

# A Monologue of New Comedy on the Athenian Stage (*PCG* VIII 1001)

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**T**HE PAPYRUS P.DIDOT (= P.Louvre 7172), found in the Serapeum at Memphis and dating to ca. 160 B.C.E., contains excerpts of Greek poetry penned by several scribes including two young brothers associated with the Serapeum. One of these brothers, Apollonius, wrote out probably from memory (there are problems with orthography, for instance) fifteen lines of a monologue belonging to a Greek comedy (fr. Didot b). The text given below is that of Kassel and Austin (*PCG* VIII 1001). Apollonius did not note the author of this text but its style and content suggest an author of the fourth or third century, quite possibly the New Comic playwright Menander.<sup>1</sup> My aim is not to weigh in on the debate over authorship. Rather, accepting the consensus view that the fragment belongs to New Comedy, I wish to make several observations about the content of these lines in relation to the topography of the south slope of the Athenian Acropolis, which

<sup>1</sup> Editio princeps: H. Weil, *Monuments grecs* I.8 (Paris 1879) 25–28. For commentary, discussion, and bibliography see A. W. Gomme and F. H. Sandbach, *Menander: A Commentary* (Oxford 1973) 723–729; W. G. Arnott, *Menander* III (Loeb 2000) 473–479. The first to attribute the speech to Menander was R. Herzog, “Ein vergessener Menanderprolog,” *Philologus* 89 (1934) 185–196; for attribution to other authors see Gomme and Sandbach 726–727, Arnott 474–475. E. Rechenberg, “Menander über die Theater-technik?” in F. Zucker (ed.), *Menanders Dyskolos als Zeugnis seiner Epoche* (Berlin 1965) 147–159, at 149, argues that the play could not belong to New Comedy because *θέατρον* in line 15 is otherwise unattested in the fragments of New Comedy; Gomme and Sandbach (727) wisely caution against this reasoning.

must be its dramatic setting, and to the landscape of Attic drama in the fourth century.

In this monologue, which may belong to the play's prologue, a man talks about being reborn into new knowledge:

- ἔρημία μὲν ἔστι κοῦκ ἀκούσεται  
οὐδείς παρών μου τῶν λόγων ὧν ἂν λέγω.  
ἐγὼ τὸν ἄλλον, ἄνδρες, ἐτεθνήκειν †πάλαι  
ἄπανθ' ὃν ἔζην, τοῦτό μοι πιστεύετε.  
5 πᾶν ταῦτό, τὸ καλόν, τὰγαθόν, τὸ σεμνόν <ἦν>,  
τὸ κακόν· τοιοῦτον ἦν τί μου πάλαι σκότος  
περὶ τὴν διάνοιαν, ὡς ἔοικε, κείμενον,  
ὃ πάντ' ἔκρυπτε ταῦτα κηφάνιζέ μοι.  
νῦν δ' ἐνθάδ' ἔλθῶν, ὥσπερ εἰς Ἀσκληπιοῦ  
10 ἐγκατακλιθεὶς σωθεὶς τε, τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον  
ἀναβεβίωκα· περιπατῶ, λαλῶ, φρονῶ.  
τὸν τηλικούτον καὶ τοιοῦτον ἦλιον  
νῦν τοῦτον εὗρον, ἄνδρες· ἐν τῇ τήμερον  
ὑμᾶς ὄρω νῦν αἰθρία, τὸν ἀέρα,  
15 τὴν ἀκρόπολιν, τὸ θέατρον.

I am all alone and no one present will hear the words I speak. Gentlemen, I was dead throughout the whole life I lived until now. Believe me about this. Everything was the same: beauty, goodness, dignity, and evil. This was the sort of darkness long enveloping, as it seems, my understanding, which hid everything and made it invisible to me. Now I have come here, just as if I had lain down and been healed at an Asklepieion, and I have come alive for the rest of my life: I walk around, I chatter, I think. Now I have discovered the sun—so large, so magnificent, Gentlemen. In the clear light today I now see you, the sky, the acropolis, the theater.

W. Geoffrey Arnott, in his recent edition of Menander's fragments, has noted that in line 15 "references to the Acropolis and the theatre in close conjunction must indicate that the dramatic scene was Athens, where the upper seats of the audience in the Theatre of Dionysus were on the southern

slopes of the Acropolis.”<sup>2</sup> A further piece of evidence unmentioned by Arnott reinforces his observation that the setting of this speech is the south slope of the Acropolis: in 9–10 the speaker claims that his state of newfound knowledge is like being healed after incubating in a sanctuary of Asklepios. This could well be understood as a reference to the City Asklepieion of Athens, which lay immediately northwest of the theater of Dionysus (discussed in greater detail below).

In 1934 Rudolf Herzog made a brief comment on line 15 in which, adducing the mention of the Asklepieion, he proposed that the dramatic setting of the monologue (and he seems to imply hereby also its performative setting) is in fact the theater of Dionysus. Herzog remarks that, as the speaker faces the audience, he tells us what he sees from the stage: first the sun and then the spectators, the Acropolis, and the theater itself, while to his left lies the Asklepieion.<sup>3</sup> Herzog’s observation, surely correct, deserves deeper consideration inasmuch as the sanctuaries of Dionysus and Asklepios were much more closely linked, both physically and ritually, by the late fourth century than his succinct note suggests. In what follows, I review the topographic and ritual connections between the theater and the sanctuary of Asklepios and then explore the cultural relevance of these connections for the audience of the monologue.

*The Asklepieion and Theater of Dionysus in the Fourth Century*

Both the theater and Asklepieion underwent major architectural expansion in the second half of the fourth century B.C.E. The cavea of the theater of Dionysus was greatly expanded up the slope of the Acropolis (the limestone rock of the Acropolis was cut back to accommodate a larger seating area) and the seats of the theater were built of stone now for the

<sup>2</sup> Arnott, *Menander* 479 n.5.

<sup>3</sup> Herzog, *Philologus* 89 (1934) 192; also Rechenberg, in *Menanders Dyskolos* 149, following Herzog.

first time.<sup>4</sup> Immediately west of the theater, a two-storey Doric marble stoa was added to the eastern terrace of the Asklepieion (which also necessitated a deep cutback north into the Acropolis rock).<sup>5</sup> Completion of the theater took place during Lykourgos' administration (338–322 B.C.E.), while construction of the stoa seems to have postdated shortly that of the theater's cavea.<sup>6</sup> Although no joins exist between the blocks of the re-

<sup>4</sup> Standard reference works on the theater of Dionysus include W. Dörpfeld and E. Reisch, *Das griechische Theater* (Athens 1896); E. Fiechter et al., *Das Dionysos-Theater in Athen I–IV* (Stuttgart 1935–1950); A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens* (Oxford 1946). Subsequent studies have challenged various findings of these scholars, especially regarding the nature and extent of the Lykourgan theater relative to the classical theater that preceded it; see e.g. H. R. Goette, "Griechische Theaterbauten der Klassik – Forschungsstand und Fragestellungen," in E. Pöhlmann (ed.), *Studien zur Bühnendichtung und zum Theaterbau der Antike* (Frankfurt 1995) 9–48; J.-C. Moretti, "The Theater of the Sanctuary of Dionysus Eleuthereus in Late Fifth-Century Athens," in M. Cropp et al. (eds.), *Euripides and Tragic Theatre in the Late Fifth Century* (= *ICS* 24–25 [1999–2000]) 377–398; H. R. Goette, "An Archaeological Appendix," in P. Wilson (ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals: Documentary Studies* (Oxford 2007) 116–121. S. Scullion, *Three Studies in Athenian Dramaturgy* (Stuttgart 1994) 2–66, provides a helpful overview of scholarship on the theater and of divergences in interpretation.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the architectural history of the Asklepieion see S. B. Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion: The People, Their Dedications, and the Inventories* (Amsterdam 1989) 7–36; J. W. Riethmüller, *Asklepios: Heiligtümer und Kulte* (Heidelberg 2005) I 250–278; M. Melfi, *I santuari di Asclepio in Grecia* (Rome 2007) 313–409. The Acropolis Ephoria (A'), under the direction of Alexandros Mantis, is currently undertaking further work in the sanctuary, including restoration of the Doric stoa. Debate continues as to both the original and the eventual extent of the sanctuary.

<sup>6</sup> E. Csapo, "The Men Who Built the Theatres: *Theatropolai*, *Theatronai*, and *Arkhitektones*," in Wilson, *The Greek Theatre* 87–121, at 112 with n.53, presents evidence and bibliography for completion of the theater's cavea by ca. 330. He also refers to recent work on the theater (as yet unpublished) that indicates that the cavea may have been completed by ca. 350. R. F. Townsend, *Aspects of Athenian Architectural Activity in the Second Half of the Fourth Century B.C.* (diss. U. North Carolina 1982) 68–76, esp. 68–70 and n.84, argues that the retaining wall of the theater of Dionysus predates construction of both the stoa and temenos wall marking the eastern terrace of the

taining wall of the theater on the one hand and either the terrace or the stoa on the other to suggest a unified building program, the spatial contiguity of the Asklepieion and theater almost certainly enhanced and forged new connections between the two sanctuaries.

Another monument, the peripatos, a pedestrian beltway of sorts ringing the upper slopes of the Acropolis, runs in an east-west course through the cavea of the theater (serving also as the diazoma that divides the cavea into upper and lower seating areas). The peripatos continues westward to embrace the Asklepieion just within its path, thereby weaving the two sanctuaries together spatially and facilitating movement of visitors between them. Some of this movement would have been quite practical. For instance, Rhys Townsend has suggested that those attending the theater may have sought shelter in Asklepios' stoa during inclement weather and that the stoa's upper storey may have been accessible from the cavea of the theater.<sup>7</sup>

Connections between the two sanctuaries extended beyond the merely spatial and utilitarian to include also rituals. The Athenians held two major annual festivals for Asklepios, one of which, according to Aeschines (3.67), took place on the same day (the Asklepieia on 8 Elaphebolion) as the proagon to the City Dionysia when poets, actors, and choruses of tragedies

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Asklepieion, but he acknowledges (n.84) that some of the evidence cannot be reconciled easily with this chronology. Townsend's study makes clear how difficult it is to determine the relative chronology of these two building programs, which itself further suggests that the two may have been perceived as an integrated whole even if they were not thus planned at the outset. See also R. F. Townsend, "The Fourth-Century Skene of the Theater of Dionysos at Athens," *Hesperia* 55 (1986) 421–438, at 436–438 with n.55, on the close stylistic connection between the skene of the theater and the east stoa of the Asklepieion.

<sup>7</sup> Townsend, *Aspects* 70, bases this suggestion on analogy to the later Stoa of Eumenes, which shared a physical connection to the Odeion of Herodes Atticus. Both of these monuments stood farther west along the south slope of the Acropolis.

competing in the Dionysia announced the subjects of their plays.<sup>8</sup> Given that the activities of the proagon were rather light relative to the lengthy days of dramatic performances that followed, those who attended the proagon may well have participated also in sacrifices and feasting in honor of Asklepios next door. The proagon, moreover, was staged within the Odeion of Pericles, immediately east of the theater; the proagon and Asklepieia thus took place in areas that created a spatial frame for the theater.

By the fourth century, moreover, Asklepios had taken on aspects of his father Apollo's role as healer of the body politic, in addition to continuing to meet the needs of ailing individuals. Athenian inscriptions, for example, acknowledge Asklepios' role in providing *ὑγίεια καὶ σωτηρία* to the *demos* and *boule*, part of a late fourth-century trend, Jon Mikalson argues, of "changed religious outlook" for Athens in the face of Macedonian aggression.<sup>9</sup> Asklepios' expanding role is evident also in paeans that ask or thank Asklepios for assistance in the political realm. The best example of this is the late fourth or early third century hymn from Asklepios' sanctuary at Epidauros wherein Isyllos thanks Asklepios for saving Sparta from Philip's army, as well as for healing a boy, probably Isyllos himself.<sup>10</sup> Robin Mitchell-Boyask has recently argued that these themes had been played out for decades in tragedies and comedies per-

<sup>8</sup> The events of the Asklepieia are poorly documented; we know only of a large sacrifice and *παννυχίς*, or all-night revelry (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1496, IV B.C.E.; 974, II B.C.E.). See L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932) 142; H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (London 1977) 64–65, 135; R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford 2005) 462 s.v. "Asklepieia."

<sup>9</sup> J. D. Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens* (Berkeley 1998) 43–44, 132.

<sup>10</sup> *IG* IV.1<sup>2</sup> 128. For recent discussion, commentary, and bibliography see W. D. Furley and J. M. Bremer, *Greek Hymns: Selected Cult Songs from the Archaic to the Hellenistic Period* (Tübingen 2001) I 227–240, II 180–192; A. Kolde, *Politique et religion chez Isyllos d'Épidaure* (Basel 2003). The identity of Philip (Philip II and III are the most likely candidates) is debated. Furley and Bremer make a strong case for Philip II; if it is Philip III, the inscription may date to the early or mid-third century B.C.E.

formed in the theater of Dionysus at Athens (e.g. Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and Aristophanes' *Plutus*),<sup>11</sup> a reflection perhaps of Aristotle's dictum that tragedy serves a cathartic function, one that can be understood in metaphorical terms as helping to maintain the health of the polis. As Mitchell-Boyask puts it, "the propinquity of the Asklepieion to the Theater of Dionysus turns the latter into a symbolic place of healing for the polis."<sup>12</sup> Finally, epigraphic evidence demonstrates some overlap in the personnel of the two cults. For example, in 327 a priest of Asklepios named Androkles was honored both for his role as priest of Asklepios and for his care of the theater of Dionysus. The decree was passed at the end of Elaphebolion, the month in which the City Dionysia and the Asklepieia were held.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to these ritual and spatial links between the sanctuaries of Dionysus and Asklepios, it is remarkable that in no other ancient city did all three monuments—acropolis, theater, and sanctuary of Asklepios—lie in such close proximity. Many sanctuaries of Asklepios did include theaters or were positioned near theaters. And many theaters in the Greek world afforded a view of the acropolis from the vantage point of its actors, given that theaters were typically built into the slope of a hill, often the same hill that led to the acropolis (e.g. Messene, Corinth, Pergamon). But what sets Athens apart from other cities with Asklepieia is its close topographical association between Asklepieion and acropolis; the majority of Asklepieia

<sup>11</sup> R. Mitchell-Boyask, *Plague and the Athenian Imagination: Drama, History and the Cult of Asclepius* (Cambridge 2008), esp. 105–121, on the cult of Asklepios and the theater of Dionysus.

<sup>12</sup> Mitchell-Boyask, *Plague* 117.

<sup>13</sup> *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 354. For discussion of the decree see C. J. Schwenk, *Athens in the Age of Alexander* (Chicago 1985) no. 54. Mitchell-Boyask, *Plague* 113–114, observes that the Roman-era *prohedria* in the theater of Dionysus included a seat for the priest of Asklepios, and that this may reflect traditions extending back to the classical period.

lay in outlying areas of the city (e.g. Corinth) or even beyond the city's walls (e.g. Pergamon).<sup>14</sup>

The accumulation of these three south-slope topographical markers in the monologue, combined with the physical and ritual links between the Asklepieion and theater of Dionysus that came to fruition over the course of the fourth century, all establish beyond any reasonable doubt that the dramatic and performative context of the monologue was the theater of Dionysus at Athens.<sup>15</sup> Yet these topographical markers function as more than mere stage setting. The reference to the Asklepieion in particular highlights a theme central to fr. Didot b: renewed vision.

*Asklepios, Vision, and Metatheater in fr. Didot b*

Most scholarship on fr. Didot b has focused on the topos of self-discovery: a young man has come to Athens (note the deictic ἐνθάδε in 9, following immediately upon the temporal νῦν) and has been enlightened, probably by some philosophical

<sup>14</sup> On the liminal placement of Asklepieia generally see F. Graf, "Heiligtum und Ritual: Das Beispiel der griechischen-römischen Asklepieia," in A. Schachter (ed.), *Le sanctuaire grec* (Geneva 1992) 159–203. On the proximity of Asklepieia to theaters see Mitchell-Boyask, *Plague* 117. For description and bibliography pertaining to each of these Asklepieia see Riethmüller, *Asklepios*, which contains a compendious catalogue of Asklepieia across the Mediterranean.

<sup>15</sup> The verb περιπατῶ in 11, while not an explicit reference to the peripatos, may, in the context of these other topographical markers, have called to mind the pedestrian pathway running through the cavea of the theater and reinforced thereby the south-slope setting. This pathway had received the designation "peripatos" by the mid-fourth century: *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 2639. K. Gaiser, "Menander und der Peripatos," *A&A* 13 (1967) 8–40, has argued that the term implies the speaker's affiliation with the Peripatetics; Gomme and Sandbach, *Menander* 728–729, oppose this interpretation on the grounds that the Peripatetics received their name not from the act of walking about but from the peripatos, or walkway, where they taught.



school.<sup>16</sup> The preponderance of language related to seeing, or seeing anew, forms the basis of this interpretation. In lines 6–8 the speaker describes how a dark cloud (*σκότος*) covered and blackened (*ἔκρυπτε, ἠφάνιζε*) his mind, or so it seems to him (*ὡς εἶοικε*); in 12–13 he speaks of having found the sun, the latter itself used often as a metaphor for the eye and by extension also for vision in ancient Greek culture<sup>17</sup>; and in 14–15 he states that in the clear light (*αἰθρία*) he can now see (*ὄρω*) the men whom he addresses, the sky, acropolis, and theater.

Scholars have argued that reference to the Asklepieion reinforces the speaker's claim to new understanding: he is a man with a new lease on life, so to speak, a man who, having awoken with deeper knowledge of the world around him, is now healthy and truly alive. The experience of awakening in an Asklepieion certainly seems to function as a broad metaphor for new life based in new knowledge, but given the heavy emphasis on vision in the monologue, the metaphor is perhaps more nuanced than scholars have noticed. In particular, the metaphor gains resonance from associations between Asklepios and vision.

The cult of Asklepios was associated with vision in two prominent ways. First, blindness was an ailment often treated by the god, as indicated by epigraphic, archaeological, and literary sources. Blindness is addressed frequently in fourth-century healing inscriptions from Asklepios' panhellenic sanctuary at Epidauros, and over time blindness would become the ailment

<sup>16</sup> Gomme and Sandbach, *Menander* 728, suggest that other scenarios could just as well explain the speaker's sense of awakening to new life, such as falling in love.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. *Hom. Hymn. Cer.* 62–73, where Helios (called a *σκοπός* of gods and mortals, 62) is the only god who sees Persephone's abduction (he both sees and hears it, whereas Hekate and Demeter only hear it); also *Soph. Ant.* 103–104. On the sun, light, and vision see also R. Rehm, *The Play of Space: Spatial Transformation in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton 2002) 3–4, with references and bibliography.

most often attested in epigraphic sources for his cures.<sup>18</sup> Anatomical votives in the form of eyes are also common at some Asklepieia. Eye votives are difficult to interpret (they could, for instance, be apotropaic or allude to the vision of the god that accompanied treatment, on which see below), but if at least some of them represent the part of the body that Asklepios healed, then we have considerably more evidence for the treatment of eye ailments, including probably blindness. It is remarkable, in this regard, that eye votives are especially prevalent in the inventories of the Athens Asklepieion next to the theater of Dionysus.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> In the fourth-century *iamata* from Epidauros, seven individuals visit Asklepios to be cured of blindness, making it the most common ailment in these inscriptions (followed immediately by paralysis, of which there are six instances): *IG* IV.1<sup>2</sup> 121–124. If we consider all of the ailments listed in *iamata* from Athens (II C.E.: *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 4514), Lebena (II B.C.E.–III C.E.: *I.Cret.* I XVII 9, 11, 17–19), and Rome (II–III C.E.: *IGUR* I 105, 148; *SEG* XLIII 661), in addition to Epidauros (IV B.C.E.–III C.E., including also *IG* IV.1<sup>2</sup> 125–127), over one-sixth of them are blindness; see B. L. Wickkiser, “Chronicles of Chronic Cases and Tools of the Trade at Asklepieia,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 8 (2006) 25–40, at 27–28, for discussion.

<sup>19</sup> *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1532–1536, 1539, 1019, and *SEG* XXVIII 116, dating from the mid fourth through the late second century B.C.E.; see Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion*, for text, commentary, translation, and discussion. Some scholars have thereby concluded that Asklepios of the Athenian Acropolis was a specialist in eye ailments (e.g. F. T. van Straten, “Gifts for the Gods,” in H. S. Versnel [ed.], *Faith, Hope, and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* [Leiden 1981] 65–151, at 149–150 with bibliography); however, Aleshire (42) cautions against this interpretation given that a large proportion of the eyes are listed in the inventory of a single year. At the Asklepieion in Corinth, several eye votives were found among votive deposits that date mainly from the late fifth through the late fourth century B.C.E.: C. Roebuck, *The Asklepieion and Lerna. Corinth XIV* (Princeton 1951) 120–121. Van Straten (125) suggests that some eyes may indicate gratitude for the dream vision through which the individual was cured rather than the nature of the ailment itself. Eye votives are by no means exclusive to Asklepieia; they can be found in the material record of many cults, even those that have, apparently, no prominent healing function.

In addition to archaeological and epigraphic evidence, there is a famous comic precedent for Asklepios curing a character of blindness. Ploutos in Aristophanes' play visits a sanctuary of Asklepios to have his sight restored (*Plut.* 633–747, perhaps even the Acropolis Asklepieion, although this identification is problematic).<sup>20</sup> Much as does fr. Didot b, the *Plutus* too evokes the topography of the Acropolis: in the final scene the characters engineer a procession to restore Ploutos to the Parthenon where he will resume watch over Athena's treasury (1191–1193). The audience of the *Plutus* could easily have pictured the procession winding by the very theater in which they sat, just as the audience of fr. Didot b may well have recalled the *Plutus* as they listened to the speaker of the monologue compare his state of new knowledge and particularly his clarity of vision to being healed in an Asklepieion.

Aside from the treatment of blindness, vision played another prominent role in Asklepios' sanctuaries. Therapy at Asklepieia, whatever the ailment, almost always included a dream vision: the patient fell asleep and saw a "vision" or "dream" in which Asklepios came to him or her and performed a medical procedure or prescribed a regimen for cure. The majority of healing inscriptions from Epidauros introduce these encounters with ὄψιν εἶδε or ἐνύπνιον εἶδε ("s/he saw a vision/dream") and proceed to describe what the patient saw.<sup>21</sup> This same tra-

<sup>20</sup> The scholiast to *Plutus* 621 indicates that it is the sanctuary on the Acropolis in Athens (ἐν ἄστυ). Scholars have doubted this assertion, however, mainly because the sanctuary is described as being near the sea (*Plut.* 656–658) and thus the context seems better to support the Asklepieion at Zea in Piraeus; see R. Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History* (Oxford 1996) 181 with n.102. As Parker notes, however, "it is hard to suppose that the thirty-year-old shrine within a stone's throw of the theatre ... could be simply ignored."

<sup>21</sup> *IG IV.1<sup>2</sup>* 121–124, especially prevalent in 122. See L. R. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Atlanta 1995) 20–39, on the repetition of the phrase ὄψιν / ἐνύπνιον εἶδε, although her discussion focuses on the nouns rather than the verb. On dreams in Greek and Roman culture and their role in various therapies, including

dition would continue centuries later, as evidenced in Aelius Aristides' descriptions of his dream experiences at the Asklepieion at Pergamon during the second century C.E. (*Or.* 47–52).

Given that vision was an important component of the healing experience at Asklepieia and that many individuals sought the god's help for blindness in particular, when the speaker of fr. Didot b says that he feels as if he has been cured (*σωθείς*, 10) in an Asklepieion, he seems to be drawing on the audience's knowledge of links between Asklepios and vision in particular to emphasize his own new (in)sight.<sup>22</sup>

The emphasis on sight in this monologue, moreover, complements its pronounced metatheatricality. The passage contains two strong metatheatrical tags. First, the speaker mentions the theater building (*θέατρον*, 15, which we have recognized is the theater of Dionysus, given the other south-slope specific topographical markers in the passage); second, he addresses the audience (*ἄνδρες*, 3 and 13) qua audience by acknowledging that they are present in the theater. The speaker hereby breaks dramatic illusion—he acknowledges that his speech is part of a drama enacted on the stage.<sup>23</sup> Timothy Hofmeister argues that this fragment, because of its emphasis on vision and knowledge and its mention of the theater, celebrates the institution of theater as one of the integral features of Athenian life: here Athens as a polis would come to see and thereby also learn from the performances on stage.<sup>24</sup> Hofmeister's discussion

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those of Asklepios, see P. C. Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton 1994), esp. 105–123.

<sup>22</sup> *σωθείς* when used in a medical context often means “cured”: N. van Brock, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire médical du grec ancien: soins et guérison* (Paris 1961) 230–234, as noted by Gomme and Sandbach, *Menander* 728.

<sup>23</sup> On audience address and breaking dramatic illusion in Greek comedy see D. Bain, *Actors and Audience: A Study of Asides and Related Conventions in Greek Drama* (Oxford 1977). Regarding this particular fragment, Bain observes that the speaker does not step outside of his character and admit that he is an actor in a play, unlike many other asides in Greek comedy (187–189).

<sup>24</sup> T. P. Hofmeister, “*αἱ πᾶσαι πόλεις*: Polis and *Oikoumenê* in Menander,” in G. W. Dobrov (ed.), *The City as Comedy: Society and Representation in Athenian*

makes a fitting complement to that of Mitchell-Boyask who argues, as we have seen, that the theater is a place of healing for the body politic and thus an extension of the healing function of the Asklepieion next door. Hofmeister's observations clarify that such "healing" within the theater takes place through vision in particular—that is, through witnessing the dramas.<sup>25</sup> Thus it is not only the speaker of the monologue who metaphorically awakens as if in an Asklepieion, but all of the audience witnessing the comedy who are enlightened by it, all of whom sit in the theater just beyond the temenos of Asklepios' sanctuary.

### *Conclusions*

The author of the monologue preserved in fr. Didot b draws on the audience's experience of the City Asklepieion, especially the close physical and ritual ties between the Asklepieion and theater of Dionysus and the prominent role of vision in Asklepios' cult, to strengthen the speaker's claims about new knowledge. The speaker is able to see anew, much as could many individuals who regained their sight after incubating in Asklepios' sanctuaries, perhaps especially in his sanctuary next to the theater of Dionysus which seems to have acquired a reputation for curing blindness in particular, as suggested both by Aristophanes' *Plutus* and by the many votive eyes listed in the inventory records of this sanctuary. The claims of the speaker to new knowledge, moreover, are a reflection of the knowledge that comes to the audience itself through viewing this and other dramas in the theater of Dionysus.

Fr. Didot b is also important for expanding our own still quite limited understanding of Greek New Comedy. It demonstrates that some Athenian comedy remains quite topical: the

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*Drama* (Chapel Hill 1997) 289–342, building on the discussion of K. Gaiser, "Ein Lob Athens in der Komödie," *Gymnasium* 75 (1968) 193–219, who argues that fr. Didot b contains a topos typical of New Comedy: praise of Athens.

<sup>25</sup> "Healing" is not a term that Hofmeister uses.

public face of Athens as represented by its most famous monuments does not disappear from the stage of New Comedy despite an apparent shift in focus from public institutions and figures to the more private sphere of the *oikos*.<sup>26</sup> When perceived in these terms, Didot b resonates with recent discussions of New Comedy by scholars like Eric Csapo, who has cautioned against positing sharp distinctions between Old, Middle, and New Comedy, and Susan Lape, who has shown that Athenian democratic culture continued to be central to Menander's plays.<sup>27</sup> The most public arena of Athens, its Acropolis, home of its most famous cults and festivals, remained critical to Athenian self-representation in the comic theater even, or perhaps especially, as the ground of Greek

<sup>26</sup> On the centrality of the *oikos* to the plays of Menander see e.g. I. C. Storey and A. Allen, *A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama* (Malden 2005) 221–229. If Didot b is indeed by Menander, then the characterization of Menander's comedy as "universal ...with no defined background," in contrast to the topicality of Aristophanes' plays (Storey and Allen 221, although this view is by no means unique to these authors) should perhaps be revised. Regarding New Comedy's apparent focus on the *oikos* (if this is not particular to Menander), it is almost as if the comic stage of the Lykourgan theater, characterized by house facades, has absorbed the houses once standing on the upper Acropolis slopes that were removed to expand the theater's cavea; see Goette, in Wilson, *The Greek Theatre* 118–120, for evidence of these houses. The homes, cast now as frequent characters in Attic comedy, are reoriented so that their facades face the Acropolis and engage in a dialogue between *oikos* and *polis* that plays out on the New Comic stage.

<sup>27</sup> E. Csapo, "From Aristophanes to Menander? Genre Transformation in Greek Comedy," in M. Depew and D. Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2000) 115–133; S. Lape, *Reproducing Athens: Menander's Comedy, Democratic Culture, and the Hellenistic City* (Princeton 2004). Csapo's discussion, both engaging and provocative, includes many a poetic phrase worth repeating, such as the following criticism of the view that a political and spiritual collapse of Athens in the late fifth century parallels an intellectual and emotional decline among comic poets: "This melodrama of the poet, the city, and the [comic] genre, all sitting together on the stoop of the fourth century blubbing over lost glory, has had surprising appeal" (124).

hegemony radically shifted in the late classical and early Hellenistic periods.<sup>28</sup>

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