet so consequential. The Cultural Studies perspective, with its strong political and ideological tendance, elevated New Comedy from the obscurity of supposed political irrelevance to the epicentre of a fruitful, and still expanding investigation of the ways literary works in late-fourth century and Hellenistic Athens, as well as in Republican Rome, mask, inflect, critique, subvert or reaffirm the ideological presuppositions of the society in which they operate.

Konstan's article exemplifies the gains promised by the practice of exposing the hidden ideological operations and premises of the literary work, in order to grasp its significance as an active producer of social discourse. He centres on three cases studies from Menander's *Dyskolos*, *Aspis* and *Samia*, which deal respectively with the categories of class, status and age. In the *Dyskolos* section, Konstan explains how a cultural critic would be attracted to the ways in which and the reasons why two contrasting themes and story lines—one about a cantankerous agelast, and another about class tensions—share the same narrative space in this early piece by Menander. A Cultural Studies-inflected analysis, Konstan writes, would focus on the strategies the play employs, first to interweave the story lines, and then to make a point about the re-affirmation of civic solidarity over disparities of class and wealth. The *Aspis* provides opportunity for comment on the status of slaves and how Menander's Comedy serves to naturalise the institution in the same time that it is wont to portray slaves of intelligence and moral standing equal to that of free Athenians. The *Samia* affords the longest case study of the chapter, as its plot reveals how in New Comedy the social hierarchy among age groups can be mapped onto the status difference of free and slave or citizen and non-citizen. In the *Samia*, Konstan maintains, age and status reinforce each other by constructing the free adult male citizen, such as Demeas is and Moschion becomes, as the locus of power and authority. A Cultural Studies perspective bespeaks how even such universal emotions as anger can have socio-political significance in this direction. The *Samia*, furthermore, which presents three paradigms of relationship between parent and child (adoption and two distinct cases of *νοθεία*, one of a

bastard of Athenian lineage and another, supposedly, of one with a foreign mother), and three types of sexual union (rape, consensual sex, and incest), lays bare a major contradiction in Athenian ideology: that an adopted son of Athenian lineage (Moschion in this respect) can have more legitimacy, which in this case translates into a right to live and prosper, than a natural son from a foreign mother (Moschion's supposed child from Chrysis). Ultimately, it hinges upon the crucial ideological issue for democratic Athens: ensuring the legitimate reproduction of the body politic.

The most important category of gender, a central concern of Cultural Studies and a concept with an illustrious track record as a conceptual tool in the study of fifth-century theatre, is reserved for autonomous and exhaustive examination in Chapter Three by **SUSAN LAPE** (“Gender in Menander’s Comedy”).

Like much else, gender came surprisingly late to New Comedy, despite the fact that the genre pivots on the relations between men and women. New Comedy may still, here and there, be dubbed “romantic”, as it concerns tortuous unions between boys and girls, who overcome obstacles of various kinds to consummate their love. There are strange, contrived things, though, involved in this: in New Comedy, at least of Menander’s, it just so happens that citizens always marry citizens, however unfeasible that may have seemed at first. Coincidence or τύχη may cause short-term suffering (for example in a raped girl), but in the end it effects or salvages unions oftentimes impossible otherwise (such as inter-class matches or marriages rigged by what Lape calls the double standard in Athenian gender ideology, as in the *Epitrepontes*). No union is ever sanctioned in Menander’s Comedy—as a rule and provided that we are not fooled by the evidence—outside the purview of Athenian laws and norms pertaining to marriage, citizenship, and legitimate procreation. For that matter, New Comedy even adheres to the stringent and inflexible Law of Perikles (451), which enjoined that both parents be Athenians for a child to be entitled as a citizen. In fact, in late-fourth century, in a period when the law of Perikles may have relaxed, New Comedy is obdurate on upholding its clauses, even more than the state itself. Therefore, the myth that New Comedy confines itself to the *vita privata* implodes in the face of gender: gender is a social script, not a biological reality, and marriage is not the culmination of a sentimental affair, but a social transaction with reverberations for the *salus publica*. The relations between men and women in Menander’s comedy are far from innocent romantic liaisons, insomuch as sex, marriage, and procreation, in democratic Athens especially, are anxiety-ridden, socio-politically conditioned *public* acts

rather than liberties of the private individual. In Lape's own words, gender is "a culturally specific story about the behaviours, roles, and psychological makeup assigned to males and females on the basis of biological sex but which do not necessarily derive from biological sex." Gender, in Greek society as well as in New Comedy, is crosscut with other social determinants, such as ethnicity, status, kinship, and social role. It is thus invested with a set of expectations attuned with official ideologies and axiologies. In Athens it serves as a mould for constructing citizens, male or female, and ensuring the continuity of the *oikos* as the nucleic element of the polis.

In her chapter, Lape focuses specifically on the way New Comedy reifies the Athenian gender system infusing it with democratic values, even in a time when democracy in Athens was in peril. This alignment of *τύχη*, social custom and political ideology is particularly productive. New Comedy plot lines are even ultra-democratic in occasion, as they fashion egalitarian bonds beyond conventional practice. This is the function that Lape sees, for instance, in New Comedy's interclass marriage, such as the one achieved in the *Dyskolos*. She contends that this overemphasis on egalitarianism is not unrelated with the threat on democracy caused by the emergence of Hellenistic kingdoms. That said New Comedy's take on the official gender system is not straightforwardly validatory. Lape also examines, focusing on the *Samia* and the *Epitrepontes*, how in some cases the genre exposes also its tensions, contradictions, and double standards, especially as regards courtesans, wives, and slaves.

Intertextuality looms large—in the purview of performance criticism—in **ANTONIS K. PETRIDES'** "New Performance" (Chapter Four). Intertextuality, or indeed "inter-visuality", the property of spectacle to call in systems of reference, thus functioning as an intertextual marker in its own right irrespective of verbal cues, is postulated to be an inalienable tool for conceptualising what is essentially "new" in New Comedy performance.

Performance Studies, an umbrella discipline, which examined figure skating and street theatre alongside Sophocles and Shakespeare, traditionally grew outside of Theatre and Drama Departments, to "attract" and incorporate theatre theorists and practitioners in the process. This, at least, was certainly the case in the two American universities most commonly acknowledged as the discipline's birthplaces, NYU and Northwestern. At NYU, as a result of a happy synergy between a theatre man, Richard Schechner, and an anthropologist, Victor Turner, breakthroughs in the study of theatre performance were achieved through analysing an array of cultural and religious rituals, i.e. through the study of

“social drama”.¹⁵ At Northwestern, Performance Studies developed from inside a School of Speech, which included, as well as Theatre, such departments as Communication Studies, Radio/TV/Film, and Oral Interpretation. In both cases, broadening the definition of what constitutes performance worthy of institutionalised university study was not dissociated from the overall, tension-ridden restructuring of tertiary education curricula towards a new postmodernist canon¹⁶.

The study of performance is, therefore, an *e principio* interdisciplinary study, which comprises literary and cultural theory, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, political history, art history, folklore, and, no less, rhetoric, semiotics, semantics, pragmatics, etc. It can by no means be limited to the study of stagecraft alone or, much less, to the archaeology of theatrical events, although, obviously both these areas of research are essential. Such study of theatre as a total event came to New Comedy even later than to tragedy or Old Comedy; but it came with a bang, introduced most momentarily by Niall Slater’s *Plautus in Performance* (1985a) and David Wiles’ *The Masks of Menander* (1991). This did not of course happen free of controversy. Wiles’ book in particular has been faulted for its trenchant structuralism, its rather cavalier attitude towards the archaeological evidence, and its “glib generalizations”.¹⁷ Be that as it may, Wiles was the first to truly advocate the power of New Comedy spectacle, especially its “master sign”, the mask, to create meaning by visual means.

Petrides’ chapter builds on that thesis—only Petrides argues insistently against a purely synchronic approach to performance. The specificity of Menander’s performance, he argues, can only be fathomed with a double reference (a) to the evolution of Comedy and its osmosis with tragedy; and (b) to the “new performance culture” which marked the era of Hellenism, even if that was still nascent in Menander’s lifetime. The theorisation of theatre, the rise of the actor, the evolution of theatre architecture and its concomitants, the new understanding of the semantics and the politics of *opsis* (the visual aspect of performance), an overall theatrical mentality prevailing in public life, are paradigm shifts, which were underway as early as the late fifth century and grew ever deeper as the sociopolitical and geographical milieu of theatre expanded rapidly to the outmost limits of the Greek world. These shifts transformed the conditions of both the production of performance by professional practitioners and its reception

¹⁵ See e.g. V. Turner 1974, 1982.

¹⁶ For an account of these developments, mostly with reference to the USA, see Jackson 2004, esp. 1-39.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the reviews by Peter Brown and Eric Csapo in *The Classical Review* 42.2 (1992), 273-274, and *Phoenix* 48 (1994), 259-262, respectively.

by theoretically savvy and experienced audiences. Petrides suggests that the new-ness of New Comedy performance can be captured by the upshots of three terms, which denote processes of evolution: standardisation (the establishment of a limited, recurrent system of signs); hybridisation (a methodical absorption of tragic structures: narrative, verbal, and visual); and semiotisation (assigning, in Keir Elam's words, an "overriding signifying power", a symbolic value, to otherwise merely iconic or indexical signs). In the case of the mask especially, semiotisation was tantamount to the physiognomical overdetermination of the πρόσωπον, the investment of mask's features with the ability to signify moral predisposition (ἠθος), thus to transmit, as an ensemble and in relation to other systems of signs, plot-specific and character-specific pieces of information. As a result, in its evolved state, New Comedy is inherently intertextual, with the tragic intertext as integral, as imbued in its fabric as epic myth was in tragedy itself. Using space and the mask as cases in point, Petrides attempts to show that New Comic intertextuality cannot be exhausted in verbal allusions or structural parallels alone, but expands to the visual aspect of performance; that in Menander's comedy the *opsis*, too, can be referential.

ROSANNA OMITOWOJU'S chapter, "Performing Traditions: Relations and Relationships in Menander and Tragedy", has been placed fifth in this volume, since some of the background information provided by Petrides in Chapter Four would be to the benefit of the non-specialist reader of her work. In essence, however, Omitowoju's chapter crosscuts the methodologies of Chapters 2-4, as it combines a literary with a cultural studies-oriented approach. Omitowoju's main focus is the presentation of social relationships in Menander, with especial reference to the father-son relationship in the *Samia*, which she examines against possible tragic intertexts, namely the father-son relationships in Euripides' *Phoenix* and (chiefly) *Hippolytus*. Omitowoju's working hypothesis is that social relationships in New Comedy owe much not only to the cultural context in which they operate but also, perhaps even more so, to the literary tradition which preconditions Menander's work. This hypothesis bifurcates into two interlinked questions: (a) are family relations constituted differently in New Comedy than in tragedy, and if so, how and why? And (b) does the use of tragic models diminish one's ability to relate the action and resolution of Menander to its dominant cultural context? The way Omitowoju formulates her questions is characteristic of a newfound sophistication in researching Menander as a source of socio-cultural history, a new understanding of the complex interplay between the

constituents of a literary work, which checks any over-enthusiastic affirmation of Menander as a “mirror of life” (cf. test. 83 K.-A.)—or indeed the contrary, an inconsequential bourgeoisification of tragic plots.

If Greek New Comedy is inherently intertextual, Roman Comedy is infinitely more so: it would never have existed in the form we have come to know it from the plays of Plautus and Terence save for an ongoing, conspicuous and deeply conscious association with its Greek models. Plautus’ plays in particular appealed broadly to his contemporaries because their framework observed a carefully constructed dramatic format that blended in an ideal way, on the one hand, native Italian drama (*fabulae atellanae*, pantomime) with Greek drama (Middle and New Comedy, Hellenistic mime), and on the other, literary and performance genres. The meticulously crafted entwinement of intertextuality and performance sits at the core of a *palliata* by definition; the two are inseparable, not only because successful dramaturgy requires so but also because their individual contributions are impossible to determine on account of the fragmentary status of the surviving New Comedy texts. This sad limitation of the *paradosis* steered modern Plautine studies towards the performance dimension of the *palliata*. This led to the birth of Roman (mainly Plautine) metatheatre, the celebration of metatheatricality as a new, decisively Roman entity on the ancient stage, and the unprecedented capabilities this technique offered the *palliata* characters, particularly the slaves, to rewrite their comic world, including the New Comedy script, upon which the play they enacted was based—to transform the reality of the literary text through impromptu performance developed in their imagination. This picture has been enhanced in the past decade or so, rekindling interest in the study of Plautus’ irreverent inventiveness towards his Greek models.

This reinvention of intertextuality in the *palliata* is discussed by **SOPHIA PAPAIOANNOU** in the last chapter of this book (“Postclassical Comedy and the Composition of Roman Comedy”). Taking advantage of the fresh fragmentary discoveries in New Comedy, Papaioannou focuses anew on the relationship between Roman Comedy and fourth-century Greek comedy, and argues that the two develop along similar structural principles because they embrace parallel philosophies of dealing with their potential literary models. Setting as premise that postclassical Greek comic drama is the outcome of a well-thought combination of individual genius and cleverly filtered sources, not always literary, Papaioannou’s assessment of Plautine and Terentian dramaturgy, based on extensive discussions of specific case studies, examines in detail the anatomy of a

twofold methodology of model reception behind the texts of the *palliata*. The process in question transforms the so-perceived image of a spontaneous, improvisatory Plautine speech, by proving that Plautus' literary language, no less than Terence's own, involves complex intertextuality, which, in turn, comes in the aftermath of a long *Quellenforschung* whose successful conclusion presupposes critical acumen, powerful memory, and years of experience in viewing and performing Greek comedies.

CHAPTER ONE

MENANDER:
THE TEXT AND ITS RESTORATION

HORST-DIETER BLUME

The “classical” Greek tragic poets Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides have never ceased to be present with at least part of their works since their lifetime, and the same holds true of Aristophanes, the leading poet of the so-called Old Comedy. Complete manuscripts with a selection of their plays have come down to us; these plays were being copied throughout antiquity and were eventually passed on to Byzantium. After having undergone the change from papyrus scroll to parchment codex and the transcription from majuscule to cursive minuscule they finally escaped destruction, and via Crete and Venice they percolated through the western medieval manuscript tradition into printed book editions.

Menander and his rival poets of New Comedy were less fortunate. In spite of their immense popularity their plays gradually vanished in late antiquity before Byzantine scholars could get hold of them. Consequently, a medieval manuscript tradition does not exist for them. Menander was considered lost for many centuries, reduced to not much more than a great name: he was represented by a handful of Roman adaptations of Plautus and Terence, by a collection of one-line gnomes (*Monosticha*) that only partly can be ascribed to him, and by a considerable number of short quotations found in various Greek authors.

It was not until the end of the 19th century that the first bits of original Menandrian scenes turned up on papyrus sheets, which had been preserved in the dry sand of Egypt. Since then, the number of newfound texts has increased continually: many of them include only small fragments and scraps collected from ancient garbage heaps, but there have also turned up the remnants of two papyrus codices, which restored to us substantial portions of half a dozen plays, amongst which one almost complete (*Dyskolos*). Remarkable finds were also made quite unexpectedly in cartonnage used for mummy wrappings. Menandrian papyri date from the

third century BC (that is very close to the poet's own lifetime) down to the sixth century AD, thus being roughly a thousand years earlier than our manuscripts of Aristophanes. However, this does not mean that their texts are more reliable: because they show no traces of a systematic treatment by Alexandrian scholars, they needed (and still need) careful reading and restoration. Step by step during the last century Menander has regained shape thanks to an international cooperation of modern classical scholars. The youngest of the great Greek dramatists, who has created, developed and influenced a theatrical tradition alive up to the present day, is on his way to become a classic once again.

Let us turn back our eyes and ask why Menander was not part of the transcription which paved the way for medieval manuscript tradition. The reasons must have been manifold, perhaps arbitrary; hence one hesitates to offer a forthright answer. Admittedly Menander had been treated with reserve by the general public during his lifetime: in the course of thirty years of his career as a dramatist (about 320 – 290 BC) he composed more than a hundred comedies, but only eight times he was proclaimed victor in the dramatic contest. It seems that the Athenian audience regarded his comic characters and the way they argued their case on stage to be too far ahead of their time. But this cannot have been a relevant factor for the later transmission of the texts, because matters changed quickly after his death.

Many theatres had been built in the third century BC, not only in Attica but all over the Greek speaking world, and Menander and Euripides who had shared a similar fate during their life now became the most popular dramatists. They dominated the stage and were prominent school authors as well: ideal conditions, one is inclined to think, to secure their afterlife. At the same time the comedies of Menander were collected and compiled in the Alexandrian Library; whether also a critical edition of his works was prepared by one of the great scholars working there, remains a debated question. The only thing we know for certain is that Aristophanes of Byzantium thought very highly of him; he placed Menander next to Homer, thus regarding the dramatist of day-to-day life and the poet of heroic myth as antipodes: both of them exemplary and outstanding in their own way.¹ This high esteem was general and lasted for several centuries; even when the theatre performances gradually came to an end, Menander continued to be a much-loved author among educated Greeks, as evidenced by Plutarch.² His complete works must still have been available in libraries. Athenaeus in his learned *Deipnosophistai* (ca. AD 200) was

¹ Test. 83 and 170 K.-A.

² Test. 103-107 K.-A.

perhaps the last to make extensive use of them: we owe to him 70 excerpts from Menander drawn from 47 different comedies, all of them quoted with their respective title. On the other hand, a selection of his favourite plays had come into use for the general reader; interest, it seems, was focused on about a dozen or so more, as the number of later papyri shows.³

In the end, the following fact proved to be obstructive to Menander's lasting fame: his plays were considered to be easy reading, above all for beginners (both Greek and Roman). The absence of coarse language and obscenities, the frugal use of topical allusions, the clear and concise dialogues: in a word, the ethical and aesthetic qualities of Menander's plays made him an ideal author for elementary teaching. Nonetheless, exercises in writing and reading could do without deep appreciation of his refined, almost individual character drawing and his subtle humour and dramatic irony, and so no need was felt for detailed commentaries. Had Menander, like Homer and the tragedians, been taught in higher education as well, he would not have escaped the attention of commentators and scholiasts. There was still another unfavourable development: during the second century AD grammarians of a strict Atticist order exercised their influence on literary style. These critics castigated Menander for the occasional *koine* phrase and an alleged lack of pure Attic dialect, being blind to his lively poetic expression which reflects the language of the audience.⁴ Their rigid, puristic criticism combined with the lack of sustained scholarly attention had, if not immediate, yet surely long-term consequences: notwithstanding his lasting popularity which manifests itself in the papyri, and in spite of his clear presence in public life by means of a large number of portrait busts,⁵ Menander fell into oblivion during the so-called dark centuries (about 650-850 AD) which marked the end of late antiquity and preceded the revival of humanism in Byzantium.

Thus for more than a thousand years the once famous dramatist had faded away. Certainly, the comedies of Terence were still widely read, from whose prologues one could learn that he had translated and adapted Greek originals, mostly of Menander; but Terence was not so much appreciated for being the *dimidiatus Menander*⁶ who created an almost Greek atmosphere on stage, as for his elegant and lucid Latin style. Rather than the Roman comedies a totally different literary genre kept Menander's

³ Del Corno 1964.

⁴ Test. 119 -120 K.-A.

⁵ Fittschen 1991; Blume 1998, 12-15.

⁶ So Caesar's judgement on Terence, cf. Donatus *Vita Terenti* 7.

name alive: the above-mentioned *Gnômai Monostichoi*.⁷ Forty manuscripts written between the 13th and 16th century preserve this collection; it consists of 877 lines in total, but only a minority of about sixty of them can definitely be identified as Menandrian. An equal number of verses have been assigned to Euripides; others are drawn from various poets of New Comedy and tragedy. Papyri of the first and second century AD testify that these dicta were used for practice at school: they were copied, read and learnt by heart. So it is hardly surprising that Menander had been considered a highly sententious and didactic poet, until original scenes of his comedies turned up again and corrected this one-sided impression. The gnomic character of Menander's language was confirmed also by the great number of quotations (frr. 680-876 K.-A.) which Stobaios has preserved in his anthology (5th century AD); some of these are identical with dicta in the earlier collection.

In the wake of the revival of Greek literature during the Renaissance period first attempts were made to collect what still could be known about the lost comic poets. Guilelmus Morelius: *Ex veterum comicorum graecorum fabulis quae integrae non extant sententiae* (Paris 1553) led the way. Half a century later scenic fragments on a broader scale, which included also the tragic poets, were listed by the famous Dutch historian and philologist Hugo Grotius: *Excerpta ex tragoediis et comoediis graecis* (Paris 1626). The first scholar who undertook the task of collecting systematically the scattered fragments and testimonies of Menander's comedies in ancient literature was Ioannes Clericus (= Jean Le Clerc) in *Menandri et Philemonis reliquiae* (Amsterdam 1709).

Clericus thus combined the two leading poets of New Comedy, both of them by that time reduced to a random sample of fragments. Philemon who had come to Athens from Syracuse was a bit older and a more successful comedy writer, a fact which, the story goes, caused Menander some annoyance.⁸ Later, however, Philemon was generally considered second to Menander, yet he continued to be held in high esteem. So even in late antiquity, when comedies were no longer played and seldom read, a rather dull piece of work, the *Comparatio Menandri et Philistionis* (apparently mistaken for Philemonis), could still enjoy some popularity.⁹ Up to now no coherent dramatic scenes of Philemon have surfaced on papyrus—perhaps some may still lurk among the fragmenta adespota. We must, therefore, judge Philemon's dramatic art from a few comedies of

⁷ Jaekel 1964; for the latest edition, see Liapis 2002.

⁸ Test. 71 K.-A.

⁹ Text: Jaekel 1964, 87-120. See also Dain 1963, 300.

Plautus: the plots of *Mercator*, *Trinummus*, and probably also *Mostellaria* have been borrowed from him.

Unfortunately, Clericus' edition was a hasty work full of mistakes, but it had the immediate effect of instigating a highly competent critic, namely Richard Bentley; under the pseudonym of Phileleutherus Lipsiensis he published *Emendationes in Menandri et Philemonis reliquias* only few months later (Utrecht 1710, Cambridge 1713). Bentley's book was a severe and sarcastic analysis of Clericus' metrical and linguistic blunders which in its turn provoked sharp replies by some inferior minds such as Iohannes C. de Pauw: *Philargyri Cantabrigiensis emendationes in Menandri et Philemonis reliquias* (Amsterdam 1711). This whole polemic is certainly mere academic squabble, yet it aptly illustrates the fact that Menander was no longer just a name but an author worth squabbling about. Bentley's *Emendationes* were reprinted a century later in August Meineke's new collection of fragments: *Menandri et Philemonis reliquiae* (Berlin 1823), a forerunner of his masterly *Fragmenta Comico-rum Graecorum* (Berlin 1839-1857).¹⁰ As far as the fragments from secondary sources are concerned, with this edition Meineke has laid a reliable foundation for all further scholarly work. In the fourth volume Menander, standing out amidst more than thirty other dramatists, receives his due place as the most prominent representative of New Comedy. The fragments are clearly arranged and numbered separately for each play; the comments are lucid and instructive.

In late 19th century interest in Greek and Roman comedy generally diminished. The study of the fragments was left to specialists; even Latin comedies were no longer produced for the stage but only read at school. When Theodor Kock, one generation after Meineke, presented a new edition of comic fragments in three volumes—*Comico-rum Attico-rum Fragmenta* (Leipzig 1880-1888)—its impact was more restrained. The material he offered was slightly corrected and augmented and more concisely arranged: the fragments of each poet now numbered through continuously which made quoting much easier, and the comments were brought up to date. Occasionally the treatment of the transmitted text seems to be less careful and the critical judgement not quite reliable. Nevertheless, all that could be known about Menander at that time had been collected and closely examined. What else could be done for this poet?

¹⁰ Edited in 5 vols. (7 parts); ed. min. Berlin 1847.