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The Staging of Menander's Comedies

THE THIRD DOOR ON MENANDER'S STAGE: WHAT'S GOING ON (OR IN)?

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1. Introduction

It is standard opinion that Menander's New Comedy played on an elevated stage depicting a street (στενωπός), usually in Athens but not exclusively, with three entrances (doors) in the *skene* which formed a wooden backdrop, thus enabling entrances and exits from and into their interiors. The outer (left and right) of these three doors/entrances represent private houses in which the two families who feature in the stage action live. In addition to the three stage doors characters can also enter and exit via the side entrances (*paraskenia*) left and right of the stage (*logeion*) and the two parodoi, or side-entrances to the orchestra. Sometimes they go 'into town' or return from town; some characters arrive from overseas and hence, presumably, from the harbour (typically the Piraeus) where their boat put into port, and sometimes actors head 'into the country'. Although there has been debate about this, the consensus is that 'exit stage left' – to the audience's right – meant into town or to the harbour whilst 'stage right' (left for the audience) was the country side, as that corresponded to the orientation of the Theatre of Dionysos at Athens, and theatres outside Athens would probably have preserved the convention[1].

This understanding of the basic geometry of Menander's stage suggests a number of binary oppositions: interior/exterior; this house/that house; town/country. It is well known that the chorus in New Comedy is largely distinct from, and independent of, the

[1] See *e.g.* RAMBO 1915, 413: "Accordingly, no Athenian dramatist would venture to have a character leave the stage to the spectator's left with the remark that he was going to the Peiraeus. Therefore, for Greek New Comedy, of necessity, the spectator's right gives egress εἰς ἀγοράν and εἰς λιμένα, the spectator's left, to the country".

action of the play, thus not upsetting these binary oppositions obtaining between the characters and their movements. The purpose of this paper is to suggest that all is not so simple. For one thing, we have indisputable evidence that there were in fact three doors—hence entrances and potential residences—in the *skene*, and for another Menander clearly used this third door in a number of plays, though probably not all. In *Dyskolos*, for example, Pan's Cave is centrestage, from which the god emerges to speak the prologue and to which the celebrants retire when they celebrate the wedding party at the end. Knemon's house is 'on the right' (audience's left) according to Pan and Gorgias' (presumably) on the audience's right. With new discoveries of text, moreover, and continued work by scholars, it is becoming apparent that even among surviving plays (and there are only five or six in a half-way decent state of preservation) a third door must have played a not insignificant role. This sheds a wholly new light on some of the binary structures of the plays' action which we have been assuming to date and, moreover, as I hope to show, marks a pointed departure from tragedy's use of the central door to show a palace or at any rate the residence of the central character.

A passage from Pollux's discussion of theatre terminology is commonly quoted in this connection (4,124-125):

> τριῶν δὲ τῶν κατὰ τὴν σκηνὴν θυρῶν ἡ μέση μὲν βασίλειον ἢ σπήλαιον ἢ οἶκος ἔνδοξος ἢ πᾶν τοῦ πρωταγωνιστοῦντος τοῦ δράματος, ἡ δὲ δεξιὰ τοῦ δευτεραγωνιστοῦντος καταγώγιον· ἡ δ' ἀριστερὰ τὸ εὐτελέστατον ἔχει πρόσωπον ἢ ἱερὸν ἐξηρημωμένον, ἢ ἄοικός ἐστιν. ἐν δὲ τραγῳδίᾳ ἡ μὲν δεξιὰ θύρα ξενών ἐστιν, εἰρκτὴ δ' ἡ λαιά.
>
> Of the three doors in the backdrop the middle one is a palace or cave or famous house or is entirely given over to the protagonist of the drama. The one on the right (stage right)[2] is where the deuteragonist lives. The one on the left has the poorest appearance (or: belongs to the poorest character) or is an uninhabited temple, or is not a house. In tragedy the door on the right is a guest house, the one on the left is an inner room[3].

This has limited relevance for Menander's stage. That the central door is a 'palace' or the dwelling of the 'protagonist' clearly applies more to tragedy than to Menander's comedy, revolving as it does around the interaction between two family groups and two houses. It does, however, confirm the vital information that there were three stage doors in both the comic and tragic *skene*[4]. This is confirmed by Vitruvius, writing about Roman theatre architecture: *ipsae autem scaenae suas habent rationes explicitas ita, uti mediae valvae ornatus habeant aulae regiae, dextra ac sinistra hospitalia* (*De arch.* 5,6,8: "The *scaena* itself displays the following scheme. In the centre are double doors decorated like those of a royal palace. At the right and left are the doors of the guest chambers", transl. M.H. Morgan).

[2] It is thought that Pollux means 'stage right' here, but it is not certain: see HANDLEY 1965.

[3] On this passage see now, apart from standard works on the ancient theatre, MAUDUIT/MORETTI 2010.

[4] Comic by inference from the *addendum* "In tragedy …", which seems to indicate that the previous remarks applied to both genres.

Little can be gleaned from the rich iconography of New Comedy[5]. Frequently a house-door is depicted, sometimes with someone entering or exiting, or peering out, without any attempt to depict the full complement of doors used in the production. The door depicted presumably relates to the scene being enacted, as in the case of Dioscurides' mosaic of *Theophoroumene*, for example. An exception is the mosaic from Zeugma showing a scene from the first act of *Synaristosai* (*"Women at Lunch"*, which shows three identical doors in the backdrop of the scene (fig. 1; cf. also fig. 2)[6]. There has been discussion of whether the women dining outside these doors are to be imagined as 'really' indoors, having been wheeled out on the *ekkyklema* for the purposes of showing an interior scene, but on the whole that is unlikely. No reason why they shouldn't be dining outside in the street, as people do. The *ekkyklema* would have to be monstrous in size to accommodate the whole company[7].

Scholarship on Menander's use of the third door has been minimal to date[8]. The only play which clearly makes use of a central door is, as already mentioned, *Dyskolos*, whereby this is a 'Cave of the Nymphs' in the play, not a house-door[9]. Some have, however, put out tentative feelers toward recognizing the presence, and use, of a third door. METTE (1965) in his *Lustrum* synopsis of Menandrean studies in the 'sixties of last centuries, considers it likely that a third door was in use in *Sikyonioi*[10], *Adelphoi A* and *Perikeiromene*[11]. WEBSTER (1974, 81) suggested that a third door in *Perikeiromene* was an inn and that *Kolax* may have used it as a shrine or inn. Recently PHILIPPIDES (2019, 302-306) has addressed some comments on the use of the third *skene* door: "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" (p. 303). A study of the 'third house-door' in Roman comedy by LOWE (2016) picked up ideas already advanced by FRICKENHAUS (1917) to argue that Plautus and Terence made considerable use of a third house-door in their plays in contradistinction to their Menandrean models. Frickenhaus had argued that "New Comedy written for the Athenian theatre only used the two outer doors of the skene, having abandoned the central door and with it the *ekkyklema*". The evidence, then, of a third house-door in Plautus and Terence marked an adaptation of Menander's stage. LOWE (2016, 171) writes: "It is still the case that there is no known example of more than

[5] However WILES (1991, 46) draws attention to frescoes from the villa of Sulpicius Rufus in Pompeii showing Roman-style stages of tragedy and comedy respectively. He writes: "The tragic scene displays only a central door, and a life-style statue stands to either side beneath a small colonnade. The comic scene displays domestic doorways to left and right and a statue of a god stands directly in front of the grand central doorway. Both scenes include the central altar, which stands midway between the door and the front of the stage".

[6] Plautus' *Cistellaria*, based on Menander's *Synaristosai*, employed three doors representing three houses.

[7] It is, however, conceivable, that the scene of the women dining in act one was in fact described by someone – the prologue speaker? – and took place inside offstage, like the hair-shearing scene in *Perikeiromene.*

[8] *E.g.* WILES 1991, 46; TRAILL 2001, 88 with n. 7.

[9] HANDLEY 1965, 21 n. 1: "The use of the three doors to represent two houses with a central shrine is well known from Plautus' *Aulularia* and *Curculio*; the *Dys.* now clearly confirms the view that this was a standard arrangement in N[ew] C[omedy]".

[10] TRAILL (2001), however, notes that it cannot have belonged to Malthake.

[11] METTE 1965, 24-35: "Zahl der Häuser".

two private houses being depicted on stage in Greek New Comedy". *Nota bene* "private houses".

In what follows I will be arguing that the third door in Menander's stage was used for a variety of different buildings or establishments, from a temple to an inn or even brothel. In other words, the basic duality of Menandrean plots played out between two households is mediated and complicated by an intermediate institution, which ranges in elevation from the lofty (Pan and the Nymphs) to the low-down. When one considers that the central door in tragedy was used for a palace or other residence of the 'protagonist', I will be arguing that Menander's use of the third, middle, door was a kind of affront to tragedy, a deliberate lowering of what one might call the social register. In other words, another way of taking up a stance against the dominant genre of tragedy.

2. Shrine

2.1. Dyskolos

In the one play which indubitably makes use of three entrance-ways in the *skene*, *Dyskolos*, Pan emerges from the shrine which he shares with the Nymphs to speak the prologue. There he announces himself, that one old curmudgeon Knemon lives, with his farm, "to the right" whilst Gorgias, the son of his ex-wife, lives in a humble property "next door"[12]. The almost universal assumption has been that Pan speaks centre-stage, although Rambelli (1960, 35) argued that Knemon's door (house) will have been centre-stage, with Pan's cave on its right. These 'rights' and 'lefts' have also been open to question. *Probably* Pan's 'right' is audience-left *i.e.* what is known in theatre parlance as 'stage right', and vice versa[13]. Pan's Cave plays a central role in the drama. Knemon's daughter is favoured by the Nymphs with an affluent suitor because she, in turn, honours them devoutly. She meets her future husband when she is out decorating the entrance to the cave with wreaths, and the acquaintanceship advances when the young man, Sostratos, fetches water for her from the Nymphs in a jug. Knemon is irritated by the comings-and-goings at the shrine as they disturb his longing for solitude; he also criticizes the mode of worship of the visitors who are looking more to their own appetites than the gods' honour. At the end of the play he is forced against his will to take part in the wedding celebration for his daughter in the Cave. Visitors to the real Cave of the Nymphs in Phyle in Attica describe its remote location, inaccessibility and ruggedness. The *skene* with its neat row of three entrances, then, as if one was in a country village, is a simplification to suit dramatic convention.

Pan's Cave, then, 'mediates' between the curmudgeonly Knemon and the virtuous farmer Gorgias (who is rewarded in the end by the hand of Kallippides' daughter). Pan's Cave is characterized by celebration, flower-garlands, drinking, dance, marriage. Nor

[12] Knemon's farm is on 'his right': τὸν ἀγρὸν δὲ τὸν ἐπὶ δεξί' οἰκεῖ τουτονὶ / Κνήμων (ll. 5-6); Gorgias and his mother have a small patch of land neighboring on this: χωρίδιον / τούτωι δ' ὑπάρχον ἦν τι μικρὸν ἐνθαδὶ / ἐν γειτόνων (ll. 23-25). We await Antonis Petrides' forthcoming commentary on the *Dyskolos* for further clarification.

[13] Rzepkowski (2012) argues persuasively that Knemon's house was probably audience *right* of Pan's Cave, and Gorgias' audience left, Pan's grotto centre.

should one forget that Pan's own connection with the Nymphs is one of lust and merrymaking. Knemon's house, on the other hand, comes to symbolize Knemon's own refusenik personality[14]. He refuses company, converse, commerce. He refuses to lend a kitchen utensil for the sacrifice conducted by Sostratos' mother, who has dreamt of Pan. At the end, suitably chastized after his narrow escape from the well, he still refuses to join the merry company celebrating in the Cave, until he is forced. Before we see in Pan's Cave, however, a higher, more ideal instance contrasting with the human players with all their faults, one should recognize the god's shrine for what it is: a place of human celebration and indulgence sanctioned by a rustic god who shows the way with his lusty carryings-on. When we move to the second topic, third door as inn, one may see that Pan's Cave in *Dyskolos* is not a kind of pilgrim's sanctuary to absolve humans of their sins, but rather a focus of revelry and pleasure. The description of the celebration within by Sikon at the end makes that clear (ll. 943-954):

> It was time for the libation. Beds of straw had already been made. I (*scil.* had arranged) the tables […]. Someone else tipped a flask of the old-man wine-god into a bowl, added water from the Nymphs, and handed it round to the men in a circle, while another served the women. It went down like water on sand. You get me? Then a good-looking serving-girl became tipsy, and, with a garland of flowers, began a sexy, rhythmic dance, suggestive and coy at the same time. Then another girl joined hands with her and danced along.

2.2. Leukadia

The situation in *Leukadia* (*"Girl from Leukas"*) may have been analogous to *Dyskolos* in that a sanctuary of Apollo certainly featured in the *skene*, which in real life would have been sheer and separate from settlement, but on stage was presumably flanked by the obligatory private houses, although we do not know whose in this case[15]. A temple attendant, *zakoros*[16], emerges from the sanctuary to chant suitably ritual anapaestic dimeters[17], while lines are preserved of a female character's description of how the audience are to imagine the cliff-top site (ll. 1-3):

> Ἄ]πολλον, εἰς [οἷο]ν κατωικίσθης τό[πον,
> ἅ]παντα πέτρα καὶ θάλαττ' ἐστὶν κ[άτω
> ἰ]δεῖν φοβερά τ[ι]ς.

(**Girl**)
O Apollo, what a place you have chosen to reside! It's all rock and the sea is a frighteningly long way down there!

[14] Cf. TRAILL 2001.
[15] The girl here is also "fetching water" from the shrine, like Knemon's daughter (l. 6). For the latest study of the meagre fragments of the *Leukadia*, see PETRIDES 2021.
[16] Addressed in l. 7 as μῆτερ, so not young.
[17] Lines 11-16, on the subject of 'Lover's Leap', where Sappho once jumped in lover's despair over Phaon.

2.3. Other Plays

The stage of *Aspis* may have featured a shrine of Tyche between the two houses, from which the goddess emerges to speak the prologue (Ireland 2011). Plautus' *Aulularia* (*"Little Pot"*) featured to left and right the houses of Megadorus and Euclio and between them a shrine of *Fides*, "Faith", with an altar before it. There has been debate about the Greek original of the play; possibly it was Menander's *Apistos* (*"Faithless"*)[18]. If so, there might have been a comparable shrine, of Pistis, for example, or, as Wiles (1991, 46) suggests, Peitho. Otherwise it has been suggested that *Sikyonioi*[19] and *Kolax*[20] may have featured an on-stage shrine/temple, perhaps centre-stage. That of *Sikyonioi* would have been connected with the Eleusinian cult, presumably.

3. Inn

3.1. Theophoroumene

A combination of pictorial record and fragmentary text makes it inevitable that an inn – or possibly brothel – featured in *Theophoroumene* (*"The Girl Possessed"*), although in Dioscurides of Samos' mosaic (found in Pompeii) and its derivates, there is only one door depicted, not a row of three, or even two[21]. This matches the iconographic tendency, however, only to depict a door which is relevant to a particular scene.

This links up with lines spoken by (?)Lysias in a surviving fragment (*PSI* XII 1280, ll. 27-29 Handley) to a flute-player pictured in the mosaic: "You play a tune of metroac music, or rather corybantic. Stand here by the door of the inn" (μητρὸς θεῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ κορυβάντ[ων σύ μοι / αὔλει. παράστα δ' ἐνθαδὶ πρὸς τὰς θύρας / τοῦ πανδοκείου). The idea is to test whether the girl is really possessed by the Great Mother by playing suitable ritual music. If she is, she should respond by coming out of the door and joining in the dance. It is certain that this particular door does not belong to a private house.

3.2. Misoumenos

New discoveries of text[22] have enabled further reconstruction of the text of the third act of *Misoumenos* which makes it highly probable that the third stage door in this play represented an inn where a drinking party was being held. The private houses of the *skene* are those of Thrasonides and his neighbour Kleinias, where Demeas is staying. Thrasonides excludes himself from his own home as Krateia rejects him and there is no question of his staying with Kleinias. In the third act, Getas announces he's returning to a drinking party (ll. 548-550: ἔπειτα πρ̣ὸς̣ κ[ο]τύ̣λ̣ας ἄ̣π̣[ειμι κ]α̣τ̣αλ̣ιπ̣[ὼν …), then a

[18] Cf. Webster 1974, 81, 119. For discussion of the Greek original of *Aulularia*, see Blume 1998, 164-165, and Hunter 2008; and on the position of the temple on its stage, see Philippides 2015, 142-143.
[19] Cf. Favi 2021.
[20] Cf. Webster 1974, 81.
[21] Austin (2013, 37) postulates an inn. For the pictorial record, focussing on the identification of a new fragment, see Nervegna 2010; for study of the textual remains, see Handley 1969.
[22] *P.Oxy.* 5198 and 5199 (Henry, Parsons, Prauscello *P.Oxy.* 2014) combine with already known text. See Furley 2021a.

little later he enters once more – from the door of the inn, we can now assume – and says, by way of introduction: "Who's master drinking with actually? One can believe anything there!" (ll. 557-558: μετὰ τίνων πίν[ε]ι ποτὲ / ὁ δε[σπότ]ης; ἐντ[αῦ]θ' ἄπιστον οὐδ[ὲ ἕν).

The interior scene which Getas goes on to describe is riddled with uncertainties as the text is so damaged but surviving words point to song by a striking singer, toasts proposed and then a peculiar approach to Thrasonides by someone apparently with evil intent ([μαρός]). This points toward some plot against Thrasonides but we cannot reconstruct its significance. Then Getas announces that he will return inside to keep a watch on goings-on: "I'll go inside and try to observe secretly what's going on and being said" (ll. 573-575: β]αδιοῦμ' εἴσω δὲ καὶ πειράσομαι / κρύπτω]ν ἐμαυτὸν ἐπιθεωρῆσαί τι τῶν / ποιουμέ]νων ἔνδον λαλουμένων θ' ἅμα). This makes it clear that the inn door is in the *skene* and not offstage. It is a reasonable assumption that it was centre-stage, between the houses of Thrasonides and Kleinias. Although details are obscure, this third interior permits Menander to develop themes (some personal animosity) which would be less likely to occur in a private house or in the street (drinking was indoors). In other words, a third locus, one might call it, emerges, opening a window onto conviviality (in the case of *Dyskolos*) and intrigue in this play. It is also significant that Thrasonides remains on 'neutral' territory, as it were, while Krateia nurses her animosity toward him in his house, and her father lodges next door with Kleinias. This arrangement sets up a triangle of relations rather than a simple opposition.

3.3. Perikeiromene

The situation is, in my opinion, parallel in another of Menander's soldier plays, *Perikeiromene*. Here the two private houses are those of the mercenary Polemon and his neighbour Myrrhine, where Moschion also lives[23]. After the falling out between Polemon and Glykera through jealousy, Glykera makes off to Myrrhine next door and Polemon clearly tries to drown his sorrows by drinking with friends. His man Sosias says in ll. 175-177: "His friends have met up together to help him bear the matter more lightly (*i.e.* by drinking)" (συνηγμένοι / εἰς ταὐτόν εἰσιν οἱ συνήθεις τοῦ φέρειν / αὐτὸν τὸ πρᾶγμα ῥᾷον). Sosias explains that Polemon has now sent him to spy out the lie of the land under the pretext of fetching a coat (ll. 177-179: οὐκ ἔχων δ' ὅπως / τἀνταῦθ' ἀκο[ύσ]ηι γινόμεν' ἐκπέπομφέ με / ἱμάτιον οἴσοντ' ἐξεπίτηδες). When Polemon appears later with the assault party to storm Myrrhine's house and capture Glykera, in an altercation with Pataikos he admits he has been drinking (ll. 470-471: ἧττον; ὃς πέπωκ' ἴσως / κοτύλην κτλ.). Now it is possible that the place where the friends are meeting and drinking is offstage but it is equally possible that it is behind the third door, as in *Misoumenos*[24]. If the suggestion is accepted, it rules out Pataikos being the owner of a third stage house, as has sometimes been mooted.

[23] For text and commentary, see FURLEY 2015.

[24] WEBSTER (1974, 81) already suggested that the third stage door in both *Perikeiromene* and *Kolax* was probably that of an inn.

The case is strengthened if *P.Oxy.* 2658 is accepted as belonging to *Perikeiromene*, as I have argued in my edition of the play (2015), but has subsequently been questioned, but not rejected outright, by PRAUSCELLO/PARSONS (2020). The main arguments for attribution to *Perikeiromene* are the mention of a Doris (l. 4) and possibly Glykera herself (l. 18: suggested by Turner but rejected by Parsons and Prauscello). The γραῦς in l. 5 might be Myrrhine; the ἦθος φιλάδελφον in l. 3 might refer to Moschion's love for Glykera. If these pointers are considered sufficient evidence, then someone – presumably Polemon – emerges in l. 14 and talks about an "inn-keeper" (κάπηλος ούτοσί), a "jug of wine" and a "cup" (ll. 15-16: οἴνου χόα … κοτύλην δ' ἔχων). In this play, too, then, one would have a third *locus* for Polemon's activities following the estrangement from Glykera. Here he is in a kind of limbo, drinking with companions, before making up with Glykera at the end and returning to his house with her as man and wife. I would say that Menander's introduction of an inn (pub) into proceedings is a further step in the direction of realism in everyday life in New Comedy after the phantasmagoria of Old Comedy and the pomp and grandeur of tragedy[25].

4. Brothel

4.1. Dis Exapaton

The inn in *Theophoroumene* may in fact already have been seen – by playwright and audience – as a *porneion*, as someone addresses the girl concerned rudely as ἱππόπορνε (l. 19). It is likely that *Dis Exapaton* featured a *porneion* by comparison with its companion piece, Plautus' *Bacchides*, which certainly did (l. 1210); traditionally this has been referred to as "Bacchis' house" but the goings-on inside – carousing and lying on couches with girls – makes it clear that this was a house of pleasure rather than a normal private house. When the tutor Lydus, for example, asks Pistoclerus who lives in "Bacchis' house", he receives the answer: "Love, Pleasure, the Goddess of Love, Voluptuousness, Celebration, Joking, Gaming, Talk and Great Entertainment" (ll. 114-115: *Amor, Voluptas, Venus, Venustas, Gaudium, / Iocus, Ludus, Sermo, Suauis auiatio*). Whether there were two other private houses depicted on stage is entirely unclear. Editors of *Bacchides* tend to the view that only the house of Philoxenus and his son Pistoclerus will have featured on the stage facade, while Nicobulus' house will have been offstage right in the direction of the forum[26]. If that is right, and applicable to *Dis Exapaton* as well, there will have been only two stage doors in operation, one a house of "ill repute". It is the scene of carousing, love-making and, finally, festivity when the sister Bacchis arrives from Samos. However, even if Nicobulus' house is offstage it is a still a pole of the action, with "Bacchis' house" taking centre-stage of the drama, at least.

[25] Of course, if the fragment belongs to another play it would be evidence of an inn in that play! *Encheiridion* has been suggested, but ARNOTT (1996, 364) prefers *Perikeiromene*, although he suggests it may have belonged at the beginning of the third act instead of the fifth, as I suggest. That there was an inn in *Encheiridion* is suggested by *PSI* I 99 col. I l. 3 πανδοκείωι· μανθάνω, "(in?) an inn – I see".
[26] See ROSIVACH 1986.

4.2. Epitrepontes

The conventional view here is that two houses featured on the stage, those of Charisios and his friend Chairestratos[27]. After the falling out between Charisios and Pamphile one has believed that Charisios left his own home and moved in with Chairestratos next door, where the drinking and womanizing take place in the piece. There are some pretty stark pointers, however, that things may not have been so simple. Large sections of the play are still missing and the gaps leave much uncertainty. The question is: where did Charisios take up with Habrotonon, the *psaltria* of the piece? Did he hire her and then take her to Chairestratos' house and more-or-less cohabit there with her? Perhaps.

Twice Charisios is said to be *apokoitos*, "sleeping away from home" (l. 136 and O14 vi.2), and paying a pimp 12 dr. a day for the services of an escort (Habrotonon). At one point the father-in-law Smikrines avers that Charisios has "ruined his life in brothels" (l. 694: καταφθαρείς τ᾽ ἐ‹ν› ματρυλ‹ε›ίωι τὸν βίον). Of course, Charisios' relationship with Habrotonon could be purely occasional with no element of permanence or stability. Then Smikrines points out to Pamphile that Charisios will be the ruination of their marriage as he will have to pay for two different celebrations of women's festivals such as the Skira and the Thesmophoria (ll. 749-750: τὴν πολυτέλειαν. Θεσμοφόρια δὶς τίθει, / Σκίρα δίς· τὸν ὄλεθρον τοῦ βίου καταμάνθανε). Then, in the newly restored section, in which Smikrines and Pamphile argue it out whether she should stand by Charisios or follow her father's advice to leave him and remarry, things get even more concrete. Pamphile quotes an accusation made by her father earlier in their dispute: "(*scil.* You say) he'll live in two different houses under compulsion from her and pay her more attention (*scil.* than you) … " (ll. 822-823: δύ᾽ οἰκίας οἰκοῦνθ᾽ ὑπ᾽ [ἐκ]είνης ἀγόμε[νον, / προσέχοντ᾽ ἐκείνη μᾶλ[λον] αἰσθάν[οιό] γ᾽[ἄ]ν).

Admittedly, Smikrines could be speaking hypothetically, picturing the situation Pamphile will find herself in if she sticks with Charisios. She'll be sharing her husband with another woman who'll be her rival in everything. The 'other house' which Smikrines imagines may be purely a figment of his imagination, not present as part of the *skene*. All true, and I hesitate to claim the tentative hypothesis I am advancing here as proven. However, let us say that even if the brothel is not part of the stage scenery, it is a real entity in the concept of the piece. Charisios has really taken up with Habrotonon (but not slept with her) and is really sleeping away from home. It is only Pamphile's fidelity and good heart which saves the marriage, when Charisios comes to understand her true qualities – and that the baby is really his! The preserved action of the play certainly takes place in/outside the houses of Charisios and Chairestratos. The hitherto unidentified baby which is the source of such tension is definitely being kept in Chairestratos' house, where, at one point, it is held and coddled by Habrotonon (ll. 853ff.). The central door may have represented Habroton's 'establishment' from which Charisios hired her and where Smikrines imagines him cohabiting with her. That the *porneion* as locus plays an important part in the drama, whether visually or merely figuratively, is not in doubt.

[27] For text and commentary of the play, see FURLEY 2009; for the revision following discovery of new fragments, see FURLEY 2021b.

5. Conclusions

The first point to be noted is that New Comedy's use of the 'third door' is diametrically opposed to that of tragedy: there it was the house or palace of the central character (*e.g.* Oedipus), here it is 'something else', as we have seen: a god's shrine, an inn or a house 'of ill repute'. Of course, the change also concerns the social structure, too: now the action concerns the *inter*action between two families rather than tragedy's concentration on the fall, or near fall, of one great house. Spatially, too, the third door of New Comedy represents a division between the neighbouring houses, a way of constructing a street rather than just two entrance-ways. In New Comedy actors can walk up and down this street, conversing, as though they were really walking along a street with many houses. There are more possibilities for them to duck down into entrances to avoid being seen, or to eavesdrop. The exits and entrances become more complex and frequent in New Comedy compared to tragedy. A scene such as that played out in *Samia* between Demeas and Nikeratos in act four or between Getas and Kleinias in act four of *Misoumenos*, with rapid, alternating comings and goings, is not possible in tragedy. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the nature of the third entrance marks a real departure from tragedy. An inn or even brothel lowers the tone considerably toward the nitty-gritty of real life compared to the lofty tone of heroic myth. True, a god's shrine belongs to a higher register, and corresponds to the divine back-stage direction of the plot such as we find in *Dyskolos* by Pan or *Perikeiromene* by Agnoia. However, Pan's grotto in *Dyskolos* is also the scene of festivity with feasting, drinking and lewd dancing by girls, so not much different to an inn, in fact.

The third door also offers a *refugium* for a central character when there is a crisis at home: that can be observed in *Misoumenos* almost certainly, *Perikeiromene* probably, and in *Epitrepontes* possibly or figuratively (Charisios co-habiting with Habrotonon in Smikrines' imagination). Again, this gives a third dimension to the two-dimensional view of stage-space which has dominated our thinking about New Comedy to date. Of course, that thinking reflects the state of preservation of Menander's plays – not to speak of his colleagues and rivals in the art. It was mentioned that the third door is a better known entity in Roman comedy, as the plays are better preserved; hitherto one thought that the Romans may have been innovating on Menander here, but I would argue that probably not.

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Fig. 1 A scene from the first act of Menander's *Synaristosai* in a mosaic from Zeugma.

Fig. 2 The South Theatre in Gerasa/Jarash.