

# ESTUDIOS CLÁSICOS

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**Harm Pinkster** El tiempo presente en la *Eneida* de Virgilio · **Julián Marrades Millet** Racionalismo y visión trágica en el *Edipo Rey* de Sófocles · **Felipe G. Hernández Muñoz** El fragmento del discurso *Contra Timandro* en el nuevo Hiperides: presentación, traducción y notas · **Marc Vandersmissen** Metatheatrical Procedures and Comic Creation in Menander · **María José García Soler** *Kai* como adverbio de foco en las declamaciones etopoéticas de Libanio · **Ignacio Etchart** La *Anacreóntica* 38 como una obra de tres autores · **Guillermo Aprile** ¿Es el rey un narrador fiable? Verdad, testimonio e historia en Curcio Rufo y Arriano · **Eveling Garzón Fontalvo** Propuesta didáctica para integrar literatura y pervivencia: Medea y Antígona toman la pantalla

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# Investigación

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# Metatheatrical Procedures and Comic Creation in Menander

Procedimientos metateatrales y creación cómica en Menandro

MARC VANDERSMISSEN

Université de Liège — Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles  
mvandersmissen@uliege.be

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**Abstract** ▪ The concept of metatheatre is outstanding for the study of ancient theatre, both Greek and Roman. It raises many questions regarding the textual links between the stage and the audience. However, researchers have often opposed the general dramatic action *stricto sensu* and the metatheatrical speeches, more limited in the plays. In this paper, I will demonstrate that Menander's theatre, as a whole, is metatheatrical and that the public is entirely part of the dramatic convention: for the author, the point would not be to propose a universe dissociated from the spectators. There would not be a border between the tiers and the stage made visible for a short while by specific lines (passive assistance vs active comedians). Menander aims to create a fictional space whereby actors and spectators are continuously connected together by a set of interdependent links. By this way, Menander would take all the participants of the show from the extratheatricality to the intratheatricality. These conditions would generate a homogeneous group united, during the time of the performance, by its awareness of the theatrical norms.

**Keywords** ▪ Ancient Theatre; Greek Comedy; Menander; Metatheatre

**Resumen** ▪ El concepto de metateatro destaca en el estudio del teatro antiguo, tanto griego como romano. Plantea muchas cuestiones relativas a los vínculos textuales entre la escena y el público. Sin embargo, los investigadores han opuesto a menudo la acción dramática general *stricto sensu* y los discursos metateatrales, más limitados en las obras. En este trabajo, demostraré que el teatro de Menandro, en su conjunto, es metateatral y que el público forma parte por completo de la convención dramática: para el autor, no se trataría de proponer un universo disociado de los espectadores. No habría una frontera entre las gradas y el escenario que se hace visible durante un rato por líneas específicas (asistencia pasiva frente a comediantes activos). Menandro pretende crear un espacio ficticio en el que actores y espectadores estén continuamente conectados entre sí por un conjunto de vínculos interdependientes. De este

modo, Menandro llevaría a todos los participantes del espectáculo de la extrateatralidad a la intrateatralidad. Estas condiciones generarían un grupo homogéneo unido, durante el tiempo de la representación, por su conciencia de las normas teatrales.

**Palabras clave** ▪ teatro antiguo; comedia griega; Menandro; metateatro

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, metatheatrical reality in ancient theatre<sup>1</sup>, comedies and tragedies in both Greek and Latin, have been largely studied by scholars<sup>2</sup>. Thanks to ancient theatre studies, metatheatricality has been questioned in itself (Dobrov 2001). In ancient plays, many metatheatrical aspects have been found and analysed in detail. Some examples include: direct addresses of the audience, references to the theatre or to the materiality of the play, disruption of the pretence, literary quotations, moral system performed, *etc.*<sup>3</sup> In many papers, one or more of these aspects is separately examined in order to understand its consequences on the dramatic action and on the theatre's definition. Nevertheless, even today, a more general study of metatheatrical nature of Menander's work is lacking. To bridge this gap, I hereby propose a theoretical argument about these concepts in Menander. Firstly, I will briefly discuss the notions of dramatic illusion, pretence and convention in Ancient theatre in general and in Menander in particular. Then I will explore the functions of the literary tradition as medium of creation in the theory of New Comedy and the place of the prologues in this total system. These definitions' questions will be illustrated by a commentary of selected passages. Finally, the play *Aspis* will be studied as a whole and compared with the *Dyskolos*.

## 2. Illusion, pretence and convention

In ancient theatre studies, metatheatricality was previously linked to 'ruptures of the illusion' and indicated the moments in which the characters make visible the theatrical conditions of the performance to the audience: direct addresses to the audience, references to the performance, external quotations... (Stow 1936). In this manner, the

<sup>1</sup> Before being applied to ancient theatre, the concept of metatheatre was developed by several seminal studies. For example: Abel 1963; Hornby 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Andrews 2004; Brown 1987; Konstan 2014; Papaioannou 2010; Wyles, D. 1991.

<sup>3</sup> David & Lhostis 2016; Lennartz 1999; Marshall 2002; Stockert 1997.

characters would reveal to the spectators that performance is only an exercise of illusion in a very specific context both in time and space. Even if we will never be able to know what happened in the Athenians or Romans' mind during a performance, this approach is today rejected in part, or at least balanced, by critics. The argument is that the dramatic action's conditions are clearly visible during the entire performance (masks, costumes, chorus, poetical language...), so the illusion is never perfectly achieved by the actors. This concept would not even be relevant for the ancient dramatists and audiences away from our own system of representations. This does not mean that drama is not realistic at all. Nobody could deny that the dramatic action relies on political (Old Comedy) or domestic life (New Comedy) scenes from Ancient Greece. The concept of *pretence* is then preferred by scholars such as Bain: 'Actors pretend to be the people they play and the audience accepts that pretence' (1977: 3-7). On this theoretical basis, innovative studies have been done on Menander's theatre and new interpretations became possible<sup>4</sup>. Nonetheless, to read ancient theatre as a metatheatrical production, the concept of pretence is, in my opinion, still not totally satisfactory.

I would rather insist on the relation between the stage and the tier, the actors and the spectators, the playwright and his readers. Both Greeks and Romans did not passively attend these plays, but they were part of the performance. They actively participated in these religious celebrations: applauses, reactions and approvals (Csapo & Slater 1995: 290). In this view, Slater described Aristophanes' metatheatre as a renegotiated contract with the audience during the entire performance (Slater 2002: 3-4). Therefore, I would propose that New Comedy too relies in part on a bilateral *convention* – in other words, an agreement or a contract – between the dramatists and their audience. These notions have already been tackled by scholars, but only for specific cases like the asides, for example (Bain 1977: 1-2). I would like to highlight this characteristic throughout the comedies of Menander. We can use the term 'convention' because, in attending a performance, the audience has expectations thanks to the theatrical tradition (Marshall 2014b: 131-146). In this way, the spectator is not only one of the passive members of the audience, he is also one of their actors of these total experiences. He has an analytic function in judging and reacting to what

<sup>4</sup> Gutzwiller 2000; Zagagi 1995.

he is watching on stage. Initially, this relationship was born from the competitive nature of Athenian theatre festivals: the audience was represented by a panel of citizens which had to elect the best playwright of the competition. But this dimension of ancient theatre remained even after the Athenian democracy.

Convention could be both implicit and explicit thanks to the essence of the theatre and the remarks or comments made during the play itself. In Menander, this relationship appears clearly, for example, in the *Perikeiromene*, in the Agnoia's last lines: ἔρρωσθ' εὐμενεῖς τε γενόμενοι ἡμῖν, θεαταί, καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ σῶζετε. (vv. 170–171: 'Audience, good-bye, / And smile on us, support coming scenes')<sup>5</sup>. In this specific case, Lamagna correctly felt the conventional function of the prologue: 'la funzione di guadagnare l'assenso dello spettatore' (1994: 179). Agnoia is clearly asking for a value judgment from the audience in using the adjective εὐμενεῖς, 'well-disposed, kindly'. It implies an active implication from the spectators too. This is reinforced by the imperative mode of the verb σῶζετε, which translates literally as 'keep alive'.

The playwright and the actors are not only the active members of the performance. Their production (the text and the acting process) is also the object of attention of the audience. The actors can fulfil or disappoint the audience's expectations, according to their ability to inscribe their work into the tradition<sup>6</sup>. The public knew they would participate in a fictional but realistic show —not an illusion— in order to celebrate the gods together (Bierl 2001: 11–104). The audiences expectations concern all the specific elements defining theatre from structure and theme to characters' stereotypes and dramatic plots. The spectators directly recognised a tragedy, a satyr play or a comedy, old, middle or new, and the style associated with each genre. The importance of theatre in the city and the number of theatrical festivals held per year aided the development of theatrical frameworks, which were fairly systematic in form but varying in details.

The convention born of the theatrical tradition between the dramatist and the audience governs a set of norms of representation according to the dramatic genre. These norms and references are tacit but visible

<sup>5</sup> Greek texts edited and translated by W.G. Arnott come from The Loeb Classical Library collection.

<sup>6</sup> In ancient Greece, theatre is a civic and religious competition: Henderson 1990; in ancient Rome, theatre, as part of the *ludi*, is a public and religious celebration: Dupont & Letessier 2011: 13–24.

for the audience, who decode them — or at least a part of them. The rules create a multilevel experience in which the recognition process by the audience forms part of the dramatic art itself. Identifying the tradition and the variations provokes a kind of intellectual and emotional pleasure in the spectators (Dupont & Letessier 2011: 118–119). By sharing this pleasure simultaneously, the audience are united as one cultural and sociological group. Rules and intertextuality become an imperative medium for metatheatrical creation. The dramatic action relies on a performative agreement (Dedoussi 1995) itself based on the participation of the two partners: what is enacted on stage is one theatrical form of reality, a new way of being together.

This situation progressively created a theatre conscious of itself and its own fundamental characteristics. In consequence, the dramatists introduce references to their own work and develop a level of self-reflectivity which becomes ever more complex through the evolution of dramatic genres.<sup>7</sup> Metatheatricality helps the dramatists to theorize their art and participates in the renewal of different theatrical genres. It functions as a total system of recreation and not merely as local isolated performances. Therefore, it is not advisable to evaluate ancient theatre only through the opposition illusion vs reality. This approach made little sense for the ancients and merely considers metatheatricality as a failure in the dramatic illusion or pretence, which is rather anachronistic. In postulating that theatre is a convention between several partners, metatheatricality could be considered more fruitfully as a performance within and about the theatrical performance itself. Metatheatrical elements are the marks of the renewal of this convention during the show. As such, they take on a particular meaning that is probably specific to each theatrical genre and which the reader must now take into account. This point of view solves the difficulties' interpretation in regards to a theatre both fictional and realistic, simultaneously close in its materiality and distant in its theme and action.

### **3. The comic rule: playing with the expected norms**

Old and New Comedies are defined by a set of norms specific to their comic genre (Konstan 2014: 27–42): topics, vocabulary, atmosphere, alternating speaking actors and singing chorus, different versification,

<sup>7</sup> Metatheatricality is present both in comedies and tragedies as resumed in Gutzwiller 2000: 104–105.

costumes and masks... Nevertheless, what seems to be one of the characterizing standards of ancient comedy is: *playing with the expected rules* to draw the attention of the audience. The objective was multiple: to keep them involved, to create emotion, to make them laugh, to pass on messages... If comedy respects a general schema in form, all the other elements can be changed, reversed or modified in a new way. All these moments can be defined as metatheatre since they allow the audience to become aware that they are not only participating in a theatrical performance but that it is also a new form of theatricality. In Old Comedy, Aristophanes concentrates on inverting the ancient theatrical norms, which are obviously linked to the *polis* values. Slater has shown that Aristophanes' metatheatre was intended to encourage the audience to think critically about the performance he was offering. In this way, Aristophanes seeks to develop the Athenians' critical sense about tragedy and indirectly about Athenian public institutions in general (Slater 2002). He often breaks the tragedy's norms to invent a kind of para-tragedy. Aristophanes proposes a carnival and fanciful theatre far from Athenian real life. It is on this contrast between the reality of Athenian people —including tragedy— and the reality of Aristophanes' world that the metatheatre of the Ancient Comedy is based.

A generation later, the tradition has evolved with the Athenian society and the comic genre has deeply transformed. New Comedy is now inspired by domestic or private life: love stories, father-son relationship, master-slave relationship (Zagagi 1995: 46). These themes, which were taken from the daily life of the Greeks and were relatively few in number, influenced the construction of the plays. The performance is now based on the association of scenes in which certain events (kidnapping, recognition scene, deception, marriage...) or character types (the lying slave, the young man in love, the stern father...) are recurrent from one play to the next. The reuse of these elements leads to new expectations from the audience as they have become predictable. Menander utilises different norms than those used by Aristophanes, however he was continuously trying to exceed these. He is evaluated at this specific ability by his peers: the pleasure of New Comedy lies in this contrast effect between recurrence and variation, which is what makes it original.

Today it is not easy for scholars to identify all the recurrences that have become creative standards thanks to the tradition at the time of Menander. Dramatists should have a set of available standards where

they could select some of them to propose a new creation. There were so many possibilities that it is impossible to compose a valid classification for each genre. However, some of these norms are clearly identifiable for New Comedy: structures, chorus' parts, plots, characters' stereotypes etc.<sup>8</sup> If Menander is assessed at playing with the rules, it is relevant that he makes them decodable to make his art visible —and appreciable— to the audience. In this sense, Menander's theatre is unquestionably metatheatrical and is influenced by this theory of ancient comedy.

#### 4. Metatheatrical nature of the prologues in Menander

In Menander, the prologues have specific form and function. They introduce the plays and present the general context. Nonetheless, the prologues are also the author's voice under one character's mask, human or divine (Handley 1965: 127). They give some information about the plot, but do not reveal everything from the beginning. By coming to the theatre during a festival, the audience knows that they will participate with the actors in a normed show. After the first steps of the ritual which signal the passage from the daily life space to a sacred space (Adrados 1975: 1–18), the prologue announces more precisely the passage from reality to fiction. It is also the moment to install the bilateral convention between audience and actors. The character in charge of the prologue sets up the necessary conditions to the theatrical convention. This conventional nature appears clearly in the three recovered prologues of a divinity: *Dyskolos* (Pan: vv. 44–46), *Aspis* (Tyche: vv. 99–100) and *Perikeiromene* (Agnoia: vv. 170–171). Nine other divine prologues have been kept in a fragmentary form or have been recreated, but they seem similar to the three recovered ones, in predicting the action itself. They do not only explain the past and the context of the action, but they also announce, in part, what will happen to the characters<sup>9</sup>.

In the *Dyskolos*, the first lines of Pan are directly addressed to the audience. The play starts with this sentence: τῆς Ἀττικῆς νομίζετ' εἶναι

<sup>8</sup> For examples, see Sommerstein 2013: 4–10.

<sup>9</sup> Beyond this general remark, it is hard to draw further conclusions because of the fragmentary nature of these plays. In the *Samia*, the prologue is the only one known today played by a human. The young man, Moschion, does not have divine power, so the prologue is less programmatic than the others. However, Moschion speaks directly to the audience at the beginning of the play and prepares the framework of the show: φανερόν] δὲ τοῦτ' ἄν εὐλόγως ὑμῖν ποεῖν / θέλωμι,] τὸν ἐκείνου διεξεληθῶν τρόπον. (vv. 5–6: 'But sensibly [I'd like] to make this [clear] / To you by spelling out the kind of man he is'). About the use of ὑμῖν here, see Sommerstein 2013: 101.

τὸν τόπον (v. 1: ‘Imagine that the scene is in Attica’). Pan uses the verb νομίζω, ‘believe’, to describe the environment of the action, in Greek: ὁ τόπος. The noun ὁ τόπος means both ‘place, region, space’ and ‘subject of a speech’<sup>10</sup>. It occurs at the first line but also at the end of Pan’s intervention (v. 43), as if it opens and closes the prologue. This double meaning allows Pan to simultaneously be on a dramaturgic and thematic level. The word polysemy has a performative dimension — the place is also the action — which supports the creation of the theatrical fiction geographically and thematically. The god is simultaneously a character present during all the play (directly and indirectly), and also seems to direct in part the action like the dramatist, thanks to his divine nature.<sup>11</sup> With his omnipresence, Pan explicitly makes official the convention with the audience (*Dyskolos*, v. 45–46): ταῦτ’] ἐστὶ τὰ κεφάλαια, τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα δὲ / ὄψεσθ’] ἐὰν βούλησθε· βουλήθητε δέ. (transl. ‘That]’s the synopsis. Now [you’ll see] / The details, if you like: you’d better like!’).

Menander, through Pan, asks the audience to participate in the action. He insists the audience participate with the repetition of the verb βούλομαι: the audience has to be involved and to accept its active role. By contrasting τὰ κεφάλαια, here with the sense of ‘the synopsis’, explained to the audience by Pan with τὰ ἕκαστα, here with the meaning of ‘the details’, which will be revealed through the play, these lines show the nature of comedy itself: the complex relation between conventions and variations, knowledge and ignorance of the audience, expectations and surprises. At the prologue’s end, the three last lines are used to announce Chaireas and Sostratos’s arrival on stage (vv. 47–49). The same formula is also used in another play, the *Sikyonioi* (vv. 23–24): ταῦτ’ ἐστὶ τὰ κεφάλαια, τὰ ] καθ’ ἕκαστα δὲ / ὄψεσθ’ ἐὰν βούλησθε· βουλή]θητε δέ. The conventional function of the prologue is of great importance to the play. It can be expressed by formulaic expressions, as aforementioned. Therefore, metatheatre not only shows the theatrical convention, it can also be itself part of the tradition it tries to reinvent.

In *Perikeiromene*, the prologue’s end is also revealing: διὰ γὰρ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ κακὸν εἰς ἀγαθὸν ῥέπει / γινόμενον. (vv. 169–170: ‘With god’s help evil turns to good, / Right from conception’). Agnoia recognises that

<sup>10</sup> Beekes 2010: s.v. τόπος, 1494.

<sup>11</sup> We also find this dramaturgical power in Tyche’s prologue in the *Aspis*: λοιπόν τοῦνομα / το]ύμόν φράσαι, τίς εἰμι, πάντων κυρία / τούτων βραβεῦσαι καὶ διοικῆσαι· Τύχη. (vv. 146–148: ‘I’ve still to tell you who I am, the steward / And judge controlling all this. I’m called Chance’).

situations can be reversed thanks to a god in this comedy as in life. This concept is frequent in comedy which confirms the changing nature of comic theatre (Lamagna 1994: 178–179). Once again, the prologue, as narrated by god, has characteristics of the dramatist’s function and guides the audience: ‘you will participate in a comedy, but pay attention because in comedy things change’. In the *Aspis*, we also find this idea narrated in a similar manner by the slave Daos, reflecting upon the lost tragedian Carcinus: ὁ Καρκίνος φήσ’. «ἐν μιᾷ γὰρ ἡμέραι / τὸν εὐτυχῆ τίθησι δυστυχῆ θεός» (v. 417–418: ‘Carcinus says: “In a single day, god brings the fortunate one to the misfortune”’) <sup>12</sup>. The success of the *Aspis* relies on its ability to vary rules whilst fulfilling convention. The prologue itself is a varying element. It could be performed by a divinity or by a human. It could occur at the play opening or at the end of the first scene, called a ‘postponed’ prologue.

Thanks to the convention between the audience and the actors, Menander produced a *mise en abyme* of theatre: this play is a comedy because it breaks the rules of a comedy which themselves break the rules of a tragedy (Gutzwiller 2002: 102–137). By linking several levels of reversed references, there are different possibilities of interpretation, which are not always evident for one observer to detect. The Ancients would take comic pleasure in recognizing some of these modified traditional elements already present in the prologue. All the plays are constructed on the opposition between several powerful dramaturgical axes: originality vs tradition, audience’s knowledge vs ignorance, comedy vs tragedy, rules vs variation, fiction vs reality. These axes are never interconnected in exactly the same way which makes each play a piece of art. However, the metatheatrical convention transcends the other axes because it can rely, in part, on them. In consequence, metatheatricality can appear at any moment of the action, in many ways. It signals a specific moment of the play and functions as an operator of dramatic tension. In the play, it shows the moments when things are evolving and when stable elements meet moving elements. These meetings make the action gradually progress until the end.

## 5. A Case Study: the *Aspis*

The *Aspis* is the most metatheatrical play of Menander. The comedy is metatheatrical *per se*, but also because the plot’s intrigue relies, in part,

<sup>12</sup> The adjectives εὐτυχῆ and δυστυχῆ probably refer to Tyche, the god of the prologue.

on a metatheatrical device. The main story recounts the unexpected come back of Kleostratos, who was wrongly believed as dead, in Athens. During his absence, one of his two uncles, Smikrines, tries to receive his nephew's heritage thanks to a marriage with Kleostratos' sister. The other uncle (Chairestratos) and the slave (Daos) of Kleostratos and Chaireas 'play' together Chairestratos' death in order to mislead Smikrines in a tragedian way: *δεῖ τραγωδῆσαι πάθος / ἀλλοῖον ὑμᾶς· ὃ γὰρ ὑπεῖπας ἀρ[τίως / δόξαι σε δεῖ νῦν [...]* (vv. 329–331: 'You must perform / A sombre tragedy. What you just said / Must now come true for you — apparently'). Daos uses the verb *τραγωδῆσαι*, 'represent in tragedy' from the theatre vocabulary to describe the action taken against Smikrines. In this purpose, the slave is performing a character who is playing a tragic actor. The character adapts his vocabulary to the theatre context and changes his verbal mode. As the actor plays openly a tragedy in a comedy, the *mise en abyme* is here direct and obvious for the audience. For these reasons, the *Aspis* is suited to our analysis. It is more the question of understanding and illustrating a system of poetic creation than commenting every single metatheatrical element.

The play opens with Daos' arrival on stage in a kind of funeral procession. He is mourning his master, Kleostratos, killed previously at war. Daos recounts his story and tells the audience how he himself came back from the frontline with his master's fortune. The whole first scene is given to this episode thanks to a dialogue between Daos and Smikrines, like a tragic scene (Beroutsos 2005: 21–23). Daos takes a messenger position in front of Smikrines who questions him. In that sense, the comedy starts like a tragedy, until Tyche's prologue brings the truth back (*Aspis*, 97–100):

[ΤΥΧΗ] ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἦν τούτοις τι γεγονὸς δυσχερές,  
 θεὸν οὔσαν οὐκ ἦν εἰκὸς ἀκολουθεῖν ἐμέ.  
 νῦν δ' ἀγνοοῦσι καὶ πλανῶνται· τοῦτο δ[έ]  
 100 ὁ προσέ[χων] μαθήσετα[ι]

[ΤΥΧΗ] If a real tragedy had struck these people,  
 A goddess like me couldn't come on next.  
 In fact they're lost and in the dark if you  
 100 Listen carefully, you'll learn what [really happened].

We have already observed the metatheatrical nature of the prologue and the dramatic power of the god. Thanks to this presence, the tone of the play evolves progressively from tragedy to comedy. From this moment, thanks to the metatheatrical convention, the audience is

aware that the plot is not what it seems and that it is developing a new direction. Tyche clearly points to Smikrines as the villain of the play and implies that he will be punished later (vv. 140–146). The audience understands that Smikrines will be Tyche’s target but does not yet know when and how.

The second scene is dedicated to one of Smikrines’s monologues where he exposes his thoughts about his nephew’s death and fortune (vv. 149–163). During the third scene, Daos completely changes his character and reverts to his role as a slave in order not to offend Smikrines with convoluted answers. He now appears discreet and respectful in a typical slave-citizen comedy scene. By contrast, Smikrines maintains his character, continuing to present himself as a greedy old man (*Aspis*, 205–209):

205 [ΣΜΙΚΡΙΝΗΣ] δοκῶν δέ σοί τι, πρὸς θεῶν, ἀμαρτάνειν;  
[ΔΑΟΣ] Φρύξ εἰμι· πολλὰ τῶν παρ’ ὑμῖν φαίνεται  
καλῶν ἐμοὶ πάνδεινα καὶ τούναντίον  
τούτων. Τί προσέχειν δεῖ σ’ ἐμοί; φρονεῖς ἐμοῦ  
βέλτιον εἰκότως.

205 [SMIKRINES] In haeven’s name, do you believe I’m wrong?  
[DAOS] I come from Phrygia. Much that you approve  
Appals me — and the converse. Why take note  
Of my opinions? Yours, of course, are far  
Superior to mine.

Daos is trying to avoid answering sincerely to Smikrines because he disapproves of his attitude. In these lines, the slave alludes to his foreign origins — from Phrygia — to discredit himself in front of Smikrines, the freeborn Greek man (Gomme & Sandbach 1973: 79–80). Daos’ position has gone from emotional and expressive in the first scene to neutral and short in the third scene, as noticed by Smikrines himself (v. 193a). It is as if he had changed his mask. The effect should be obvious for the audience who can perceive Daos as the moving element of the comedy.

Alone again, the slave closes the scene by an invocation to Tyche which is a metatheatrical indication because all the play is under Tyche’s control since the prologue, as we have seen above: οὐδείς. — ὦ Τύχη, / οἶω μ’ ἀφ’ οἴου δεσπότης παρεγγυᾶν / μέλλεις. Τί σ’ ἠδίκηκα τηλικούτ’ ἐγώ; (vv. 213–215: ‘No one. — Lady Chance, / Some owner you assign me, after him! / What awful crime against you have I done?’). These lines indicate a new change of mode to come in Daos’s part. In the fourth and fifth scenes, Daos meets the cook and the waiter and partakes in

stereotypical exchanges expected between slaves. When he is alone, Daos invokes Tyche again with a more general metatheatrical remark (*Aspis*, vv. 246–249):

[ΔΑΟΣ] καὶ γὰρ τινα  
ὄχλον ἄλλον ἀνθρώπων προσιόντα τουτονὶ  
ὄρω μεθύοντων. νοῦν ἔχετε· τὸ τῆς τύχης  
ἄδηλον· εὐφραίνεσθ' ὃν ἔξεστιν χρόνον.

[DAOS] There's another rabble  
Approaching here, I see – some men, quite drunk.  
You're sensible. What fortune brings is all  
Uncertain. Take your pleasure while you can!

Daos announces here the Chorus' arrival on stage and closes the first act with a moral maxim about chance, echoing once again the prologue. The last two lines seem to be addressed to the chorus, but it can also be interpreted as addressed to the audience. The comedian's glance or body movement should enlighten the meaning within this extract, or perhaps maintain the ambiguity. The level of metatheatricality may be increased intentionally here. In this manner, the slave makes both the chorus and audience come into the fiction. Just for a minute, Daos gathers actors, spectators and chorus showing that theatre is a specific moment in time and space where they all participate in the fiction. Furthermore, as we have seen in *Agnoia's* prologue, the imperative form of the verb *εὐφραίνεσθ'*, 'enjoy oneself', invites the audience to stay active during the performance whilst taking pleasure as spectators.

When Daos reappears in the second act, his position has once more changed. He is now the schemer-slave (Wyles, D. 1991: 95–98). In front of Chaireas and Chairestratos's despair, the slave tries not to lose heart. In this goal, Daos imagines how to defeat Smikrines's greed: *ἔξει τιν' ἀμέλει διατριβὴν οὐκ ἄρρυθμον / ἀγωνίαν τε τὸ πάθος, ἂν ἐνστῆ μόνον, / ὃ τ' ἰατρὸς ἡμῖν πιθανότητα σχῆ τινα.* (vv. 388–390: 'Our charade will give, for sure, / Some fine sport and excitement, if it once / Gets moving, and our doctor's plausible!'). He clears the action and turns tragedy to comedy. In the quotation, the noun *τὸ πάθος* refers to the previous occurrence's *πάθος* in line 329, where Daos has the idea for his plan. Nevertheless, *τὸ πάθος* is now associated with *διατριβήν*, 'pastime, amusement', instead of *τραγωδεῖν*, 'act a tragedy', in 329. This once again shows that it is not serious anymore and that tragic could become comic. All the comedy relies on this false *πάθος* and subtly the word opens and closes the trick's report, letting the audience see the boundaries of the fiction.

The third act is completely devoted to the trick itself. In front of Smikrines, every single remark by Daos is made of tragic quotations or moral maxims, according to the prepared plan which the slave had earlier devised, for example: *καὶ τοῦτό που· / «τύχη τὰ θνητῶν πράγματ', οὐκ εὐβουλία»· / ὑπέρευγε.* (vv. 410–411: ‘This too, perhaps: / “The affairs of men not providence but chance”: / Superb.’)<sup>13</sup>. It should be noted that Daos chooses a quotation about *τύχη*’s power. In this unique manner of expressing himself, he is recounting Chairestratos’s death to Smikrines. When Daos is in mourning, he uses tragic lines without any spontaneity. This new way of speaking by Daos creates misunderstanding in Smikrines. This discrepancy in turn provokes laughter in the audience. This act has common points with the first act. In both acts, the slave in mourning must announce a close relation’s death to Smikrines, first his nephew then his brother. However, in the first act, Daos *really* is in mourning. He is crying out for his master. To represent this tragic situation, Menander uses a tragic style of performance for Daos’ character as we have seen above. In the third act, Daos *feigns* that he is in mourning in order to mislead Smikrines. The dramatist imitates the tragic style in producing this kind of tragic pastiche. In the same play, Daos twice performs the same emotion in a similar context, but he performs it from a different discursive position. Does the slave’s acting change with his discourse? This is hard to answer but it is probable. What remains clear is that a contrast is created between the two acts. The trick continues with the false doctors’ meeting. The doctor’s part is based on the same discursive principle than Daos’s. Menander creates a medical pastiche with technical vocabulary and a complex diagnostic. The specific language of the doctors is a commonplace in Antiquity and it is used by the characters to support their plan (vv. 376–379)<sup>14</sup>. The doctor succeeds in misleading Smikrines.

Unluckily, the fourth act is largely fragmentary and only the framework survived from the fifth one. It seems that Kleostratos finally comes back to Athens, Smikrines loses any possibilities of receiving money and that the play ends with a double wedding: Kleostratos marries Chairestratos’s daughter and Chaireas marries Kleostratos’s sister. Another attested fact is that Daos takes part in the action until the end of the

<sup>13</sup> On the tragic style of the third act, see Katsouris 1975: 111–113. Here, it is a line from the lost tragedy *Achilles, Slayer of Thersites* by Chaeremon.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques 1998: xxxviii–xli.

play<sup>15</sup>. As a consequence, he is clearly the key character of this comedy. In this genre, slaves play an important role in the action but this place can also be taken by another character. In the *Dyskolos* for example, the young man, Sostratos, has this specific function of driving force. In the *Aspis*, Daos takes part in every important dialogue of the play and the other characters react in relation to him. The dramatic action progresses unquestionably thanks to him. Nevertheless, our reading shows that Daos's position (style, vocabulary, function) is not stable throughout the play. He plays a different role in each scene, both a tragic messenger, a respectful slave, a schemer-slave and a tragic actor. The situation forces him to adapt his position and language even if he keeps the same mask during the whole performance.

Comedy puts character types together and creates independent scenes where comic sides can emerge independently. The strength of the comedy relies on the play as a whole. These independent scenes come together harmoniously as we have seen with the mourning in first and third acts. They make the secondary framework progress to increase the dramatic tension (the trap against Smikrines), just when the main action can be realised (Kleostratos's return to Athens). The unity is made by the theme but also thanks to metatheatrical aspects of the play. These very specific moments announce the changes in the action which does not escape the audience. This process repeats the convention with the spectators but also links the scenes together to create a consistent and unique whole. The invocations of Tyche function as a leitmotiv through the play controlled by this divinity (cf. vv. 8, 213, 248, 381, 411). Beside the direct metatheatrical elements, the occurrences of Tyche's name remind every time the limits of theatre fiction to the audience. If Tyche is, in part, a playwright's representative on stage integrated to the action, Daos could be interpreted as an involuntary polymorph, somewhat functioning as an agent of the god. Daos embodies the changes of fortune and ensures that the comic action evolves over time. Together, Tyche and Daos are the most obvious metatheatrical elements for the audience in the play. They are the intermediary between spectators and actors, action and fiction. They do not hesitate in using metatheatrical elements in their parts to support their particular function in the dramatic action.

<sup>15</sup> We still have several fragments from the fourth and fifth acts but they are severely damaged. Even if we understand the end of the action, the dialogues are really uncertain.

## 6. The *Aspis* and the *Dyskolos*

The *Aspis* is not the only play based on a similar framework. In the *Dyskolos*, we can compare the relationship between Pan and Sostratos and the relationship between Tyche and Daos. In the prologue, Pan openly explains that he provokes love between Sostratos, the rich young man, and Knemon's poor daughter in order to thank her for her devotion (vv. 34–44). In line 44, ἔρωτ' ἔχειν πως ἐνθραστικῶς ποῶ. (transl.: 'I've put him under a spell, and made him fall in love'). Pan uses the verb ποῶ, 'to cause', in the first person showing his personal involvement in the play. The god stays at the centre of the action: his sanctuary is in the middle of the stage and a celebration is held in his honour during the play. Like Tyche, Pan controls the progression of the performance, both geographically and dramatically. Since the beginning of the play, Sostratos is the involuntary agent of Pan, working to achieve God's aims. This situation influences the dramatic action since it is directed by Sostratos's powerful feelings. The young man tries everything to win Knemon's daughter's heart and asks for help from his slaves, friends and family-in-law. His main difficulty is Knemon's personality: he is irritable. The attempts of Sostratos to reach the young girl are used for enlightening the concept of *Dyskolos* detailed through the play.

Like Daos, Sostratos takes part in the whole play. He is present at every key moment. He also changes his position through the play: he is sometimes combative in front of his friends (vv. 50–144), sometimes fearful in front of his future father-in-law (vv. 145–179), and sometimes bashful in front of his beloved (vv. 179–205). Sostratos, the young dandy, also takes on the role of a farmer in order to seduce his lover, which provokes laughter from the audience (vv. 522–545). Yet these changes are less extreme than in the *Aspis*. Sostratos maintains his status as a young man in love throughout the entirety of the play. However, he shows varying aspects of his unstable nature according to the situation and the interlocutor. His tenacity finally pays off when he is able to convince Knemon to marry off his daughter after his accident in the well (vv. 711–747).

The action is different in the *Aspis*, the metatheatrical elements are less present in the *Dyskolos*. However, the characters refer several times to Pan creating implicit metatheatricality within the play itself (v. 311, 401, 407, 412, 433, 572). For example, Sostratos appeals to Pan to prove his honesty to Gorgias (vv. 309–314). By doing this, he reminds

the audience that the action is progressing in the positive direction, according to Pan's will. The surprise is that the spectators do not rely on the happy ending, as outlined in the prologue, but rather how the ending is foreseen thanks to the characters through the performance. As in the *Aspis*, every scene works independently but comes together to fulfil the main purpose of the play: portraying the complex personality of Knemon. The comparison between the *Aspis* and the *Dyskolos* shows that Menander does not use metatheatrical elements in the same way and as frequently in every play. As in the other rules of composition, metatheatricality can be the object of variation.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, on a generic plan, we have seen that metatheatricality can be defined in three main categories in Menander. It can be directly addressed to the audience like the direct addresses or references to the materiality of the theatre (i.e.: *Perikeiromene*, vv. 170–171). It can also be indirect metatheatrical elements but external to the play itself like the tragic references (style, quotations, vocabulary). Menander adds references to other plays in his own work underlying the theatrical tradition and context (i.e. *Aspis*, vv. 410–411). Finally, metatheatre can be indirect but internal to the play like the references to the prologue in other acts (i.e. *Aspis*, vv. 213–215; 388–390). It is also possible to find several kinds of metatheatricality combined in the same passage as in *Aspis*, v. 246–249. Beyond the different categories, metatheatricality fits in a more general system of dramatic creation in Menander.

In considering metatheatricality as the visible marks of the tacit bilateral convention existing in ancient theatre, metatheatre becomes, in Menander, a powerful medium of creation and originality. A game is clearly established between the spectators and the actors, upon which the essence of comic effects relies. In the best way, metatheatre follows the rule of comedy: playing with the rules, as comedy shows the rules in order to reinvent them. Consequently, metatheatricality is not a local phenomenon but it participates globally, with other elements, to produce a living theatre both in text and performance: Menander's theatre is by nature metatheatrical. These moments show specific steps in the dramatic action, when elements which have been known since the beginning are unveiling at the end of the play. They draw the attention of the audience to the present performance and contribute to create a

community celebration involving all the participants. More concretely, in the text, Menander interweaves the dramatic action itself with metatheatrical elements. The playwright always weaves a metatheatrical thread throughout the play, which may be more or less important depending on the play, in the theatrical context. This complex relation is specific to Menander and makes his theatre unique.

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