Menander, *Epitrepontes* 581[[1]](#footnote-1)

According to the edition of Sandbach, the papyrus reads here:

ποιειν ε[ ]λ̣α . ειν

The reconstruction of this leaf of P. Cair. J. 43227 is problematic[[2]](#footnote-2) but at this point there is no doubt that the two ends of the line match up.

Various restorations for this line have been proposed, but none are satisfactory. The suggestions of Wilamowitz[[3]](#footnote-3)

ποιεῖν ἐ[μαυτὸν οὐδὲ πράγατ᾿ ἄλ]λ᾿ ἔχειν

or

ποιεῖν ἐ[μαυτὸν οὐδ᾿ ἰδεῖν αὐτὸν] δοκεῖν

were refuted by the 1978 facsimile of the Cairo codex,[[4]](#footnote-4) which confirms the readings of the traces reported by Guéraud.[[5]](#footnote-5) Gomme / Sandbach also point out correctly that οὐδέ coordinating a positive and a negative clause does not correspond to Menander’s usual practice.[[6]](#footnote-6) The single counterexample, fr.236.7, is not probative: we should read οὐκ with Sandbach (and indeed Clericus), which gives good sense and better idiom.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Furley in his commentary gives the sense of the scene: ‘Onesimus wants to avoid a “talk” with Smikrines’.[[8]](#footnote-8) This is based on the frequently endorsed reconstruction λα[λ]εῖν.[[9]](#footnote-9) Furley’s own reconstruction, which he qualifies with ‘possis’ in his apparatus, is as follows:

ποιεῖν ἐ[μαυτὸν πρίν γε δή τί μοι λαλ]εῖν

This rids us of the intrusive οὐδέ, but introduces another problem. Clauses introduced by πρίν with a dynamic infinitive attested in extant Menander never coincide with a change of subject.[[10]](#footnote-10) This may be put simply down to chance; but as a result we do not know if Menander would have written a πρίν-clause with a change of subject without that subject somehow being indicated. It is possible that the necessary accusative has been lost from the following line, of course, but that is impossible to know from our present witnesses.

I propose therefore to read

ποιεῖν ἐ[μαυτὸν ὥστε τὸν ἄγριον] λα[θ]εῖν.

In this way we avoid trouble over the negative; we are able to provide a plausible adjective to refer to Smikrines;[[11]](#footnote-11) the restoration of λαθεῖν does not contradict the traces. In fact, after I had thought of λαθεῖν I discovered I had been anticipated by Leidig, to whom I owe ὥστε.[[12]](#footnote-12) However Leidig’s own suggestion of ὥστε τὸν ἄνθρωπον introduces an unwelcome split anapaest into the text,[[13]](#footnote-13) and ἄνθρωπον in any case seems a little bland.

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1. My thanks to Prof. Peter Parsons for helpful discussion of this line, and to Mrs Ruth Ogden of St John’s College Library, Oxford, for her assistance. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Gomme / Sandbach (1973) 343-4, and the apparatus in Sandbach (1990) 116 for the suggestions of Robert (though contrary to Sandbach’s report, Guéraud does not rule out the reading δοκεῖν). These are also for the most part incorporated into Furley’s edition (2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1925) 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Riad / Selim (1978) plate XV. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Guéraud (1927) 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gomme / Sandbach (1973) 345, 701; Denniston (1950) 190, 583. Gomme (*apud* Gomme / Sandbach (1973) 345) suggested that fr. 236 was in a high register and therefore borrowed the usage from tragedy. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sandbach *apud* Gomme / Sandbach (1973) 701; I am less convinced by Kaibel’s πολυτελές however. Clericus (1709) reads οὐκ, but arranges the fragment rather differently to other editors. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Furley (2009) 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. First mooted by Guéraud (1927) 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Cartlidge (forth.). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. *Dysk*. 388 with Handley (1963) 198 for the adjective applied to Knemon, who is similar to Smikrines in character; for Smikrines himself cf. *Ep*. 1079. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Leidig (2006) 140-141. I originally thought of καὶ τὸν ἄγριον, but this requires ἄγρ- to be heavy, which is contextually unlikely; see Handley (1963) 204-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. ‘Für den geteilten Anapäst an dieser Stelle des Trimeters gibt es Beispiele’, claims Leidig (2006) 141, but without citing any. In any case, the issue is not the position in the line but the kind of break a split anapaest introduces; the break in τὸν || ἄνθρωπον is innocuous, the break in ὥστε || τόν is not. I do not propose a reconstruction for 582, but I regard προνοητικῶς in Leidig’s reconstruction, repeated from 561, as unlikely; Menander’s speeches do not generally repeat vocabulary in this way, unlike, say, those of Aeschylus (see Fraenkel (1950) 551. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)