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Secrets and Lies in Menander's Samia: A Reading of the Play Focused on Light and Darkness*

Summary – This paper examines the implications of the opposition ‘Athenian sun’ versus ‘Pontic fog’ for a better understanding of Menander’s dramatic art in Samia. The secret intrigues orchestrated inside the houses of Demeas and Nikeratos obscure the luminous, open spaces of Athens for the two uninformed or misinformed returnees from the dark regions, leading to complete confusion and near misfortune. Ironically, the fog that plagued the two men in Pontos now shrouds the brilliant Athenian sky. Thus, the climatic descriptions, introduced in one early scene, transcend the limits of their literal sense and acquire a metaphorical meaning which can be traced in most of the play.

Toward the end of Act I of Menander’s Samia, two old men, Nikeratos and his friend and foil Demeas, make their first entrance as they return to Athens from a long business trip to the Pontos. Overjoyed to be home, they praise the brilliant sun of their fatherland against the foggy weather they experienced abroad (96–112). The implications of these references to sun and fog have generally escaped the attention of scholars, most of whom seem to have taken them as literal descriptions of the two opposing regional/geographic climates. However, a few scholars have connected the references to sunlight and fog with the larger part of the plot, understanding sun and fog as ironic metaphors symbolizing the two men’s misapprehension of the realities confronting them after their return.

My reading follows the interpretation of these scholars who have succinctly noted the relevance of the climatic references to the broader context.¹

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¹ See Stoessl, Unkenntnis, 23 (followed by Lamagna, La donna di Samo, 221 and Sommerstein, Samia, 136), who speaks of Demeas’ and Nikeratos’ praise of the Greek sun: “Ihr begeisterter Preis des herrlichen hellen Athen im Gegensatz zu dem unangenehmen, düsteren Pontos wirft ein ironisches Licht auf die Verwicklungen, in die sie durch ihre Unkenntnis zu geraten im Begriffe stehen.” See also Collard, Samia, 102. Petrides, New Comedy, 71 maintains that Demeas’ mind has been shrouded by a dark cloud of misapprehension; cf. Petrides, New Comedy, 74.

However, my point of view differs from theirs, in that they see the fog as impacting the actual perceptions of the two friends, who, under the influence of the Pontic gloom, cannot arrive at a clear assessment of the facts. I shall argue that, on the contrary, the mental capacities of both old men are intact,² but that the lies and half-truths presented to them could not reasonably lead anyone to a clear understanding of the situation. Indeed, contrary to expectation, the brilliant Athenian sun is deceptive since it shines on the secrets and intrigues of the two houses represented on either side of the stage. These intrigues, grossly misconstrued by the masters of those households, will lead to unfortunate situations that only a round of confessions and chance revelations can avert. A Pontic fog has metaphorically descended upon the two returnees, blinding them to the luminous, open space of the Athenian street.

The metaphor of light versus fog is easily traced throughout the first two thirds of the play and it is discernible, though indirectly, in the last third. The metaphor of Athens-sun-clarity versus Pontos-darkness-secrets is not a superficial imagery, but a representation of the play's major theme of misunderstanding. In what follows, I shall explore this pervasive motif on two thematic levels of opposition: the one between Athens and Pontos, and the other between private and public. In the play, the two levels are intertwined, but for purely methodological reasons, I shall break the thematic unity of the comedy and discuss each level separately, beginning with the latter.

The opposition between private and public (a)

Intrigues have been woven into the households of Demeas and Nikeratos. Their purpose: to conceal from the two men what has occurred during their prolonged absence. Thus, an opposition is formed between what is actually going on inside, behind the facades of the two houses, and what is said about it out in the open, both to the two old men and, we must assume, also to their fellow citizens.

Moschion, son of Demeas, delivers the prologue, in which he confesses that he will sadden his father, who loves him exceedingly and has spoiled him with every kindness and luxury. He is ashamed to disclose to him an offense he committed during his father's absence: during the celebration of the Adonia he seduced Plangon, the young daughter of Nikeratos, and, moreover, got her pregnant. The girl gave birth to a baby boy in secret to avoid the scandal.

² According to Sommerstein, *Samia*, 230/231, Demeas exhibits carefully articulated processes of reasoning, whereas Nikeratos is not at all given to λογισμός. I will argue that the latter also makes logical deliberations even though he reacts more emotionally.

Moschion, in the last, badly mutilated lines of his monologue, explains that Demeas' mistress, a hetaera named Chrysis, is assisting the young couple by nursing the infant as her own, in place of the baby she has recently lost.³ Later, Chrysis and the domestic slave Parmenon, urge the spineless Moschion to speak to his father when he returns, and to act responsibly toward the wronged girl by having him arrange for their marriage. For her part, Chrysis is ready to continue posing as the baby's mother – an intrigue she herself most probably devised⁴ to keep the baby from being exposed or handed off to an impoverished wet-nurse living in an unhealthy tenement (συννοικία, 85).

The fact that Chrysis had milk gave the possibility of devising such a scheme. Otherwise the infant might have been presented as one of Demeas' slave girls' baby of an unknown father. That the scheme aims to fool not only the two old men, but also their neighbors and acquaintances is made clear, later in the play, when Demeas gets into great pains to prevent Moschion and Nikeratos from disclosing the secrets of his home. Moschion and the other conspirators plan to wait until after the wedding to tell the two fathers the truth, so not to arouse their anger.

Thus, the lines which precede the arrival of the two old men inform the audience about secrets hidden in the innermost recesses of the two houses and about lies which are going to be told to both fathers. In particular, the celebration of the Adonia was held in Demeas' house; it was there that his son seduced Nikeratos' daughter during the night of the feast; Plangon's pregnancy

³ The text has a lacuna at the point which probably contained information about the loss of Chrysis' baby. We can infer that Chrysis had recently given birth from the fact that she has been nursing Plangon's infant (265/266). Infants must be nursed frequently – a need which the real mother could not fulfil lest she be seen frequenting the house of a young man while unmarried. On the question whether Chrysis had given birth to a baby or not, which has troubled some scholars, see the discussion in Heap, *The Baby*, 81–86, who accepts the maternity of the hetaera. See also Blume, *Samia*, 15, n. 28; Blume, *Menander*, 132, and Sommerstein, *Samia*, 117, both of whom favor the idea of Chrysis as an actual mother. In Epitrepontes, as well, the wife of Syriskos nurses a foundling, having previously given birth to a baby who died. Thus, she has milk for the new baby and also more affection for him. This case is compared to *Samia* by Post, *Dramatic Infants*, 202 and Jacques, *La Samienne*, xlii, n. 3. – That Chrysis will only temporarily bring up the baby is supported by Sommerstein, *Samia*, 125/126 with sound argumentation.

⁴ See Keuls, *The Samia*, 15/16; Henry, *Menander's Courtesans*, 68; West, *Notes*; Krieter-Spiro, *Sklaven*, 99/100; Sommerstein, *Samia*, 117/118. The Bodmer papyrus has a lacuna where it would have disclosed who planned the ruse. It should be added that in Epitrepontes the hetaera Abrotonon, too, is the mastermind of a plan that involves a baby whom she passes off temporarily as her own.

and the baby's birth were concealed in Nikeratos' house,⁵ out of sight of Athenian society; the baby boy was then brought to Demeas' house where he was nursed in turn by Chrysis and Plangon. In Nikeratos' house Moschion has secretly made a promise under oath to Plangon's mother that he will marry her daughter. All members of both households participate in the hoodwinking of the two old patres familias in order to protect the young mother and the baby: the slave Parmenon, the unnamed female slaves of Demeas' household, Moschion's unnamed libertine nurse, Chrysis, of course, and Plangon's mother.⁶ Everyone else, including the entire City of Athens, is in the dark. It is ironic that the two old fathers, who are by law and custom masters of their households, retain their authority only ostensibly because of their very deception.⁷ Thus, an opposition is formed between inside and outside – the interiors of the houses, on the one hand, and the outer world, on the other. Nor should we forget that the seduction occurred not in an outdoor festival, as usually happens in New Comedy or Roman *palliata*, but in the privacy of Demeas' home.⁸

Brilliant Athens vs. Foggy Pontos

In the light of the initial scenes of the play the dialog between the two old men acquires an extra layer of meaning for the spectators. Let us begin

⁵ In other comedies, too, the delivery of the baby happens in the house of the young woman assisted by her mother, her nurse, and a midwife (see, for instance, Terence's *Hec.*).

⁶ Traill, *Women*, 166–169 speaks of the solidarity of the women in safeguarding the baby, and aptly observes: “To judge Chrysis is, in a sense, to judge the women of the play collectively” (169).

⁷ Stoessl, *Die neuen Menanderpublikationen*, 22 observes that there are two groups of characters which are contrasted and do not know what is going on with one another. See also Ciesco, *Menander*, 101/102 for comic characters who return home after a long absence and face unexpected domestic problems.

⁸ The opposition inside vs. outside is not as firmly established in other plays whose plots feature a rape as it is in the *Samia*. In Terence's *Eun.*, Pamphile's rape takes place in Thais' house and perpetrator and victim can identify each other. However, the rape and its aftermath are very quickly disclosed not only to the inhabitants of the house, but also to characters outside. In Menander's *Epit.*, another Pamphile is raped outdoors, during the celebration of *Tauropolia*, but her torn dress and disheveled hair, as well as her tears, gave away what happened to the *hetaera* Abrotonon and other participants in the festivities; and later, after marrying, without knowing it, the very man who wronged her, she cannot long keep hidden from her husband the secret of her disgrace. In Terence's *Hec.*, Philumena's rape occurred at night, so that the victim and the perpetrator never see each other; the rape (and the resultant baby) are kept secret, the young woman moving back to her father's house soon after her marriage, while her in-laws, in the neighboring house, are in the dark.

analyzing the first layer, which is the juxtaposition of Athens with Pontos (lines 96–112):⁹

[ΔΗΜ.] ἄ]ρ' οὖν μεταβολῆς αἰσθάνεσθ' ἤδη τόπου,
 ὅσον διαφέρει ταῦτα τῶν ἐκεῖ κακῶν;
 Πόντος· παχεῖς γέροντες, ἰχθῦς ἄφθονοι,
 ἀηδία τις πραγμάτων. Βυζάντιον·
 ἀψίνθιον, πικρὰ πάντ'. Ἄπολλον. ταῦτα δὲ
 καθαρὰ πενήτων ἀγάθ'. Ἀθῆναι φίλταται,
 πῶς ἂν [γ]ένοιθ' ὑμῖν ὅσων ἔστ' ἄξιαί,
 ἴν' ὧμεν ἡμεῖς πάντα μακαριώτατοι
 οἱ τὴν πόλιν φιλοῦντες ...

NIK. ἐκ[ε]ῖν' ἐθαύμαζον μάλιστα, Δημέα,
 τῶν περὶ ἐκεῖνον τὸν τόπον· τὸν ἥλιον
 οὐκ ἦν ἰδεῖν ἐνίοτε παμπόλλου χρόνου·
 ἀἴρ παχύς τις, ὡς ἔοικ', ἐπεσκοῦται.

ΔΗΜ. οὐκ, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν οὐδὲν ἐθεᾶτ' αὐτόθι,
 ὥστ' αὐτὰ τἀναγκαῖ' ἐπέλαμπε τοῖς ἐκεῖ.

NIK. νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον, εὖ λέγεις.

Dem. Don't you all notice now a change of scene,
 How much this differs from the horrors there?
 The Black Sea – fat old men, no end of fish,
 Disgusting business. Then Byzantium:
 Absinthe and all things bitter. God! But here –
 Pure blessings for the poor. Oh, dearest Athens,
 If only you could get all you deserve –
 So we who love the city might then be
 Completely happy ...

Nik. One feature of that region, Demeas,
 Particularly puzzled me. Sometimes
 You couldn't see the sun for hours on end.
 A dense fog, so it seems, blotted it out!

Dem. No – it saw nothing there of note, so it
 Shone on the people there the least it could!

Nik. That's really well said!

⁹ The Greek text and the translation are Arnott's. Fountoulakis, A Note, argues in favor of attributing lines 98–101 to Nikeratos, as Sandbach prints them. Other editors, among whom Arnott (see his observations in Arnott, First Notes, 42/43) and, most recently, Sommerstein, Samia, assign them to Demeas.

Praise of the bright light of Athens is a locus in classical literature.¹⁰ Pontic fog is also notorious.¹¹ What is important here, however, is that Menander contrasts the bright light of his fatherland with the fog of the Pontos. Or, to say it in other words, the poet has chosen to have his two old men return home from a region notorious in literature and common knowledge for its misty atmosphere, precisely in order to build this contrast. A bit later on, the poet will similarly use stock proverbial phrases to compare the products of the two opposing lands.

Demeas draws special attention to the change of scenery: Athens is different from the Pontos, which he qualifies with the word *κακῶν*. Nikeratos lists some of the evils they encountered in the Pontos, which in a more literal

¹⁰ See, for instance, Euripides' *Med.* (829/830), where the Athenians are eulogized as fortunate to live *αἰεὶ διὰ λαμπροτάτου / βαίνοντες ἀβρῶς αἰθέρος*; or Aeschylus' *Eu.* (905/906), where Athena commands the chorus to invoke the blessing of the breathing gales passing over Athens in radiant sunshine (*κάνέμων ἀήματα / εὐηλίως πνέοντ' ἐπιστείχειν χθόνα*); by contrast, in Sophocles' *OC.* (675–678), Sophocles describes the thick grove of Colonus as impenetrable to the sun (*φυλλάδα ... ἀνάλιον*). For praise of the mild climate of Attica in general see for instance Euripides' *fr.* 981: *οὐρανὸν ὑπὲρ γῆς ἔχομεν εὖ κεκραμένον / ἴν' οὐτ' ἄγαν πῦρ οὐτε χεῖμα συμπίτνει*: the above texts are cited by Kienzle, *Lobpreis*, 16, 18, 27/28. Blume, *Menander*, 133 considers Demeas' greetings to his homeland as a patriotic tribute; see also Blume, *Samia*, 46, 49.

¹¹ See, for example, in a much later era the statement of Greg. Naz. in *Epist.* 4, 4 (cited by Gomme-Sandbach, *Menander*, 556), that the Cimmerians are barely lighted by the sun as if through a chimney (*τὸν ποθοῦμενον ἥλιον, ὃν ὡς διὰ κάπνης ἀγάξεσθε, ὃ Ποντικοὶ Κιμμέριοι*); Dedoussi, *Μενάνδρου Σαμία*, 130 also cites the Homeric description (*Od.* 11, 13–16) of the land of the Cimmerians: *Ἡ δ' ἐς πείραθ' ἴκανε βαθυρροῦ Ὀκεανοῖο. / ἔνθα δὲ Κιμμερίων ἀνδρῶν δῆμος τε πόλις τε / ἠέρι καὶ νεφέλη κεκαλυμμένοι· οὐδέ ποτ' αὐτοῦς / ἠέλιος φαέθων καταδέρκεται ἀκτίνεσσιν*. See also Nonn. *Dion.* 45, 269: *Κιμμερίων μίμημα δυσέκβατον, ἄμμορον Ἡοῦς* (I owe this quote to one of the *WSt.* readers). Danoff, *Pontos*, 938ff., cites the following texts: *Ov. Pont.* 3, 53/54: *aequora ... solibus orba*; *Amm. Marc.* 22, 8, 46: *omnis autem circumfluo ambitu Pontos et nebulosus est* (see also Lamagna, *La donna di Samo*, 220); *Val. Flacc.* 4, 729–732: *illic umbrosae semper stant aequore nubes / et non certa dies, primo nec sole profundum / solvitur aut vernis cum lux aequata tenebris, / sed redit extremo tandem in sua litora Tauro*; *Hdt.* 4, 28: οὐτῶ μὲν δὴ τοὺς ὀκτῶ μῆνας διατελεῖ χειμῶν ἑών, τοὺς δ' ἐπιλοίπους τέσσαρας ἡνύχαια αὐτόθι ἔστι; *Hipp. Aër* 25: *πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ τὰ ὕδατα οὐ λαμπρά· αἴτιον δὲ ὅτι ὁ ἠῆρ τὸ ἑωθινὸν κατέχει ὡς ἐπὶ πολὺ, ὅστις τῷ ὕδατι ἐγκαταμιγνύμενος τὸ λαμπρὸν ἀφανίζει· ὁ γὰρ ἥλιος πρὶν ἄνω ἀρθῆναι οὐκ ἐπιλάμπει...* According to Arnott, *First Notes*, 43, other ancient writers besides Menander attributed this climatic feature to the territory of the Scythians west and north of the Black Sea (cf. Blume, *Samia*, 39/40); he also cites as parallel for the Scythians' fog *Verg. Georg.* 3, 357–359: *tum sol pallentis haud umquam discutit umbras, / nec cum invecus equis altum petit aethera, nec cum / praecipitem Oceani rubro lavit aequore currum*. See also Fountoulakis, *A Note*, 471, n. 22 and Sommerstein, *Samia*, 136.

translation are the following: fat and obviously rich¹² old men (*παχεῖς γέροντες*), abundance of fish (*ἰχθύς ἄφθονοι*), disgusting things (*ἀηδία τις πραγμάτων*); in Byzantium in particular, he was repelled by the bitter wormwood, the bitter tastes in general. All these are also literary loci.¹³ The notion that the inhabitants of the Black Sea region were obese owing to the misty atmosphere was a long-held stereotype.¹⁴ By contrast, Athens offers pure blessings for the poor. Demeas adds that if Athens could get all the things it deserves, its citizens, who adore their city, would live in bliss.¹⁵ The phrase *καθαρὰ πενήτων ἀγαθὰ* is also proverbial,¹⁶ but we need to see all these phrases in their dramatic context.

Demeas feels repelled by the rich old men of the Pontos and the superabundance of fish. Why does he react like that? It is understandable that he would be fed up with the bitter wormwood, but not with the abundance of goods.¹⁷

¹² Cf., e. g., Ar. Pax 639: τοὺς παχεῖς καὶ πλουσίους; Hdt. 5, 77: οἱ δὲ ἰπποβόται ἐκαλέοντο οἱ παχεῖς τῶν Χαλκιδέων. See also Blume, Samia, 41, n. 74.

¹³ Gomme-Sandbach, Menander, 555 note that “The abundance of fish in the Black Sea is frequently mentioned,” quoting Aristotle’s HA. 598a 30, Diph. fr. 17 K.-A.: διὰ γὰρ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἰχθύων / πάντες βλιχανώδεις εἰσὶ καὶ μεστοὶ λάσπης, Plut. De Soll. An. 981c, Oppian, Halieut. 1, 597ff., and, in Byzantine times: Theoph. Simoc. Dial. 1, 19. Blume, Samia, 41 & n. 74 cites Hermipp. fr. 63, 5 K.-A.: ἐκ δ’ Ἑλλησπόντου σκόμβρους καὶ πάντα ταρίχη. Diph. fr. 17 K.-A. speaks also about the wormwood of the region (lines 11–13): ἂν Βυζαντίους, / ἀψινηθῶι σφοῖη δεῦσον ὅσα γ’ ἂν παρατιθῆις, / κάβαλα ποιήσας πάντα κάσκοροδισμένα. Lamagna, La donna di Samo, 217 cites Theoph. Simoc. Quaest. Phys. 9. Fountoulakis, A Note, 21 adds the following Latin texts: Plautus, Trin. 934/935, Ov. Tr. 5, 13, 21, Pont. 3, 1, 23; 8, 15; the first-mentioned Ovidian passage (also quoted by Blume, Samia, 40) speaks about the Pontic wormwood: *tristia per vacuos horrent apsinthia campos / conveniensque suo messis amara loco*. Treu, Humane Handlungsmotive, 240 notes “das Nebeneinander unkoordinierter Begriffe (wie z. B. Konkreta und Abstrakta)” as a comic mechanism.

¹⁴ See Hipp. Aër 15: ἤρ τε πολὺς κατέχει τὴν χώραν ἀπὸ τῶν ὑδάτων ... οἱ Φασηνοὶ ... τὰ πάχεια δ’ ὑπερπάχητες; 19: ἤρ τε κατέχει πολὺς τῆς ἡμέρης τὰ πεδία ... τὸν ... ἡέρα ὑδατεῖον ἔλκοντες καὶ παχὺν (cited by Lamagna, La donna di Samo, 216). Cf. Blume, Samia, 42, n. 81.

¹⁵ The laudatio of a city which is, however, poor, has been seen by Treu, Humane Handlungsmotive, 240/241 as grounds for dating the play in the years following the Lamian war (322 BC), when Athens was struggling financially to survive. Treu compares this with Sangarinus’ greetings to the same city in Plautus’ Stich. (649/650), which he calls by contrast *nutrices Graeciae*.

¹⁶ See Kassel, Aus der Arbeit, 58.

¹⁷ According to Dedoussi, Μενάνδρου Σαμία, 127 Demeas’ disgust comes from the smell of the fish, but the spectators do not share his feeling in respect to the quantity of the fish, because the Athenians liked this food a lot and would wish to be able to have more. Cf.

We should note that the old man had used the deictic pronoun ταῦτα, just before speaking about the evils of the Pontos. So it is likely that ταῦτα refers to all the wonderful things that greeted him on his arrival in Athens and in his neighborhood.¹⁸ And, probably, what is also meant in this passage is that Athens may be beloved to its citizens, but does not offer them opportunities to accumulate wealth, so they are obliged to turn to merchandise and travel in long and dangerous trips, to unhospitable far-away places, to become rich (or in Demeas' case richer). Attica's farmer is poor, as Menander points out in *Dyskolos* (603–606).¹⁹ Consequently, the two old men, even though they have experienced the riches of the distant region, declare that they repudiate them with disgust, and are satisfied even with the few poor goods of their city as long as they won't have to leave it again in search for a fortune elsewhere.

Now, whereas their dialogue on the Pontos revolves around material goods and more specifically the bitter or abundant food, they also use words with a more general meaning: the noun πράγματα and the phrase that the Pontos has οὐδὲν σεμνόν – the meaning of which I discuss below – show that Demeas and Nikeratos shift the focus of their criticism from food to a more general assessment.²⁰

In light of what the spectators have learned from the opening scenes of the play, when they hear the word κακῶν they probably recall that, just a short while ago, Moschion confessed to them that he had committed a grievous wrong (ἡμάρτηκα, 3): the seduction of a free Athenian maiden – a wrong, moreover, which got the girl pregnant. Ἀμάρτημα is a wrong which is not premeditated, but happens in the heat of passion.²¹ Later, Parmenon will describe Moschion's offence as ἀδίκημα which harmed the girl and her mother (67/68). Moschion has indeed severely compromised the girl: she is poor,

Blume, *Samia*, 41/42. For Fountoulakis, *A Note*, 471, n. 20 the revulsion is due to the smell of fish or its superabundance.

¹⁸ Blume, *Samia*, 45/46 thinks the theater as καθαρόν πενήτων ἀγαθόν.

¹⁹ Besides *Dyskolos* other comedies describe Attica's poor farmers in whose fields wild herbs grow rather than crops; see Ireland, *The Bad-Tempered Man*, 153.

²⁰ Lamagna, *La donna di Samo*, 218 interprets the word πράγματα as business (as does Arnott), for which the people of the Pontos show repugnance, which is absolutely consistent with their phlegmatic nature; this reluctance to do business would be extremely frustrating for someone who travelled hundreds of miles for that very purpose! Blume, *Samia*, 45 offers a more general interpretation of the word: he holds that the phrase ἀηδία τις πραγμάτων means “und überhaupt macht das Leben dort keinen Spaß” and adds that “die πράγματα umfassen alles, woran ein wendiger, betriebsamer Athener seine Freude hatte ... jene kleinen Aktivitäten und Nörgeleien.”

²¹ See Arist. *EN* 1135b 16–25.

while he is well off. Although Moschion has promised Plangon's mother that he will marry the girl, and the genre calls for a wedding at the finale, it is not at all expected, at that particular juncture, that Demeas, a rich man (*παχύς*), will consent to his son's marriage to the daughter of a man of humble means. A poor girl's prospects for a good marriage depend on her good reputation, and, as Gorgias says in *Dyskolos* (289–298), a poor father would consider himself grievously injured if his daughter were seduced by a rich boy.

Thus, Moschion, who cannot be sure that Demeas will consent to the marriage he genuinely desires, is afraid to talk to him. Indeed, Moschion is so ashamed of his actions that he even hesitates to reveal them to the audience, who must wait till the end of his monologue to learn what it is that he did: only after aposiopesis of the actual seduction does Moschion reveal that the girl got pregnant: *ἐκύρησεν ἢ παῖς* (49). So, the offence is impressed on the memory of the spectators, and especially the fact of a young girl's (*παῖς*) and not a married woman's pregnancy can only strengthen that impression. Moschion feels not only that he has betrayed his father's good opinion of him, but also that he has harmed Nikeratos, the *κύριος* of Plangon. When the audience hears the list of the misfortunes the two old men encountered in Pontos, they must have thought that those misfortunes were slight, compared to what awaited them at home.

A similar correlation with *κακῶν* can be drawn from Nikeratos' astonishment at the thick Pontic fog that kept the sun from shining "for hours on end"; for Demeas wittily remarks to his friend that the sun refused to shine because there was *οὐδὲν σεμνὸν* to shine on, i.e. nothing worthy of respect.²² Similarly, in Athens, Moschion's actions make the Athenian sun, as the spectators perceive it, misleading; although the two friends see it with relief in all its brightness, the sun shines on dishonorable deeds.

The portrayal of the beloved, shining City is deconstructed in Act III, by words and phrases which allude, directly or indirectly, to the dialogue between the two old men in Act I. Demeas enters from his house and vents his despair on learning – falsely, thanks to a misunderstanding – that his son has been

²² For this meaning of the adjective see LSJ under the lemma *σεμνός*, II. Cf. the comment of Gomme-Sandbach, *Menander*, 556: "οὐδὲν σεμνόν: «nothing majestic, or noble»; we might say «nothing very wonderful»" (my emphasis). Lamagna, *La donna di Samo*, 221 translates the phrase as "nel senso di «nulla di straordinario»" alluding to Eq. 777; yet, in that passage the Sausage Seller uses the phrase with the meaning "nothing to be proud of"; cf. Henderson's translation (*Aristophanes*, 323): "nothing to brag about". Sommerstein, *Samia*, 136 agrees with Lamagna holding that "from «nothing worthy of respect» this comes to mean «nothing worthy of special note»".

sleeping with his concubine, Chrysis, and that the baby she has been holding out to the world as Demeas', was actually fathered by his son. For the first time, Demeas consciously employs metaphorical language to describe the mess he thinks he is in. Thus, he speaks of a good journey (δρόμου καλοῦ, 206) in which a sudden storm (χειμῶν ἀπ[ροσδ]όκητος, 207) comes up to shipwreck the passengers who just a while earlier had been scudding through tranquil (ἐν εὐδίᾳ) seas. Demeas then applies this metaphor to his own experience, as someone who has just returned from a safe sea voyage, adding that he cannot tell if his eyes still see straight (οὐδ' εἰ βλέπω ... καλῶς, 214/215).²³ In his despair he invokes the goddess Athena.²⁴ The spectators, however, make more connections than Demeas and see more metaphors in his words: the χειμῶν is in opposition to εὐδίᾳ; the latter suggests sunshine, and the former darkness.²⁵ Demeas is so thoroughly surrounded by darkness that he cannot

²³ Petrides, *New Comedy*, 76–78 correlates these lines with the lines 325/326 – which allude to Euripides' *Oedipus* (fr. 554b) – in order to show that Demeas, like Oedipus, suffers from blindness of mind.

²⁴ The reference to Athena might not be accidental, since she is protector of Athens, which Demeas saluted patriotically on his first entrance; see Feneron, *Menander's Style*, 90, who also remarks that the goddess is connected with truth, wisdom and knowledge. Athens, of course, is a sunny city and her protector has big eyes, like the owl – emblematic bird of Athens, which sees through darkness. Besides, Athena is characterized as γλαυκῶπις and ὄξυδερκής, since, as she possesses wisdom, is sharp-sighted. With these qualities she must help Demeas gain insight into his muddled situation; see de Kat Eliassen, *The oaths*, 57, who does not associate the matter of Athena's vision with the Pontic fog. Heap, *The Baby*, 120 observes that Athena is a goddess of weaving connecting her with the weaving-room in Demeas' house and the μῆτις, the women's craft.

²⁵ Metaphors with dark and wintry terminology occur twice in the play and apply not only to landscape but to men as well. In the beginning of Act II, when Demeas learns that Chrysis has given birth to a child by him and has not exposed it as a hetaera was expected to, he looks sullen (σκυθρωπάζεις, 129). The adjective σκυθρωπός, meaning "sullen", is opposite to φαειρός, which means "bright". At his first contact with the lies in his house, Demeas' face is darkened. If this metaphor has become common in the language, and has lost its initial connotations, this is not the case with the next instance of a metaphor applied to a man, which retains all the surprise of its bold associations. In Act IV Demeas says that his neighbor is στρβίλος ἢ / σκηπτός (555/556, "a whirlwind or a thunderbolt"), when the latter, after learning that his daughter has given birth to a baby, enters and exits repeatedly in a state of confusion and anger. In Sophocles' *Ajax*, we see a similar assimilation of light to a man's disposition, where the chorus describes the hero as ἀνέρος αἴθονος (222, "gleaming or glowing"); see Stanford, *Sophocles' Ajax*, 191.

see clearly: he is like a blind man walking through a thick fog that does not permit him to see the light of truth.²⁶

Later, when Demeas interrogates Parmenon to identify the father of the baby, he does not let the panic-stricken slave complete his sentence and jumps to the false conclusion that Chrysis betrayed him with Moschion. He utters the paratragic lines 325/326 ὃ πόλισμα Κεκροπίας χθονός, / ὃ ταναός αιθήρ, ὃ – (“O citadel of Cecrop’s land, o firmament outspread, o –”), directed at Athens.²⁷ These lines recall in reverse his earlier cheerful apostrophe to the same beloved and shiny city.²⁸ The term ταναός denotes “the bright element that «lies above and beyond the medium in which we live, between the medium and the sky»”.²⁹ Athens is still bright, but its sun is deceptive.

According to a marginal comment in the Bodmer papyrus, lines 325/326 allude to Euripides’ lost Oedipus (fr. 554b). Sommerstein wonders if it is only the first four words which allude to Euripides’ tragedy and cites as parallel excerpt Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound 88 – 92.³⁰ It is noteworthy that also in Aeschylus’ tragedy, Prometheus calls upon the natural elements, among them, the divinely shining upper air (δῖος αιθήρ) and the sun to witness his suffering. As Stanford has noted, Greek light figures prominently among these apostrophes.³¹

The image of the shining Athens and the foggy Pontos is reversed with additional climate allusions in Act IV. Nikeratos agrees with Chrysis that Demeas behaved like a lunatic when he kicked her out of his house. Nikeratos also attributes his friend’s behavior to the unhealthy Pontic region (ὁ Πόντος οὐχ ὑγιεινόν ἐστι χωρίον, 417).³² Indeed, Nikeratos, too, is ensnared in another

²⁶ Earlier in the play, we find an indirect reference to vision when Demeas, learning that his son is longing to be wedded to his neighbor’s daughter (which the two fathers had already arranged), in an apostrophe to the goddess Chance (ταυτόματον, 163), admits that she watches over many invisible things (πολλὰ τῶν ἀοράτων πραγμάτων, 164). The word ἀοράτων is perhaps a double entendre. Indeed, the two youths fell in love by chance; but also, Demeas is blind because of a shroud of deceit, and what he cannot see is what has been deliberately concealed from him.

²⁷ Iversen, Menander, 177 sees Demeas as mouthpiece of Menander, as a character who exploits tragic diction and then criticizes it as bombast.

²⁸ See Petrides, New Comedy, 74.

²⁹ See Sommerstein, Samia, 204, who quotes Dover; Sommerstein discusses the adjective ταναός without correlating it with the Pontic fog.

³⁰ Sommerstein, Samia, 204.

³¹ Stanford, Sophocles’ Ajax, 189.

³² Petrides, New Comedy, 74 cites this line as evidence that the Pontos has influenced Demeas’ mental state. Groton, Anger, 439 observes that “the humor of the lines depends

web of lies: he believes that Plangon is still a virgin, and has no idea that his own wife and daughter have conspired and continue to conspire to conceal from him seduction, pregnancy, birth, and infant.³³ What is more, Nikeratos is caught up in a second fog: Demeas has not revealed to his friend the real reason for evicting Chrysis, her supposed affair with Moschion. What he called Chrysis' wrongdoing was her decision to raise an illegitimate child against his wishes. Consequently, the Pontos – or rather its gloomy climate – has invaded the Attic sky.

Nikeratos considers it οἰωνὸς ... ἄτοπος (424) that because of Chrysis' eviction the women in his house are weeping on the festive day of the upcoming wedding – a wedding between Plangon and Moschion, arranged by their fathers already in Act I. In the phrase οἰωνὸς ἄτοπος (“an untoward omen”), the adjective ἄτοπος may be understood as a euphemism for κακός.³⁴ But more significantly, a few lines later, Nikeratos repeats that the weeping is ἀηδία ... ἔκτοπος, 434 (“an extraordinary and disagreeable event”).³⁵ Let us first examine the two adjectives, ἄτοπος and ἔκτοπος: They both derive from the noun τόπος (place), and the two prefixes ἐκ and ἀ signify something that is unusual for this place – and this is the first meaning of these adjectives. If we accept that ἄτοπος means simply “strange”, as in *Dyskolos* 417, the conjunction of ἔκτοπος with ἀηδία cannot be haphazard. Thus, Nikeratos describes the event as something not characteristic of Athens – not befitting its climate, hence, a disagreeable event more suitable for other places, like Pontos.

But the noun ἀηδία, besides an unpleasant fact, also denotes the disgust which one feels, for instance, for bad food. The same term was earlier employed to describe Pontos with its repugnant things and its food, always spiced with the bitter wormwood.³⁶ That Nikeratos uses this word in Act IV might be an argument for attributing lines 98–101 to the same character, as

on the spectators' awareness that Nikeratos is wrong: he has mistaken Demeas' anger for a case of temporary mental derangement picked up in Byzantium.”

³³ It should be noted that Plangon and her mother have spoken to Nikeratos about Chrysis raising a baby. Were they preparing the ground for Nikeratos to accept the baby into his family?

³⁴ See Sommerstein, *Samia*, 234.

³⁵ See, for instance, Sommerstein, *Samia*, 237.

³⁶ Petrides, *New Comedy*, 74, n. 124, without explaining the meaning of the adjectives, connects ἀηδία in the Pontos and in Athens: “It is suggestive that the *aēdia pragmatōn* describing Pontos, its fog and its *pacheis gerontes*, is soon transferred to Athens and the equally *pachys* Demeas (ἀηδία τις συμβέβηκεν ἔκτοπος, *Sam.* 434), when Nikeratos realises that his neighbour's actions are fogged and blind.”

Sandbach prints them. Thus, Nikeratos unconsciously cannot escape from the experience of his travels and he recalls it now that he describes events in Athens.

These events are indeed incomprehensible: Moschion shares Nikeratos' amazement at his father's unseemly behavior towards Chrysis; Demeas is angry with Moschion for defending Chrysis and undermining his father's authority; Moschion cannot understand what Demeas is accusing him of;³⁷ Nikeratos gradually shares Demeas' belief of the affair between Moschion and Chrysis.³⁸ He actually labels Moschion's behavior *τύχην καὶ τὰσέβημα* (493), an impious act – a hendiadys which possibly recalls the *σεμνὸν οὐδὲν* of 109. Ultimately, Nikeratos urges his friend to put out Moschion's eyes, whereas in fact it is the two old men who are wandering around blind in a fog of lies. Indeed, if Nikeratos were in Demeas' place, he would eagerly spread word of the supposed infidelity, believing that by such means he will gain the support of his fellow citizens for disinheriting his son and selling his hetaera.³⁹ Conversely, Demeas wrongly accuses Moschion of advertising, or making "conspicuous" (*κα[τ]αφανῆ*, 500), all the immoral things he has done, alluding at the same time to light (*φῶς*) and to the opposition of inside vs. outside.

Demeas had previously prayed at the stage altar of Apollo Agyieus,⁴⁰ beseeching the god to give him courage to carry through with the wedding without giving way to his emotions (*μὴ ᾿πίδηλος*) (448).⁴¹ Demeas is trying to be courageous: *καταπιῶν τὴν χολήν* (447). According to the usual translation, the verb participle means "swallowing, suppressing" and the noun "anger".⁴²

³⁷ For the failure of communication between father and son due to their different presuppositions about an underlying fact, see Martin, *Failing Communication*, 121.

³⁸ On the ambiguity of Menander's *Samia* see Fantham, *Roman Readings*, 90/91.

³⁹ At this point the tension between two images of the external world should be noted: in his opening monologue, Moschion, standing outside his father's house, tells the audience that, thanks to his father's fortune, he has accomplished enviable things and acquired fame in Athens (especially his brilliant – *λαμπρῶς*, 15 – command of his tribe); whereas now, Nikeratos demands the public humiliation of the youth. The outside space is similarly employed when Moschion begs his father to take back Chrysis so that they might avoid the malicious gossip, or when Demeas advises his son, dressed up as a mercenary soldier, to stop giving his father's enemies a reason to crow.

⁴⁰ According to Gellar, *Sacrifice*, 41, "the Menandrian stage had only one altar, and it was in fact consistently dedicated to Apollo Agyieus." See also Gomme-Sandbach, *Menander*, 594, 576; Lamagna, *La donna di Samo*, 278, 339; Sommerstein, *Samia*, 197, 240.

⁴¹ According to Henry, *Menander's Courtesans*, 66, Demeas prays to Apollo, because he is the god of restraint.

⁴² See Sommerstein, *Samia*, 241. Cf. Lamagna, *La donna di Samo*, 159, 339; Arnott, *Menander*, 109.

But in Greek literature, *χολή* (bile) is proverbially bitter, especially in drama. Indeed, Demeas must swallow something very bitter, the supposed defiance of his son and the supposed adultery of his Samian hetaera. The bitter taste arguably recalls the bitter flavors of Byzantium.

Demeas invokes Apollo as *Λοξία* (474) when he calls on to him to witness things that he believes to be clear and beyond question (*γνώριμα καὶ σαφῆ*, 473/474) – i. e. Moschion's and Chrysis' supposed affair.⁴³ Apollo Loxias was notorious for giving ambiguous answers in the Delphic oracle through the priestess Pythia; here, likewise the situation abounds with double meanings: things are perceived differently by Demeas, Moschion and Nikeratos.⁴⁴ Of course, Apollo cannot be a witness to Demeas' ignorance. Matters within Demeas' home, the *κρυπτά* (478), are not at all as Demeas imagines, and soon the truth will come to light, out in the stage street.

Opposition Between Private and Public (b)

Act III revolves around Demeas' house, Act IV around Nikeratos' house. Chrysis' move, along with the baby, from the one house to the other is the mechanism that drives the dramatic plot forward.⁴⁵ It is as if Chrysis draws along with her the schemes she has orchestrated to protect her companion's little grandson. As the two old men collide with the obstacles she has set up in the road to the truth, they each react in their own way. Demeas, cherishing his privacy, endeavors to keep the upset of his household from leaking out, while Nikeratos, indifferent to the possible repercussions on his own household as well as his neighbor's, is ready to spread the scandal throughout the city.⁴⁶ It is characteristic of Demeas that he utters soliloquies and controls his temper, while Nikeratos hurls just a few lines agitatedly at other characters.

As has been noted, at the beginning of Act III, Demeas enters the stage in shock. He utters an emotional monologue outside, in front of his house,

⁴³ De Kat Eliassen, *Oaths*, 56 notes the ironic invocation of the god of light in a situation that is not clear as day. Petrides, *New Comedy*, 78 holds that Demeas invokes Loxias as witness to his illusory powers of perception.

⁴⁴ Pace Sommerstein, *Samia*, 249/250.

⁴⁵ According to Sommerstein, *Pallake*, 20/21, after her eviction, Chrysis, a *pallake*, cannot return to her natal family as a wife would do after her divorce; however, Chrysis has built up a network of support among friends and neighbors, with whom she can find shelter.

⁴⁶ Although he fails to connect the reactions of the two old men to the metaphor of light and darkness or to note the dramaturg's deliberate contraposition of inside and outside, Ireland, *Personal relationships*, does catch the difference between Demeas, who conceals his suspicions, and Nikeratos, who publicizes what has happened to him.

confiding to the audience that he has overheard Moschion's old nurse say that the father of the baby is Moschion. Immediately after this, continues Demeas, a young slave hurried into the room to reprimand her for speaking out loud while their old master was inside the house. So Demeas discovers that the members of his household are all parties to a secret they have been keeping from him: the baby is Moschion's. But who is the mother? Continuing his monologue, Demeas recounts how he withdrew cautiously to the yard of his house without letting on what he has heard; and there, he glimpses Chrysis nursing the baby! The misunderstanding is now complete. In describing the scene with Chrysis, Demeas uses the term ἀποβλέψω (277) which alludes to his blurry eyesight.

Later, when Demeas interrogates the slave Parmenon, accusing him of conspiring with the members of his household to hide (συγκρύπτεις, 308) something from him, Parmenon denies it outright by a collective oath to four gods (309/310).⁴⁷ The list seems random, but on closer inspection it fits perfectly the dramatic situation and the slave's predicament.⁴⁸ Thus, Parmenon invokes four gods: Dionysus, the god of theater, because he pretends he is innocent and knows nothing of any scheme; Apollo, the god of the stage altar, to protect him; Zeus, to save him from his master's strap; and Asclepius to heal the stripes in case he gets whipped anyway. Equally appropriate is Demeas' oath to the Sun god (323), that he will whip Parmenon: Demeas mistakenly believes that the sun has shone the light of truth into his home, exposing the lies that were hidden there. Moreover, the sun, in Greek thought, is connected with knowledge. In Sophocles' *Trachiniai*, for example, light generally symbolizes knowledge, not only for Hercules but for Deianira as well.⁴⁹

Demeas decides to carry on with the wedding as planned. However, he evicts Chrysis from his house, believing that she has had an affair with his son. However, as we have seen, he uses a pretext to evict Chrysis. Ironically, it is now Demeas who tells lies to everybody – not only to Chrysis, Moschion,

⁴⁷ Webster, *An introduction*, 100 observes that this string of oaths is employed at a moment of high emotion and offers other instances of conglomerate oaths in other Menandrian comedies.

⁴⁸ De Kat Eliassen, *Oaths*, 59 notes that the four deities Parmenon invokes are all characterized by the epithet of σωτήρ, and that Asclepius can save a man even from death. Furthermore, according to Gellar, *Sacrifice*, 152, the accumulation of names of gods and the rhythmic repetition of the beginning of each oath contribute to the comic effect.

⁴⁹ See Holt, *Light*, especially 213, 215–217.

and the members of his household in general, but also to Nikeratos' family, which offers the hetaera shelter.⁵⁰

Let us return now, briefly, to Demeas' monologue, which starts at line 325: ὦ πόλισμα Κεκροπίας χθονός – the invocation with which Demeas starts his monologue – and ends with his decision to evict Chrysis. Soon after his invocation of the bright air of Athens in line 326, Demeas cuts short his tirade, calling himself a fool for shouting, and urging himself to be patient. His paratragic words evidence his need to decry unto all of Athens the shame of his home. He calls upon his fellow citizens to listen and learn, but almost immediately stops his outburst. Here, the opposition created is between the broader external world of the city and the interior of Demeas' house, which he perceives (wrongly, of course) as hostile to him.

In Act IV, where events are focused on Nikeratos, the latter rushes into his house to expel the supposed adulteress, Chrysis. However, he is immediately confronted with the truth when he sees his daughter nursing the baby. Nikeratos reports his own reaction to the scene with paratragic expressions of emotional pain (lines 532 – 534) as Demeas had done in Act III.⁵¹ Yet, as noted before, Demeas is resolved to protect the privacy of his personal affairs, and reveals them only to the audience⁵² – even when he expels Chrysis ἐκ τῆς δ' οἰκίας (352) – a phrase that contraposes the exterior world of the outside with the interior world of the home.⁵³ The excitable Nikeratos cries out his pain to

⁵⁰ Blundell, *Menander*, 45 observes that Demeas and Moschion mainly utter monologues instead of talking to each other, and that their isolation breeds their wilder thoughts: “[E]verything is kept secret till the plans announced in monologue are carried out, to the great bewilderment of others.”

⁵¹ On Nikeratos' and Demeas' different use of paratragedy, see Fountoulakis, *Playing*, 91/92, who states that Nikeratos makes fuller use of tragic patterns of speech and thought, without caring about his friend's oikos; Demeas' use of tragic diction is restrained by his desire to keep his oikos safe. Chrysis, too, is interested in protecting Demeas' home, and succeeds, in contrast to Moschion, who acts irresponsibly (see Vester, *Staging*). Willi, *The language(s)*, 181 notes that Menander's paratragic style aims at “heightened emotionality rather than comic effect.”

⁵² According to Ciesko, *Menander*, 105, Demeas “walks out of the house where everyone is a potential enemy and creates his own domestic private space on stage with the audience as umpires of the logic of his reasoning ... His monologue before the audience must be taken as something that does not compromise Demeas' attempt to keep secret from the public everything he saw inside.” See also 106. Lape, *Reproducing Athens*, 153 sees line 270: τὸ πρᾶγμα δ' εἰς μέσον φέρω (“to put the matter before you”) as a common oratorical collocation.

⁵³ Lape, *Reproducing Athens*, 152–156 includes this phrase in the legal vocabulary of the play, considering it to be Chrysis' punishment for her supposed infidelity.

the world. Fortunately, Demeas has in the meantime learned enough to prevent Nikeratos from broadcasting the scandal to all of Athens, but not before his irascible friend has threatened to burn the infant and kill either Chrysis or his wife in order to find out who is the father of his daughter's baby.⁵⁴ If Nikeratos is contemplating actions unworthy of a father, a husband, a neighbor, it is because he has discovered only a part of the truth.

Now that Demeas knows who the real mother of the baby is, he tries to placate his neighbor by telling him falsehoods – viz. that perhaps Plangon was playing (τυχὸν ἔπαιζεν, 542), pretending to feed the baby, or that he only imagined it (τυχὸν ... ἔδοξεν, 543). Thus, Demeas again steps into his role as master of the house and protector of those within.⁵⁵ Demeas even claims that the baby is his – probably not so much because he sees him as a grandson, hence a member of his household whom he must protect,⁵⁶ but because he backs up Chrysis' scheme at his attempt to save her and the baby from his friend's rage. Demeas' lies are devised on the heat of the moment, while Nikeratos is pursuing Chrysis and the baby across the stage. Nikeratos does not at first believe Demeas, but finally realizes that Moschion is the baby's father and yields when Demeas assures him that his son will marry Plangon.

It should be emphasized that even now Demeas still doesn't know the full truth. So, when he tries to appease Nikeratos by asking him if his roof is leaking like the roof of the king Acrisius (Zeus impregnated Danae disguised as a golden rain),⁵⁷ he is making a false assumption: the spectators know that Plangon's seduction took place not in Nikeratos' house, but in Demeas'. What Demeas also does not know is that it was Chrysis who inadvertently paved the way for Plangon's seduction, since it was she who organized the fatal Adonia celebration in Demeas' house.

⁵⁴ According to Feltovich, *Women's social bonds*, 215–219, the women in Nikeratos' house (Chrysis, Plangon, and her mother) help each other. This is a correct reading, but it should be stressed that the leading part in the conspiracy is played by Chrysis, pretty much as in Demeas' house, too.

⁵⁵ The phrases that he utters are seen by Stoessl, *Die neuen Menanderpublikationen*, 40 as "Neckerer" against Nikeratos. In my opinion, they are said seriously.

⁵⁶ The ἐμόν (580, "mine") of Demeas is read by Gomme-Sandbach (*Menander*, 64), Lamagna (*La donna di Samo*, 387–388), and Sommerstein (*Samia*, 278) as implying Demeas' grandson and member of his household. Sandbach (*ibid.*) proposes that possibly Demeas wants to exonerate his son and reverts for a moment to the situation before hearing that Moschion was the father; however, Sandbach adds that Demeas could not maintain such attitude for long.

⁵⁷ Demeas uses this myth/parable in order to assuage Nikeratos; see Zagagi, *The comedy*, 135.

The Wedding

The beginning of Act V features an indignant Moschion feigning his resolve to enlist as a mercenary soldier, in order to make his father feel sorry for unjustly accusing him of having an affair with Chrysis.⁵⁸ Thus, yet another trick is attempted – but one which Demeas appears not to fall for.⁵⁹ In fact, though Demeas apologizes sincerely to his son for his wrong suspicions, he reproaches him for publicizing his father’s misbehavior (τὴν ἐμὴν ἀμαρτίαν νῦν ἐκφέρεις, 707) and successfully persuades him in the end to remove scandal and lies from the prying eyes of the Athenian public.

Nikeratos, however, is still angry and, most importantly, deeply offended⁶⁰ – not only because of the web of lies uncovered in his own house, but also because of the falsity of his future son-in-law, whom he had considered trustworthy and who was now letting him stew in uncertainty about the boy’s intentions toward Plangon. When Nikeratos arranges the ἐγγύη (betrothal), he provides no dowry, but only a promise that Moschion will get all of his possessions when he dies, which he hopes won’t ever occur (προῖκα τὰμὰ πᾶνθ’ – ὅταν / ἀποθάνω γ’ ὃ μὴ γένοιτ’, ἀλλ’ (εἰς)αεὶ ζώην, 727/728)!⁶¹

⁵⁸ Pierce, *Ideals*, 137 notes the antithesis between Moschion’s cowardice during the play and his pretended assumption of military duties, a symbol of masculinity. Cf. Grant, *The Father-Son Relationship*, 175. For Moschion’s metatheatric ruse see Moodie, *Metatheater*, 89.

⁵⁹ Zagagi, *Exilium amoris*, 196 reads as a fine Menandrian touch Demeas’ perception of the real motivation behind the supposed self-banishment of Moschion.

⁶⁰ Post, *Dramatic infants*, 207 comments on Nikeratos’ hesitance to accept Moschion as his son in law in the previous Act: “Presumably [in Menander’s plays] the girl’s father would care enough about her future to acquiesce in her marrying the father of her child. If his character was, however, as irascible as that of Niceratus in the *Samia*, he might sacrifice his daughter’s future to his lust for vengeance. Niceratus’ decision in the *Samia* is long delayed.” Groton, *Anger*, 442 holds that neither Nikeratos nor Moschion in the finale has his heart in the quarrel, so it takes only a few words by Demeas to soothe their re-ruffled feelings.

⁶¹ See, for instance, Dedoussi, *Μενάνδρου Σαμία*, 288. Most of the scholars believe that Nikeratos leaves no dowry because he is poor and, at the same time, he uses commonplaces to avert the idea of his death. Sommerstein, *Samia*, 317/318 differentiates his position arguing convincingly that the old man would have gained some profit from his trip. He adds that Nikeratos refuses to give a dowry perhaps thinking that Moschion is rich. But, let us see the lines in their specific context. The revelation of Moschion as a μοιχός, as a seducer, took place at the end of the previous act. Moschion has committed a serious offence against Nikeratos, the κύριος of a maiden, which would make him extremely angry. In the final act there is an intense quarrel between Nikeratos and Moschion in which Moschion brandishes his sword against Nikeratos, although he does not seem serious about using it (lines 719/720; see the discussion in Sommerstein, *Samia*, 314). Thus, it is probable that Nikeratos refuses Moschion a dowry because of his anger; and that he wishes he might never die, so

But the wedding is finally under way. The evening is illuminated by the wedding torch, and all the characters join in the ceremonial procession, ex-conspirators and ex-victims, all of them reconciled, almost completely.⁶² The extra-marital affair and the subsequent pregnancy and secret birth of a child, which formerly were represented as obscene and offensive, like the indignities experienced in the Pontos, have now been expiated and legitimized by marriage and by Demeas' forgiveness of the conspirators who, he concedes, protected the secrets of his house for a good cause.

From the above discussion, I hope that I have been able to show that Menander has used the opposition of sun vs. fog for comic effect. When Demeas and Nikeratos first mention the brightness of Athens and the dimness of the Pontos, they understand one literal meaning only; but the spectators, who have already watched the greater part of Act I, and who will follow the ensuing action, should have no problem perceiving an additional, metaphorical meaning. Demeas and Nikeratos are portrayed in an almost ridiculous light, as they walk into a fog of secrets and lies orchestrated by the members of their households. All the anguish and anxiety they are about to suffer flow from the false and misleading information being fed to them practically until the very end.

If we compare *Samia* with two Sophoclean tragedies, *Trachiniai* and *Ajax*, both of which employ imagery of light in the words of characters and chorus, we can see how sharply this comic play differs from them in the exploitation

that his son in law will never inherit from him. Cf. Blume, *Samia*, 281, who wonders if Nikeratos has still a residue of resentment against his future son in law.

⁶² Nikeratos is still angry with Moschion (see previous note). Also, according to Grant, *The Father-Son Relationship*, 175/176, 181–184, the gap between Demeas and Moschion is never bridged, since Moschion never asks his father for forgiveness, whereas Demeas apologizes to him; cf. Ireland, *Personal relationships*. Weissenberger, *Vater-Sohn-Beziehung*, 430–434 disagrees, suggesting that the relations between father and son evolve, as the two characters evolve during the play. He proposes that Moschion is not psychologically ready to deal with his father in the finale and that the two seem amenable to holding an honest conversation at some future time. We should add the reversal of the father-son relationship. It is Demeas who apologizes to his son (694–711). Moschion, earlier, with his threat to join the army, aimed at dissuading Demeas from being ungrateful to him (μηθὲν εἰς μὲ ἄγνωμονεῖν, 637) in the future. This situation comes as a direct reversal of what Moschion had said in the Prologue (17–19), in which he admitted that all his life he appreciated his father's benevolence and repaid the old man by behaving nobly.

of a similar imagery. In these two tragedies,⁶³ the imagery of light and darkness is not employed for ironic effect, nor does it signify different meanings for the characters who recite the lines and the audience that hears them.⁶⁴ In *Samia*, where the comic genre demands the use of techniques which produce laughter, the contraposition of sunlight and fog acquires an ironic dimension that can be traced throughout most of the play. This irony informs and comments on the antics taking place before the spectators, whose enjoyment of the spectacle is enhanced by the ignorance of the characters.

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⁶³ The imagery of light and darkness is found in many lines in both tragedies; see the discussion by Holt, *Light*, and by Stanford, *Light*; cf. Finglass, *Ajax*, e.g. 254/255.

⁶⁴ Of course, in tragedy in general, too, there can be ambiguity in the case of tragic irony where the character understands one thing and the audience another. Yet, in these two specific tragedies the imagery of light and darkness does not happen to fall in this category.

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