MYSTERY ELEMENTS IN MENANDER'S *DYSCOLUS*

EVA KEULS
Howard University

In the Prologue of Menander's *Dyscolus*, Pan, whose scheming is the moving force behind the plot of the comedy, introduces the main hero Cnemo as a degenerated human being (ἀπάνθρωπός τις ἄνθρωπος) and hateful soul (5–11). This description, it turns out, misses the keynote of Cnemo's character, namely his moralism.[1] For Cnemo makes it clear that he has withdrawn from his fellow men in despair over their all-too-real selfishness and greed (718–21). Within the plot, his outburst against the sacrificers at Phyle, who keep the choicest part of the victims for their own dinner, is motivated by righteous indignation (447–55). Sostratus rightly refers to Cnemo as an "evil-hater" (μισοπόνηρος 387). Being a moralist at heart, Cnemo knows that he must pay a price for the ethical superiority to which he clings, and the price is that of self-imposed labor. This element of labor as a form of self-castigation recurs in the *Heauton Timoroumenos* of Menander, as shown by Terence's adaptation.[2] The motif of "work fever" separates the tale of Cnemo from the perennial legend of Timon of Athens, to which it is in other respects quite similar.[3] For the poverty of Cnemo, unlike that of Timon,[4] is not the result of his fellow men's

N.B. Unless otherwise noted, the text cited is that of H. Lloyd-Jones in the *OCT*.

[1] Expressed particularly in lines 742–45. Cf. W. Goerler, "Knemon," *Hermes* 91 (1963) 268–87.

[2] Terence, *Heauton Timorumenos* 11–17. Terence's words *fodere aut arare aut aliquid ferre* closely echo lines 31–32 of the Dyscolus: ξυλοφορῶν σκάπτων τ', ἀεὶ πονῶν. In Menander's *Georgos* the same theme occurs of a prosperous farmer voluntarily undertaking hard labor (65–66), but the reason is not clear from the fragments.

[3] Wolfgang Schmid, "Menander und die Timonlegende," *RhM* 102 (1959) 157–82. References to Timon in Old Comedy: Aristophanes, *Aves* 1549, *Lys.* 809; Phrynichus, *Monotropus* fr. 18 (Kock).

[4] Cf. Lucian's treatment of the Timon legend, in which the moral lesson taught

misdeeds but voluntary: Cnemo has a comfortable estate[5] and is poor only in comparison with the wealthy Kallipides. Cnemo, in other words, is not so much a misanthrope as a cynic,[6] who believes in self-sufficiency and moral regeneration through labor. In the play's presentation, Cnemo's human shortcoming lies not in his scorn for the human race but in his illusion that he can successfully barricade himself against its evil. Accordingly, as the plot develops, he is cured, not of his bad temper, which is only momentarily suppressed, but of his dream of *autarkeia* or self-sufficiency.[7]

He falls down a well-shaft, and while several members of the cast voice their indifference to his fate (629–34, 669–83), he has a little time to ponder his dependency on outside help, then is rescued by his stepson Gorgias. The helplessness of the single human individual is further dramatized in a teasing scene (912–31), in which the crippled Cnemo is delivered up to the vengeful pranks of servants.[8]

In his long recantation monologue (711–35) it is his illusion of self-sufficiency which Cnemo first denounces, using the important cynic term *αὐταρκής*.[9] Cnemo's share in the happy ending consists of the abandonment of his isolation: he takes his estranged wife back. The Dyscolus himself, then, is taught a moral lesson through an ordeal of fear and humiliation.

Intertwined with this tale is another story of a human shortcoming and its correction, namely that of the romantic hero Sostratus. For the second moral lesson the stage is more elaborately set. Sostratus

Timon by poverty is that wealth should be managed with prudence, not squandered: Lucian, *Timon* 121. See also Alciphron, *Ep.* 3.34 (Timon driven into poverty). For other late classical treatments of the Dyscolus-Timon theme see Schmid (above, note 3); J. M. Jacques, *Bulletin de l'Association Budé* 1959, 200–15.

[5] Line 327. So Menedemus in Terence, *H.T.* 11–12. Cleainetos in the *Georgos* owns a farm (47) and slaves (56).

[6] Cf. Claire Préaux, *Chronique d'Egypte* 34 (1959) 340; Goerler (above, note 1) 286.

[7] Cf. J. C. Kamerbeek, *Mnemosyne* 4th ser., 12 (1959) 126.

[8] The theme of helplessness esp. in 934: *οὐδεὶς βοηθός σοι πάρεστι*. The motif of Cnemo's injury is an adaptation of the Timon legend according to which Timon fell out of a wild pear-tree (cf. the wild pears in *Dyscolus* 101, 121), was crippled, and died for lack of care. Schol. Ar. *Lys.* 808; Schmid (above, note 3) 161.

[9] On the philosophical principle of *autarkeia*, which Menander probably knew from the Peripatetic school, see F. Stoessl, *Menander, Dyskolos, Kommentar* (Paderborn 1965) note to line 714; Goerler (above, note 1) 286; I. Trenczényi-Waldapfel, *Acta Antiqua* 10 (1962) 288.

is the son of a gentleman farmer from the same region of Phyle where the action takes place, but we are informed from the very beginning that he lives a life of luxury in the city; he is ἀστικὸς τῇ διατριβῇ (41). The occasion of his visit home is not connected with the management of his father's estate but an elegant hunting expedition (42–43). Much mention is made throughout of his expensive clothes and soft habits (e.g. 257, 365, 766). Sostratus must rediscover the merits of rural simplicity and hard labor before he can earn his bride.[10] His ordeal consists of an afternoon of hard digging in a rocky soil[11] with a pick he can hardly lift. That the image of this chastening experience was prior in the author's mind to the working out of its logic, seems indicated by the awkwardness with which it was adapted to the plot.

The ordeal of Sostratus has been foretold to his mother in a dream (412–17) in which she sees Pan chaining her son's feet as if for labor in a slave gang, handing him a goatskin jerkin and pick and ordering him to start digging. The shackles[12] are no more mentioned, but have an equivalent in the ordeal as it actually takes place in that Sostratus takes over his chore from a slave, thereby suffering humiliation as well as hardship. The goatskin likewise does not reappear in the text, but the dialogue[13] suggests that Sostratus in fact does don it

[10] The bride herself is praised for her good character, molded by rural simplicity (34–36, 384–89). The theme of the "moral benefits of country life" is also evident in Menander fr. 408 (Kock, Edmonds): ἀρ' ἐστὶν ἀρετῆς καὶ βίου διδάσκαλος ἐλευθέρου τοῖς πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἀγρός. The principle of "ennobling poverty" also in Ar. *Plutus* 576, with which play the *Dyscolus* has many similarities, including one line (*Dyscolus* 152, *Plutus* 252). For another view of the motif of rusticity in the *Dyscolus*, see J. M. Jacques (above, note 4) 211, 214.

[11] The stoniness of the area around Phyle, which aggravates Sostrates' ordeal, is established early by Pan, 3–4. Cf. line 604.

[12] περικρούειν τὰς πέδας, universally accepted emendation for the meaningless παῖδας. Cf. below, note 35. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 3.10, states that Pan and the nymphs often appear in dream visions with shackled feet, but gives no explanation for this tradition. On the role of Pan in the *Dyscolus* see C. Gallini, "La follia panica," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 32 (1961) 225–31. For a metaphorical interpretation of the dream vision see Stoessl (above, note 9) note to line 414, who holds the fetters to be symbolic "shackles of love."

[13] 552 (Geta fails to recognize Sostratus at first sight); 559 (Sostratus: ". . . going over just as I am"); 616 (Sostratus to Davus: "pick up these things and take them home"). "These things" probably included the διφθέρα of Sostratus, as the picks alone would be feminine. Schmid (above, note 3) 175 note 59; V. Martin, *editio princeps* 616.

for the ordeal, and so several scholars conclude.[14] The reason why Menander makes no further specific reference to this symbol of rustic poverty may be that it was, as we know from Pollux,[15] traditionally associated with *old* rustic characters. It is the pick or δίκελλα (about which more below) which is both the intrument and the symbol of the ordeal.

The trial of Sostratus, first announced by Pan, is then integrated into the logic of the situation, but the author does not succeed in fitting it in smoothly, thereby revealing that the concept of the ordeal was father to the plot. After Sostratus has convinced Gorgias that his intentions are honorable (304 ff.) and won his support, Gorgias suggests the digging expedition. The reasons given for it are twofold: First, it will create an opportunity for a seemingly casual encounter on the adjoining fields (353–54), and second, Sostratus' masquerade will delude the old man into thinking that he is a working boy (356 ff.) and not a spoiled loafer.[16] The old man, however, never appears on the scene, and yet Sostratus digs away lustily until his back almost breaks.[17] Moreover, this scheme to bamboozle an old man does not

[14] Stoessl (above, note 9) notes to lines 356 and 370; Max Treu, *Dyscolus* (Munich 1960) 523.

[15] *Onomasticon* 4.137–39, according to which διφθερίας (fem. διφθερίτις) was a *terminus technicus* of the theatre for an "old" rustic servant or subordinate. Pollux probably meant "mature": cf. the use of the term διφθέρα in Ar. *Nub.* 72, *Eccl.* 80, *Vesp.* 444. Varro, *De re rustica* 2.11.11, is aware of the role of the garment in comedy as a voluntarily assumed symbol and cites Terence's *H.T.* and Caecilius' *Hypobolimaeus*, also based on Menander. Although the term διφθέρα apparently belonged essentially to the theatre, the goatskin itself has obvious, more direct Dionysiac connotations, and was probably worn in some rites, perhaps in lieu of the traditional νέβρις or fawnskin. Cf. J. E. Harrison, *Themis*[2] (New York 1962) 209–10. Late evidence: a goatskin worn by an initiant in a Dionysiac mystery scene from the second century A.D., R. Turcan, *Les Sarcophages romains à représentations Dionysiaques* (Paris 1966) 546 and note 8; F. Matz, *Dionysiake Telete* (Wiesbaden 1963) number 14, plate 22b. An inscription from Smyrna also dating from the second century A.D. shows that a certain grade of initiates wore a σάκος (or σάκκος), a garment of coarse goathair (they were designated as σακηφόροι μύσται): *Oesterreichische Jahreshefte* 23 (1926), Beiblatt, 265 = *SIG* IV 522. Cf. M. P. Nilsson, *Eranos* 53 (1955) 28.

[16] Stoessl (above, note 9) note to line 356, points to the moralizing connotations of the word τρυφάω and its cognates in Menander.

[17] The expedition later achieves some measure of result in an uncalculated way: Cnemo observes Sostratus' suntan and concludes from it that he works in the fields (754). Cf. the motif of the suntan as the symbol of honest labor in Sosicrates' *Parakatatheke*, fr. 1 (Kock); see below, note 22.

seem worthy of the forethought of Pan (which the dream vision had established). Indeed, later in the play Gorgias reveals that there was a more meaningful purpose behind the exploit. In what sounds somewhat like a commencement address, he says to Sostratus:

> You didn't think yourself too good to undertake anything for the sake of this marriage. Though used to luxury, you took up the pick and dug, and were willing to toil.... You have given the required proof of character. May you continue to be such (765–71).

In other words, Sostratus, too, is given a moral lesson through an ordeal. The symbol of this beneficial toil, the pick or δίκελλα, deserves further attention.[18] In post-classical literature it is a recurrent symbol of rustic hard labor, frequently with overtones of penance or moral improvement.[19] This symbolic instrument was a two-pronged hoe, the prongs providing the special implication of soil too hard and stony for either the plough or the undented blade of an ordinary hoe.[20]

It is a recurrent feature in Menander: in the *Georgos* (66) it fulfils a similar role and in the *Heauton Timoroumenos* it is the symbol of Menedemus' penance, as shown in Terence's adaptation where it is found under the name of *rastri* (88, 931).[21] It was not, however, the monopoly of Menander among New Comedy authors, as it occurs in a fragment of Sosicrates in the same antithesis to "living the soft life" (τρυφάω).[22] Confirmation that in later ages the δίκελλα was a conventional byword for praiseworthy toil is found in Achilles Tatius (1.1.6), who echoes a Homeric simile describing a gardener at work (*Iliad* 21.257–59), but replaces the Homeric μάκελλα or single-

[18] Cf. Stoessl (above, note 9) note to line 375, for the δίκελλα as a byword for hard labor. Stoessl does not bring out the moralizing tendency of many of the literary passages in which the implement occurs.

[19] In classical times the implement does not appear to have had this connotation. In Euripides (*HF* 944 and *Phoen.* 1155) it is an instrument of destruction, in Soph. *Antigone* 250 a tool for digging a grave. In Aesch. fr. 196 Nauck it is an agricultural implement put in antithesis to the plough, but the fragment does not reveal any moralizing tendency. Similarly in Ar. *Pax* 570.

[20] The scholia to Aratus, *Phainomena* 8, provide an etymology for the term: μάκελλα ἡ μονόθεν κέλλουσα, ὅ ἐστι τέμνουσα, δίκελλα δὲ ἡ διχόθεν.

[21] Other literary references to the δίκελλα as a symbol of rustic labor with moralizing tendency: Alciphron 2.21.3; Lucian, *Timon* 114 *et passim*.

[22] *Parakatatheke* fr. 1 (Kock) = Pollux 9.57. A moralizing tendency is not apparent in the Sosicrates fragment: ὅταν γὰρ οἶμαι, λευκὸς ἄνθρωπος παχὺς ἀργὸς λαβῇ δίκελλαν, εἰωθὼς τρυφᾶν, πενταστάτηρον, γίγνεται τὸ πνεῦμα ἄνω.

bladed hoe with the later δίκελλα. To my knowledge the two-pronged hoe is not attested as an actual farm implement, but that the δίκελλα of our literary passages was such and not a mattock is shown by the Latin equivalent of *rastri* in Ovid, *Met.* 13.765, where it serves as a comb for Polyphemus.

This symbolic implement, for which German scholars coined the translation "Doppelhacke," is found on a number of representations, most of them on Hellenistic gems, of the Eros-and-Psyche cycle.[23] Both Eros and Psyche are portrayed as wielding the δίκελλα (though not together[24]). In almost all of these the motif of the two-pronged hoe is combined with that of shackles, which is also a frequent aspect of the iconography of the Eros-and-Psyche myth.[25] The combination of these two themes of hoe and shackles establishes a clear tie between the dream vision in the *Dyscolus*, the iconography of the Eros-and-Psyche myth (though not with the myth's version as found in Apuleius), and the scene in Achilles Tatius where Melitte and her guests, in the garden of her country estate, meet Lacaina-alias-Leucippe, fallen into slavery and "bound in heavy fetters and wielding a two-pronged hoe" (5.17.2).

The dependency of the Eros-and-Psyche myth on mystery symbolism has long been argued.[26] That this myth was linked to the rites of Dionysus in a general way is quite clear from the frequent Dionysiac allusions in its extant pictorial renderings.[27] At least one secure iconographic link between the Eros-and-Psyche myth and (specifically)

[23] E. Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen* (Berlin 1900) plates 25, 9; 57, 9; 57, 12; 64, 68. R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich and Berlin 1962) Tafel I (= O. Jahn, *Berichte der königl. sächs. Gesellsch. der Wiss. in Leipzig, phil.-hist. Klasse* 185, Tafel VI) numbers 4 and 11.

[24] A regular hoe also occurs in the context of the Cupid-and-Psyche myth, in the well-known Pompeiian wall painting known as the "Punished Amor," Merkelbach (above, note 23) Tafel IV; K. Schefold, *Die Wände Pompeiis* (Berlin 1957) 172; B. Maiuri, *Museo Nazionale di Napoli* (Novara 1957) 100.

[25] Merkelbach (above, note 23) 27 note 1; 28 note 1; Tafel I, numbers 2 and 3; Tafel II, number 3.

[26] F. Creutzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (Leipzig 1842) 3.161 ff.; Georg Heinrici, "Zur Geschichte der Psyche" (1897), *Amor und Psyche*, edd. Binder-Merkelbach, 73 ff.; R. Merkelbach, "Eros und Psyche" (1958), *ibidem* 395–97.

[27] A. Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen* (Berlin 1900) 3.329–30, plate 57, number 15. Maxime Collignon, *Essai sur les monuments grecs et romains relatifs au mythe de Psyche* (Paris 1877) 332–37.

the Dionysiac initiation rites is established by a sardonyx cameo, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts:[28] it shows the mystic wedding of Psyche and Eros, with an attendant holding the Dionysiac *liknon* of initiation.

The motifs of the shackles and the hoe which the *Dyscolus* shares with the Psyche myth strongly point to cultic rites as Menander's source of inspiration. Reinhold Merkelbach ([above, note 23] 26, 141) traces these very motifs in the Psyche myth and in Achilles Tatius to initiation ordeals. That these themes were modeled after specific mystery proceedings at present seems impossible to prove, but a general parallelism between these various tales of toil, humiliation, and ultimate salvation and the mystery rites is hard to ignore.

The two ordeals and redemptions of Cnemo and Sostratus form distinct subplots in the *Dyscolus*.[29] The author, possibly wary of dichotomy in the play's structure, tied the two tales together by a common symbol, the selfsame hoe. For Cnemo, who has assumed the hardships of the simple life, also possesses a δίκελλα. At a given moment he looks for it to shovel some dung (an appropriately humiliating occupation) in order to retrieve a bucket. Cnemo, in his stubborn *autarkeia*, decides to salvage both bucket and hoe himself, and it is this attempt which lands him at the bottom of the well.[30] The device of the common symbol is somewhat strained, as the pronged hoe is not a suitable implement for shoveling and clearly more at home in the ordeal of Sostratus than in that of Cnemo.

When isolated from the remainder of the plot, the two tales of ordeal and salvation sound unmistakable echoes of initiation rituals. The most prevalent common features of these, as revealed by our scanty literary sources, are ordeals of toil,[31] terrors of the underworld undergone in underground chambers, humiliation, and considerable

[28] Furtwängler (above, note 23) plate 57, number 11; Otto Waser, *Roschers Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* 3.3249, fig. 24.

[29] Cf. the two antithetical subplots in the *Adelphoe* as adapted by Terence.

[30] Cf. the fragments of the *Georgos*. Here, too, the δίκελλα is the symbol of self-imposed labor, but it serves at the same time as the instrument with which Cleainetos inflicts a dangerous wound on himself. Lucian's Timon (147–60) threatens unwanted visitors with his symbolic hoe.

[31] For the motif of πόνοι elsewhere in Menander (frs. 525 and 622K) see Carlo Diane, *Note in margine sul Dyscolo* (Padua 1959) note to lines 371–72.

teasing.[32] All these have their fictional equivalent in the *Dyscolus*. Sostratus takes over his digging chore from Davus, not, as Stoessl maintains,[33] because the slave is eager to shirk his duty, because in 206–7 Davus joins his master of his own volition, without immediate compulsion.[34] The slave, however, does take a malicious pleasure in Sostratus' discomfort (371–73). After the ordeal, Davus relieves Sostratus of his own accord (541–42). That this added feature of the impersonation of a slave or the "reversal of the social order" is also derived from the mystery rites, is suggested by the frequency of such occurrences in the romances and also by Hippolytus, who speaks metaphorically of the "enslavement" and the "shackles" of applicants for initiation.[35]

Cnemo, too, is socially humiliated (though after the completion of his

[32] On "toils" or πόνοι, see esp. Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profanarum religionum* 22: θαρρεῖτε μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένου, ἔσται γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐκ πόνων σωτηρία; cf. *Dyscolus* 204: τίς ἂν ἐμὲ σῶσαι ἐκ πόνων; cf. the mystic phrase (perhaps an initiation formula) preserved on one of the Orphic tablets from Thurii from the early Hellenistic period (*CIG* XIV 642; cf. below, note 49): χαῖρε παθὼν τὸ πάθημα, τόδ' οὔπω πρόσθε ἐπεπόνθεις, θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου. For the terrors of initiation: Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 4.10: διόπερ ἐξοιμοῖοι τοῖς ἐν ταῖς Βακχικαῖς τελεταῖς τὰ φάσματα καὶ τὰ δείματα παρεισάγουσιν (also 8.48). Cf. M. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries in the Hellenistic Age* (Lund 1957) 122, and *HTR* 46 (1953) 186–87. For the underground chamber used for the ordeals (καταβάσια) Livy 39.13.13, Asterios, *Hom.* 10 (Migne, 40.324). Cf. A.-J. Festugière, "Ce que Tite Live nous apprend sur les mystères de Dionysus," *Mél. d'Arch. et d'Histoire* 66 (1954) 79–99. For the descent (κατάβασις) into Hades in the Orphic-Dionysiac rites, O. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Berlin 1922) frs. 293–96. Cf. *Dyscolus* 598: καταβήσομαι εἰς τὸ φρέαρ. For teasing in the Eleusinian procession see Hesychius s.v. γεφυρίς and γεφυρισταί. L. Deubner, on the other hand (*Attische Feste* [Berlin 1932] 73), denies that the teasing on the way to Eleusis and the banter by the chorus in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 392 ff. had a ritual foundation.

[33] Stoessl (above, note 9) note to line 375.

[34] διατρίβω σοι διακονῶν πάλαι ἐνταῦθ'. ὁ δὲ σκάπτει μόνος. The last words express Davus' concern for his master. (V. Martin in the *editio princeps* holds that Davus here refers to Cnemo.)

[35] In the preface to his *Refutatio omnium haeresium* he announces his intention of revealing mystery secrets in scornful metaphorical language alluding to mystery terminology (*Proem.* 2–5). The term δουλόω he applies repeatedly to the indoctrination of novices before initiation: τὰ ἀπόρρητα μυστήρια ἃ τοῖς μυουμένοις . . . παραδιδόασιν οὐ πρότερον ὁμολογήσαντες εἰ μὴ τὸν τοιοῦτον δουλώσανται; and εἰ μὴ ὁμοίως δουλωθείη. There is a strong suggestion of an actual symbolic rite behind the metaphor. "Shackles" as a specifically Dionysiac symbol of the "toil of the unsaved" also in Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Phaedonem* p. 122 Norvin: ὁ δὲ ζῶν Διονυσιακῶς ἤδη πέπαυται τῶν πόνων καὶ λέλυται τῶν δεσμῶν.

main "ordeal") in the teasing scene (912–31) in which he is tormented by a slave and the hired cook.[36]

In addition to the main theme of salvation through ordeal, several secondary features of the play contribute towards its mystic flavor.

The figure of Gorgias is the perfect literary counterpart of the *boukolos* (in Dionysiac terminology), or the *mystagogos* in Eleusinian language, the guide of the initiants through their ritual.[37] Gorgias, though young, is introduced as "mature through experience" (27–29); he is a rustic, poor but proud, responsible and full of homilies (cf. esp. 271–87). It is he who administers the ordeal to Sostratus, and it is he who, as we have seen, gives the young hero his "diploma." Again, it is Gorgias who rescues Cnemo from the well (allowing enough time for the moral lesson to sink in) and Gorgias speaks to Cnemo the mystic phrase "take heart" (*θάρρει*, 692).

Another specific mystic note is set by Menander in his treatment of the character of the *μάγειρος*. Of the two distinct aspects of this stock character of New Comedy, namely the free entrepreneur boastful of his cooking skill[38] and the ritual slaughterer jealous of his standing as a religious functionary,[39] Menander emphatically chose the latter, less common one.[40]

Upon the assumption of a dependency on a mystic ritual, several oddities of the play become natural. First, there is the fact that Cnemo's well is located *inside* his cottage, as the dialogue firmly establishes.[41] This is unusual for a humble peasant dwelling. However, if a dependency on mystery is presumed, this feature is inescapable, since indoor celebration was one of the most characteristic aspects of the mystery rites. Cnemo's well inside his cottage suggests comparison with the

[36] There is a reminiscence of this scene in Lucian's *Kataplous* 12, where the ghost of the tyrant Megapenthes laments the mocking of his dead body by his household slaves.

[37] Cf. the metaphorical use of the term *mystagogos* in the sense of "spiritual guide" by Menander, fr. 550 Kock = 534a Edmonds. For *βουκόλοι* in the Dionysiac cults, O. Kern, *RE* s.v. 1014–17; Nilsson (above, note 32) 48, 55, 58.

[38] E. M. Rankin, *The role of the Mageiroi in the Life of the Ancient Greeks* (Chicago 1907) 73–77.

[39] Rankin (above, note 38) 55–64. See esp. 56 for the role of *μάγειροι* in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

[40] 644–46: *οὐδὲ εἷς / μάγειρον ἀδικήσας ἀθῷος διέφυγεν. / ἱεροπρεπής πώς ἐστιν ἡμῶν ἡ τέχνη.* Cf. line 945.

[41] 670, 689–90 (*ψοφεῖν τὰς θύρας*, standard in comedy to indicate that a character is emerging from a building onto the stage, *LSJ* s.v. II).

mystery *katabasion* (above, note 32) or underground initiation chamber, of which a number have been found, albeit of later and more syncretistic ages than Menander's.[42] In fact the underground basin of the Isis sanctuary in Pompeii with its steep and slippery access, located inside a separate, small shrine[43] or *aedicula*, is so similar to the scene of the *Dyscolus* that it could be used as a stage prop for the comedy. Another striking feature of the plot is that neither of the two ordeals are exploited for visual comedy; instead both are reported by Sostratus. Both the hoeing scene and the episode with Sostratus lost in amorous contemplation of his beloved while Cnemo's anguished voice is heard from below, have more comic potential than for instance the farcical skit in which the cook struggles with a recalcitrant sacrificial sheep (392 ff.). If the ordeals of the heroes are viewed as echoing hallowed rituals, it is no longer surprising that they take place off-stage.

When Cnemo emerges from the well, wet, bedraggled, and crippled, he acknowledges the moral lesson: "It seems that only suffering can teach us" (699–700).[44] Thereupon he takes his daughter's arm (701), and Sostratus addresses him as μακάριε ἄνθρωπε, "blessed man" (701-2). The enamored Sostratus refers only to the bliss of leaning on his beloved,[45] but to the audience the address probably had a second humorous overtone of initiation: Now that Cnemo has learned the lesson from his ordeal, he is ready to join the circle of blessed initiates.

Also suggestive of mystery influence is the peculiarly passive and timid character of the romantic protagonist Sostratus, which he shares with most of the young male heroes of the Greek romances. The dependency of this type of literary hero (which contrasts sharply with the male lover of later sentimental love stories and our own class B movie plots) on mystery influences has long been noted.[46] In the

[42] Brief survey and literature in V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte d'Isis à Pompéi* (Paris 1964) 34. Merkelbach (above, note 23) 200 and note 1, points to κατάβασις (in the form of a fall into or burial in a pit) as a recurrent plot element in the Greek romances. Merkelbach (following Kerényi) traces this motif to an initiation rite, but, for reasons which are not made clear, does not believe that Cnemo's fall into the well in the *Dyscolus* reflects the same dependency on the mysteries.

[43] Description in Tran Tam Tinh (above, note 42).

[44] H. Lloyd-Jones and Jean Bingen give this line to Gorgias. It is here assigned to Cnemo, following Stoessl, Blake, and others.

[45] Stoessl (above, note 9) note to line 701.

[46] Merkelbach (above, note 23) 143; K. Kerényi, *Die griechisch-orientalische Roman-*

initiation rites, the role of the initiant was to undergo ordeals, not to overcome them. His only resistance was to be steadfast endurance. As it is put in the *Dyscolus*, he had to give "proof of character" (769–70). Naturally he had to display the appropriate fright at the terrors to which he was exposed, or their effect would have been lost. In the *Dyscolus* we see Sostratus bravely undergoing the ordeal of the digging (525–38), but at his first confrontation with the angry but feeble old man he cuts a most unmanly figure (144–78).

There is, of course, nothing improbable in Menander's use of mystery symbolism. Aristophanes' *Frogs* and *Clouds* also take their basic plot-structure from the mystery rites and are full of allusions to specific details of the initiations.[47]

That Menander infused his plays with more earnest significance than other authors of New Comedy was recognized by ancient critics. Dionysius of Halicarnassus singles out Menander among New playwrights as remarkable for the merits of his "subject matter."[48] Pseudo-Plutarch states that Menander leads his audiences "to flowery meadows," a comment which itself sounds an echo of mystery symbolism.[49]

What is new in Menander is the adaptation of mystery concepts to a sentimental love story with moralizing tendency, and herein he foreshadows the Greek romances.

The question which is difficult to answer is whether Menander

literatur in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung (Tübingen 1927) 127, who points to Achilles Tatius 5.23.6: ἐγὼ δὲ ὥσπερ ἐν μυστηρίῳ . . . ἐδεδοίκειν ἀμύνασθαι καίτοι δυνάμενος.

[47] Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*[3] (1965) 511–16. G. T. W. Hooker, *JHS* 80 (1960) 112–17, argues convincingly that in *The Frogs* Aristophanes alludes to the preliminary Eleusinian Mysteries at Agrai. The specific rite spoofed appears to be the resurrection of Semele by Dionysus. Cf. W. Otto, *Dionysus, Myth and Cult* (trsl., Bloomington 1965) 67–68.

[48] Μενάνδρου δὲ καὶ τὸ πραγματικὸν θεωρρήτεον (namely in addition to the virtues common to all authors of comedy), *De imitatione* 424 (fr. VI, 2, Vol. 2, p. 207 Usener-Radermacher). Here as in *De compositione verborum* 1, πραγματικός ("relating to subject matter") is put in antithesis to λεκτικός ("relating to style").

[49] Plutarch, *Aristoph. et Menandri Comp.* 3C. Cf. Treu (above, note 14) 99. For the common symbolism of the meadow as the abode of the initiates see esp. one of the Hellenistic Orphic-Dionysiac gold tablets from Thurii: χαῖρε, χαῖρε, δεξιὰν ὁδοιπορῶν, λειμῶνάς τε ἱεροὺς κατά τ' ἄλσεα Φερσεφονείας, *CIG* XIV 642 (Harrison [above, note 47] 662).

had any specific initiation rites in mind, and, if so, which ones. According to literary tradition Menander was an initiate of the Eleusinian mysteries,[50] but it appears he disapproved of the rites of Sabazios and Cybele which probably did not have moralizing content.[51] From the Greater Mysteries at Eleusis no ordeals of purification and no underground "terrors" are known.[52] Our literary sources overwhelmingly assign such ordeals to the Orphic-Dionysiac context.[53]

The preliminary Eleusinian Mysteries at Agrai, of which Menander surely had experience, are known to have had Dionysiac overtones[54] as well as a didactic flavor.[55]

Socrates' famous prayer to Pan at the end of the *Phaedrus*[56] indicates that this erstwhile mountain sprite was a reigning divinity at Agrai and that he was worshiped there as a source of moral guidance. This manifestation of Pan perfectly fits his ubiquitous and didactic role in the *Dyscolus*, and the very figure of Sostratus, the hunter tamed to moral purpose, sets another Dionysiac tone.[57] Whether or not the *Dyscolus* contains clues to specific identifiable rites, the general dependency of the symbolism appears to be on the Dionysiac rather than the Eleusinian cult.

[50] Alciphron, *Ep.* 4.18, where Menander is represented as swearing by the Eleusinian mysteries as a fellow initiate.

[51] Fr. 245 (Kock, Edmonds); fr. 222A (Edmonds). Cf. A. Koerte, *Hermes* 70 (1935) 431–38, George Méautis, *Le crépuscule d'Athènes et Ménandre* (Paris 1954) 80–82.

[52] O. Kern, *RE*, s.v. "Mysterien," 1242.

[53] See above, note 32.

[54] Stephanus Byzantius, s.v. *Ἄγρα: ἐν ᾧ τὰ μικρὰ μυστήρια ἐπιτελεῖται μίμημα τῶν περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον.* Cf. K. Kerényi, *Die Mysterien von Eleusis* (Zürich 1962) 60–66, with special consideration of the veiled allusions to the Lesser Mysteries in Plato's *Phaedrus* (which is set in Agrai). G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis* (Princeton 1961) 241, argues that Stephanus referred to a dramatic representation.

[55] Clement Alex. *Strom.* 5.11.

[56] *Ὦ φίλε Πάν τε καὶ ἄλλοι ὅσοι τῇδε θεοί, δοίητέ μοι καλῷ γενέσθαι τἄνδοθεν* (279 BC).

[57] Menander's *Heauton Timoroumenos*, which shares with the *Dyscolus* the motif of the hoeing ordeal, also had a pronounced Dionysiac setting, which was abandoned by Terence except insofar as it was indispensable to the plot: F. Skutsch, *Hermes* 47 (1912) 141–45. Cf. Friedrich Leo, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (Berlin 1913) 241–42: "Die Bearbeitung . . . hebt den Zauber der dionysischen Feststimmung auf."