

Stanley Ireland, *Menander The Shield and The Arbitration*, Edited and Translated, Aris and Phillips Classical Texts Oxford 2010, ISBN 978-0-85668-897-3 (cloth), 978-0-85668-833-1 (paper), reviewed by William Furley, Department of Classics, Heidelberg University,  
Email: [william.furley@skph.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:william.furley@skph.uni-heidelberg.de)

[Reviewer's note: in the following I concentrate on the *Aspis*, as I recently wrote an annotated new edition of *Epitrepontes* myself (BICS Supplement 106, London) which Ireland has not been able to consider in his edition. My comments on *Epitrepontes* would therefore largely reflect what I formulated in print in 2009].

## Introduction

In the introduction to *Aspis* Stanley Ireland launches straight into a summary of the plot before dealing with some preliminary issues: the stage setting (he argues for three doors, including Tyche's shrine); the opening of the play (repeated, it seems to me, in the commentary); then a longer and somewhat dry section on legal points about the Athenian *epiklēros* law in which Ireland surveys scholarly opinions without finding they add much to our understanding of the play; a section on the role of Chance in the play with a splendid quote from Demetrios of Phaleron's discourse *On Chance*, showing how the world had been turned on its head as if by chance in the last fifty years as a result of the Macedonian conquests. Very brief sections outline the rediscovery of the play in the Geneva Bodmer codex and explain Menander's use of the comic trimeter. If the reader seeks a general introduction to Menander or New Comedy, he must look elsewhere before returning to this edition.

## Text

Ireland bases his text on Sandbach's revised OCT of 1990 with additions where new material or scholarly conjectures postdate Sandbach. Ireland has a good scheme for indicating the varying degrees of confidence we can place in speaker-names with three shades of brackets beside non-bracketed names. He uses dots to indicate lost or unreadable letters but shuns dotted letters. I wonder whether it is not pedantic in a simplified edition such as this to use brackets to mend itacism in the Bodmer codex as in e.g. *Aspis* 10 ποθ<ε>ινὸν. Likewise, Ireland dutifully lists the originator of supplements and conjectures throughout the text which takes up much space, as line beginnings and ends are frequent casualties in the manuscript. Perhaps one could have been selective here, referring the interested reader to fuller editions, and noting only interesting variants and

conjectures in the *apparatus*. For surely there is some disparity between a commentary keyed to English lemmata and painstaking attribution of supplemented letters to one or other scholar. An alternative might have been a comprehensive list of supplements and attributions in an appendix to the edition, as early Teubner ‘reading-texts’ sometimes did. Likewise I wonder about the hybrid language of the *apparatus* with stock abbreviations in Latin (corr., suppl. and the like) but the rest in English.

## 0.1 Translation

Ireland’s prose translation is consistently readable and accurate and often finds the *mot juste*. He gets just the right balance, in my opinion, between up-to-date English turns of phrase without becoming slangy. *Aspis* 62 ὡς ὦνησ’ ἀποσταλεῖς τότε becomes ‘How lucky you’d been sent away’, an elegant and economical rendering. *Aspis* 77-79 becomes ‘So he heaped them all together [sc. the bodies] and cremated them *en masse*, and once he’d given them a very speedy burial, he immediately broke camp.’ The flow of the English sentence matches the light and ‘chatty’ style of Menander’s *Daos*. When the goddess Tyche announces in the prologue ταῦτι μὲν οὖν μεμαθήκατε / ἱκανῶς, Ireland has ‘That’s enough information for you on that’ – which well conveys the purpose of the prologue to ‘fill the audience in’ before the play proper starts. Ireland also gets the small interjections nicely. 171 ὦφελεν. τί οὖν; becomes ‘Yes, if only. So?’ and νοῦν ἔχεις in the same exchange is well rendered ‘Quite.’ When the Greek becomes more colloquial Ireland keeps pace: 233-34 (waiter) κοπτόμενος ὑμῶν οὐδὲ ἐν / αὐτὸς διοίσω, ‘I’ll be just as cut up as you lot are’. There is some slight embarrassment with expletives: ἱερόσυλε (227) becomes ‘you useless article’; ὁ μαρώτατος (313) ‘blackguard’. One needs something a little more robust here and up to date. Generally, Ireland’s translation reads fluently and he has captured many nuances of the original accurately; nevertheless, reading only the English translation gives one the impression that Menander is plain and prosy. The constant play and interaction between colloquial speech and the elaborate rhythms of the comic trimeter are what make Menander’s style charming in the original.

## Commentary

Ireland’s commentary aims to bring out the subtleties and undercurrents in the play’s action and dialogue. He concentrates on the character and motives of the players with attention to divergences from generic stereotype and telling parallels from other plays of the *Nea* and the *Palliata*. His remarks are often the judicious digest of others’ comments and studies, always carefully attributed. His

compass of scholarship on the play is admirable. The dominant theme of the commentary is, perhaps, irony, beginning with the overarching dramatic irony which is a structural basic of New Comedy (p. 6 and 211). Given the prologue, the audience is always in a privileged position to view the antics of the less enlightened stage characters as they struggle to cope with impending disaster. Subsidiary to this, the commentary maintains a high level of dramatic exegesis, consistently pointing out the nuances of Menandrian scene-play and characterization. A good example of Ireland's elucidation of such irony comes at the beginning of act three, in which Smikrines prepares to confront Chairestratos' household, fearing a plot against him: little does he know what the others are in fact plotting against him, which gives, as Ireland succinctly shows, several shades of irony to Smikrines' remarks. Or again, in the first act, Smikrines' purported tact in not raising the subject of a wedding just after the news of death (158-161) in fact 'confirms by denial: for [...] it is exactly this (marriage to the heiress) that lies at the forefront of his own mind'.

Little help with Greek expression is given, but that is more the fault of the format and due to restrictions of space than to the author. Given the complexity of Menandrian diction, however, it is almost a mockery to be told that αἶς in line 65 is equivalent to ταύταις ἄς (*attractio relativi*), or that ὄναρ in 358 is an 'accusative of respect', when so much else goes unexplained. True, the student can try to unravel Menander's Greek from Ireland's excellent translation, but otherwise he'll need help from other editions to tackle difficulties in the text. Where Ireland does pay attention to the text in the commentary is in the matter of questionable attribution of parts. Where explanation of historical matters is required, Ireland is informative, particularly in the matter of Attic law and mores, where these bear on the drama.

One might complain that Menander's humour gets relatively scant mention in the commentary. There are references to the 'black humour' of Smikrines' avarice, but Ireland is otherwise reluctant to 'explain the joke', as it were, which does run through Menander's text. True, the opening of *Aspis* is sombre with the quasi-funeral cortège for Kleostratos, but the humour immediately steps in, with Smikrines' barely-concealed greed when confronted with Kleostratos' war booty. Or in the dialogue between cook and other kitchen staff in act one, Ireland is not concerned to bring out the humour of their banter. Ireland also refuses to translate the spoof Doric lingo of the 'doctor' in act four, explaining in the commentary that others have 'translated into an equally comic form of Scots; readers, however, are invited to insert their own prejudices'. I sympathise with this reluctance to import a national prejudice into the translation, but Menander obviously had no such qualms, nor Aristophanes, when it came to mocking the Dorians.

This rather dead-pan tone of the commentary leads to some missed obser-

vations, it seems to me. For example, when Smikrines sniffs that Chairestratos is marrying the young heiress to ‘goodness knows who’ (177) Ireland seriously wonders whether Smikrines may in fact not know who the prospective groom is, whereas the whole point is that Smikrines is already envisaging himself as the ideal groom compared to this ‘nobody’. Or when the cook boasts that Thracian Getai are ‘real men, that’s why the mills are full of us’ (244-45), Ireland takes this as a serious reflection of the lawless nature of these Thracians, thus missing the irony of heroic he-men doing forced slave-labour. I acknowledge that explaining humour is not the most rewarding of activities; perhaps Ireland really finds Menander funny. But I think readers need some help to see the subtlety of Menandrian humour as well as the serious side.

### Minor points

40 no comment on the imperfects ἐξώρων, ἀπῆρον, which, I think, help explaining the dramatic sequence (said to contain illogicalities in the commentary p. 77) 193a apparatus fails to indicate that the line is transmitted in O, not in B.

195 ἔστι[ν presumably (accent).

198-200 surely refer to the agreements (ὄσα συνήλλαξέν τιςιν) Kleostratos made when embarking on his travels (ἀποδημῶν), not ‘while abroad’ (I.). Is the reference not to the agreements Kleostratos made with Chairestratos (leaving his sister in his charge) before he set off? Ireland has no explanatory note.

205 no comment on ἀγνώμονεῖν, translated as ‘have no feelings’; but surely it’s more like ‘do you think I’m doing something crazy?’ (cf. ἀγνώμων in *Epitrepontes* 918).

p.80 last line: Chairestratos, surely, not Cleostratos.

p.83: surely Chairestratos is not an ‘old man’? He is addressed as παῖ in 257.

p.87 top: Κονε<i>azomenai

458 if βιώης is the correct reading, this must come from βιάω, not βιόω and Ireland should translate accordingly.