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## REMARKS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF MENANDER'S COMEDIES IN THE ATHENIAN THEATER OF DIONYSUS



**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this paper is to offer some suggestions on the performance of Menander's plays in the Theater of Dionysus in Athens. The issues under discussion are as follows: use of a stage with three doors (as entrances either to three houses or to a temple and two houses); the lack of a door in the case of shrines; representation of a two-story house; on-stage dances; use of an altar; the staging of internal scenes; the possible existence of a raised stage separating the chorus from the characters; and relics of the tradition incorporating the chorus into the action. To corroborate the argumentation, reference is made to Latin comedies, Aristophanic plays and Greek tragedies, as well as to mosaics depicting scenes from Menander's plays.

### INTRODUCTION

**A**LTHOUGH A HANDFUL of early 20th century scholars examined how Menander's plays were performed in the Theatre of Dionysus, they were necessarily restricted to a small number of fragments, and to the Latin adaptations by Plautus and Terence. The recent discovery of further fragments and plays has now opened up avenues to new, more firmly grounded research: there have been separate studies on specific aspects of Menander's stagecraft, such as those on the use of the ekkyklema or masks, as well as commentaries on specific plays that deal with stage action among other things.

In this paper I intend to revisit earlier investigations of Menander's works, take a broad look at some of the results of recent research and shed new light on various aspects of stagecraft in the plays. Using the dramatic

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texts as my starting point, I shall try to visualize how some Menandrian comedies might have been staged in the Theater of Dionysus in Athens. I shall inevitably be skating on thin ice when it comes to minimally preserved plays, where a greater degree of speculation will be necessary. Without going into great depth, I will occasionally have recourse to a number of Latin works modelled on comedies composed in Menander's time. In any case, it should be noted that performance techniques are more or less standardized across New Comedy, as are the stock characters and conventional plots that transcend the limits of one playwright or one nation.

### USING A STAGE WITH THREE DOORS

In commencing this investigation we should bear in mind that Menander's comedies were staged a few years after the Theater of Dionysus was restored by 'Lycurgus'<sup>1</sup> (*Dyskolos* was produced in 316 B.C.), and that the stage action presupposes the characteristics of the theatre in the Hellenistic period. At that time, the stage of the Theater had a façade with three openings; the stage was probably raised — a point to which I shall return later — and all the action took place on the *proscenium*, which is estimated to have been roughly 2.1 m deep and 3 m wide.<sup>2</sup> There were also two side entrances, one generally leading to the city center and the port and the other to the countryside.<sup>3</sup> The orchestra was used by a chorus disconnected from the plot, which sang interludes while dancing (*ὀρχεῖται*) at the end of each Act.

In most cases the stage represents a city street in Athens, running in front of three double-doors that match the three openings, though on occasion it may represent a country road, as in *Dyskolos*, *Georgos* and *Plokion*, or a road by the seashore, as in *Kybernetai*, *Alieis*<sup>4</sup> and probably *Leuxadia*.<sup>5</sup> The doors correspond to buildings: in some cases all three are used, and

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1. See the discussion of Papastamati-von Moock (2014) especially pages 23-25, 33, 72.
  2. See, for example, Frézouls (1989) 336, n. 52. Hughes (2012) 222 is more flexible as regards width (2-3.2 m.), accepting the view of Moretti (1997).
  3. The direction of the two parodoi is not fixed for all plays but changes according to the needs of the plot; see Sommerstein (2013) 95-96, 312.
  4. See Wiles (1991) 42. *Rudens* also features a road by the seashore.
  5. In addition to the sea-related theme of both *Kybernetai* and *Leukadia*, the blue color of the sea is clearly discernible in the mosaics of scenes from them in Menander's house in Mytilene.

in others only two.<sup>6</sup> There are instances where one of the openings has no door, remaining available for the characters to enter and exit freely. The buildings represented by the doors are normally urban dwellings; in addition to Athens, they are sometimes located in other Hellenistic cities. Cottages, temples, shrines or even inns appear less frequently.<sup>7</sup> The only comprehensive study of Menander's staging to date was completed in 1914 by R. Graf, who reached some interesting conclusions on the use of the doors, though his findings were obviously limited by what was known at the time.<sup>8</sup> In this section I shall restrict my research to the most complete plays discovered since then.

One stage opening is left hollow when it represents a shrine.<sup>9</sup> This is definitely the case in *Dyskolos*, where it represents a Nymphaeum, a shrine dedicated to the Nymphs, deities related to Pan.<sup>10</sup> The Nymphaeum occupies the central, most prominent position in the façade, as dictated both by the importance of religion in Greek life at the time and by specific dramatic demands. Since the relevant opening in the stage represents the mouth of a cave, it has no door; the characters who enter and exit through it do not knock or ask anyone to open up, as they do, for instance, at Knemon's house.

Archaeological evidence has revealed that a shrine did indeed exist in antiquity, at a cave in the side of a gorge at some distance from the ancient

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6. Lowe (1987) 128, n. 11 observes that there are possibly three houses in *Kitharistes* (Austin [2012] 51 sees only two), *Perikeiromene* and first *Adelphoi*; he suggests that the third house in the Roman comedies *Pseudolus*, *Stichus*, *Hecyra* and *Phormio* may be a predominantly third-century vogue found in Apollodorus, perhaps in Philemon, but not yet in Diphilus. The stage of Plautus' *Cistellaria*, which is modelled on Menander's *Synaristosai*, has also three doors which represent three houses.
  7. An inn features in *Theophoroumene* (see Austin [2012] 36), *Encheiridion* (see Arnott [1979] 367) and perhaps also in *Perikeiromene* (see the discussion in Furley [2015] 18, 44).
  8. See Graf (1914) 18-28. A few years later, in 1929, Dalman examined the number and ownership of buildings represented in Roman comedies (p. 8-21).
  9. From what little we know of *Encheiridion*, the Corycean god probably appears (see Arnott [1979] 371), so a shrine may be employed. Plautus' *Aulularia* has a temple of Fides, which the characters either enter or exit from freely; Webster (1974) 81, 119 supposes that the model is Menander's *Ἀπιστος*, in which *Πίστις* would have made an appearance, though more recent research suggests *Τύχη* was the Prologic goddess in the Greek play; on the original of *Aulularia* see Blume (1998) 164-65 and Hunter (2008), and on the position of the temple on its stage see Philippides (2015) 142-43.
  10. Webster (1960) 507 notes that the Nymphaeum is represented by an "elaborate central door". Indeed, it is highly probable that the wall around the opening of the shrine was decorated with flowers and plants, offered by none other than the god-fearing daughter of Knemon; added to this, an altar or statue of Apollo is situated near the entrance. But there is no door, as I argue below.

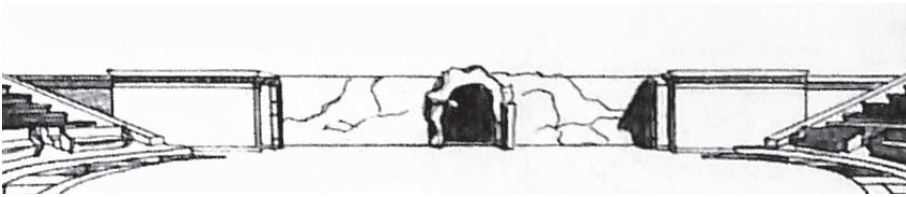


Fig. 1. A reconstruction of the *Dyskolos* stage by H. Kenner, *ÖJH* 47 (1964/65) Abb. 27 c.

village of Phyle, where *Dyskolos* takes place.<sup>11</sup> By choosing to represent the shrine on his stage, Menander necessarily places it next to houses. Thus, two cottages are represented on either side.<sup>12</sup> Jobst reproduces three drawings of the setting as envisaged by H. Kenner.<sup>13</sup> We should note the assumption that the stage and orchestra are on the same level. In the third drawing (see fig. 1), the two houses have been replaced by the two side wings, the doors of which are in the *paraskenia* rather than facing the audience. Jobst considers this arrangement as the most probable, arguing that it serves to underscore both the rocky nature of the terrain and the prestigious position of the *Nymphaeum*.<sup>14</sup>

More recent scholarship favors the idea of the two cottages being represented by two doors mapped onto the openings in the stage, exactly as in other comedies by Menander.

We must also imagine scene paintings that would have heightened the audience's sense of being in wild nature. Pan does not appear by crane, but enters on foot from the shrine, as he himself relates in his Prologue;<sup>15</sup> he then proceeds to present the characters inhabiting the two cottages.<sup>16</sup> In

11. See Handley (1965) 24-25, Ireland (1995) 111.

12. Petrides (2014) 121-30 discusses the stage for *Dyskolos* and notices two extremes: Knemon's house on the left is closer to wild country, whereas Gorgias' house on the right lies nearer to civil culture; Pan's cave, situated in the middle, can symbolically verge either to stage-left (if the god expresses illicit sexuality) or to stage-right (in this play, Pan protects marriage).

13. Jobst (1970) 168, 181.

14. Jobst (1970) 82, 153.

15. Mastronarde (1990) 274, 287-88 with n. 18 observes that the stage-level appearance of the gods in Menander suits their "nonthreatening confidential tone"; he adds that this is a change in how deities are presented in drama, the groundwork having already been laid by Euripides in his presentation of Hermes in *Ion*.

16. Wiles (1991) 54 contrasts the two owners of the houses, characterizing "the one open and philanthropic, the other closed and misanthropic". I should like to point out an interpretation of the play on the basis of the tripartite division of the façade and the prestigious position of the shrine. Pan is speaking from center stage; the one house is inhabited by

instances where there is a temple, the situation is rather different: the entrance is barred by a door that is locked and unlocked by a priest or priestess, as occurs in tragedy, e.g. in *Iphigenia Taurica*.<sup>17</sup> Such use of a door most probably occurs in Menander's partially preserved play *Leukadia*, as it employs a temple of Apollo (1, 5). The priestess appears on stage and engages in dialogue with a girl who comes from the sea when her boat runs aground. Although we do not possess the verses revealing the reason for the priestess' entrance, the plot of the Greek play can be reconstructed from a similar scene in Plautus' *Rudens*, where the priestess of the *fanum* of Venus comes out to meet two shipwrecked girls begging for shelter. It is reasonable to suppose that at least one more building is shown on stage in *Leukadia*, given that a cottage features in *Rudens*.

We can now move to a brief overview of the number, identity and dramatic function of the city dwellings represented in two other comedies. It is not possible to ascertain whether all three doors were employed in Menander's *Aspis*, since its two last Acts are lost to us, but we can be certain that the two houses owned by Chaerestratos and his brother Smikrines were part of the scenery.<sup>18</sup> It has been suggested that there may have been a shrine between the two buildings, since the goddess Chance appears to

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Knemon, the grouch, with his daughter and an elderly slave woman, and the other by Knemon's ex-wife and her son Gorgias from a previous marriage, along with a male slave (On this symmetry see Lowe [1987] 129). Consequently, what the spectators witness is a broken family symmetrically divided between two houses. What Pan promises is to marry the daughter to a rich young man, by making him fall in love with her. The spectators also hope that the girl's parents may be reunited with Pan's mediation, thus healing the wound to their family life.

What they see over the course of the plot, particularly in the closing Acts, is the accomplishment of the wedding plan and the reconciliation of Knemon's family. Pan is the hidden force behind a chain of events leading to the happy-end. They also see that all of the characters, including the wayward Knemon, make their final exit via the shrine, where two betrothals are to be celebrated: a) between Knemon's daughter and the rich youth Sostratos; and b) between Sostratos' sister and Knemon's stepson. Beyond the principal family members, everyone down to the humblest slaves and a hired cook is directed to the shrine, as if Pan is gathering all the characters under his wing. Cf. Lowe (1987) 133, who observes that "Pan has drawn each of the dozen major characters' plotlines to finish up together under his roof" and that "not only Sostratos' family but also the long-divided household of Knemon is funneled into the Nymphaeum". Menander thus depicts the god's benevolent influence on the reunion and expansion of Knemon's family, involving the incorporation of new members from a fourth location (Kallippides' country residence), which cannot be shown on stage.

17. See Hourmouziades (1965) 16 with n. 5.

18. See Groton (1982) 36.

deliver the postponed Prologue.<sup>19</sup> According to another view, two adjoining houses are all that is to be seen.<sup>20</sup> Another possibility would be to have a third house belonging to the men's deceased brother, who had two children: a son, Kleostratos, who is erroneously presumed to have fallen in battle, and a daughter, who is temporarily living with her uncle Chaerestratos. If such a house were also employed it would remain locked until Kleostratos' unexpected return.

In my view there were most probably only two houses, though not necessarily abutting each other. Such a setup is only called for when the plot features a dividing wall used for covert communication between two dwellings: in *Phasma* a mother meets her daughter in secret, as there is hole that permits the girl to live with her stepparents while also seeing her biological mother.<sup>21</sup> A similar opening in *Miles Gloriosus* facilitates frequent trysts between two lovers (138-43, 173-76). Regardless of whether Menander uses two houses in *Aspis*, he certainly draws an overt contrast between their owners. On the one hand we have Chaerestratos, an uncle generous and compassionate toward his niece, and on the other Smikrines, who is so greedy and indifferent towards the girl's welfare that he exploits her predicament.<sup>22</sup> When Kleostratos heads off to war she has no roof over her head and risks falling prey to Smikrines' undignified designs, until she is afforded protection by Chaerestratos, who offers her his house to stay in. A dramatic contrast between two households also features in *Samia*, where the two homeowners are polar opposites. The house owned by rich Demeas is contrasted to that of poor Nikeratos.<sup>23</sup> The first old man has a son, the latter a daughter. Demeas is introverted, Nikeratos extrovert, etc.

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19. See Ireland (2010) 23.

20. See Arnott (1997) 12.

21. Donatus (I. 272 Wessner) commenting on Terence's *Eun.* 9.3, notes that the houses in *Phasma* were joined: *parietem, qui medius inter domum mariti ac uicini fuerat, ita perfodit*.

22. In discussing the stage of *Aspis*, Wiles (1991) 44 states that it expresses a "moral antithesis", comparing it with that of *Perikeiromene*, in which one house belongs to a "manipulative city youth" and the other to an "impulsive soldier".

23. See Wiles (1991) 44: "Plays like *The Girl from Samos* or *The Farmer* juxtapose a rich and a poor household". Webster (1974) 82 remarks that there was no overt distinction between the stage doors of rich and poor private houses, and that their financial state was revealed via descriptions of their interior: in *Samia* the wealthy household lives in a large, two-storey building (232-36), whereas the poor family are in cramped rooms (533); in *Konciazomenai* (10) and *Perikeiromene* (288-89) the houses of the well-to-do have an exedra and women's quarters respectively; in *Heautontimoroumenos* (frs. 128-30 K-T) we have a poor and a rich house. Demeas' house in *Samia* has women's quarters (232), while his neighbor's roof is leaking (593-94).

ONE INSTANCE OF A SCENE ENACTED IN FRONT  
OF A TWO-STORY HOUSE (*PERIKEIROMENE*)

The third Act of *Perikeiromene* dramatizes a parodistic siege. The soldier Polemon is overcome with jealousy, laboring under the misapprehension that his mistress Glycera has been unfaithful to him. Accompanied by Sosias the slave, a flute girl who is to sound the attack, and possibly other slaves,<sup>24</sup> the soldier is all set to lay siege to the house of his neighbor Myrrhine, where Glycera has sought shelter. Although the beginning of this scene is now lost, we do have the end of the siege, where an old man called Pataikos intervenes and manages to persuade the crowd of drunkards to disperse and return to the soldier's house, which is represented near to that belonging to Myrrhine.

As we attempt to recreate the stage for *Perikeiromene*, the focus of our attention in this section will be on the besieged house. At the end of Act II as preserved, a female slave of Glycera's named Doris eavesdrops on Sosias, who is threatening to launch the attack on the house. She then exits, either to go and fetch Pataikos from the countryside or to inform those inside the house of the imminent assault. By the beginning of Act III Pataikos is aware of the danger. Any answers as to how he knows are hindered by the loss of the relevant verses: either he is informed by Doris or he has witnessed the gathering of the "troops". This brings us to a second, more important question. Does Pataikos survey the siege from the street? Let us postpone this problem for a while. Just as the siege comes to an end and everybody withdraws into the soldier's house, Myrrhine's young son Moschion enters. He knows that his home has been under attack and that the battle is over, but he waits for everything to calm down before emerging to brag that the enemy could not even have obliterated a nest of swallows. How is it that he knows the details of the attack and, more importantly, the right time to leave the house?<sup>25</sup>

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24. As Gomme & Sandbach (1973) 501 surmise.

25. *Mostellaria* dramatizes the parodistic siege of Theopropides' house (on the motif of the siege in this comedy see Philippides [1999]). The people under attack do not come into view from a window, but remain locked in throughout the play, and do not reappear on stage; the only one to leave is Tranio the slave, who is kicked out when he approaches to bring news of the siege via a back door in the yard, which is not represented. Thus, no character is sufficiently aware of events to exit on their own initiative at the appropriate moment, when battle ceases, as in *Perikeiromene*. However, in *Mostellaria* both Theopropides' house and the neighboring one have a *gynaecaeum*, i.e. a second story.

One possible answer to these questions is that Moschion and the other inhabitants of the house have been watching what is going on from a higher floor, either from a window or a balcony. Moschion cannot have watched the siege from the side of the stage; upon his entrance after the assault at the end of Act III, he clearly states that he was inside the house, and goes on to narrate how he found a room inside, away from anyone else, and laid there all on edge (ἀλλ' εἰς οἶκον ἐλθὼν ἐκποδῶν / ἐνταῦθα κ[α]τεκ[ε]ῖμην σ[υ]ν-*νεστηκῶς πάνυ*, 540-41).<sup>26</sup> An upper-story window is possibly attested in Aristophanes, regardless of whether we are to imagine a permanent fixture in the Theater of Dionysus or an *ad hoc* temporary structure added to meet the needs of specific performances.<sup>27</sup> In *Vespae*, for instance, Bdelycleon and his slaves guard Philocleon, who is imprisoned in his house; the old man looks down from a window on the chorus of the judges in the orchestra, who call out to him;<sup>28</sup> in *Ecclesiazusae*, a young girl at a window engages in conversation with an old woman and the youth she loves, and subsequently witnesses the old hag attempting to claim the boy's favors by force, until she climbs down to try and rescue her lover.<sup>29</sup>

Here a phrase by Pollux (iv. 129) is apposite: in comedy ἀπὸ τῆς διστε-*γίας πορνοβοσκοί τι κατοπεύουσιν ἢ γράδια ἢ γύναια καταβλέπει*, probably

26. See Arnott (1996) 433: "Moschion now enters from Myrrhine's house"; cf. Furley (2015) 143: he "appears from next door".

27. Mastronarde (1990) 14 observes that the sparsity of references to windows in 5th century tragedy and comedy indicates that there was no permanent second floor on stage, but that "a temporary panel representing a wall pierced by a window" was employed where necessary.

28. Philocleon appears διὰ τῆς ὀπῆς (317b). According to MacDowell (1971) 18, this is "one window at a higher level", cf. his page 125. Mastronarde (1990) 258 agrees that the window is at a high level, but that this applies to the "main story", arguing that Philocleon moves quickly from this window to the door in line 173. Of course, one might counter that Philocleon's rapidity is key to the slapstick nature of the entire scene, rendering it even more ridiculous given the character's advanced age. Dearden (1976) 31 argues that the window in *Nubes*, *Ecclesiazusae* and *Vespae* is "a solidly made window between five and six feet above the level of the stage". However, even if the stage has no second floor and the window is simply located higher up, the actors obviously need some sort of ladder behind the stage façade to reach it, so a higher story might not be entirely out of the question.

29. E.g. Ussher (1986) 196, commenting on *παρακύψασα* (884), notes that the girl is looking "perhaps ἐξ ὑπερώου"; on the basis of the phrase "καταδραμοῦσα τὴν θύραν / ἀνοιξον (962-63) he also draws the conclusion that "the girl is upstairs, at her window" (1986) 210. Cf. Sommerstein (1998) 169. Dover (1966) 15 argues that the girl and the old woman with whom she converses are at two separate windows (cf. Dearden [1976] 31). Mastronarde (1990) 257 n. 28 holds that the participle *καταδραμοῦσα* only suggests to the audience that the girl is on a second floor, while in reality "the scene façade has its usual single-story appearance".

with reference to New Comedy and Roman Comedy. Besides, the fact that the characters mentioned are stock figures from post-classical comedy means that the phrase ἀπὸ τῆς διστεγίας is better suited to *Perikeiromene*, a play of this genre. Windows on the upper floor rather than at ground level were a characteristic feature of Greek urban homes; compliance with such a feature by the New Comedy stage is particularly apt, and only to be expected in a genre depicting the everyday life and experiences of average Athenians. It should be added that Mastronarde joins others in agreeing that upper stories were employed in post-classical comedies, and proceeds to explain that whereas use of a crane would have been dangerous in 5th century theater if there were upper levels, by Hellenistic times the *mechane* would have been of a different shape.<sup>30</sup>

One difference between the fragmentary scene in *Perikeiromene* and the aforementioned comedies from the previous century lies in the fact that in the latter texts, the characters on upper floor balconies or at windows engage in conversation with characters on the street. Menander's divergence from this convention is probably due to his observing the rule that there could be no more than three speaking characters on stage at any one time. This means that by making Polemon, Sosias and Pataikos speak, he is forced to present the besieged characters as mute. As soon as the three interlocutors withdraw, young Moschion enters from Myrrhine's house to deliver his speech. He is spineless, and only Pataikos can confront the enemy and win them over. In *Vespae* too, the chorus lays siege to Philocleon's house, and a battle ensues; but in this case the old man wants to be set free, whereas Glycera does not want to leave the home she has voluntarily entered.

Another parallel text featuring the enactment of a parodistic siege is Terence's *Eunuchus* (lines 771-817), in which the soldier Thraso, his parasite and slaves attack the house of a *meretrix* named Thais so as to snatch Pamphila, a young slave girl. In all probability this play also makes use of a window, from which the besieged Thais and Chremes can watch events and communicate with their attackers. A brief digression in support of this claim is now necessary:<sup>31</sup> regardless of Donatus' view that Thais is outside during the assault (*cum foris sit meretrix*),<sup>32</sup> the idea that the two characters watch

30. See Mastronarde (1990) 48.

31. Most translations of *Eunuchus* note that a window is used; see e.g. the incorporated stage guidelines by Sakellariou (2007) 121, 125.

32. Donatus (I 434 Wessner) commenting on Terence's *Eun.* IV 7.3. His view is accepted by Barsby (1999) 228, 230. Tromaras (1991) 206 assumes that both Thais and Chremes withdraw to the *porticum* of her house, from which they watch what is going on.

from above is corroborated by textual evidence. A few lines before the troops arrive, the young man tells Thais to go inside and bar the door (*tu abi atque obsera ostium intus*, 763); she then stops him from going to the *forum*. Although there is no specific reference to their entering Thais' house, the stage direction for the door to be bolted from the inside would be void if both characters remained on the street. What is more, during the siege Chremes applauds his earlier decision to have the door locked (*nimirum consilium illud rectumst de occludendis aedibus*, 784). There is no textual evidence to suggest that Thais calls a slave to come out while she and Chremes are supposedly outside, and orders him to lock up from the inside; such a situation does arise e.g. in Plautus' *Mostellaria*, where Tranio, defender of the besieged house, commands the slave Sphaerio to lock the door from the inside (*abi [hinc] intro atque occlude ostium*, 425). Additionally, in *Eunuchus* the parasite expresses the humorous wish that his patron had a sling to fire at the enemy from an ambushade (786-87). If the soldier were near Thais and Chremes he would probably not be obliged to use it, and what is implied here is a shot aimed high, at their secure place; we add: like the birds in the sky. Terence is not restricted by the rule of three speaking actors, and in this particular scene five characters converse with each other. In contrast to Moschion, young Chremes is dynamic and the braggart soldier Thraso is weak-willed, so the siege ends without conquest.

In the case of *Perikeiromene* we can likewise safely assume that some precaution is exercised by bolting the door, since Doris has informed the inhabitants of the house that an assault may be imminent. Thus, they most probably survey the troops from a safe position at a higher level. To return to the previous question regarding Pataikos' knowledge of the siege, before exiting to plead for an end to hostilities he may well be among those sequestered in the house, though this hypothesis cannot be advanced with certainty.<sup>33</sup>

Reference to a second story is also encountered in other Menandrian comedies. In *Samia*, the house of the rich Demeas has an *ὀπερῶον* (232).<sup>34</sup> Myrrhine is wealthy too, as the personified Ignorance states in the

33. Furley (2015) 134 claims that Pataikos delivers line 469, possibly his first in Act III, while coming from Myrrhine's house. Yet the discussion between Pataikos and Glykera in the next Act suggests that the old man first meets the girl then, at least with respect to the events of the siege. It follows that Pataikos may not have been in the house when the army assembled. On the other hand, it might be a technique Menander employs so as to show his audience a conversation that could already have taken place in the interior of the house.

34. In considering the case of *Samia*, Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 173 broadens his argument to observe that some New Comedy plays presuppose an upper story.

Prologue, since her family can provide for the adopted Moschion and offer him luxuries —a feature that argues in favor of the existence of an opulent dwelling with an upper floor. Likewise, Terence's Thais is a well off meretrix who possesses many slaves and most probably owns a house with a second floor.

A further indication that a tall building is under siege in *Perikeiromene* can be seen in the way Sosias teases the flute girl. He says that she has skills useful for an assault: ἀναβαίνειν, περικαθῆσθαι (484). These two infinitives are a double entendre, pointing to the sexual abilities of a *hetaera*, but more importantly here, the first infinitive denotes climbing up a high wall.<sup>35</sup>

If we turn to the pictorial tradition of comic scenes prior to Menander's plays, we come upon pottery decorations depicting lovers ascending a ladder to approach ladies at a window, i.e. on an upper story. These are seen on two bell-kraters painted by Asteas (around 350-340 BC), which may have been inspired by local Italiotic drama, the playwrights of which were influenced by Attic theater. Zeus is the lover in one of the scenes, whereas an ordinary mortal features in the other.<sup>36</sup>

On *Perikeiromene* we should close by noting Graf's arguments. He regarded the siege as proof that the stage in the Theatre of Dionysus cannot have been raised, and thus that the orchestra and the stage were on the same level. His thinking is essentially based on the notion that the mob of besiegers would have been too large and too drunk to climb steps; however, Hughes points out that the stage of Menander was vast.<sup>37</sup> Besides, the siege does not occupy the orchestra in Terence either, being performed on the makeshift wooden stage of his era. In any case the orchestra was not employed as acting space in Roman theater but was filled with seats.<sup>38</sup>

35. Capps (1891) argues that the terms ἀναβαίνειν and καταβαίνειν found in dramatic texts from the 5th century merely signify actors' entrances and exits, and do not constitute evidence for a raised stage; cf. Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 69. According to MacDowell (1971) 308, Philocleon's exhortation to Dardanis in *Vespaie* (ἀνάβαγε, 1341) shows that the girl takes at least one step up, grabbing the phallus instead of a rope. In *Perikeiromene*, a century later, the specific verb retains the initial meaning of its adverbial prefix ἄνω, when integrated in a siege scene involving a higher story.

36. See the discussion in Konstantakos (2002) 159-60; cf. Konstantakos (2014) 174.

37. Hughes (2012) 222. Graf (1914) 15-17 thought that the actors would be squeezed onto a narrow space, rendering them unable to perform freely and making the audience nervous. Also, spectators sitting in the front rows would find it difficult to watch the spectacle.

38. See Dupont (1985) 57 f.

DANCE BY AN ACTOR ON STAGE OR ON THE ORCHESTRA  
(*THEOPHOROU MENE*)

As regards dance, one case study comes in the form of the poorly-preserved Menandrian comedy *Theophoroumene*, which most probably presents an actor dancing in the very first Act.<sup>39</sup> Whether genuinely overcome by demoniac mania or — most likely — feigning possession,<sup>40</sup> the titular heroine dances in front of Kleinias and Lysias. Lesky assumed that the young woman is on the orchestra, leaving enough room for her wild gyrations; while performing she is stared at by the two men located near the pillars of the side wings;<sup>41</sup> this scene is then compared with Euripides' *Suppliants*, leading Lesky to conclude that Menander's stage was no higher than the orchestra.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Gomme and Sandbach believe that there is no evidence the girl is dancing, or indeed moving too wildly to be confined to the stage.<sup>43</sup>

According to the text, the girl, as Lysias predicts, *εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν ἐνθάδ' ἐκπηδῆ[σεται]* (26). This means she is in one of the buildings represented on stage, probably the inn, and is going to emerge at the point where the two young men are standing conversing with each other. The adverbial phrase *εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν*, variations of which also occur elsewhere in Menander, signifies that the girl will appear in front of the audience.<sup>44</sup> The two young men must thus make room for her to enter. Lysias exhorts Kleinias to stand by the door of the inn (*παράστα δ' ἐνθαδὶ πρὸς τὰς θύρας τοῦ πανδοκείου*, 28-29<sup>45</sup>), i.e. not by the side wings, but near one of the openings in the stage façade.<sup>46</sup> The men obviously have to move aside to make room for the girl to dance, and for them to check whether she is faking possession. The girl's dance or her beauty are later described as a "fine spectacle" (*καλὴ θέα*, 30).<sup>47</sup> The argument that a dance is being referred to is corroborated by a

39. On fragments belonging to this Act see Arnott (1996) 61 and Austin (2012) 36.

40. See Ioannidou (2017) 150-52.

41. Cf. Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 165-66.

42. Lesky (1937) 125-27.

43. See Gomme & Sandbach (1973) 404. Cf. Webster (1970) 22.

44. *Dysk.* 522, *Sam.* 214. According to Ioannidou (2017) 166-67, 207, this adverb and further textual evidence go to show that the girl dances on stage.

45. Gomme & Sandbach (1973) 404 translate the verse as "stand by me here, coming to the inn-door". Cf. Arnott (1996) 65.

46. The Cook in *Samia* also stands by the door, in order to be able to spy on Demeas and Chrysis unobserved.

47. For various suggestions on the meaning of this phrase see Ioannidou (2017) 210-11.

textual reference to *κορύβαντες* (27), as well as by two other related comic scenes I shall analyze later.

At the time Lesky penned his article on *Theophoroumene*, *Dyskolos* had yet to come to light. In the latter play, Sikon the cook and Getas the slave prompt Knemon to dance on stage.<sup>48</sup> In both of the above comedies the dance is accompanied by flute music, as indicated by the verb *ἀνλεῖν* (*Theoph.* 28: *ἀνλεῖ*; *Dysk.* 880: *προσανλεῖς*<sup>49</sup>). So there is no doubt that Menandrian characters can dance on stage. Furthermore, Getas' staging directions offer an outline description of Knemon's movements, which fall in with the steps made by the others. Although the dance may not be as wild as that performed by the girl in *Theophoroumene*, the fact that three people are taking part would certainly require a relatively large space.

An explicitly frenzied dance is described in another play, Aristophanes' *Vespae*, where old Philocleon dances feverishly while possessed by the god Dionysus. The spectacle here is of course ridiculous rather than pleasant, and is exploited to generate laughter. Philocleon dances wildly out of his house and onto the stage, giving a detailed account of his moves (1487-95) while gazed upon by the slave Xanthias, who comments on his rage. Without ceasing to move, Philocleon mockingly describes (1497-514) a dance by the three sons of Karkinos, who have appeared on the orchestra to compete against him, and then approaches them (*καταβατέον μοι*, 1514)<sup>50</sup> before exiting together with the chorus.<sup>51</sup> This demoniac performance would certainly have called for a fair amount of space. Here we should note that the dance in *Theophoroumene* occurs right in the first Act, and no verse has been preserved to imply that the girl meets up with the chorus.

48. Hughes (2012) 222 provides a convincing rejection of Brown's opinion (2001) xviii that the actors in the action-packed drama *Dyskolos* would have been too cramped on a narrow stage, and thus that the narrow stage was constructed after Menander's time. See also my page 311 with note 37.

49. In fact, the papyrus of *Dyskolos* contains also the verb *ἀνλεῖ* after line 879, as a stage guideline entered by the scribe to show there was a musical accompaniment in the following scene.

50. See MacDowell (1971) 329, and the comment on *συγχωρήσωμεν* on 330.

51. Before the exodos, the chorus describes the dancing contest between Philocleon and the sons of Karkinos on the orchestra.

## USE OF A STAGE ALTAR

Since fourth century comedy focuses on urban life, it naturally makes frequent use of the altar dedicated to Apollo Agyieus which guarded neighborhoods. This appears on stage early on, in Aristophanes' *Vespae* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. Even in Roman adaptations it is borrowed unaltered from the Greek models, despite the fact that public religious practices in Rome differed from those of the Greeks.<sup>52</sup> In *Samia*, where Prologic gods do not appear, the altar takes the place of a temple. Should we imagine it closer to Demeas' home rather than center stage, since he among all characters greets its god and prays to him? It seems more likely to me that the altar occupies the space in front of the unused central opening in the stage façade, its function being to highlight comic irony. Apollo, the god of reason, is invoked by a character who is in a state of insanity (σκέψασθε πότε-ρο[ν εἶ φρονῶ / ἢ μάλινον', 216-17, μαινόμενος, 361, ὥσπερ ἐμμανής, 415, Δημέας χολᾷ, 416), due to his ignorance and misinterpretation of the facts. The altar also stresses the madness which dominates Act IV and is grafted onto Nikeratos, until he comes to his senses thanks to the mediation of Demeas, who has regained his sanity in the meantime.

The altar to Apollo may actually have been a permanent structure in the Theater of Dionysus rather than a prop, bearing in mind that it is also used in *Misoumenos* (715), in the initial scene of *Perinthia* and in *Dyskolos* (659);<sup>53</sup> in the latter, the shrine is devoted to another god, Pan. A similar instance of an altar belonging to a different deity than the temple on stage is found in *Aulularia*, featuring a shrine devoted to the Roman goddess Fides and an altar of Apollo, and in *Curculio*, where there is an Asklepieion and an altar of Venus. Furthermore, an altar from which Polemon grasps a garland is employed at the end of *Perikeiromene* (999).<sup>54</sup> A similar fixture also

52. On the shape of the altar, the problem of identifying it with the pillar of Apollo Agyieus and its position on the stage of 5th century drama, see the detailed analysis by Poe (1989) 130-37. On the frequent use of this and other altars in Plautus' comedies see Philippides (2015). An altar is also employed in Terence's *Andria*.

53. On *Dyskolos*, see, for instance, Handley (1965) 246, Webster (1974) 81 and Ireland (1995) 156.

54. See Webster (1962) 252 & (1974) 81. Arnott (1996) 460-61 accepts Robert's conjecture (τινα) and prints the relevant phrase as: στέφανον ἀπὸ βω[μοῦ τινα / ἀφελὸν ἐπιθέσθαι βούλομα[ι], translating "from the altar". On the other hand, Furley (2015) 64 prints: ἀπὸ βω[μοῦ ποθεν, translating "from an altar", following Gomme & Sandbach (1973) 529. To my mind, the word βωμός, for which the ending seems a safe conjecture, cannot refer to

appears in an untitled comedy possibly by Menander,<sup>55</sup> though we cannot establish whether it is dedicated to Apollo. *Leukadia* has a temple as well as an altar, on which a fire is to be lit (fr. 6 [257 KT]). The prayer and libation that appear in a fragment from *Kolax* handed down to us by Athenaeus 14.659 d would clearly have necessitated an altar. A further comedy entitled *Hiereia* (test.i & fr.188 K-A) suggests the employment of both a temple and an altar.<sup>56</sup> Finally, *Theophoroumene* might employ an altar of Cybele or Apollo Agyeius.<sup>57</sup>

#### INTERNAL SCENES (I): *PROTHYRON* OR *EKKYKLEMA* (*SYNARISTOSAI*)

We now come to a scene from comedy famous for its representation in mosaic art. Considerable debate has arisen over the actual performance conditions, largely because neither the particular scene nor the play containing it has been preserved. The comedy in question is *Synaristosai*, and the scene involves three women taking their lunch. This activity lends the play its title, spawning a rich pictorial tradition: the most artistic of all the mosaics on the theme was by Dioskourides of Samos (see fig. 2), excavated in Cicero's house in Pompeii (2nd c. BC); an inferior version (see fig. 3) has been unearthed in what is known as Menander's house in Mytilene (3 to 4th c. AD);<sup>58</sup> and last comes a rendition in Zeugma (see fig. 4), near the

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any altar other than that frequently used on stage by Menander. Thus, the first interpretation seems more plausible.

55. A fragment from Pap. Antinoopolis 55 K-A (1096). On the altar, which has previously been used for a sacrifice, a slave and his master find a wooden plate bearing a written message; see Webster (1974) 81. On the identity of the two characters, see the discussion by Arnott (1999) 49-51 (see also Borgogno [1986] 33) and Arnott (2000) 537-39 who classifies the relevant excerpt as the *fabula incerta* 7.
56. Webster (1962) 251 argues that *Hiereia* is played before the temple of Kybele since the heroine is her priestess, and *Kolax* possibly employs the temple of Aphrodite Pandemos because a cook is serving the Tetrastai in the feast in honor of the goddess; yet, as Pernsterfer (2009) 105-06 has convincingly shown, the stage of *Kolax* features three houses. Thus, like Plautus' *Poenulus*, this Menandrian play presupposes a temple of Aphrodite located off-stage.
57. See Ioannidou (2017) 165.
58. For the two aforementioned mosaics see, for example, Blume (1998) 30, Arnott (2000) 326-27. See also Nervegna (2013) passim, who discusses all the *Synaristosai* mosaics within the broader context of the Menandrian iconographic tradition.



Fig. 2. *Synaristosai* mosaic signed by Dioskurides of Samos. Pompei.  
After S. Charitonidis, L. Kahil and R. Ginouvès. AntK-BH VI. Bern 1970. Plate 5, 2.

Turkish border with Syria (2nd c. AD).<sup>59</sup> The women in the scene are three *hetaerae*, seated on multicolored cushions before a small three-legged table, being waited on either by a young servant — a mute-extra —<sup>60</sup> or by two servants in the third mosaic.

59. According to Slater (2014) 372, the Zeugma mosaic reproduces performance conditions for Menander's plays in Roman times. Nervegna (2013) 139-40 dates it to the first half of the third century A.D. There is also another mosaic of this comedy from Daphne dated to the second or third century A.D.; see Nervegna (2013) 144.

60. It is not possible to discern whether it is a boy or a girl. Auhagen (2004) 197 concludes that it is a girl from fr. 335 K-A, which attributes the feminine article (*ἡ βάρβαρος*) to the slave whose duty it is to set the table.



Fig. 3. *Synaristosai* mosaic from the House of Menander in Mytilene.  
After S. Charitonidis, L. Kahil and R. Ginouvès, *Les mosaïques de la maison  
du Ménandre à Mytilène*. Bern 1970. Plate 5,1.

As one fragment of the play (335 K-A) shows, the meal includes wine and takes place indoors. However, indoor scenes are as rare in New Comedy as they are elsewhere in ancient drama. If Menander did dramatize it, he had the following ways of doing so: (a) with an *ekkyklema*,<sup>61</sup> (b) at the *prothyron* outside one of the doors in the stage façade,<sup>62</sup> (c) behind the wide open doors

61. As claimed by Webster (1974) 82-83. See also Wiles (1991) 48-49, who adds that Menander offers a variation on the use of this device, which is connected with dreadful scenes at the end of tragedies, by employing it at the beginning of a comedy to facilitate the performance of a tranquil, domestic scene. Cf. Green & Handley (1995) 79. See also Jacques (2000) 95. See also Nerveña (2013) 164 with note 93 who holds that *Synaristosai* like *Philadelphoi* has an indoor setting with its characters rolled out onto the *ekkyklema*.

62. For the *prothyron* in Greek comedy and the corresponding *vestibulum* in Roman *palliata* see Dalman (1929) 23-36. He concludes that the two interior scenes in *Mostellaria* (for which see below) are possibly enacted in the *vestibulum* (cf. Beacham [1991] 60-61, 78, 81), but adds that there is no certainty as to which symposia in Roman comedies take place under its roof and which simply *ante aedes*. Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 75-174 argues against the use of the *prothyron* in classical period plays, interpreting the word to mean the space in front of the door, and assuming that the Southern Italian vases that depict a kind of a small temple (*aedicula*) reflect the vase-painting tradition of a different country and era; Webster (1948) on the other hand, counter-argues that the scenes represented on the vases are modelled on Athenian performances, and constitute a valuable material source of information on Middle Comedy. While he recognizes there is no conclusive evidence for the use of the *prothyron* in Euripides, Hourmouziades (1965) 27-29 observes that such a construction would make some scenes more attractive and effective. Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 174 believes a portico could have been used in New Comedy plays.



Fig. 4. *Synaristosai* mosaic from Zeugma. Courtesy of the Centre Henri Stern de Recherche sur la mosaïque. Photo by Anne-Marie Manière-Lévêque.

of the house, from where the women would appear as a *tableau vivant*,<sup>63</sup> or (d) simply on the street.<sup>64</sup> In what follows I shall discuss these options.

We should state from the outset that our knowledge of *Synaristosai* and its contents is augmented by Plautus' *Cistellaria*, the Roman comedy which used it as a model. It is notable that Plautus describes the banquet scene in narrative, in the past tense: the women who have shared their meal chatter about it on leaving the house, after its completion. Menander probably represents the lunch as it takes place, given that it was important enough to lend the play its title and inspire mosaicists.<sup>65</sup>

63. See, for instance, Gomme & Sandbach (1973) 12-13, n. 2 (the other alternative they offer is that the scene is narrated); Newiger (1996) 488. Webster (1970) 24 holds that "the scene plays before or in one of the two side houses". See also Bieber (1961) 124.

64. See Webster (1962) 246-47, and generally his pages 267-68; cf. Konstantakos (2005) 200-07, who also believes that symposia in ancient drama including this scene most probably took place on the street.

65. By contrast, Plautus changed the title of his own version, in which the lunch is less significant, to *Cistellaria* ("Little casket"). There are further instances of this in Plautus' oeuvre, e.g. when he disregards the name *Δις ἐξαπατῶν* given to Menander's model ("The Double Deceiver" in Latin) and invents a new title highlighting the importance of the two *meretrices* (*Bacchides*), to reflect the shift in focus.

On the other hand, if we bear the transmitted text in mind (fr. 335 K-A), we see that a clearly older ex-hetaera asks for more wine in the present tense,<sup>66</sup> but soon complains that the slave girl has shifted the table and the wine away from them, using imperfect and past tenses:

ἄν ἔτι πιεῖν μοι δῶ τις· ἀλλ' ἡ βάροβαρος  
ἄμα τῇ τραπέζῃ καὶ τὸν οἶνον ὄχετο  
ἄρας' ἄφ' ἡμῶν.

The lunch is thus definitely over. It could be that the old woman is recounting the scene, with the first verse as direct speech embedded in her report. Consequently, the specific fragment cannot be taken as proof that the banquet scene was acted out on stage. Indeed, it has been argued that the mosaic depicts a scene narrated rather than performed,<sup>67</sup> though more recent research has refuted such a view.<sup>68</sup>

In Webster's opinion, the mosaic by Dioskourides depicts the scene just before the slave girl shifts the table;<sup>69</sup> the same seems true of the Mytilene version.<sup>70</sup> If we accept this interpretation, then the indoor banqueting scene lasts up until that point. The women's conversation possibly includes a reference to the chewing of myrtle berries to freshen breath, as can be deduced from an excerpt in Pliny commenting on *Synaristosai* (*Nat. Hist.* 23, 159, fr. 336 K-A).<sup>71</sup> The banquet scene was probably lengthy, and could have extended to detailed discussion of relationships, as is the case in the introductory scene of *Cistellaria*. One argument favoring the performance of the indoor scene in *Synaristosai* is that the Mytilene mosaics also represent spectacular scenes from Menander's comedies, such as the eviction of Chrysis in *Samia* or the arbitration scene in *Epitrepontes*.<sup>72</sup>

Let us now examine the possibility that the banquet scene was performed in the *prothyron*. In the past, Greek Old Comedy and Roman palliata have been taken as evidence for the enactment of internal scenes in this area. In an article published in 1915, Rees collated the interior scenes in

66. On reworking the relevant verse, Plautus employs imperfect: *raro nimium dabat quod biberem, id merum infusabat* (18).

67. Gomme & Sandbach; see my note 63.

68. See, e.g. Newiger (1996) 487, Konstantakos (2005) 194-98.

69. See Webster (1970) 23.

70. See, for instance, Auhagen (2004) 198.

71. See Auhagen (2004) 200.

72. On the mosaic representation of *Phasma*, see the relevant section below.

Latin adaptations and observed that they are acted out *ante ianuam* or *ante ostium* or *ante aedes*, in contrast to the exterior scenes performed *in via*.<sup>73</sup> A symposium similar to the banquet scene in *Synaristosai* might unfold in the *vestibulum* or *ambulacrum* at one of the two houses in Plautus' *Mostellaria*, where it is preceded by another internal scene featuring the *meretrix*, enacted in the same place. We should not forget that Roman comedy frequently made use of a Greek backdrop, and that Greekness is central to the identity of the two houses in *Mostellaria* in particular. As for Rees' discussion of hitherto unknown and poorly transmitted fragments from Menander (*Samia* and *Perikeiromene*),<sup>74</sup> subsequent discovery of more complete scenes or new fragments from the same plays has shown that arguments for use of the *prothyron* are inadequate, leading more recent scholars to reject them.

Further evidence in favor of the *prothyron* might be based on Aristophanes' *Vespae*, which dramatizes a private trial and employs the term in question in the text. Philocleon prays to Apollo Agyieus to protect the new rite of the imminent trial, calling him: τοῦ μοῦ προθύρου προπύλαιε (875).<sup>75</sup> The corresponding Latin terms appear in *Mostellaria* (*porticus*, 756, *vestibulum*, 817), which includes the abovementioned internal scenes. As an architectural feature of Greek houses it is only natural for the *prothyron* to have been employed in New Comedy, which represents the civic milieu of its era.<sup>76</sup> That being said, there are no specific textual references in Aristophanes or Plautus to indicate that it was the setting for indoor scenes. Now, Pickard-Cambridge discussing the plays of the classical period expresses his doubt that the Greek term necessarily implies either a columned porch or a portico;<sup>77</sup> he accepts, however, the ad hoc construction of a portico in *Mostellaria* or *Stichus*, believing it to be pure chance that there is no analogous indication for the use of such an architectural element in the extant plays of New Comedy.<sup>78</sup>

In his book on Aristophanes, Dearden claims that the *prothyron*, taken to be the area between the columns in front of a house, would be too narrow for the performance of an indoor scene. As for the curtain hung from the columns, which Rees suggests could be drawn aside to reveal a tableau,

73. Rees (1915) 118-23.

74. Rees (1915) 123-24.

75. Papathanasopoulou (2013) 19, 204-13 holds that the *prothyron* is used in *Vespae* as well as in *Acharnenses*; in the latter it is necessary for the market scene.

76. See Rees (1915) 126.

77. See Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 75-78 and my note 62.

78. See Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 174.

Dearden points out that it would render the door useless until the indoor scene was revealed.<sup>79</sup> He thus proposes a device for the performance of such scenes in Aristophanes: the *ekkyklema*, a low wheeled platform which he estimates to have measured up to 2.55 by 1.30 metres. Here we should note that stages were large in Menander's times, and that a *prothyron* might possibly have been of similar dimensions.

Aristophanes uses the *ekkyklema* elsewhere, in the scene featuring Agathon in *Thesmophoriazusae*, and at the point where Euripides appears in the *Acharnenses*.<sup>80</sup> Yet in *Synaristosai*, apart from the three *hetaerae* and the mute-extra at the banquet there are no other characters already on stage, as occurs in other cases where the mechanism is employed. And even in plays where the *ekkyklema* emerges onto an empty stage, e.g. when Clytemnestra appears with the lifeless bodies of her husband and Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, or where Orestes enters in the same way with the corpses of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus in *Choephoroi*,<sup>81</sup> at the very least the chorus is on the orchestra, and engages in conversation with the murderers.

Menander's adherence to the rule of three speaking characters on stage could be cited as further evidence against the use of the *ekkyklema* in *Synaristosai*, as there are three women taking their lunch, leaving nobody else already on stage to speak. This is also the case in *Cistellaria* for that matter, though Plautus does not generally observe the rule. As Taplin remarks for tragedy, a number of introductory lines announce the *ekkyklema* and prepare the audience prior to its entrance.<sup>82</sup> If the banquet scene in *Synaristosai* was acted out rather than simply narrated, no lines pointing to it are given to any other character. The only way for the mechanism to be heralded would be by a Prologue speaker, who would depart immediately afterwards. Yet the lunch sequence seems to be the play's introductory scene.<sup>83</sup> *Cistellaria* begins in like fashion with the three *meretrices*, with the god Auxilium appearing to deliver a postponed Prologue once they have exited.<sup>84</sup>

79. Dearden (1976) 50 ff.

80. Lucarini (2016) *passim* argues that Aristophanes uses the *ekkyklema* only in these paratragic scenes. Casanova (2017) 23 on the other hand believes that the *ekkyklema* is also used in *Nubes*.

81. For the use of the *ekkyklema* to bear in the corpses in both tragedies, see e.g. Garvie (1986) Iii-Iliii.

82. See Taplin (1977) 443. See also Eis (2014) 197.

83. See for instance Csapo (1999) 164 with n. 38, 165.

84. Postponed prologues are also used by Menander, e.g. in *Aspis*.

In addition to its role in revealing or withdrawing corpses, Greek playwrights use the ekkyklema to facilitate the entrance of actors who do not walk on stage engaged in friendly conversation or an altercation (as per ancient dramatic convention), but who are lying in bed, sleeping or simply sitting somewhere.<sup>85</sup> For instance, Agathon in *Thesmophoriazusae* and Euripides in *Acharnenses* are both lying on a bed; Ajax sits among the corpses of the sheep he has slaughtered; Orestes in the *Eumenides* is sleeping, exhausted after being pursued by the Erinyes, who surround him; a stupefied Hercules lies tied to a broken pillar, among the dead bodies of his wife and children. Menander's *hetaerae* are seated, engaging in conversation and action like the abovementioned Agathon or Euripides.

The ekkyklema might be responsible for the fact that four characters are clustered outside a house; a comparable level of proximity between them is shown in the first two mosaics. In *Mostellaria*, however, the aforementioned symposium and toilet scene might play out either in the *vestibulum* or on the street close to the first house. In fact, the second house only features in the second half of the work.<sup>86</sup> Yet Roman theater may not have used the ekkyklema, and if such a device were demanded by the Greek model, Plautus would have made the necessary adaptations.

To summarize, there are arguments and counterarguments for every theory on the performance of the indoor scene in *Synaristosai*. To my mind, it seems most likely either that the *prothyron* was used or that the banquet was staged on the street, though close enough to the door of the hosts' house to create the illusion that it was taking place inside. The matter will only ever be cleared up definitively if more lines relating to the performance conditions come to light.

#### INTERNAL SCENES (II): EKKYKLEMA (*DYSKOLOS*, *PHASMA*)

In *Dyskolos*, Knemon is unable to stand upright after falling into the well, and so is most probably carried out on an ekkyklema; the technical term for use of the device, according to an uncontested restoration, is found in

85. Cf. Hourmouziades (1965) 108, who aptly remarks that the ekkyklema serves for "the introduction from the interior of figures in still attitudes".

86. On the division of this comedy with regard to its plot and its performance see Philippides (1999).

the order the old man gives to his daughter and stepson to wheel him in (εἰσ[υ]κλεῖτ' εἴσω με, 758).<sup>87</sup> As Ireland argues, together with Knemon's related commands to his daughter to help him stand up (ἀναστῆσαι, 701) or lie down (κατάκλινόν με, 740), the presence of the term disproves an earlier view that Knemon was walking, but simply leaning on his children.<sup>88</sup> Some scholars are uncomfortable with the mechanism entering from a door other than the central one, as is generally the case in fifth century drama. This limitation has led them to question the use of the ekkyklema in *Dyskolos*, but to suggest the use of a wheeled couch in its place.<sup>89</sup> Sandbach objects that such furniture was not to be found in the houses of poor men like Knemon,<sup>90</sup> though Ireland counters that Menander's comedy does not presuppose absolute verisimilitude.<sup>91</sup>

But why should a theatre tool attested elsewhere be rejected, and another one invented to help the wounded Knemon enter? We should bear in mind that when the ekkyklema is used in *Oresteia*, *Hippolytus* and *Thesmophoriazusae* it may indeed appear from the central door, but in those cases only one building is represented (the palace of Agamemnon, the palace of Theseus and Agathon's house respectively). In New Comedy, however, where two or three separate buildings are represented on stage, there is no reason to suppose that the convention of the central door applies. And whereas the central opening is dominated by Pan's shrine, Knemon's house is also vital to the plot, given that he is the protagonist. In addition, as Pollux (iv. 128) notes, the ekkyklema is not only combined with the central door: καὶ χρή τοῦτο νοεῖσθαι καθ' ἐκάστην θύραν. οἶονεῖ, καθ' ἐκάστην οἰκίαν.

A further indoor scene is to be found in Menander's *Phasma*. Recent research has convincingly overturned the earlier view that the scene was narrated rather than acted out on stage.<sup>92</sup> Wiles believes that an ekkyklema

87. See, for instance, Jacques (2000) 93-94.

88. Ireland (1995) 157-58. Cf. Wiles (1991) 48, 233, n. 54, who argues that in this scene "the device is used to pseudo-tragic effect". Blume (1978) 69, n. 199 states that Knemon's entrance on the ekkyklema is "ohne parodistische Absicht". Casanova (2017) 39 states that the use of the ekkyklema in this play is an allusion to tragedy "però un'allusione al suo uso improprio, euripideo, criticato da Aristofane". On the use of the ekkyklema in this scene and the tragic nuances see also Belardinelli (2000) 249-52.

89. Handley (1965) 263 holds that a bed or a couch was wheeled (rolled) out; cf. Frost (1988) 58. Webster (1974) 82 suggests a smaller rolling platform for scenes in comedy than that employed in tragedy.

90. Sandbach (1973) 239.

91. Ireland (1995) *ibidem*.

92. Turner (1969) holds that its scene did not take place on stage, and warns that we should



Fig. 5. *Phasma* mosaic from the House of Menander in Mytilene. After S. Charitonidis, L. Kahil and R. Ginouvès, *Les mosaïques de la maison du Ménandre à Mytilène*. Bern 1970.

was employed here, too,<sup>93</sup> whereas Arnott and Cusset simply speak of a “door that is wide open”.<sup>94</sup> These scholars base their argument on a mosaic from Mytilene (see fig. 5) depicting a now lost scene, in which a young woman sits in a small temple with a few steps leading to it. We know that in the play, a girl adopted by a new family meets her biological mother in secret at a sacred place.<sup>95</sup> Outside this small temple, two characters are gazing at the girl: an older figure with a threatening posture, and another character of undefined gender and age with a protective stance.<sup>96</sup> The girl is the supposed Apparition or title character.

It seems possible to me that the ekkyklema is used to help the girl appear, especially since the other two characters are already on stage. This may be a further instance of the motif seen above, whereby the characters on stage first announce the wheeling on of the platform and then engage in conversation with the figure upon it. The girl is of course standing in this particular instance, but as an apparition there is no need for her to be sitting or lying down. Furthermore, she may not want to reveal that she can emerge on foot on stage like any “living” character.<sup>97</sup>

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not be misled by the fact that reported action was shown in visual terms. Gomme & Sandbach (1973) 675 find his opinion tempting but maintain their reservations due to lack of evidence; they also quote Kahil’s view that the mosaic shows what went on before the audience’s eyes. Arnott (2000) 365-66 is also pro-performance, having demonstrated that the scene can be represented on stage without difficulty; cf. Konstantakos (2005) 195, n. 37.

93. Wiles (1991) 49.

94. Arnott (2000) 365; Cusset (2008) 43-48. Cusset (2008) 146 remains unconvinced by the arguments in favor of an ekkyklema put forward by Wiles and Jacques.

95. This temple belongs to a Greek house. In a wealthy Roman house such a sacred place would be a shrine, the *lararium*. See Ingrid Rowland’s view, quoted in an article by Cascone (2018), on the recent discovery of such a room in Pompeii (available online).

96. See Arnott, op. cit. Cf. Jacques (2000) 96; Barbieri (2001) 6, 9, 13-14; Cusset (2008) 43-48.

97. Jacques (2000) 92-93 argues for the use of an ekkyklema in *Aspis* (309-99); Belardinelli (2000) 252-62 argues against such a hypothesis.

## ORCHESTRA AND STAGE: THE PROBLEM OF THE CHORUS

As mentioned earlier, in Menander's time choral songs were interludes not composed by the playwright himself, and there was no interaction between the chorus and the actors.<sup>98</sup> Along with other features, this has been adduced as evidence by those who argue that the stage in the Hellenistic Theater of Dionysus was raised, setting it apart from the orchestra where the chorus sang or danced.<sup>99</sup> Other scholars have claimed that the opposite is true;<sup>100</sup> a few of them add that such an architectural innovation was effected in contemporary theaters elsewhere.<sup>101</sup> Winter has countered that logically speaking, Athens would have taken the lead rather than remaining behind the times, especially since approximately 600 New Comedy plays were performed in the city between 340 and 270 BC; none of the fragments assigns any dramatic role to the chorus<sup>102</sup>. The same scholar also argues that performances of earlier dramas requiring a connection between the stage and the orchestra could have been catered for by the addition of a low wooden stage in front of the *proscenium*.<sup>103</sup>

Early 20th century scholarship saw the way in which the chorus is announced in Menander as evidence for the construction of a stage on the same level as the orchestra. In 1918, Flickinger adduced a relevant passage from *Perikeiromene* to argue that the chorus cannot have been far removed from the actors.<sup>104</sup> Thus, at the end of Act One (261-63), the slave Daos

98. Sifakis (1967) 130-33 argues that communication between the two parties did occur during the Hellenistic period, even if limited.

99. See Hughes (2012) 220-21; Gogos (2005), especially his p. 169, 188-89. Cf. Wiles (1991) 38, Wurster (1993) 36.

100. See more recently Papastamati-von Moock (2014) 60-63; but see Möllendorff (2017) 220, n. 19.

101. See, for example, Bieber (1961) 123, Blume (1978) 51, Newiger (1996) 57 & n. 109. Bieber actually proposes two different settings for *Epitrepontes*; she believes that the one would have suited a theater in Asia Minor (with a raised stage), while the other would have been appropriate for the Theater of Dionysus (with the stage and the orchestra on the same level and the two houses represented by the *paraskenia*).

102. Winter (1983) 41. Cf. Frézouls (1989) 336.

103. Winter (1983) 43. Hughes (2012) 221 proposes a different solution: communication between actors and choristers in old tragedies could be achieved with the use of the entrances between the pilasters of the supporting colonnade of the high *logeion*.

104. Flickinger (1918) 93: "Even in New Comedy, in which the chorus is now known to have appeared only for the entr'actes, its on-coming is often used to motivate the withdrawal of

heralds the arrival of the drunken youths who form the chorus, relieved that his mistress has removed Glycera to the safety of their house:<sup>105</sup>

μεθύοντα μειράκια προσέρχεται  
π[ά]μπολλ'. ἐπαινῶ διαφόρως κεκτημένην·  
εἶσω πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἰσάγει τὴν μείρακα.

The feeling that the dangerous mob is approaching and that the characters should not come into contact with them suggests that if the characters did not exit in time, then there would be an awkward interaction between the choristers and the dramatic persons, as they both would be on the same level. Indeed, similar announcements of the impending arrival of the chorus are encountered in Euripidean tragedy, where the stage is no higher than the orchestra.<sup>106</sup>

That being said, situations of this type are also to be found in Menandrian comedies that remained unknown in Flickinger's time. In *Dyskolos* (230-32):

καὶ γὰρ προσιόντας τούσδε, Πανιστάς τινας  
εἰς τον τόπον δεῦρ', ὑποβεβρεγμένους ὄρῳ,  
οἷς μὴ ῥοχλεῖν εὐκαιρον εἶναί μοι δοκεῖ.

In *Epitrepontes* (169-71):

ἴωμ[εν], ὥς καὶ μειρακυλλίων ὄχλος  
εἰς τ]ὸν τόπον τις ἔρχεθ' ὑποβεβρεγμένων  
οἷς] μὴ ῥοχλεῖν εὐκαιρον εἶν[α]ί μοι[ι] δοκεῖ.

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the actors. Such a motivation could scarcely have become common if the actors stood so far above the choreutae as to be safe from their drunken words and acts".

105. Lape (2006) discusses the introductions of the chorus in Menander from a different perspective than mine: she argues that they describe a *kōmos*, which presages and emphasizes the ultimately celebratory nature of the community-making end of the comedies.

106. In *Phoenician women* (193-201) the pedagogue bids Antigone to go into the palace, since a crowd of women, the chorus, is approaching: ὦ τέκνον, ἔσβα δῶμα καὶ κατὰ στέγας / ἐν παρθενῶσι μίμνε σοῖς... In *Phaethon* (fr. Nauck-Snell 773, 10-14) the eponymous hero urges his mother Clymene to enter the palace, to avoid the chorus of the servants who are coming near: ἀλλ' ἔρπ' ἐς οἶκον· καὶ γὰρ αἶδ' ἔξω δόμων / δμῳαὶ περῶσιν, αἱ πατρὸς κατὰ σταθμοὺς / σείρουσι δῶμα... Both passages are quoted by Hourmouziades (1965) 22. Hourmouziades (1965) 22-23 observes that the chorus enters in *Phoenician women* from the parodos, whereas in *Phaethon* from the palace (the actors and the chorus use the palace door in succession if it is the only one in the background).

Furthermore, something analogous is seen in Middle comedy, in Alexis' fr. 112 K-A.<sup>107</sup> It is immediately obvious that the phraseology for announcements of the chorus' entrance is almost identical in Menander.<sup>108</sup> In practical terms this indicates they may well have been standardized notifications invariably placed at the end of the first Act, essentially serving to account for the exit of the actors before the chorus arrived, so that the stage emptied. The frequency of such announcements in the few surviving plays leads to the conclusion that they were a rule applying to the entire corpus of New Comedy, in what constitutes further evidence that they were standardized.<sup>109</sup> Thus, we cannot prove that the orchestra and the stage were on the same level when we turn to the dramatic texts of New Comedy.

All the same, the theory that the chorus in Menander probably does not interact with the characters is not altogether unproblematic. One bold hypothesis is that the worshippers who come to sacrifice to Pan in Act III of *Dyskolos* are none other than the chorus.<sup>110</sup> If this is valid, they head onto the stage before exiting into the shrine. However, this leads to further questions. Where do the worshippers re-enter and depart after their initial disappearance into the shrine? Do they use the orchestra? Should we imagine them reentering from the shrine to sing the next choral ode, or descending the steps of the high stage, or going behind the stage façade and reappearing from a *parodos* to the orchestra to sing? Furthermore, when Daos the slave announces the arrival of the chorus at the end of Act I, he describes the

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107. This fragment, known to Flickinger, goes as follows: *καὶ γὰρ ἐπικώμων – οὐ ἀνθρώπων ὁρῶ / πλῆθος προσίων ὡς τῶν καλῶν τε κάγαθῶν / ἐνθάδε συνόντων. μὴ γένοιτό μοι μόνῳ / νύκτωρ ἀπαντῆσαι καλῶς πεπραγόνῳ / ἑμῖν περὶ τὸν βαλλισμὸν*. For the interpretation of this fragment see Lape (2006) 104.

108. Blume (1978) 51 noticed this phenomenon, but sees it as an indication for a stage on a similar level to the orchestra. According to Sifakis (1967) 114-15 these typical phrases are introduced by the poet so that the characters can “dissociate themselves from the approaching chorus because the spectators, naturally, expected some relationship”.

109. In *Aspis* (246-49) the motif varies, since there is no warning on the avoidance of contact with the chorus: *καὶ γάρ τινα / ὄχλον ἄλλον ἀνθρώπων προσιόντα τουτονὶ / ὁρῶ μεθύνοντων. νοῦν ἔχετε τὸ τῆς τύχης / ἄδελον εὐφραίνεσθ' ὅν ἔξεστιν χρόνον*. In the lines preceding these (245-46), the slave Daos sends away the Cook and the waiter because their services are no longer called for in a house in mourning, rather than on account of the approaching chorus. The fact that a character directly addresses the chorus is without parallel; see, for instance, Lape (2006) 99, and Ireland (2010) 91, who sees Daos' exhortation to them to enjoy life as highlighting a contrast between his own despondency and the merriness of the drunken crowd. The chorus do not respond, of course, so what we probably have here is not so much an address as an act of self-contemplation, whereby Daos realizes that life is too short, that good fortune is not permanent and that one must make the most of one's days.

110. Marshall (2002).

followers of Pan as being tipsy. If they and the worshippers are one and the same, should we assume that Sostratos' mother is already drunk, something improbable? And could the supposed chorus be heterogeneous? Could it comprise Sostratos' mother and sister, young female slaves, male slaves, and two other members, the cook and Getas the slave? It should be noted that the last two arrive earlier than the rest of the worshippers, in the previous Act. As a matter of fact, Getas and the cook engage in conversation with other characters and have an important role in the play.

Perhaps all these issues can be addressed by the general observation that what we see in *Dyskolos*, including the announcements of the chorus in this and other comedies by Menander, are the relics of an earlier tradition of incorporating the chorus into the plot. Its role at this point is either diminished or utterly obliterated; the process of transition begins with the latest comedies by Aristophanes, continues through Middle Comedy and is completed in New Comedy.

In addition to the attractive hypothesis regarding the worshippers in *Dyskolos*, it may be possible to formulate a second one on the chorus at the end of the same work. *Dyskolos* closes in Aristophanic style: as we have seen, Getas and the cook persuade Knemon to perform an on-stage dance to the tune of the flute. He is a ridiculous figure, being old, wounded and in need of support to give his performance. Just before this bizarre spectacle the cook offers a lyrical description of a circular dance by shy, beautiful girls, which takes place off-stage, in the shrine. Spectators cannot fail to perceive the contrast between the unseen, enchanting movements of the girls and the visible, repulsive sight of the old man.

Menander cannot round off his play in the manner of numerous classical tragedies — and in eight comedies by Aristophanes — with an actor joining the chorus in a simultaneous exit; in earlier drama, such a possibility was facilitated by the fact that the stage and the orchestra were on the same level.<sup>111</sup> At the end of *Vespae* and *Aves*, for example, the chorus and characters sing and dance before exiting in unison. Menander deals with the problem by narrating the parallel dance in the shrine while dramatizing the ludicrous moves by the old man, in such a way as to exploit both on- and off-stage areas in the theatre.

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111. See Capps (1891) 18-20, who discusses the relevant excerpts from the tragedies *Choephoroe*, *Eumenides*, *Septem contra Thebas*, *Persae*, *Ajax*, *Philoctetes*, *Supplices*, *Ion*, *Troades*, and *Alceste* (where the funerary procession occurs in the middle of the plot); the satiric drama *Cyclops*; the Aristophanic comedies *Acharnenses*, *Vespae*, *Ranae*, *Ecclesiazusae*, *Lystrata*, *Pax*, *Aves*, *Plutus*.

In the finale to *Samia*, by contrast, we can surmise that the actors dancing and singing the Hymenaios in the wedding procession, again involving a flute girl,<sup>112</sup> may well head to the orchestra to join the chorus, who should be chanting a wedding song that befits the occasion.<sup>113</sup> The comedies *Pax* and *Aves* both end in a wedding procession of characters and choristers; in the latter, the procession heads towards the building represented on stage. We expect the characters in *Samia* to withdraw from the stage — they are in any case supposedly headed to the Enneakrounos fountain near the Acropolis, to fetch water for the nuptial bath — so their final exit must be from the parodos to the audience's left, leading to the city center.<sup>114</sup> If the actors were to remain on stage, rather than leaving from the parodos, the spectacle would be rather disappointing for the spectators. On a raised stage, we would expect them to descend the stairs. Perhaps they meet the chorus, who could be chanting as they leave. In the end, the chorus might leave the orchestra to join them, in what would make for an impressive spectacle. If this hypothesis is valid then we can make the case for the chorus singing a last ode after the finale, in this case a traditional wedding hymn.<sup>115</sup>

What is certain is that Menander has preserved elements belonging to the tradition of Old Comedy, such as the dance and the song at the happy end, but given them to the characters rather than the chorus. Even in the occasional instances where his chorus is at least partially related to the plot,<sup>116</sup> it clearly plays a minimal role when compared to the drama of the previous century.

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112. According to Sommerstein (2013) 320 the role of the flute girl was taken by a female slave of Demeas, a mute person, who would only mime, since the music would be played by the theater's regular piper, who played during the choral interludes.

113. Cf. Sommerstein (2013) 323: "The chorus, if present, will have departed in the same direction [as the characters], perhaps singing a hymeneal chant". According to Lape (2006) 97, after the fourth Act in the Menandrian plays, the chorus / *kōmos* remains in position, ready and waiting to sing for the final wedding or pre-nuptial celebration.

114. On the parodoi in *Samia* see Sommerstein (2013) 95-96, 312.

115. At a time when an extant fragment of *Samia* had yet to be found, Graf (1914) 10 had supposed that the chorus might be the wedding guests, although he believed there would have been a different chorus in the first Acts. Now that we have large parts of the play and better knowledge of Menander's corpus at our disposal, we can safely say that the chorus in *Samia* is irrelevant to the plot. Besides, due to the hastiness of the wedding, there are no invitations to guests or available time.

116. Flickinger (1918) 147 makes the observation that the chorus of *Perikeiromene* has a formal relationship with one of the characters, i.e. Polemon, as it is made up of a cheerful gang of his friends. On the other hand, Graf (1914) 10 rejects such a possibility.

Analogous remnants of the chorus' involvement in the action are encountered in two Plautine comedies, *Poenulus* and *Rudens*, which are adaptations of Alexis' *Karchedonios* and a play by Diphilus respectively. The first Latin play features a group of witnesses (*advocati*) and the second a group of fishermen (*piscatores*).<sup>117</sup> The latter initially sing a hymn and then engage in brief conversation with other characters; the witnesses have a larger role, but only speak to others. In their dialogic parts, both groups are represented by a "coryphaeus", but neither is a regular chorus. Lowe assumes that they are a Plautine innovation, that the witnesses in particular must be an expansion of the brief role played by mute persons in the Greek model, and that the two groups owe their existence to the influence of Italian tragedy upon Plautus.<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, Hartwig believes that Diphilus and Alexis must also have incorporated a chorus corresponding to the fishermen and the witnesses into the plot of the models for *Rudens* and *Poenulus*.<sup>119</sup>

While it is an undeniable fact that Plautus makes numerous adjustments when adapting models to create his own works, associating elements of the chorus in *Dyskolos* with the worshippers of Pan leads us to the likely conclusion that the abovementioned Greek models contained similar remnants of the chorus, and that Plautus might well have borrowed them from his sources. That is to say that Menander's inclination to retain certain relics of earlier comic tradition is a general tendency in Middle and New Comedy, rather than being restricted to a single poet.

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Unfortunately, precious few traces of the stage and mechanisms in the Athenian Theater of Dionysus have survived to the present day, and the plays performed there in the Hellenistic period have largely suffered the same fate. Some of our speculations on the performance conditions of plays of which we only possess meager fragments may be vindicated or disproved by further verses or scenes discovered in the future. Even so, the comedies and mosaic depictions we are in possession of do shed some light on the arrangement of the stage façade, the existence of a window at a higher

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117. Hunter (1979) 36-37 holds that it is an open question whether the *piscatores* performed as the regular chorus between the acts, equating their entry with the *parodos* at the end of Act 1; he adds that the slow entry of *advocati* recalls choruses from the fifth century.

118. Lowe (1990). His opinion is accepted by Moodie (2015) 132-33.

119. Hartwig (2014) 208 with n. 7.

level, the use of devices like the *ekkyklema* or architectural elements like the *prothyron*, the employment of a stage altar, and the possibility that a raised stage may have separated the chorus from the actors. At the very least, these features offer us a glimpse of what spectators enjoyed in Menander's time.

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