CHORUS, METATHEATRE, AND MENANDER, DYSKOLOS 427-41

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Abstract. The stage action of Dyskulos 427-41 has Menander creating a moment of contact between the chorus and the actors, effectively turning his chorus into a minor character in the overall narrative. This is unparalleled in extant Menander but shows continuity with Old Comedy and fourth-century tragedy. This is part of the playwright’s overall metatheatrical programme for the play, which also makes reference to masks, role-sharing, and musical accompaniment.

Received wisdom tells¹ that the fourth century saw a marked decline in the role of the chorus in comedy by the time of Menander,² with the only textual indication of the chorus’ existence being a brief coda at the end of the first act,³ and the notation XOPOY⁴ (“[song] of the chorus”) at each of the four

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³ W. G. Arnott, “Notes on Eight Plays of Menander,” ZPE 31 (1978) 1-32 at 18f., discusses the formulaic quality of these introductions; similarly, “In Alexis’ fr. 237, ‘Eubulus’ frs. 3 and 8, and Ar. Plut. 316-21, we have essentially the same situation: an actor tells the chorus to perform an interlude” (Sifakis [2 (1971)] 431, who believes these all refer to the first song).
act divisions. A chorus existed, though we do not know how big it was; it sang and danced songs, but we do not know if they were even composed by the playwright; these songs were incidental to the plot and were therefore perceived as being dispensable by those preserving the plays on papyrus. However, an unappreciated exchange in Menander’s play Dyskolos lines 427-41, challenges this opinion, and requires a reassessment of the possible functions of the chorus available to a playwright at the end of the fourth century. Rather than being a superfluous holdover from earlier drama, Menander shows the chorus becoming part of an arsenal of metatheatrical devices used by the playwright.

Menander is not typically thought of as a playwright who employs metatheatre. For the present purposes, metatheatre can be seen as a dramatic recognition of the theatrical reality—those moments in a play where contact is made between the fictional world created on stage and the actual world of the actors and audience, and which are now generally recognized as being a regular component of ancient theatre. While it will always be possible to express skepticism about such moments (for a theatrical reference will usually be

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5 There is no doubt that the five-act structure, as it is thought of today, was a fixed pattern in comedy by the late fourth century. It is described by Donatus, Adelphoe pr. 1. 4 quinque actus...choris divisos a Graecis poesis (P. Wessner, Aelii Donati Commentum Terentii 2 [Stuttgart 1958] 4) which “suggests that if we had a play of Menander absolutely intact we should find ΧΟΡΟΥ four times, dividing the play into five blocks of approximately equal weight” (Dover [4] 144).

6 Some scholars have adopted the Aristotelian term έμβολα με from Poetica 18, 1455a29, often calling these songs “interludes” (e.g., Sifakis [2 (1971)] 417) or “entr’actes” (e.g., W. G. Arnott, Menander 1 [Cambridge, Mass. 1979] 219)

7 E.g., “Lesser companies simply did without choruses, and the productions were no less intelligible” (N. W. Slater, “The Fabrication of Comic Illusion,” in Dobrov [2] 29-45, at 41).
explicable in dramatic terms as well), there are enough instances in Dyskolos (of various degrees of certainty) to indicate that Menander can use the device if he so chooses. What might be the most explicit metatheatrical references in Menander are his integration of the chorus' aulos-player, who is addressed by Sostratos' mother directly with the words σοĸει, Ὣργειν, / Ὡλον ("play the hymn of Pan, Parthenis," 432f.). Later in the play, the official aulos-player is again addressed by the slave Getas: τί μοι προσεκκεῖ; ("why are you providing accompaniment?", 880); and ἐγὼ προϊσσω πρότερος ών, καὶ τὸν ἴδιμον σω τηρεῖ ("I'll first set the time [lit. 'lead the way'], and you keep the beat," 910). The aulos-player is made part of the dramatic world—Goold rightly adduces the nightingale in Aristophanes' Birds as a parallel—as Menander naturalizes a stage convention.

An awareness of role-sharing by the audience allows for a recognition of some amusing parallelism in certain scenes of Dyskolos. It is at least plausible that Menander's plays, like fifth-century tragedy and comedy before him, were meant to be performed by three actors who between them deliver all the

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8 There are very many questions concerning the presence of an aulos-player on stage, and I give only a cursory discussion here (drawing heavily from O. Taplin, Comic Angels, and Other Approaches to Greek Drama Through Vase-Painting [Oxford 1993] 70-78, 105-10). The character Parthenis is an auletris, and certainly appears on stage. The performance would have had an official aulos-player, who was probably (though not necessarily: cf. Taplin [above, this note] 75-78) male. What is the relationship between these two, both of whom are addressed in the play? If they are the same, then the official aulos-player is here being incorporated metatheatrically into the drama. It would also mean that this person, whether male or female, would be costumed as a slave girl, and not in the elaborate robes typically associated with the official aulos-player, and would not be wearing a mask, but only the musician's phorbeia. I suspect that this is not outside of what was permitted on stage, but others will disagree. The alternative is that the official aulos-player (metatheatrically addressed at lines 880f.) plays music to which a masked Parthenis mimes accompaniment after the instructions to her at 432. South Italian iconography appears to give parallels for both of these possibilities, but the former seems less awkward in this context.


lines,\textsuperscript{12} assisted by the chorus, non-speaking extras, and the aulos-player. At lines 230-32, Daos is inconvenienced by the crowd coming on stage (the chorus). At line 430, Knemon is also inconvenienced by a crowd, this time the Pan-worshippers headed by Sostratos’ mother. It is perhaps not too much of a stretch to see further connection between these two groups by the use of cognate words. At line 432 the Pan-worshippers are called ἄχλος τις. This might recall for some the earlier use of ἐνομαλεῖν in line 232 when Daos first sees the chorus.\textsuperscript{13} This provides a point of contact between the chorus and the sacrificers, but it also associates the roles of Knemon and Daos. This is reinforced metatheatrically by role-sharing, for both Daos at line 230 and Knemon at line 430 are being played by the same actor: the audience is aware that the person being bothered by crowds is in each case the same.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} It is not possible to discuss all the ramifications of the use of three actors in Menander here, but many scholars have examined its effect on Greek New Comedy: cf. Goold [10] 144-50; J. G. Griffith, “The Distribution of Parts in Menander’s Dyskolos,” CQ 10 (1960) 113-17; Handley [9] 25-30; F. H. Sandbach “Menander and the Three-Actor Rule,” in O. Bingen et al., Le Monde Grec: Hommages à Claire Préaux (Brussels 1975) 197-204; K. B. Frost, Exit and Entrances in Menander (Oxford 1988) 2f.; A. Seeberg, “Heads on Platters,” in J. H. Betts et al. (edd.), Studies in Honour of T. B. L. Webster 2 (Bristol 1988) 121-32, at 129f. A contrary position is taken by J. M. Walton and P. D. Arnott, Menander and the Making of Comedy (Westport 1996) 65-67, who argue for six actors sharing roles, but not splitting them, which I do not find convincing. This seems to introduce a new attitude to acting and part allocation that is unprecedented in the fourth-century. The fact that Dyskolos can work with three actors, against probability, with its dramatis personae, suggests something. Modern prejudice against role-splitting (“cross-casting”) is based on the lack of any apparent reward for the audience: why would a poet restrict himself thus? John Barton’s 1973-74 production of Richard II provides a contemporary point of departure (cf. S. Wells, Royal Shakespeare: Four Major Productions at Stratford-upon-Avon [Manchester 1977] 64-81). Barton had the actors playing Bollingbroke and Richard exchange roles on successive nights to demonstrate how meaning from actor choice can be manipulated for characterization within a given production. With Menander, I can imagine good comic benefit from having all three actors interpret a role in a similar fashion, creating an appearance of continuity, though not excluding the audience from appreciating what is the role sharing. (The contrary effect, having Sostratos appear markedly different in terms of somatotype, voice, etc. in each incarnation which thereby creates a deliberate discontinuity of character, does not seem to me to be a joke with ancient parallels.)

\textsuperscript{13} The verb returns at line 750, with Knemon describing those sacrificing to Pan next door.

\textsuperscript{14} A long-standing difficulty later in the act points to another possible instance of this kind of humour. At line 500, Knemon addresses Sikon with πάλιν αὐτὸ σό; (“You back again?”) which implies that Sikon has bothered him previously. As Ireland notes, the “question, taken at face value, suggests either that Knemon cannot tell Sikon from Getas, or that when Sikon enters he is accompanied by Getas, to whom the question is directed” (S. Ireland, Menander:
There are also potential metatheatrical references to the masks being worn by the actors. When Pyrrhias says Knemon picked up a lump of earth and ταύτην ἄφιησ' εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτὸ μου ("he tossed it at my face," 111), it seems likely that at least some of the audience would be disposed to hear the theatrical term "mask" behind the words τὸ πρόσωπον. Because the lines are incorporated into the dramatic narrative as well, such recognition need not be forced. It remains, however, available to the audience. Similarly, Sostratos’ mother berates one of her servants, asking ποί κέχνας, ἐμβρόντητε σὺ; ("What are you gawping at, you dumbstruck fool?,” 441\(^{15}\)). This could be a reference to the fixed expression of the comic mask, yet it comes at a moment where it describes a perfectly reasonable expression on a slave’s face.\(^{16}\)

While each of these three types of reference (to the aulos-player, to rolesharing, and to masks) are found more than once in the play, it is perhaps worth noting that all types are found clustered in one brief passage, Dyskolas 427-41. The playwright has created at the beginning of the third act a passage full of

\(^{15}\) Cf. Ar. Eccl. 793 for this insult.

\(^{16}\) Walton and Arnott [12] 59 see indications of a mask change at Dyskolas 551-53 and 754. It is possible that Sostratos was given a darker (or perhaps redder) mask to indicate his day’s labour, but this need not be so. Lines 551-53 represent a common trope of characters not recognizing one another on stage (cf. C. W. Marshall, “Quis Hic Loquitur?: Plautine Delivery and the ‘Double Aside’,” SylldClass 10 [1999] 105-31). Male masks were typically darker than female ones, to accord with the reality that men were usually darker because they worked outside (cf. D. M. MacDowell, Aristophanes and Athens: An Introduction to the Plays [Oxford 1995] 258, 304). Lines 535 and 754, which describe the effects of the sun, may be Menander’s recognition of this.
metatheatrical resonance. This clustering, and at this particular point, is noticeable, but it is also in some ways surprising, since so much else is happening on stage at the same time. Since this actively concerns the chorus, it is useful to describe what is known about its function in the fourth-century.

"It is well known that in the fourth century the comic chorus went through a period of decline, which ended with its standardization into a group of drunken youths, who invariably appeared in all plays of New Comedy".17 While this claim may be true, the precise timing of the decline and its cause are open to question. The increased separation of stage from orchestra, the rise of the professional actor, and the elimination of the choregia in ca. 316/5 BC18 are all possible influences on the diminishment of the chorus, but none of them need be correlated directly to the change in choral performance itself. The first of these three will serve as an example. It is typically held that the chorus performed their songs in the orchestra,19 while the actors performed the episodes on a raised stage.20 However, "the stage was never completely cut off from the orchestra level"21 and communication between these two areas of the performance space, while perhaps rarer than in earlier plays, remained possible. While the physical appearance of the stage buildings had changed, then, as is suggested by illustrations on red-figure vases, the principles governing their use had not, and movements permitted on a fifth-century stage were also possible in the fourth century. Xanthakis-Karamanos goes further than this, claiming that "the high stage seems not to have been raised until late in the fourth or early in the third century, and this, as far as our evidence shows, applies to both tragedy and comedy."22 In either scenario, then, the chorus was not physically confined to the orchestra, and there is nothing about the performance space itself that restricted or had a necessary effect on choral development. The same is true of the professionalization of actors23 and the elimination of the choregia.24

19 This is the assumption of Rothwell [2] 224, for example; cf. the longer discussion of Sifakis [2 (1967)] 126-32.
24 Rothwell [2] 214-18 argues this. It is particularly suggestive for my present purposes because Dyskolos, which happens to survive, dates to the Lenaia of 316, and the choregia was most likely eliminated in 316/5, but there is no necessary connection between Dyskolos' stagecraft and the elimination of the choregia.
Certainly the appearance of the chorus had changed over time. For one thing, it was almost certainly smaller than the twenty-four comic choristers or the twelve or fifteen tragic/satyr choristers of the late fifth century: evidence points to six, seven, or eight members in all kinds of choruses in the late fourth century. Yet like the earlier choruses, “[t]he tragic chorus did sing and not merely dance;” it does not necessarily follow that “the performance of the comic chorus in the fourth century was, on the whole, a dancing one” merely because the words they sang no longer survive. Dancing was important to the Hellenistic chorus: a chorus would enter during the parodos (the chorus’ entry-song), remove their outer cloaks to enable ease of movement, and begin to dance vigorously. But caution should be urged against over-interpreting this evidence. For one thing, the practice of choral stripping is attested in Aristophanes’ Acharnians of 425 BC, and so this feature points to continuity with earlier choruses rather than disjunction. Similarly, these interludes would be accompanied by someone playing the aulos, as had been the case in the fifth-century.

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25 Sifakis [2 (1971)] 418 and 420 suggests there were seven or eight in the chorus, and this is corroborated by epigraphical evidence, such as the number of choristers at the Amphictyonic Soteria at Delphi, which seems to have been seven or eight (Sifakis [2 (1967)] 71-74, 156-65). Cf. Rothwell [2 (1992)] 217. Maidment [4] 13; Pickard-Cambridge [9] 241f. discusses the possibility of silent “choristers.”

26 Xanthakis-Karamanos [4] 10. This is made clear by the use of ἐδομεῖν at Aristotle, Problematum 19.48, 922b10f.


28 Sifakis argues that Aristotle, Eth. Nic. 4.2, 1123a19-24 implies that the costume would not be put on again because “after the opening song...the chorus-men remain inactive; a group of on-lookers who come to life, as it were, at convenient breaks in the action to perform their independent interludes” (Sifakis [2 (1971)] 417). Even if they did leave the performance area during acts (as I believe), there is no need to put on their outer cloaks again, and Sifakis’ reading of Aristotle is unaffected. The continued prominence of the chorus after the period of Old Comedy is seen from the comic plays with collective names which likely derive from choruses (cf. T. B. L. Webster, “Chronological Notes on Middle Comedy,” CQ 2 [1952] 13-26, at 25f.: for tragedy, cf. Xanthakis-Karamanos [4] 123). Again, continuity with the earlier comic tradition is suggested.

The chorus of Dyskolos, like that of every other Menandrian chorus, is a band of revelers, a κώμος. The play’s conventional reference to the chorus and its identity occurs at the end of the first act: 30

καὶ γὰρ προσιόντας τούσθε Πανιστάς τινας
εἰς τὸν τόπον δεδρ᾿ ὑποβεβηριενούς ὁρῶν,
οίς μὴ νοθείν ἐυκαιρον εἶναι μοι δοκεῖ.

(230-32)

Further, I see some rather drunk Pan-worshippers coming here to this place. It seems to me to be a good time not to meddle with them.

But even here difficulties exist, for this text involves an emendation to the papyrus at precisely the word that is most descriptive: Lloyd-Jones’ emendation Πανιστάς 31 (“Pan-worshippers”) replaces the papyrus’ παιανιστάς (“paean-singers”), a word equally suggestive, though what Menander’s audience would have considered a “paean” is not certain. Handley gives the most detailed discussion of the emendation and ultimately rejects it, 32 but most editions accept the alteration. However, during the performance of Dyskolos the difference between these two is meagre, since the setting of the play is before a shrine of Pan and the Nymphs (τὸ νυμφαῖον, 2), and Pan speaks the prologue (1-49). Either the chorus are Pan worshippers, or they are a generic κώμος in front of Pan’s shrine singing something called “paens.” 33 By Menander’s day this term might refer to metre, melody, or even tone, and need not reflect the actual ritual function (and note the reference to “Paean Phoebus” at line 192). It may even be a sarcastic and, to the audience, a clearly inappropriate description of the music. Whatever the case, even if the papyrus reading is correct, the chorus in Dyskolos is still to some extent characterized by the presence of Pan because of his appearance in the prologue. Pan governs all events on this stage. The association between chorus and performance area, then, means that all subsequent choral songs, because they are performed on the same space, are

30 The text I use throughout is Arnott [6]. While minor differences do exist in certain readings in F. H. Sandbach (ed.), Menandri Reliquiae Selectae (Oxford 1990), none affects the present argument.
33 A third possibility should be considered. The deme of Paiania is mentioned in line 408, specifically in the context of Pan worship. It is tempting to consider that the heart of line 230 may lie in the meaning “Paianians” and have an automatic association with Pan worship. However, without reference to the deme before this point in the play it remains uncertain. Even if this were correct, the audience’s interpretation of line 230 is not significantly altered.
still associated with Pan in the minds of the audience, even though there is no explicit reference to the chorus in the text, apart from the act-dividing XOPOY.

For Sifakis, it does not matter whether the Menandrean chorus physically stays on stage during the episode or not, as one consequence of the raised stage is that plays are released from the chorus’ “immediate presence, which hampered the development of the plot, by splitting the performance into two levels” —they are, for him, effectively out of the performance area during the episodes, since the high stage prevents the audience seeing them, at least by convention. Sifakis claims that “[a]s far as their participation in the plot is concerned, [the chorus] are brought into direct contact with it only in the parodos,” that is, between acts one and two. As has been demonstrated, contact of a different sort—metatheatrical contact—has been identified at the next act-boundary, between acts two and three. Even if our evidence were sufficient to allow a generalization about Menander, Menander’s decision “not to incorporate the chorus into the action [does not mean] that other fourth-century playwrights made the same choice.” A fourth-century Medea has a chorus addressed by an actor immediately following an act-dividing XOPOY. The line contains a direct verbal allusion to Euripides’ Medea 214, and this

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35 I should reiterate that this is not what I believe. It does, however, mean that one can discuss the chorus “leaving the performance area” meaningfully without knowing exactly what happened historically: either the chorus physically leaves the performance area, or the orchestra is removed from the performance area by an act of will by the audience. Arist. Pr. 19,48 (922b26-28) suggests the chorus is a well-meaning but ineffectual witness to stage events, but (assuming this refers to productions contemporary with Aristotle) this does not require the chorus to remain on stage constantly. I believe it is preferable to assume the chorus members stagger on, remove their cloaks, sing a song accompanied by vigorous dance, and then leave to return later.
36 Sifakis [2 (1971)] 417, italics are in the original, and serve to emphasize Sifakis’ contention that the parados is “the only [song] specially composed for the play,” because it is only there that characters refer to the chorus. As will become clear, I disagree.
39 Various other possible sources are discussed by Sutton [38] 38-43. In Euripides’ Medea (as at Sophocles, Electra 255), the address of the chorus immediately follows the parados.
certainly implies that the chorus remains on stage after their song (in at least this tragic instance). There are two things to notice for now. First, this could be evidence for the continued presence of the chorus during the acts of a play generally. Second, since tragic titles exist that apparently refer to the identity of the chorus, this Medea may be merely indicative of a difference between tragic and comic practice. The evidence would seem to support Sifakis’ conclusion that the chorus of Menander “has invariably become a komos, a band of revelers who are not present in the course of the play but enter the scene between episodes or acts, and have nothing to do with the plot of the play,” though perhaps this is so only when tempered with some interpretative caution.

There is no a priori reason why dramatic contact between the chorus and audience need be associated with the metatheatrical contact between actors and audience described earlier. Still, both effects can be seen as the characters integrating theatrical stage conventions into their dramatic world, and this is perhaps sufficient to warrant further scrutiny. The anonymous Medea demonstrates that in at least some fourth-century drama contact between character and chorus could take place after an act-division; it need not be restricted exclusively to the end of the first act as implied by the extant fragments of Menander. The second act division in Dyskolos has already been seen to be marked by the playwright since it is infused with metatheatrical nuance: it is also a good candidate for examining contact between the chorus and the characters.

The slave Getas and the cook Sikón leave the stage and enter into the shrine after line 426, and the chorus returns (or, in Sifakis’ understanding, re-animates) for another vigorous song and dance. The flurry of stage activity continues after the end of the song, however, which marks the awkwardness of the passage and would draw out its length considerably to its length in performance. Here is what happens in the first fifteen lines of act three (427-41):

This does not mean that the fourth-century imitation also represents the introduction of the first episode (rightly Sutton [38] 41-49, who also questions the ordering of the papyrus fragments [cf. especially the citation of C. Austin at 44 n. 72]).

It also, of course, implies a level of textual awareness by the audience that can be seen, broadly, as metatheatrical.

Sifakis [2 (1967)] 114, and see n. 27.


This is based on Frost [12] 49-53, whose study can be considered the communs opinio; it does not at any rate differ in any substantial respect with any edition or translation I have
1. The chorus leave the stage after their song, after line 426.
2. At line 427, Knemon, the grumpy old man of the title, enters from his house, which is next door to the shrine of Pan. It is possibly desirable within the Menandrian performance aesthetic to avoid an empty stage. If so, Knemon nevertheless pays no attention to the departing chorus because he is shouting inside to his elderly servant.
3. At line 430, Sostratos’ mother, Plangon, the auletris Parthenis, and some mute characters (who are probably slaves, but perhaps fellow-sacrificers) enter from a wing. The size of the group is uncertain, but it seems to be as many as 6-8. The mother is being played by the Sikon actor, who has changed character and then run around from backstage to the wings since line 426.
4. At line 434, Getas enters from the shrine, and all three speaking actors are now on stage.
5. At line 441, Sostratos’ mother, Plangon, the auletris, and the slaves enter the shrine, as does Getas, leaving Knemon on stage to soliloquize. The actor playing Sostratos’ mother changes back to Sikon using the mask and costume he left there after line 426, and will re-emerge as the cook at line 487.

Most striking is the entry of the large crowd including Sostratos’ mother, whose identity has been anticipated since lines 260-64. Frost describes the entry: “The group is unannounced, which contributes to the surprise effect as they burst suddenly on to the stage bringing noise and bustle: their arrival startles Knemon whose attention is directed away from the stage back into the house as he issues instructions to Simache.” However, the phrases “surprise effect,” “burst suddenly,” and “noise and bustle” are inappropriate descriptions when it is remembered (as Frost does not) that the chorus has departed a mere three lines

consulted. Frost, however, does not consider choral movements at all, presumably because they are largely unproblematic and perceived to be incidental to the plot, so I have added them here to his stage directions.

45 It is not clear whether Plangon is the sister of Sostratos, or a slave. The commentaries are split, but Ireland ([14] 144) may be correct that “this may be one of those details that creates problems only for a reading audience.” The present argument is unaffected in either case.


47 This is not mentioned by Frost [12]. Getas emerges from the shrine again at line 456, and this is the only opportunity for him to leave the stage without interrupting Knemon’s soliloquy. His departure here is affirmed by Arnott [6] 253 inter alia.

48 This is why it is important for him to change characters before the run: backstage economy is preserved by leaving the mask and costume of Sikon by the door to the shrine. For backstage economy as a factor for rite division, cf. Marshall [11 (1994)] 53-61.

earlier: the level of activity associated with the fourth-century chorus means that the noise and bustle continues, rather than begins. The sacrificers’ arrival rather becomes a part of the larger overall commotion on the stage.

A singing and vigorously dancing group of six to eight in front of a shrine to Pan who are accompanied by an aulos-player depart, and are replaced by another group of six to eight Pan-worshippers accompanied by an aulos-player (cf. line 432 σῶλει) within seconds. Further, Maidment suggests that extras in Menander would typically be played by the members of the chorus.\textsuperscript{50} If true, the chorus departs in the role of exuberant youths (who circumstantially, and perhaps explicitly at line 230, have been associated with Pan), changes costume almost instantly into Pan-worshippers proper who will then be given a more developed identity in order to re-enter the stage for only eleven spoken lines. Any surprise effect is eliminated (or at least greatly diminished), and replaced by a redundant creation of minimal consequence. Such messy stage action is, I submit, an intolerable result, from which there are two means of extraction. Gomme and Sandbach believe:

\begin{quote}
The fact that the chorus has become a purely conventional survival is shown by Knemon’s conduct here. He pays no attention whatever to the tipsy Panistai, but is shortly to be greatly upset by the arrival of a respectable household party.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

In other words, the chorus is so removed from the events of performance that it is essentially invisible and has no impact on the audience reception of the surrounding text. This is possible, but I do not believe it gives sufficient weight to the importance of the vigorous musical presence of the fourth-century comic chorus in performance.

The alternative is that the chorus represents not a generic group of Pan-worshippers (or paean-singers) but the rather specific group, which at the end of the second act includes Sostratos’ mother. While without an exact parallel in extant New Comedy, this is the most economical account of the required stage movement. The chorus then does not depart immediately after their second choral song, but remains onstage until they enter the shrine at line 441, crossing from the orchestra onto the stage and into the shrine of Pan. This does create a surprise effect, and one that clarifies all the movements in this passage and gives a more natural persona to the chorus, who now become a character and

\textsuperscript{50} Maidment [2] 20-22.

rise above the status of a conventional holdover.\textsuperscript{52} In terms of the catalogue of movements outlined above, this solution eliminates number one and greatly simplifies number three: only the mother and Plangon need arrive now. The initial injunction to Plangon from Sostratos’ mother to hurry (430) is now seen as a dramatically integrated acknowledgement that they arrive after the rest of the group, as Getas also observes (435f.).

Nor is the effect achieved by identifying the apparently extra-dramatic chorus with the dramatic group of Pan-worshippers unique. The fourth-century Medea already mentioned affords the closest parallel, as a character entering after a choral song immediately acknowledges the choral presence.\textsuperscript{53} This need not mean that the chorus remains on stage throughout the act: the Corinthian women could be in the process of departing. Both post-\textsc{XOPOY} exchanges constitute an effort by the playwright to incorporate the chorus into the dramatic world he has created. It is a gesture towards naturalism, acknowledging the group and giving them some dramatic definition within an extension of the fictional world. This effect is similar to that advocated for Menander by Maidment, and Leo and Körte before him: but they were writing before Dyskolos was discovered, and they lacked this clear example.

If the chorus in Dyskolos is identified as the entourage of Sostratos’ mother, then there are some necessary consequences for production. Information about the groups is additive, and what is true of one becomes equally true of the other. The group which \textit{περιέρχεται θύουσα τῶν δήμων κύκλῳ ἀπαντῖ (“travels around the whole deme in a circle, sacrificing,” 262f.)} is also \textit{ὑποβεβραγμένος (“rather drunk,” 231)}, or at least appears so to Daos, the hard-worked household slave who before the first act is completed has already cursed Poverty (209f.) and Knemon (220f.). The slaves could easily be called Pan-worshippers (if that is the word used at line 230), and it would be natural for them to remove their cloaks as they prepare the sacrifice for Sostratos’ mother who is following behind them (and will appear at line 430). Whether the characters are actually drunk or only carrying wine jars to be imbibed at the post-sacrifice banquet (cf. lines 927, 946-49) is not a distinction Daos seems likely to make. By acknowledging the chorus’ presence and giving

\textsuperscript{52} The chorus of Euripides’ Helen leaves the orchestra and enters the palace at line 385, so while rare the action is not unparalleled in extant Greek drama.

\textsuperscript{53} Parallel in a different way are the many instances in fifth-century tragedy, where the chorus examine the propriety of their function within a drama. There have been several studies of choral self-reference in recent years, but the best introduction remains A. Henrichs, “‘Why Should I Dance?’: Choral Self-Referentiality in Greek Theatre,” \textit{Arion} 3.1 (1995) 56-111; cf. K. Heikkilä, “‘Now I have a Mind to Dance’: The Reference of the Chorus to Their Own Dancing in Sophocles’ Tragedies,” \textit{Arctos} 25 (1991) 51-67.
a reason for its existence on stage, Menander provides an explanation for subsequent act-dividing songs: the celebrations, at whatever stage, temporarily spill out onto the street. Menander has integrated the chorus naturalistically into his play.

It will be clear that giving the chorus this dramatic character potentially affects its every appearance. Visual cues likely are available to the audience throughout the play. The costume that the chorus wears from its initial entry will be consistent with whatever would be expected of members of Sostratos’ mother’s party, and this costume will be maintained throughout the play. If this differs in any way from what an audience would expect a chorus to wear (assuming there was a standard, which there may have been), then the costume marks the chorus as non-standard from its initial entry, even though the text of lines 230-32 appears to be entirely formulaic. Certainly, this interpretation implies a variation from modern expectations in terms of the chorus’ departure. If the chorus does typically leave the stage during the acts (as seems likely), then, as in Euripides at Helen 385, the chorus leaves the stage by means of the central door (representing the shrine of Pan), and subsequently emerges from there as well. It must however be asked: were these modern expectations also held by Menander’s audience? The stagecraft implied by Dyskolos suggests that they need not have been. It is possible that integration of the chorus into the dramatic narrative could occur without upsetting the play’s action. This is increasingly likely when the technique is seen in the larger context of metatheatrical reference in Menander.

There are clear markers that Dyskolos 427-41 is charged with metatheatrical nuance, incorporating reference to the aulos-player, role-sharing, and masks. To these three, reasons have been given to add a fourth—the chorus—and so Dyskolos alludes to the four most obvious features of a Greek comic performance. None of these references functions in isolation; each ties to another passage somewhere else in the play. It may be that Dyskolos is exceptional in this way, and direct acknowledgement of theatrical conditions does not exist to this extent in other contemporary plays. But Dyskolos employs theatrical techniques that show continuity with earlier comic practice. Menander works to blur the naturalism of dramatic illusion for which he is typically praised with explicit acknowledgments that this is a fictional world. By doing so, the world of the play presses out and absorbs the whole theatrical space, which even in 316 BC is a representation of the polis at large. All the world is a stage, as Democritus said (68 fr. 115 [84] D-K).

In Dyskolos, Menander does not allow the audience to believe that the chorus “was hardly more relevant than the advertisements that today punctuate
television programmes.” They are given a character, albeit a small one, that helps to define the entire performance space as the area before a shrine of Pan. Menander does this by integrating the Pan-worshippers, briefly, into the plot, thereby removing their artificial presence as a group of generic “drunken revelers.” A useful comparison may perhaps be made with another conventional chorus, that of the fifth-century satyr play. There, genre determined that the nature of the chorus was fixed. Nevertheless, fragments and play-titles of satyr drama demonstrate that some individuation could take place from play to play. A chorus might become net-fishermen, hammer-wielders, shepherds, nurses of Dionysus, or lovers of Achilles depending on the plot, while still always remaining satyrs. Such innovation in the use of the chorus may have been possible in New Comedy as well.

Menander’s metatheatre is in no fundamental conflict with his supposed naturalism. Quite the contrary: by acknowledging the existence of a chorus, the aulos-player, role-sharing, and masks, the playwright is able to further naturalize his dramatic world by presenting rational explanations for the presence of each. This is a technique Euripides also used. If the tendency in fourth-century comedy suggests that “the decline of the chorus (apparent already in late Menander) goes hand in hand with the fabrication of comic illusion,” then Dyskolos demonstrates how the artificial features of the theatrical event can be used to help preserve and reinforce illusion. Menander establishes continuity with earlier playwrights, turning the vestigial chorus, at least in Dyskolos, into an integrated dramatic character. Metatheatre helps Menander reinforce dramatic illusion, and adds to the types of humour that can be identified as Menandrean.

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