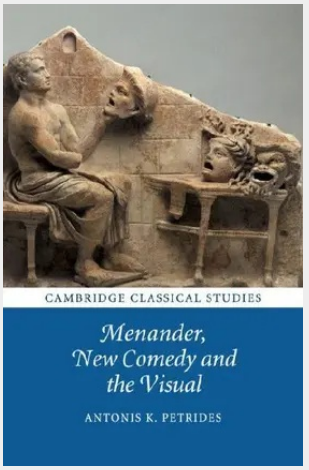
Petrides

Menander, New Comedy and the Visual



This book argues that New Comedy has a far richer performance texture than has previously been recognised. Offering close readings of all the major plays of Menander, it shows how intertextuality - the sustained dialogue of New Comedy performance with the diverse ideological, philosophical, literary and theatrical discourses of contemporary polis culture - is crucial in creating semantic depth and thus offsetting the impression that the plots are simplistic love stories with no political or ideological resonances. It also explores how the visual aspect of the plays ('opsis') is just as important as any verbal means of signification - a phenomenon termed 'intervisuality', examining in particular depth the ways in which the mask can infuse various systems of reference into the play. Masks like the panchrestos neaniskos (the 'all-perfect youth'), for example, are now full of meaning; thus, with their ideologically marked physiognomies, they can be strong instigators of literary and cultural allusion.

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