

Women and the Comic Plot in Menander

Ariana Traill



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WOMEN AND THE COMIC PLOT IN MENANDER

Taking a fresh look at mistaken identity in the work of an author who helped to introduce the device to comedy, Professor Traill shows how the outrageous mistakes many male characters in Menander make about women are grounded in their own emotional needs. The core of the argument derives from analysis of speeches by or about women, with particular attention to the language used to articulate problems of knowledge and perception, responsibility and judgment. Not only does Menander freely borrow language, situations, and themes from tragedy, but he also engages with some of tragedy's epistemological questions, particularly the question of how people interpret what they see and hear.

Menander was instrumental in turning the tragic theme of human ignorance into a comic device and inventing a plot type with enormous impact on the western tradition. This book provides new insights into his achievements within their historical and intellectual context.

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For Brian

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Preface

This project began as an attempt to explain the origins of the so-called *bona meretrix* (“good prostitute”) in Terence, but the Menandrian material proved so richly informative that it soon became a study of Menander’s hetairai. It transformed into something much broader when it became clear that the mechanisms at work in the representation of hetairai applied to other female characters. The simple question “Are they good?” led to many other questions about the dramatic representation of women, women’s identity, and the basic premise of mistaken identity. With roots in folk tale, tragedy, and Old Comedy, the mistaken identity plot was developed by Menander and his contemporaries into a versatile and productive comic form. Menander’s plays, in particular, show how it could be adapted to all kinds of situations. This book traces some of these variations and explores the rich dialogue Menander engaged in with his literary predecessors and with the intellectual currents of his time. His comedies have not only enriched the western tradition with many of its basic plots and devices, but they also open a fascinating window into the laws, customs and social mores of late fourth-century Athens.

This book has been many years in the making. I owe special thanks to Richard Thomas, who supervised the Ph.D. thesis from which it grew, and to Cynthia Damon and James Halporn, who both read the thesis with a critical eye. I have been very fortunate to have had supportive colleagues both at the University of Colorado at Boulder and at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Peter Hunt patiently answered many questions about Greek historical topics. David Sansone, Maryline Parca, and Angeliki Tzanetou all read chapters with their usual painstaking care, generously sharing their expertise on ancient women, tragedy and Greek literature in general. I am very grateful to Kirk Freudenburg for his support and advice, both as a department chair and a friend. David Konstan was kind enough to read chapter four, giving invaluable advice. Andreola Rossi and Jud Hermann invited me to present portions of the work in progress

and provided both warm hospitality and an appreciative audience. Thanks are also due to my editor, Michael Sharp, to my copy-editor, Muriel Hall, and to the anonymous readers for Cambridge who offered valuable suggestions for making this more of a book and less of a dissertation.

Students in classes at the University of Illinois, both graduate and undergraduate, have commented helpfully on excerpts. My graduate research assistants Lindsay DesLauriers, Angela Kinney, Ryan McConnell, Michael Monroe, and Rebecca Muich all took time from their own work to make this a better book, reading it with an awareness of the needs of the non-specialist, pointing out opportunities for clarification, and catching innumerable errors. I owe a special debt to Michael for his sensible suggestions and his tireless proofreading and reference checking; now there is, indeed, a little bit of him in the book. Thanks are also due to the other Greek historian who has provided so much advice and encouragement over the years: my father, John Traill. Finally, no thanks can ever express my gratitude to my husband Brian whose unwavering support has done more than anything else to bring this book to completion.

CHAPTER I

Those obscure objects of desire

κατὰ πολλά γ' ἔστιν οὐ καλῶς εἰρημένον
τὸ γινῶθι σαυτόν· χρησιμώτερον γάρ ἦν
τὸ γινῶθι τοὺς ἄλλους

(*Thrasyleon*, Men. fr. 181 K-A)

Most of the time ‘know thyself’ is not good advice: ‘know other people’ would be a lot more useful.

There is a plot type that has become a staple in the western comic repertoire: the troubles of a small community – a few families, some friends – escalate as misunderstandings grow, accusations fly, and everything threatens to unravel until the situation is set right with the discovery of a long-lost son or daughter. The lovers can now marry; the rich man has an heir; the orphan finds his or her parents. These mistaken identity plots are essentially stories of wish-fulfillment which pretend, perhaps in deference to conservative attitudes towards social mobility, that the transformations required by poetic justice are simply revelations of a hidden truth. The plot type may be traced back to Plautus and Terence, who inspired the Renaissance dramatists who in turn instated it at the heart of the western comic tradition. Credit for its original development, however, must go to the Greek models for the Roman plays, most of which have been lost. Fortunately, a number of the comedies of Menander (342/1 – c. 290 BC), the most famous Greek New Comic playwright, still survive. They center on problems of social identity and the obstacles that blind people to truths about their closest friends and family. Over and over in Menander’s mistaken identity plots characters are forced to make judgments on partial or misleading evidence, while emotion, self-interest and self-delusion foster misapprehension (ἄγνοια) – the recurring theme of the plays. Proverbial wisdom may have urged “Know thyself,” but Menander’s comedy had the more utilitarian goal, “Know other people.” The plays dramatize how and why things go wrong.

The basic narrative pattern of the mistaken identity plot has a long history prior to comedy. “Theoxeny” stories of gods such as Demeter, Dionysus, or Aphrodite disguising themselves to test mortals are common in Greek myth and folk tale.¹ The motif first appears in epic, where gods regularly appear incognito and where a favored mortal like Odysseus can even perform his own “test” in disguise, complete with epiphany, revelation of special powers, and distribution of rewards and punishments.² Once mortals become the protagonists, the disguise-recognition story begins to take on a familiar dramatic form, particularly in Euripidean tragedy. Alcestis, Telephus, and Menelaos in the *Helen* conceal their true identities; Ion and Iphigeneia (from the *Iphigeneia in Tauris*) do so as well, although not by choice. All are eventually recognized and restored to their rightful positions. In the cases of Alcestis, Menelaos, and Iphigeneia, the recognition is clearly associated with transcending mortality, a connection already evident in Homer and still detectable in Menander. In the *Aspis* and *Perikeiromenē*, for example, misrecognized figures are left for dead.³ This plot type was not entirely foreign to Old Comedy: although he makes little use of other forms of mistaken identity, Aristophanes does spoof the disguise motif in the *Acharnians*, *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs*. It is hard to know whether New Comedy borrowed this central, structuring device directly from tragedy or whether earlier fourth-century comic poets should be given credit for adapting it. In either case, so thoroughly were disguise and recognition stories naturalized in their new genre that ancient scholars started to identify prototypical elements of “comedy” in the *Odyssey*.⁴

This book explores how the mistaken identity plot was used by one of the playwrights who helped to give it definitive form as a comic device. Two major developments from myth and tragedy are noticeable in Menander. First, the motif takes on an increasingly sophisticated shape. Mistakes are rationalized, with supernatural intervention yielding to human psychology as the primary cause. The “disguise” is usually unwitting and the focus is the dupe, not the trickster, with a corresponding emphasis on *how* the mistake is made. By grounding identity mistakes in psychological mechanisms, Menander was able to use comedy to explore questions of perception and subjectivity. Second, the misrecognized characters are disproportionately

¹ Burnett 1970: 24–5 n. 8. See Thompson 1955–8 K8111 “Gods (saints) in disguise visit mortals” for folk-tale examples.

² Murnaghan 1987: 11–13. ³ On the Homeric association see Murnaghan 1987: 16–17.

⁴ E.g., Ps.-Long, 9.15, Eust. *Com. ad Hom.* 2. 3.488.17–20. Even Aristotle thought the resolution of the *Odyssey* was more comic than tragic (*Poet.* 1453a31–9). See further Knox 1970: 89. The *kyrieia* disputes discussed in chapter 2 are arguably prefigured in the *Odyssey* (Lacey 1966: 62).

women, particularly when the mistakes concern relatively objective aspects of identity, such as social status. Plays frequently revolve around attempts to free or marry a seemingly forbidden woman, such as a slave, captive or prostitute, who is eventually restored to her rightful status. The characters who suffer loss of status – e.g., through piracy, war, exposure or more complicated mishaps – are predominantly women. One particular group is a useful entry point to my discussion because they typify a problem Menander explored with many different characters: the difficulty of knowing the truth about one's φίλοι ("loved ones," immediate family and close friends). In Athens and other Greek cities there was a demimonde of women who could not marry for economic or legal reasons and who therefore had to form other relationships for support. These women included the expensive call girls and musicians Greeks called hetairai ("companions").⁵ The foreigners, freedwomen and slaves who made up the majority of historically attested hetairai are the women with the largest speaking roles in Menander, including many of his female romantic leads.⁶

Although these women are misidentified in many different ways, some of the wilder mistakes concern their moral character. Readers since antiquity have suggested that some of Menander's hetairai are "good," since they usually prove innocent of the worst charges laid against them. His brand of mistaken identity certainly involves falsely suspected hetairai and some "good" women who are not hetairai at all, but did he really depict – or even invent – the whore with a heart of gold?⁷ The strongest positive claim occurs in Plutarch's *Moralia* at the end of a speech on the merits of various dinner entertainments. This passage is worth examining because it raises questions about the definition of status, the relationship between status and character and the appropriate criteria for virtue – the same questions

⁵ On the etymology and connotations of the name see Davidson 2006: 35–6.

⁶ Examples of foreigners include Chrysis (*Sam.*), Thais (Ter. *Eun.*), the "Bacchides" (*Dis Ex.*), Pythias (*Syn.*), and probably a number of title characters (*And.*, *Per.*, *Hymn.*, *Khalk.*, *Leuc.*, *Mess.*, *Olyn.*). Slaves include the two Habrotonons (*Epir.*, *Perik.*), Malthake (*Sik.*), Dorkion (*Fab. Inc.* 5 Arnott), the title figures in the *Aulētris* (and *Paidion?*), a *habra*-turned-*pallakē* (*Pseudher.*), and the three-mina woman in the *Kolax*. There are a few lost daughters (Glykera, *Perik.*; Plangon, *Syn.*; Krateaia, *Mis.*) but no hetairai of recognized citizen status. There may be a few freedwomen, such as the ἀπτελευθέρα mentioned in *Rhap.* fr. 332 K-A, if she is the woman who is 'slapped' (a sign of a lover's jealousy, Luc. *Dial. Mer.* 8.1) and perhaps the title figure of the *Anatithemenē*. The title character of the *Thais* and the two hetairai in *Fab. Inc.* 8 Arnott are free but nothing more is known about their status.

⁷ Cf. Keuls 1985: 188 "the stereotype [of "the whore with the noble character"] can be traced back to Classical Greece, at least as far as the fourth-century playwright Menander, and perhaps further." See also Webster 1953: 117, Henry 1988: 113–15, Zanker 1987: 149, and Zagagi 1994: 33. Modern scholars agree that Menander depicted women sympathetically (e.g., Ruiz 1981: 49 and *passim*, Keuls 1985: 191–4, Henry 1988 and 1987 and Martina 1997 11.2: 287) but no one quite matches Post 1940: 457–8: "Every woman in Menander's gallery is courageous and independent in face of trouble."

that create misunderstandings in the plays. After praising Menander for offering both pleasure and instruction, Plutarch claims that he is the sort of poet to send symposiasts running back to their wives. But the philosopher has to resort to some special pleading about the sexual content:

τὰ δὲ πρὸς τὰς ἑταίρας, ἂν μὲν ὥσιν ἱταμαὶ καὶ θρασεῖαι, διακόπτεται σωφρονισμοῖς τισιν ἢ μετανοαῖς τῶν νέων· ταῖς δὲ χρησταῖς καὶ ἀντερώσαις ἢ πατήρ τις ἀνευρίσκεται γνήσιος, ἢ χρόνος τις ἐπιμετρήται τῷ ἔρωτι, συμπεριφορὰν αἰδοῦς ἔχων φιλάνθρωπον. (*Mor.* 712c)

As regards hetairai, if they are audacious and bold, the affair is cut short by self-control or a change of mind in the young men; for those who are good and loving in return, either a legitimate father is found or some additional time is allotted to the affair, with a humanely indulgent attitude towards the disgrace.⁸

Scholarly efforts to apply these categories to the extant Menandrian comedies and Roman adaptations have been unconvincing, in part because of the limitations of the evidence and in part because this passage is selective and slightly tendentious.⁹ Plutarch's categories do not hold up well, even for the few plot endings that survive. The only affair to be "cut short" (in the *Heauton Timoroumenos*) is terminated by paternal authority, not youthful remorse, while one of the two affairs granted "additional time" (between an old man and his live-in mistress in the *Samia*) seems permanent. It is hard to believe that a time limit figured prominently in any resolution that left a lover and a hetaira together (no limit is mentioned in the other example, in the *Eunuchus*); furthermore, the sudden shift to the topic of "humanity," φιλάνθρωπία, suggests that these endings did not promote marriage in quite the same way as fifth act weddings.

Scholars have also asked who counts as a hetaira and how many types are distinguished.¹⁰ Plutarch's categories require a broad definition of the

⁸ With Minar, Sandbach and Helmbold, I take συμπεριφορά as "indulgence" rather than "companionship." Brown 1990: 246, follows Russell and Winterbottom's "which brings a humane relationship of respect," with reservations. αἰδώς, usually "sense of shame," can mean "that which causes shame, scandal" (LSJ s.v. II.1). Cf. Gilula 1987: 513–14.

⁹ Plutarch's scheme excludes certain plays (Gilula 1987: 512–13, Brown 1990: 246). *Contra* Anderson 1984: 128 takes it as roughly accurate. Plutarch consistently criticizes hetairai (Pomeroy 1999: 118) and his views on marriage may reflect a new "reciprocal" ideal promoted by Stoic and Christian ethics (but *contra* Patterson in Pomeroy 1999 argues that much of this is traditional).

¹⁰ Gilula 1987, Anderson 1984. Brown 1990: 249–50 argues that two of these women (Glykera and Kratea) are πολλακαί ("mistresses") and not hetairai, but Davidson 1997: 101–2 cites cases where such women are called hetairai. These are subjective terms reflecting the attitude of the speaker as much as the status of the referent (Reinsberg 1989: 89, Konstan 1993: 142) and categorical distinctions may be impossible (Ogden 1996: 157). Since kinless women had little hope of marriage, any arrangements they might make were liable to be represented as prostitution. Cf. Omitowaju 200: 213, McClure 2003: 9.

term hetaira. His argument, after all, is that these women get their just deserts, not that most of the women who appear to be hetairai are really something else. The underlying opposition between marital and extra-marital relations suggests that “hetaira” covers virtually all objects of male affection who are not recognized daughters of respectable families from the start of the play. It is not entirely unreasonable to group these women together, but in the surviving plays young women with “legitimate fathers” in their background are not openly and straightforwardly classed as hetairai. The four best-known lost daughters are described as a “captive” and soldier’s “beloved” (ἐρωμένη, *Misoumenos*), as a “beloved” who was “raised as befits a free woman” (*Sikyōnioi*), as a “slave . . . to an extent, in a way” (*Hērōs*), and simply as a “girl” (κόρη, μείραξ, *Perikeiromenē*). The lost daughters in Terence and Plautus are described as a “girl” (*puella, virgo*) and a “citizen . . . I think” (*Eunuchus*), as a “teenager” (*adulescentula*) and “foreigner” (*peregrina, Andria*), as a “girlfriend” (*amica, Heauton*), and as a “girl” (*puella*) reared “decently and chastely” (*bene et pudice, Cistellaria*). None of these characters accepts the label of hetaira and one explicitly rejects it (*Perik.* 711).

This problem stems from real ambiguities about the status of women in fourth-century Athens. One of the arguments of this book is that Menander’s plots characteristically involve women whose social position is unclear, many of whom could be (and sometime are) called “hetairai” by biased observers. A more troubling issue is that Plutarch’s categories are not parallel. In the surviving fragments of Menander, “audacious” (ἰταμή) and “bold” (θρασεῖα) are stock epithets for hetairai but “good” (χρηστή) and “loving in return” (ἀντερωσσα) are not.¹¹ It has been suggested that the latter should be split, so that “good” women find fathers and “loving” women earn extensions, although as Peter Brown points out, the Greek construction μὲν . . . δέ indicates that “good and loving” is meant to parallel “audacious and bold.”¹² There appear to be only two groups here, one of which – the “good and loving in return” – does not correspond to a Menandrian type.

Finally, it is also unclear whether Plutarch uses “good” (χρηστή) in a Menandrian sense: does it carry social implications which would make its application to hetairai oxymoronic, or does it mean little more than “nice” and potentially apply to anyone?¹³ Menander uses the feminine form

¹¹ For ἰταμή, cf. *Dis Ex.* 21, 101, *Perik.* 713. For θρασεῖα, cf. 163 K–A, *P. I.F.A.O.* 337 (= *Demiourgos* iv K–A).

¹² Brown 1990: 251. I would add that the single article in ταῖς δὲ χρησταῖς καὶ ἀντερωσσαῖς also supports this reading.

¹³ Gilula 1980: 147 restricts χρηστή to citizens. Brown 1990: 252 argues that it was used in a broader sense in the fourth century BC and suggests the translation “nice” here.

surprisingly rarely (whereas the masculine and neuter are quite common), and two examples turn up in *sententiae* which leave no doubt that the virtues commended belong to a wife: “a good (χρηστή) woman is the rudder of the house” (*Mon.* 155); “a good woman is a prized possession for a decent man” (*Mon.* 835). Menander wrote a *Khrēstē*, which may have featured an atypical hetaira (a “good” wife or daughter is not much of a premise), but nothing is known of the play. “Loving in return” is equally problematic. It means “rival in love” as often as “love in return” (cf. the “young rivals,” ἀντερραστῶν μειρακίων, at *Samia* 26).¹⁴ Furthermore, Menander barely recognizes the possibility that a woman might reciprocate her lover’s passion. The most devoted women, the loyal young wives in the *Epitrepontes*, *Stichus* and (probably non-Menandrian) Didot Papyrus 1, do not even speak of affection, much less the intense sexual passion of ἔρωσ.¹⁵ The hetaira in the *Epitrepontes* would like to *be* loved (ἐρᾶσθαι 432) but shows no sign of succumbing to ἔρωσ herself, while the “Samian Girl” speaks of her lover’s ἔρωσ with good-natured condescension (“he’s in love too, and pretty badly” *Sam.* 81). The title character in the *Perikeiromenē* is assumed, at most, to have “liked” her lover (491). In fact, in the entire Menandrian corpus only two women are “in love:” the title character of the lost play *Synerōsa* (a feminine participle which translates roughly “loving jointly with,” perhaps in a kind of rivalry?) and the lost daughter Plangon in the *Synaristōsai*, who returns her lover’s ἀγάπη (fr. 338 K-A) – the sort of emotion a nurse might feel for a baby (e.g., *Sam.* 247, 278). If Plautus’ adaptation of this play is any reliable guide, the opening scene dwelt on the bizarreness of her problem (“A heart-ache? Where did you get a heart?” *Cist.* 65).

Plutarch is probably referring to hetairai who forego multiple relationships in favor of a single lover. They are “good” because they are faithful. But he makes an association that Menander does not. Sexual fidelity for Menandrian women has comparatively little to do with virtue and a great deal to do with opportunity. The luxury of a monogamous relationship is out of reach for slaves in the clutches of pimps and for many freeborn hetairai as well. The important choices facing these women are not about fidelity to a lover but about dedication to a natal family, if they have one, or to the welfare of their community, if they do not. Romantic attachments were anything but virtuous, except in the eyes of the lover. As L. A.

¹⁴ Both Antiphanes and Nikostratos wrote an *Anterōsa* (“qui peut signifier *la Rivale*,” Legrand 1910: 112). There are, however, love-struck hetairai in Plautus, Lucian and Alciphron. Posidippus’ *Apoklēiomenē* may have been another (Legrand 116).

¹⁵ They admit only to “goodwill” and “liking” (*Epitr.* 830, *P. Did.* 1.18). Cf. Konstan 1994: 142–3, 145–6.

Post remarks, “the word *eros* did not become respectable until late, at least where women were concerned.”¹⁶ For Plutarch, who is arguing that the plays promote married love, it is not unreasonable to claim that virtue and “loving in return” go hand in hand, but nothing could be less Menandrian. *ἔρως*, a disruptive and often violent emotion, is not associated with good behavior in anyone.¹⁷ Its male victims may be treated with considerable sympathy, but their obsessive desire is still an affliction, an embarrassment, and a potential threat to the stability of the community. If Menander was playing to the fantasies of a freeborn male audience, it was surely by making their kin, and not their hired girlfriends, good and loyal.

Plutarch might be dismissed as a moralist writing five centuries after Menander and determined to find lessons the plays were not written to teach, but arguments over the moral character of hetairai go back to at least the fourth century, when Middle Comic poets started to describe hetairai in positive terms and to debate the virtues of individual women, praising them as “dignified” (*σεμνή*), “clever” (*σοφή*), “witty” (*ἄστεϊα*), and “well-behaved” (*κοσμία*).¹⁸ The comic poet Antiphanes (iv BC), perhaps the first to give a heart of gold to a whore, defended the “true” hetaira in his *Hydria*:

οὗτος δ' ὃν λέγω
 ἐν γειτόνων αὐτῷ κατοικούσης τινὸς
 ἰδὼν ἑταίρας εἰς ἔρωτ' ἄφικετο,
 ἄστῆς, ἑρήμου δ' ἐπιτρόπου καὶ συγγενῶν,
 ἦθός τι χρυσοῦν πρὸς ἀρετὴν κεκτημένης,
 ὄντως ἑταίρας. αἱ μὲν ἄλλαι τοῦνομα
 βλάπτουσι τοῖς τρόποις γὰρ ὄντως ὃν καλόν

The man I'm speaking about saw a certain hetaira living in his neighborhood and fell in love with her – a citizen, but bereft of a guardian and relatives, in possession of a character of gold where virtue is concerned, in truth a “companion”. The rest damage the name with their character, although it is in reality a fine one. (Athen. 572a = fr. 210 K-A)

The word “hetaira,” itself a euphemism, had acquired some tarnish by the fourth century. In Anaxilas' (iv BC) *Neottis* (“The Chick”), the modest suggestion from an unidentified speaker that “hetaira” is a more appropriate term than “whore” (*πόρνη*) for a particular woman elicits a rant from his companion about the general destructiveness of hetairai, followed by a point

¹⁶ Post 1940: 454.

¹⁷ Dover 1974: 212, for example, defines *ἔρως* as “an exceptionally strong response to stimuli, i.e. a very strong and obsessive desire.”

¹⁸ Henry 1988: 37.

by point comparison between named individuals and the legendary monsters of myth (Chimaera, Charybdis, Scylla, the Sphinx, Harpies, Sirens, fr. 21–2). The speaker in the Antiphanes passage above, however, is not simply pointing out the hypocrisy of the name. He is making the paradoxical argument that the woman's virtue (ἀρετή) makes her all the more a hetaira. He takes pains to distinguish her ἥθος ("character," often in a moral sense) from the τρόποι ("ways" or "character" in the sense of habits and temperament) of other hetairai. His argument requires redefining "hetaira" by resurrecting its original meaning. Any suggestion that it might be possible to be virtuous *despite* being a hetaira is undercut both by the concession that this woman is an exception to the rule ("the rest hurt the name") and by her juridical status. Destitution, he seems to imply, is what drove her to become a hetaira, and her heart of gold is unmistakably associated with citizenship. Since Athenian citizenship required two married Athenian parents, she is, evidently, another lost daughter who was probably not left to a life of prostitution.

The suggestion that individual hetairai ought to be called something more in accordance with their character would be wholeheartedly endorsed by several Menandrian figures who bandy about less euphemistic names like "whore" and "ground-beater". An anecdote recorded in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, composed some time after the death of Commodus in 192, describes a disagreement between Menander and his fellow comic playwright Philemon:

ὅτι δὲ καὶ Μένανδρος ὁ ποιητὴς ἦρα Γλυκέρας κοινόν· ἐνεμεσήθη δέ. Φιλήμονος γὰρ ἑταίρας ἔρασθέντος, καὶ χρηστὴν ταύτην ὀνομάσαντος διὰ τοῦ δράματος, ἀντέγραψεν Μένανδρος ὡς οὐδεμιᾶς οὔσης χρηστῆς.

That Menander the poet loved Glykera is common knowledge. But he was ashamed of it. For when Philemon fell in love with a hetaira and called her "good" on stage, Menander wrote in response that none [sc. no hetaira] was good. (13.594d)

Athenaeus' acceptance of the dubious tradition that Menander loved a hetaira named Glykera is consistent with the assumption, common in antiquity, that playwrights' lives provided material for their plays.¹⁹ By this principle, if Philemon expressed his opinion in a play, Menander must have responded in kind. The story has a suspiciously comic flavor: an infatuated lover finds in his girlfriend virtues that a more cynical lover denies to her whole profession. The phrase "none is good" suggests a lover at a low point, not a playwright discussing his work. It looks as if a biographical incident

¹⁹ See Körte 1919 on Menander and "Glykera."

has been extrapolated from passages that happened to make contradictory claims about hetairai, but unfortunately none survive.²⁰ All this story can confirm is something implicit in the Antiphanes passage: it was provocative to claim that a hetaira could be “good” since her profession was thought to preclude it. The issue, then, is not literary innovation – at least, not before Donatus – but whether a member of a despised status and profession could be “good” in any sense.²¹ Antiphanes and Athenaeus are operating within the fictional world of New Comedy. Plutarch is more detached, but what he sees is noticeably shaped by his own agenda. It is questionable whether any of these references really provides evidence for a “good” stock type on the comic stage, although they do testify to an interest in the moral character of a type that had formerly embodied only vice.

I have used the question of the good hetaira as a point of departure because it introduces larger questions about female identity. Menander’s female characters were shaped by a combination of literary traditions, philosophical ideas and the real circumstances of life in the Hellenistic Greek world. Economic and social conditions dictate some of their behavior, as do contemporary expectations about qualities that come naturally to different subsections of the population. Greeks recognized many significant status distinctions among women: legal (e.g., citizen, foreigner, slave, freedwoman), social (e.g., unmarried girls, wives, old women), even professional (e.g., midwives, market sellers, pipe players). Menander’s plays fully acknowledge the status divisions which Greeks – and Athenians in particular – considered important, but they also challenge notions of absolute and clearly demarcated groups by presenting women whose status is not quite clear. Problems of determining status lie at the center of these plays: virtually all contain errors about a woman’s position within her community.

This book begins with an examination of relatively objective mistakes, the most common type for women. Chapter 2 argues that Menander devised ingenious variations in order to explore how and why characters make blatant mistakes which they often refuse to give up. The underlying psychology in the plays is consistent with fourth-century theories of perception. Chapter 3 examines errors about more subjective aspects of identity, arguing that serious suspicions about a woman’s moral character are acceptable only when her status is low. These suspicions often draw on the stereotype of the wicked prostitute, whether the woman is a prostitute or not, and

²⁰ Henry 1988: 44, Gilula 1987: 514–15, n. 16. See also Legrand 1910: 113, Anderson 1984: 133 n. 2.

²¹ Donatus credited Terence with inventing the “good hetaira” (*ad Eun.* 198, *ad Hec.* 774, cf. Evanthis *De Fabula* 2.4, discussed by Norwood 1923: 145, Duckworth 1952: 259, Perelli 1973: 39 and Gilula 1980). On his generally sympathetic treatment of women see Taladoire 1972: 114 and Perelli 1973: 32.

the emotional disposition of the viewer plays an even greater role than in mistakes about status. Naturally, the audience needed to recognize mistakes as such, since they provide much of the dramatic interest, and New Comedy often resorts to artificial means to provide the sort of background knowledge that tragedy could simply assume. This was particularly tricky for morally ambiguous behavior, since the audience had to be convinced, and not merely informed, of the correct interpretation. Chapter 4, which explores questions of women's moral agency and the relationship between social roles and moral expectations, examines how Menander tries to engage our sympathies for the characters who are rewarded at the end of the play. Chapter 5 focuses on a single play, the *Epitrepontes*, which features the likeliest "whore with a heart of gold" in Menander. This chapter shows the connection between mistakes about "who" (socially, legally) and mistakes about "what" (personally, morally) a woman is and argues that even a sympathetic hetaira can only be called "good" in a limited sense. The final chapter turns to broader questions about the Menandrian mistaken-identity plot: where did it come from and why did women become the typical objects of mistakes? Did Menander also create *la femme incomprise*?

The core of my argument derives from close analysis of speeches by and about women, with particular attention to the language Menander uses to articulate problems of knowledge, perception, responsibility, and judgment, as well as the multiple means he employs to keep his audience in a position of privileged understanding. I concentrate on the Greek plays and fragments. Although some reference is made to Roman adaptations, these are of limited use in demonstrating that devices and themes are characteristic of Menander (my findings do, however, offer new insights into Plautus and Terence). My primary concern is how Menandrian women are seen and judged by Menandrian men. I am interested in the subjective elements of statements about status and moral character, and my readings emphasize both the fictional context and dramatic character of the speaker. My goal is to recuperate the range of meanings available to an original audience, including both implicit and contextual meanings and the nuances of individual words or phrases. "Contextual meanings" include the specific dramatic context, the generic context (how conventions of New Comedy, or in some cases tragedy, influence what is said and how it is received), and the broader historical context. My basic approach is philological, starting with close readings of the text and drawing on the growing corpus of Menandrian textual criticism and commentary. Emphasis is placed on concepts expressed within the plays themselves (e.g., ἄγνοια, τρόπος) and interpretive tools available to the playwright and his audience (e.g., contemporary

ethics and rhetorical theory). Ancient readers praised Menander for his realism and plausibility, a standard held up by Aristotle and plenty of “internal playwrights” within the corpus.²² For actions to seem plausible, either on stage or in the courtroom, they had to conform to commonly held assumptions that were being investigated and classified by contemporary philosophers, especially the Peripatetics. Many Menandrian characters in fact think and act in ways that fourth-century scholars of rhetoric and ethics were theorizing.

For the historical context, I am indebted to the many scholars who have illuminated the questions of formal status and points of law and custom that figure in Menandrian identity mistakes.²³ It is important to recognize the implications of being a citizen, metic, freedwoman or slave, the relevant Athenian laws of family and property, and the socioeconomic context – from women’s religious activities to marriage customs, family dynamics, and the many gradations of ancient prostitution. Menander’s plays have long been recognized as sources, albeit slippery ones, for Attic social and legal history; they show the “law in action” – how people thought about the law and how it affected their daily lives. Nor can political context be discounted. These plays were once disparaged as apolitical, escapist fantasies written for people who took two-talent dowries as a matter of course and did not need the theoric fund to afford tickets. But more recently scholars have shown the plays’ ideological engagement, particularly with social and economic issues, and have questioned whether they really are politically neutral.²⁴ Classicists have drawn on theories of Marx and Althusser, among others, that works of fiction are always ideologically engaged in a broad sense of “ideology”: the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. Fiction often supports values that serve the interests of politically powerful groups (“dominant codes of behaviour”), even when it is not overtly political.²⁵ Several major recent studies have collected ample evidence of “political” engagement in this sense in Menander, even though New Comic conventions did not make it easy to include overtly political

²² Aristophanes of Byzantium, Manilius and Quintilian note Menander’s “realism” (*Test.* 83, 94, 101 K-A). Arist. *Poet.* 1451b12–13, 1455a33–4.

²³ More scholars have grappled with the problems of using Menander as a historical source than can be listed here. Scafuro 1997, Krieter-Spiro 1997 and Lape 2004 are excellent starting points for law, society and politics, respectively.

²⁴ Apolitical readings include Shipp 1960, Barigazzi 1965: 18, 222, Gomme and Sandbach 1973: 23–4, Davies 1978: 113–14, Webster 1953: 100 and 1974: 2–5, Green 1990: 73, Walton and Arnott 1996: 29–30, and Nesselrath 1997: 287, n. 54. Ideological readings include Masaracchia 1981, Konstan 1995 and Rosivach 1998, who focus on social issues; Scafuro 1997 and Omitowoju 2002, on legal issues; and Wiles 1991: 29, on tensions between the individual and the state.

²⁵ E.g., Lape 2004. Quotation from Rabinowitz 1987: 127.

content.²⁶ Although I have profited greatly from these, my own project differs from studies which read Menander for implicit ideological content in order to better understand the values and assumptions behind Attic laws. My purpose is not to analyze the extra-textual work the plays are doing (for example, defending and justifying patriarchal values such as the subordination of women) but to illuminate the patterns of thinking that generate errors within this fictional form. I share the historicist belief that a phenomenon like mistaken identity is best understood through its historical development, starting with its original historical, intellectual, and artistic context, and I am more interested in the development and application of the device than in the specific values it was used to promote.

Finally, this project owes an enormous debt to feminist scholarship on the representation of women in earlier Greek literature. Tragedy and epic addressed problems that recur in New Comedy, such as the conflicting loyalties wives often feel for their natal and marital families or the problems of integrating women into civic space, and used similar strategies to neutralize the threats posed by women's supposedly insatiable sexuality and propensity for deceit.²⁷ Anthropologically based studies have shown the importance of evaluating women's behavior within a framework of expectations based on social roles.²⁸ This work has been particularly helpful to me for understanding the moral choices faced by Menander's women, who are often subjected to conflicting demands from very different roles: a false identity forced upon them by circumstances and a true identity which must remain hidden. This is usually dramatized as conflict of loyalties to different male figures. The problem in evaluating their moral choices is to situate them in the right role (and what other characters see is heavily influenced by what they believe this role ought to be). Menander thus follows in a long tradition, going back to tragedy, of using women to explore questions of ethics, perception, and judgment. Since Simone de Beauvoir's seminal work on women as Other, classical scholars drawing on Freud and psychoanalytic theory have shown how the tragedians and others used women as a "projection surface," for both fantasies and problems of interest to fifth-century male audiences.²⁹ Menander's women are particularly well suited to serve as a screen for the projection of male hopes and fears because they are

²⁶ Evidence has been found of pro-Macedonian (Major 1997), oligarchic (Wiles 1984), and even democratic (Hofmeister 1997, Lape 2004) ideology. Incidental references to political figures and events had long since been noted, e.g., by Webster 1953: 103–110.

²⁷ See, e.g., Murnaghan 1995, Rabinowitz 1993.

²⁸ E.g., Demand 1994, Wohl 1998, Foley 2001, Blok 2001.

²⁹ Rabinowitz 1993, Seidensticker 1995, Zeitlin 1996, Kurke 1997 and 1999, Wohl 1998, Gilhuly 1999, McClure 1999, Ormand 1999, Foley 2001, and Griffith 2001.

heavily constructed figures – sometimes in multiple ways, as, for example, when a stock type is overwritten by individual characters who determine “who” and “what” she is to serve their own ends. There is little possibility of recovering any kind of authentic female voice here; even when they are allowed to speak, these women ventriloquize the values of others.

What these plays do show is an awareness of the construction of identity as a process – an act of interpretation, even creation (an idea which becomes explicit in Plautus) – rather than a detection of some underlying truth. There is considerable overlap with techniques of rhetoric. Indeed, Menander and his contemporaries were very much aware of the subjectivity of the viewer, a principle that is explicitly articulated in the *Aspis*.³⁰ Not only does Menander freely borrow tragic language, situations, dramatic techniques, plot elements, and themes, but he also engages with some of the epistemological questions that interested the tragedians, notably the question of how people interpret what they see and hear.³¹ In other words, he is interested in the process of creating meaning out of spectacle. As a comic poet, he explores these problems lower down the social scale than tragedy, in the “real” world of the average citizen rather than the mythic world of kings and heroes. He uses women to develop scenarios that make these problems dramatically interesting and exploits comedy’s traditional license to rupture dramatic illusion in order to comment on the play as a play. Not only does he create internal spectators, whose reactions offer insight into how contemporary audiences interpreted the actions of characters on stage, but he embeds critiques of their interpretations within the dramatic fiction. Menander was able to look back on a long history of dramatic explorations of problems of knowing oneself and others. He also had the benefit of a critical tradition that had named and classified many of the conventions used in these plays. This book argues that his comedies show an awareness of the process by which identity mistakes are made and that they employ a richly varied language, to which formal rhetoric and ethics certainly contributed, to reflect on a central, absorbing problem: how do people fail to understand those they supposedly know best?

³⁰ See the discussion in chapter 2, pp. 62–5.

³¹ Euripides, for example, articulates the problem of inferring the unknown from the visible: τεκμαιρόμεσθα τοῖς παροῦσι τὰ ἀφανῆ (*Oenomaus*, fr. 574 Nauck), τὰ ἀφανῆ τεκμηρίοισιν εἰκότως ἀλίσκεται (*Phoenix*, fr. 811 Nauck).

Misperception of status

The mistaken identity plots of Greek and Roman comedy are notoriously formulaic: pirates, kidnappings, sale into slavery, threats of prostitution and then last-minute rescues through recognition. It can be hard to see why audiences kept coming back for new plays. The most familiar type is probably the “lost daughter” play, about a girl on the brink of prostitution who clutches her birth tokens through three or four acts until a legitimate father turns up by the fifth.¹ She appears in many guises. Some lost daughters pass for prostitutes (e.g., in Plautus’ *Cistellaria* and Terence’s *Andria*, both adapted from Menandrian originals); others are living as concubines (e.g., in the *Perikeiromenē*) or as slaves (the *Misoumenos*, *Sikyōnioi*). Women can be “lost” in many different ways, however, and mistakes are made about other things than free birth and a legitimate father. This chapter looks at ways the stock device can be varied in order to try to explain why ancient audiences and playwrights found this premise so engaging. My focus is on how and why characters go wrong and my aim is to show how Menander managed to turn relatively simple errors about legal and social status into dramas full of conflict, emotion and even humor.

Disputes over the position a woman holds or ought to hold in a community figure prominently in almost every Menandrian play. The *Sikyōnioi*, *Misoumenos*, *Perikeiromenē*, and *Hērōs* feature heated arguments about the heroine’s status, while the *Dyskolos*, *Aspis*, and *Phasma* explore more imaginative mistakes. An unidentified play, Arnott’s *Fabula Incerta* 8, preserves the remains of a particularly complicated mistake: an excitable young man seems to have fallen successively for two different women, thinking they were the same one. These disputes are largely between men and usually

¹ Often called “lost citizens,” these women are rarely referred to as such in the Greek. Before recognition they are “slaves,” “captives” and even “hetairai;” after, they are “daughters.” Only Philoumene is called a πολίτις (“citizen”) and it is in the context of a debate over her juridical status. There is also a κόρη ἄσπῃ in *Karch.* 38–9. See Omitowoju 2002: 206–8 on the scarcity of citizenship terms. It was Terence who regularly used the word *civis* (e.g., *And.* 780, *Eun.* 890, *Phor.* 114, *Ad.* 725, cf. *Poen.* 372).

over sexual access to the woman: who has it and on what terms. They range from a very public assembly to a very private debate between friends and they cover everything from the legal (a deadlocked ransom negotiation) to the metaphysical (an argument about a psychological illness). Much of the humor of mistaken identity plots comes from what the philosopher Henri Bergson called the “reciprocal interference of series,” situations which “[belong] simultaneously to two altogether independent series of events and [are] capable of being interpreted in two entirely different meanings at the same time.”² Menander was a master in creating ironic arguments at cross purposes between characters who cannot see beyond their own interests. This chapter emphasizes women, not because the playwright is uninterested in mistakes about men, but because the latter tend to concern moral character rather than status, at least when they are central to the plot (the *Sikyōnioi* is an exception).

Mistakes which play out as arguments are of course a useful technique for providing insight into a character’s motivation and beliefs. As one scholar notes, “Menander is by no means concerned with *ēthos* [character] by itself, but rather with the way his characters think, the way they make assessments and deductions, the way that *ēthos* is sometimes a function of *dianoia* [intelligence, intellectual capacity].”³ Misperception is treated here as an aspect of *dianoia*, an intellectual process grounded in what Menander’s contemporaries would have recognized as basic human psychology. Fourth-century rhetorical and philosophical theory about the role of emotions in perception can help contextualize Menandrian mistaken identity. For an ancient audience, it was common wisdom that emotions affected judgment. Rhetorical handbooks recognized that moving an audience was halfway to convincing them and accordingly taught how to exploit the conditions that made people irrational judges. A late fourth-century manual in the sophistic tradition advises aspiring orators to gauge the disposition of their audience and address any hostility right away: “in addressing an audience on [subjects liable to rouse hostility] one should . . . put the blame on necessity, fortune, circumstances, considerations of expediency, and say that the responsibility . . . lies not with the advisers but with the facts of the case.”⁴ Implicit is the assumption that the case is already lost if the audience is “hostile” (δυσμενής). This manual also suggests that emotional impairment could serve as a criminal defense: “try to gain pardon

² Bergson 1981: 123. ³ Scafuoro 2003: 115.

⁴ *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1437b22–7 tr. H. Rackham. Speech introductions should secure attention and goodwill: “we shall secure their goodwill by first considering how they happen to be disposed towards us of themselves – whether they are friendly or hostile or merely neutral” (1436 b17–19).

by bringing in the passions to which all mankind are liable, that divert us from rational calculation (λογισμός) – namely love, anger, intoxication, ambition and the like.”⁵

In his own treatise on rhetoric, Aristotle also recognizes the possibility of swaying an audience by appealing to their emotions: “all people are persuaded either because as judges they themselves are affected in some way (τῷ αὐτοῖ τι πεπονθέναι οἱ κρίνοντες) or because they suppose the speakers have certain qualities or because something has been logically demonstrated.”⁶ Aristotle takes a greater interest in causes than the author of the sophistic treatise and offers a psychological explanation of the effect of audience disposition (τὸ διακείσθαι πῶς τὸν ἀκροατὴν) on judgments at trials:

Things do not seem the same to those who are friendly and those who are hostile (*misousin*), nor [the same] to the angry and the calm but either altogether different or different in importance: to one who is friendly, the person about whom he passes judgment (*krisin*) seems not to do wrong or only in a small way; to one who is hostile, the opposite; and to a person feeling strong desire (*epithumounti*) and being hopeful, if something in the future is a source of pleasure, it appears that it will come to pass and will be good; but to an unemotional person and one in a disagreeable state of mind, the opposite. (*Rhet.* 1377b31–1378a5 tr. Kennedy)

What is important here is that Aristotle sees emotions directly affecting perception – how things “seem” (φαίνεται). The plays discussed in this chapter will furnish many examples of “persons feeling strong desire” who believe that their hopes will come to pass: Moschion (the *Perikeiromenē*), Sostratos (the *Dyskolos*), Daos (the *Hērōs*), Smikrines (the *Aspis*), Speaker A (*Fabula Incerta* 8 Arnott). There are also examples of the pairs Aristotle cites: Polemon and Pataikos in the *Perikeiromenē* can easily be described as “the angry and the calm;” Thrasonides and Getas in the *Misoumenos* are certainly “the friendly and the hostile.” We may see outrageous errors by characters desperate to believe their beloved belongs to an accessible status category. In contemporary terms, however, they are simply “judging” as people in the grip of desire generally do.

SIKYŌNIOI (THE SIKYONIANS)

The *Sikyōnioi* is one of a number of plays in which the heroine’s status is at the center of all major conflicts. It is a good starting point because it concerns juridical status in a narrow sense: whether or not the woman is

⁵ *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1429a16–19.

⁶ 1403b10–13, tr. Kennedy.

an Athenian citizen. One of the few status categories with a clear legal definition, citizenship is theoretically determinate, although Menander knew how to muddy the waters. In this case, he motivates the conflict by setting up a complicated situation of false enslavement. A prologue fragment tells how a four-year-old Athenian girl named Philoumene and a family slave were kidnapped and taken to Caria, where they were sold to an “extremely decent commander – rich too.” The commander is probably a soldier named Stratophanes. Sikyonian by birth but raised in Athens, he has returned home intending to settle down with Philoumene, now old enough for him to have fallen in love with her.⁷ The young woman has other ideas, however. She takes advantage of their return to Athens to flee to the sanctuary at Eleusis, where she pleads for a chance to find her lost family and reclaim her citizenship. Not surprisingly, since the enslavement of Athenians was illegal at Athens, she receives a sympathetic hearing. Her disclosure effectively blocks the marriage, since a Sikyonian could not marry an Athenian.⁸ Stratophanes’ status of course proves satisfactory in the end: the Sikyonians were only adoptive parents; his real parents were Athenian. His recovery of citizenship generates comparatively little conflict, however. Menander is far more interested in the tensions created by the temporary uncertainties surrounding Philoumene’s status. In the course of the play almost everyone becomes involved in the dispute between Stratophanes and Philoumene. The people of Eleusis meet to adjudicate it. There are at least two, and possibly three, claimants to Philoumene, not counting her actual father. The dispute also affects the soldier’s other dependents: his parasite Theron, who hopes to marry Stratophanes’ housekeeper (and interim mistress?) Malthake, and the slave sold with Philoumene, Dromon, who wants to reunite her with her family.⁹

Some of the uncertainties about Philoumene’s situation cannot be easily resolved. The background would be clearer if more of Acts I and II had

⁷ Alternatively, the buyer might be his deceased Sikyonian foster father (“more probably,” Arnott 2000a: 211 n. 4, cf. MacCary 1972: 286 and n. 22), but this character sketch would then be superfluous. It is unlikely that an Athenian family gave a child to a mercenary and unclear how Stratophanes was once poor (fr. 6 Arnott) if his father had been rich.

⁸ On prohibitions on marriage between Athenians and foreigners see Harrison 1998 I: 24–9, MacDowell 1978: 87, Sealey 1984: 112–19, and Just 1989: 62–4.

⁹ Malthake must be Athenian if Theron is (Arnott 2000a: 209) but they might both be non-citizens (Lape 2004: 219 “the marriage. . . would have been akin to a metic marriage”). Pollux (4. 119) mentions a parasite wearing white to a wedding “in the *Sikyonios*,” probably this play. The title is attested in both the singular and plural. Faced with the necessity of a choice, I have followed papyrological and pictorial evidence against the majority of the testimonia (see Gomme and Sandbach 1973: 632, Belardinelli 1994: 56–9, and Arnott 2000a: 196–8 for discussion).

survived.¹⁰ As it is, some detective work is needed to reconstruct her relationship to Stratophanes. Photius preserves a short quotation from the play, evidently from the prologue, suggesting that the soldier originally intended to make her a *habra* (lady's maid) but changed his mind. He bought another woman for the purpose and raised Philoumene as a free woman instead:

ἄβραν γὰρ ἀντωνούμενος,
ἐρωμένην ταύτῃ μὲν οὐ παρέδωκ' ἔχειν,
ἔτρεφε δὲ χωρὶς ὡς ἐλευθέραι πρέπει.
(fr. 1 Sandbach = fr. 4 Arnott)¹¹

. . . buying instead a lady's maid, he did not hand his beloved over for *her* to have but raised her separately, as befits a free woman.

It looks as if Philoumene was raised to replace Malthake in a more formal union when Stratophanes was ready to settle down. "For *her*" must refer to the only other female member of Stratophanes' household, Malthake, who is probably the soldier's mistress.¹² She is the only person in the play who could be called a hetaira (409) and the likeliest to complain about feeding donkeys on marches (411–12). (The speaker here is female because of the feminine participle and cannot be Philoumene. A "free woman" would be spared this menial task.) As soon as everything falls into place for Stratophanes' marriage, Malthake is hustled out of the house with enough baggage ("suitcases, knapsacks, hampers, trunks" 388–9) to imply years of generous maintenance. This rather suggests a mistress who had to be dismissed before the bride could be received and who was ready to retire whenever the soldier would release her on good terms.¹³ "His beloved" in line 2 of the fragment is best taken as a pregnant construction, describing Philoumene as she is now, not as she was at the time of purchase (although

¹⁰ Except for three short scraps appearing in 1906, most of the play was first published by A. Blanchard and A. Bataille in 1964. Arnott 2000a prints the remains of 470 lines, the majority from Acts III–V. All *Sikyōnioi* citations are from Arnott except fr. 1.

¹¹ I have moved up Sandbach's comma after ἐρωμένην so that the ἄβρα is not the beloved. A ἄβρα was an unusually trusted and privileged slave (Francis 1975, cf. Men. fr. 63 and 411 K-A).

¹² The unnamed woman might be the soldier's foster mother (Galiano, Corbato, both cited Belardinelli 1994: 235–6) but παρέδωκε is a casual way to describe sending someone across the Aegean (the sale takes place in Caria and the foster parents evidently lived in Athens, since Stratophanes sends a slave "home," οἰκοῦσε at 120). They cannot have raised Philoumene (Arnott 2000a: 207) because her enslavement at Athens was illegal. For the same reason, it is unlikely that she lived there with Stratophanes and exploited a campaign absence to seek sanctuary (as Lape 2004: 218 suggests).

¹³ See Gomme and Sandbach 1973: 634 and Henry 1988: 89–92 (Malthake as mistress), Krieter-Spiro 1997: 53 (as housekeeper) and Ireland 1992: 114 (as both).

this means the prologue speaker must have stopped referring to her as “the child” somewhere in the 26–40 missing lines).¹⁴

Stratophanes’ intentions are a mystery. Raising her “as befits a free woman” suggests that he freed her (technically, one had to be born an ἐλευθέρᾳ or “free woman,” so he could only make her an ἀπελευθέρᾳ, “freedwoman”) but he is still called her master (δεσπότης) at the beginning of the play. At four, the girl was too young for any kind of work.¹⁵ He had to raise her in any case, but why as a free woman? One possibility is that he intended to return her to her family, a benevolent scheme which figures in the *Eunuchus* and the *Andria*. There was, however, no reason to wait until she was an adult or to conceal his intentions (and if he had told her the truth, she had no reason for flight). He does claim to have “saved” her for her father (253), but only after he has learned of his own citizenship, and in the same breath as a marriage proposal. It seems unlikely that he restored her to her homeland intentionally. I suspect the benefactions he brags about in 79–84 (“benefactor,” “favor . . . child,” “doing an act of charity”) were similar to those Thrasonides conferred on Kratēia: nominal freedom, clothing, jewelry, servants, and a position of authority within the household. Stratophanes paid Philoumene’s τροφεῖα or rearing expenses and gave her a comfortable life when she could have expected only slavery. We are told about this at least three times: in fragment 1, at 226 (“I raised [her from] a small child”), and at 237 (“I waive her τροφεῖα”). Child rearing was an expensive investment, never undertaken in New Comedy for purely sentimental reasons – at least, never by men – and Stratophanes can hardly have fallen in love with a four-year-old. He must have had some hope of future return and a long-term plan to make her a domestic partner seems the likeliest explanation. Slave concubines were probably common (although raising one for the purpose is a little unusual).¹⁶ Stratophanes’ willingness to waive her rearing expenses when he bids for her hand suggests that he regards marriage as adequate compensation. Moreover, the education he gave her qualified her for nothing but concubinage or marriage: a “free woman” did not learn marketable skills.¹⁷ We know that Stratophanes had

¹⁴ First suggested by Marzullo 1967: 16–17, but Gallavotti 1970: 50 notes that the two participles (ἀντωνούμενος, ἐρωμένην) would need to refer to different points in time. The lack of an article with ἐρωμένην is also a problem. My reconstruction follows Henry 1988: 88–9 and Arnott 1997c: 102.

¹⁵ Barigazzi 1986: 189, Belardinelli 1994: 234 n. 1, Arnott 1997c: 102.

¹⁶ Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005: 168. Adoption of (but not marriage to) a freed θρεπτός/ή is attested (179); concubines evidently had to wait until they had children to be manumitted (see 167, 169 for examples).

¹⁷ Clark 1989: 12.

enough money to forego a dowry. Since his Sikyonian citizenship left him few marital options at Athens, a freedwoman of his own rearing may have seemed preferable (or simply easier for an ex-soldier to obtain?) than the daughter of another metic.

Menander goes to some effort to mislead his hero about the heroine's status. It looks as if Stratophanes never knew Philoumene's Athenian origins. A tantalizing fragment from the prologue, right after the account of the purchase, mentions a man bringing someone or something in apparent ignorance:

(τ)ῷ παιδίῳ τὴν πατ[ρίδα]	
[.]ξον προσάγων οἰκεῖον εἰς τ[(perhaps [ν]έον)
[πρὶν εἰδέναι δοκεῖν τ[1]	
(17–19)	

for the little child, her father[land] . . . [recently?] bringing . . . into (her?) familial . . . [before] seeming to know [what/anything]

Philoumene is the only “little child” in the play (mentioned as such in lines 5, 17 and 84). At some point Stratophanes brought her from Caria, where she was purchased and probably reared, to her “fatherland” of Athens, the setting of the play (“this is Eleusis” in line 57 suggests recent arrival). It is hard to believe that he knew he was repatriating her. He had every reason to avoid Athens, the one place where she could permanently escape his grasp. It may be simply that Dromon lied to him in the hope that they might return some day, a reasonable expectation once he learned that his master had Athenian ties. Her flight to the sanctuary clearly comes as a surprise; evidently he has been under a false belief about her nationality. This ignorance has serious consequences: his most important emotional relationship – at least a decade in the planning – is now predicated on a mistaken assumption about Philoumene's status.

The question of who has *kyrieia* (legal authority) over Philoumene thus pits the two principal characters directly against one another, eventually bringing them before a local deme assembly. The messenger who reports the assembly's deliberations in Act IV describes Philoumene sitting “by the gates” of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore – appropriately enough for a kidnapped girl fleeing an unwanted marriage.¹⁸ “Sitting” (καθημένην 190) can also mean “sitting in supplication.”¹⁹ He also describes her as “having fled” (214), which suggests some urgency. We do not know her immediate reason for flight. Dromon offers an explanation, but the lines

¹⁸ Arnott 1997a: 3, Lape 2004: 238 n. 89.

¹⁹ Belardinelli 1994: 165 ad 190.