

CAMBRIDGE GREEK AND LATIN CLASSICS

MENANDER  
SAMIA

EDITED BY ALAN H. SOMMERSTEIN

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SAMIA

(THE WOMAN FROM SAMOS)

EDITED BY  
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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

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It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521735421](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521735421)

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First published 2013

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Menander, of Athens.

[Samia. English]

Samia (the Woman from Samos) / Menander ; edited by Alan H. Sommerstein,  
Professor of Greek, University of Nottingham.

pages    cm

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-0-521-51428-6 (hard back)

1. Athens (Greece) – Drama.    2. Illegitimate children – Drama.    3. Fathers and sons – Drama.    4. Mistresses – Drama.    I. Sommerstein, Alan H.    II. Title.

PA4246.E4    2013

882'.01 – dc23    2013016269

ISBN 978-0-521-51428-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-73542-1 Paperback

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*virorum comicorum*  
*Geoffrey Arnott*  
*Colin Austin*  
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## PREFACE

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This edition represents the first appearance of Menander in the *Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics*. Next to *Dyskolos*, *Samia* is the play of Menander that in its present state comes nearest to completeness: we have virtually the whole of the last three Acts, and in the first two, although almost half the text is completely lost and much of the remainder is badly damaged, it is almost always possible to infer with considerable confidence what was done, and often also the substance of what was said, in the missing portions. I hope that this edition will serve to encourage the study (especially at undergraduate level) of Greek New Comedy, the ancestor of an entire western tradition of light drama.

My thanks are due above all to Pat Easterling and Richard Hunter, first for inviting me to undertake this edition and then for all the help they have given me in the course of its preparation. They have read the whole edition in draft and made many valuable suggestions. I have not felt able to adopt all of them, but responsibility for any errors or infelicities is entirely mine. I have received much assistance from other scholars who had often been working on Menander far longer than I, among whom particular mention is due to Horst-Dieter Blume, to Christophe Cusset and especially to Richard Green, who kindly made available to me his images of the fragmentary Brindisi mosaic (see Introduction §11) and shared with me his ideas about it: my disagreement with these ideas does not diminish my respect or my gratitude.

The completion of this edition was greatly accelerated by an award of research leave by the School of Humanities of the University of Nottingham, where I have had the privilege of working for nearly forty years, and of an additional semester by the Arts and Humanities Research Council under a scheme which has now unfortunately been terminated.

## ABBREVIATIONS

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Ancient authors and texts, and collections of papyri, are generally abbreviated as in LSJ or its *Revised Supplement*, although longer abbreviations are used in some cases; other deviations, where not self-evident, are listed below. Fragments of tragedy are cited from *TrGF*, those of comedy from *PCG*; for fragments of other authors the name of the editor, or the abbreviated title of the collection, is given. References to the plays of Menander contained in Sandbach 1990 are to that edition wherever possible; where Arnott 1979 + 1996a + 2000 has a different line-numbering, both references are given, distinguished as S and A respectively.

The comedies of Plaut(us) and Ter(ence) are abbreviated as follows:

<i>Ad.</i>	<i>Adelphoe</i>	<i>Eun.</i>	<i>Eunuchus</i>
<i>Amph.</i>	<i>Amphitruo</i>	<i>Hec.</i>	<i>Hecyra</i>
<i>Andr.</i>	<i>Andria</i>	<i>HT</i>	<i>Heauton Timorumenos</i>
<i>Asin.</i>	<i>Asinaria</i>	<i>Men.</i>	<i>Menaechmi</i>
<i>Aul.</i>	<i>Aulularia</i>	<i>Merc.</i>	<i>Mercator</i>
<i>Bacch.</i>	<i>Bacchides</i>	<i>Phorm.</i>	<i>Phormio</i>
<i>Capt.</i>	<i>Captivi</i>	<i>Poen.</i>	<i>Poenulus</i>
<i>Cas.</i>	<i>Casina</i>	<i>Pseud.</i>	<i>Pseudolus</i>
<i>Cist.</i>	<i>Cistellaria</i>	<i>Trin.</i>	<i>Trinummus</i>
<i>Curc.</i>	<i>Curculio</i>		

Sigla used in the critical apparatus to denote papyri are given in the discussion of each papyrus in section 13 of the Introduction. In addition the following abbreviations appear as superscripts to these sigla:

ac	<i>ante correctionem</i> (before correction)
pc	<i>post correctionem</i> (after correction)
s	<i>supra lineam</i> (above the line)

Other abbreviations are listed below. Modern works not listed are referred to by author and date, and particulars given in the Bibliography; but the editions of Arnott 2000, Austin 1969–70, Dedoussi 2006, Gomme & Sandbach 1973,<sup>1</sup> Jacques 1971 and Lamagna 1998 are normally referred to by the editor's name alone.

*Note on line references:* references in the form '47–8' are to the two (or more) lines so numbered; references in the form '57/8' are to the lacuna

<sup>1</sup> In references to passages in the Gomme-Sandbach commentary that must have been written, or fundamentally rewritten, after the appearance of the Bodmer papyrus, Sandbach's name is used alone.

between these lines, or to actions that take place between the end of one spoken line and the beginning of the next.

Ant.	Antiphon
Apoll.	Apollodorus <sup>2</sup>
<i>Fab. Inc.</i>	Menander, <i>Fabula Incerta</i> (Sandbach) = <i>Fabula Incerta 1</i> (Arnott)
<i>FGrH</i>	F. Jacoby et al., <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin/Leiden, 1923–)
<i>h. Dem.</i>	<i>Homeric Hymn to Demeter</i>
<i>IC</i>	M. Guarducci, <i>Inscriptiones Creticae</i> (Rome, 1935–50)
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>Karch.</i>	Menander, <i>Karchedonios</i>
Koster	W. J. W. Koster et al., <i>Scholia in Aristophanem</i> (Groningen, 1960–2007)
<i>LGN</i>	M. J. Osborne and S. G. Byrne, <i>A lexicon of Greek personal names. Vol. 2: Attica</i> (Oxford, 1994)
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> (Zurich, 1981–99)
<i>LSJ</i>	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>A Greek-English lexicon</i> , 9th edn rev. by H. Stuart Jones (Oxford, 1926–40) with <i>Revised Supplement</i> by P. G. W. Glare (Oxford, 1996)
<i>Lyc. Leocr.</i>	Lycurgus [not Lycophron], <i>Against Leocrates</i>
<i>OCD</i> <sup>4</sup>	S. Hornblower, A. J. W. Spawforth and E. Eidinow, eds. <i>The Oxford classical dictionary</i> , 4th edn (Oxford, 2012)
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English dictionary</i> (online edition: <a href="http://www.oed.com">www.oed.com</a> )
<i>PAA</i>	J. S. Traill, <i>Persons of ancient Athens</i> (Toronto, 1994–)
<i>PBingen</i>	H. Melaerts, ed. <i>Papyri in honorem Johannis Bingen octogenarii</i> ( <i>P. Bingen</i> ) (Leuven, 2000)
<i>PCG</i>	R. Kassel and C. F. L. Austin, <i>Poetae comici Graeci</i> (Berlin, 1983–2001)
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft: Neue Bearbeitung</i> (Stuttgart, 1894–1980)

<sup>2</sup> If the name is in square brackets, the reference is to the mythographer.

Rhodes and Osborne	P. J. Rhodes and R. G. Osborne, <i>Greek historical inscriptions, 404–323 B.C.</i> (Oxford, 2003)
schol.	scholium or scholia
<i>SH</i>	H. Lloyd-Jones and P. J. Parsons, <i>Supplementum Hellenisticum</i> (Berlin, 1983)
<i>Sik.</i>	Menander, <i>Sikyonioi</i>
<i>SVF</i>	H. F. A. von Arnim, <i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i> (Leipzig, 1903–24)
test.	testimonium
<i>TrGF</i>	<i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta</i> (Göttingen, 1971–2004)

# INTRODUCTION

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## 1 MENANDER'S LIFE AND CAREER

Menander, son of Diopeithes (of the Athenian deme of Cephisia) and his wife Hegestrata,<sup>1</sup> was born in the Athenian year 342/1 BC;<sup>2</sup> he was thus about three years old when Macedonian hegemony over Greece was firmly established with Philip II's defeat of the Athenians and Thebans at Chaeroneia, and came of age, at eighteen, in the year (324/3) near the end of which Alexander the Great died in Babylon. In accordance with the practice of the time ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42), he spent the following two years (323/2 and 322/1) living the semi-segregated life of an 'ephebe' (cf. 10n.) in the company of his age-mates, one of whom was destined for a fame equalling his own – the future philosopher Epicurus;<sup>3</sup> these years witnessed the crushing of an Athenian-led anti-Macedonian revolt in the so-called Lamian War, followed by the disfranchisement of the poorer citizens (many of whom were deported to Thrace) by command of the Macedonian regent Antipater, who also ordered several leading democratic politicians, including Demosthenes and Hypereides, to be executed without trial, and placed a Macedonian garrison at the Peiraeus.<sup>4</sup> From then on, despite repeated regime changes including several restorations of democracy, Athens always remained dependent on one or another of the Macedonian dynasts who fought each other for shares of Alexander's empire.<sup>5</sup>

Menander, it seems, had chosen the profession of a comic poet at an early age; one source claims that he attached himself to an established dramatist, Alexis of Thuri, to learn the craft.<sup>6</sup> At any rate he was still an

<sup>1</sup> Apollodorus *FGrH* 244 F 43; *IG* XIV 1184; Paus. 1.2.2; *Suda* μ 89. His father was probably born in 385/4, since a Diopeithes of Cephisia is named in a list of public arbitrators for the year 325/4 (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1926.17–19) during which his sixtieth birthday must therefore have fallen ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 53.4).

<sup>2</sup> *IG* XIV 1184; confirmed by D.L. 10.14 (= Apollodorus *FGrH* 244 F 42), which gives this as the birth-date of Menander's exact contemporary (see below) Epicurus.

<sup>3</sup> Strabo 14.1.18. Epicurus had then only recently come to Athens, his parents having been Athenian settlers (cleruchs) on Samos (ibid. and D.L. 10.1).

<sup>4</sup> Plut. *Phoc.* 27.7–29.1, *Dem.* 28–29; D.S. 18.18.4–5. Demosthenes avoided execution by suicide. Political rights were limited to those possessing property worth at least 2000 drachmae.

<sup>5</sup> For the political history of these decades see Habicht 1997, Bayliss 2011 and Waterfield 2011, also Lape 2004: 40–67 and (for the period down to 307) O'Sullivan 2009.

<sup>6</sup> *Prolegomena de Comoedia* III 57–58 Koster. The *Suda* (α 1138) even asserts, impossibly, that Alexis was Menander's paternal uncle. See Arnott 1996b: 11–13.

ephebe when, in 321, he produced *Orge* (*Anger*),<sup>7</sup> the first of his 108 plays.<sup>8</sup> We do not know for certain when he won his first victory; it may not have been until 316, when he was successful at the Lenaea with *Dyskolos*.<sup>9</sup> The following year he won at the City Dionysia for the first time;<sup>10</sup> in total, however, he was to gain in his career only eight victories<sup>11</sup> – though this may still have been more than any of his numerous rivals achieved in the same period.<sup>12</sup> It should be remembered that little more than half of Menander's plays can have been produced at the two main Athenian festivals during his thirty years of activity, even supposing that he applied and was selected to compete on every possible occasion; the remainder must have been staged at some of the many other dramatic festivals which by the late fourth century were being held in Attica and elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

Once, but apparently only once, Menander found himself in danger for political reasons. When Demetrius of Phalerum, who had been effectively the sole ruler of Athens for ten years under the aegis of Antipater's son Cassander, was overthrown in 307 by the intervention of two other Macedonian dynasts (Antigonos Monophthalmus and his son Demetrius Poliorcetes) and democracy was restored, there was a wave of vengeful legislation and litigation against the ex-tyrant's friends or supposed friends. Demetrius had been a pupil of Theophrastus and a follower of the Peripatetic school of philosophy, and a law was passed, on the proposal of one

<sup>7</sup> *Prolegomena de Comoedia* III 58–59 Koster – which appears to say he was the first ephebe ever to do so (quite plausible, since the full-blown ephebic system was only thirteen years old: D. M. Lewis 1973: 254; Sommerstein 2010: 48–49). The one manuscript gives the date as that of the archonship of Diocles; there was no archon of this name in the relevant period, and the name is usually emended to Philocles (322/1) – the only plausible alternative, Anticles (325/4), is incompatible with our transmitted birth dates both for Menander and for Epicurus. Different versions of the chronicle of Eusebius give the date 322/1 and 321/0 for this production; they state (probably wrongly) that it was victorious. See Schröder 1996.

<sup>8</sup> So *Prolegomena de Comoedia* III 60 Koster; Apollodorus *FGrH* 244 F 43 gives the number as 105. We know the titles of about 98 plays.

<sup>9</sup> Hypothesis to *Dyskolos*. The papyrus names the archon as Didymogenes; this is usually emended to Demogenes, the archon of 317/16.

<sup>10</sup> *Marm.Par.* (*FGrH* 239 B 14).

<sup>11</sup> A. Gellius 17.4.4, citing Apollodorus. At least four of these successes were at the City Dionysia (cf. *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 2325.160).

<sup>12</sup> Philemon, widely regarded in antiquity as second only to Menander in the genre (Quintilian 10.1.72), gained only three Lenaeian victories in a career of some sixty-five years (*IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 2325.161). In the Lenaeian victor-list, Menander and Philemon are eighth and ninth in a sequence of fifteen wholly or partly preserved names (lines 153–167); at least eight of these fifteen dramatists gained only one win each, and probably none had more than three (unless Menander had four – against his name only the first unit-stroke survives). See Konstantakos 2008.

<sup>13</sup> On the spread of theatre in the fourth century, see Csapo 2010: 83–103; on the Hellenistic period, Le Guen 1995 and many of the contributors to P. J. Wilson 2007.



Sophocles of Sunium, that no one was to be allowed to maintain a philosophical school unless authorized to do so by the Council and Assembly, whereupon Theophrastus and his followers left Athens.<sup>14</sup> Menander was not a philosopher (though according to one source he too had studied with Theophrastus),<sup>15</sup> but he had been, or was believed to have been, a friend of Demetrius,<sup>16</sup> and he is said to have 'come close to being put on trial' for that reason<sup>17</sup> but was 'begged off' by Telesphorus, a kinsman of Antigonus and his son.<sup>18</sup>

Menander appears never to have married, and there is no record of his having any children. In later centuries he was believed to have lived with a *hetaira* named Glykera, and Alciphron (2nd/3rd century AD), the writer of fictional letters from classical and early Hellenistic Athens, created a letter of Menander to Glykera and a reply;<sup>19</sup> but when we find that Menander is also said to have had another mistress named Thaïs (Martial *Epigr.* 14.187–8), suspicion is aroused, since *Glykera* and *Thaïs* were the titles of two of Menander's plays.<sup>20</sup> Alciphron's letters are built around an invitation that Menander is supposed to have received from King Ptolemy (I of Egypt), which he intends to decline;<sup>21</sup> that he received, and refused, such invitations from Ptolemy and also from an unidentified king of Macedonia is also stated by the elder Pliny (*HN* 7.111).

We do not have enough datable material to be able to follow the development of Menander's technique and style, except in a few respects such as the virtual disappearance of personal satire in his middle and later works (see §8). Plutarch, however, who clearly did know the sequence of many of the plays,<sup>22</sup> says (*Mor.* 853f) that while Menander right from the start of

<sup>14</sup> D.L. 5.38; cf. Athen. 610e–f, Pollux 9.42, Alexis fr. 99, and see Arnott 1996b: 259–265, 858–9 (who makes the law sound more innocuous than it was). The law was annulled a year later, and Sophocles heavily fined (despite being defended by Demochares, nephew of Demosthenes).

<sup>15</sup> D.L. 5.36, citing Pamphile.

<sup>16</sup> It is striking that Menander's only two datable victories came in the first two years of Demetrius' rule.

<sup>17</sup> No doubt in the actual indictment, had things got so far, some allegation of an actual legal offence would have been concocted.

<sup>18</sup> D.L. 5.79. <sup>19</sup> Alciphron 4.18–19.

<sup>20</sup> Accordingly Alciphron makes Glykera speak of 'the play you've put me into' (4.19.20).

<sup>21</sup> Menander writes from the Peiraeus, and says he is in indifferent health (4.18.4); apparently we are meant to infer that these are the last letters that passed between him and Glykera.

<sup>22</sup> Very likely from synopses (Hypotheses) either prefixed to play-texts or compiled into books on their own; in a surviving fragment of such a book (*POxy* 1235.103–12) we are told, not only that *Imbrioi* was to have been produced at the Dionysia of 301 (but the festival, or at least the comic contest, was not held owing to a political upheaval), but also that it was 71st (or 73rd or 76th or 79th) in the

his career was adept at matching each character's language to his or her age and personality,

when he died he was at his peak as a poet and producer, at the time of life when, according to Aristotle, authors show the greatest improvement as regards style. If one compares the earliest plays of Menander with those of his middle and his last periods, one will realize from that how much further he would have advanced had he lived.

Menander died in his fifty-second year (291/0);<sup>23</sup> according to a tradition known to Ovid (*Ibis* 591), which may go back to Menander's near-contemporary Callimachus (fr. 396 Pfeiffer), he was drowned while swimming at the Peiraeus.<sup>24</sup> He was buried beside the Athens-Peiraeus road, where his tomb was seen by Pausanias more than four centuries later (Paus. 1.2.2). Soon afterwards he was honoured with a seated statue in the theatre (Paus. 1.2.1.1; see Papastamati-von Moock 2007, Zanker 1995: 78–83);<sup>25</sup> its inscribed base survives (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 3777), naming its makers as Cephisodotus and Timarchus, sculptors of the early third century and sons of the great Praxiteles (Pliny *HN* 34.51, 36.24). Many surviving sculptures and other images appear to be direct or indirect copies of this statue.<sup>26</sup>

## 2 NEW COMEDY

The periodization of Athenian comedy into 'Old', 'Middle' and 'New' phases, though it goes well back into antiquity,<sup>27</sup> is necessarily artificial,

sequence of Menander's plays – roughly where we should expect it to be, coming about two-thirds of the way through his career.

<sup>23</sup> All our sources (Apollodorus *FGrH* 244 F 43; *IG* xiv 1184; *Prolegomena de Comodia* III 60 Koster) agree on Menander's age at death. Those that give a date for it (*IG* XIV 1184, and two versions of Eusebius' chronicle) place it in 292/1 (*IG* XIV 1184 names the Athenian archon, Philippus, and adds that it was the thirty-second year of Ptolemy I); this, however, would be only the fifty-first year of Menander's life, and it is likely that the attempt to equate dates in calendars that began their year at different seasons has led to a slippage of one year (see Schröder 1996: 35–42).

<sup>24</sup> The identification of the comic poet who, in Ovid's words, *liquidis perit, dum nabat, in undis*, as Menander, and the statement that Callimachus wrote an epigram on his death, both depend on a scholium in a single MS of dubious authority (see Pfeiffer 1949: 324–5); but *dum nabat* 'while swimming' does not fit the stories of the death by drowning of Eupolis (Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 6.1.18; *Suda* ε 3657) or of Terence (Suetonius, *Life of Terence* 4–5), and there is nothing surprising in a middle-aged Athenian going swimming for pleasure, for exercise, or to maintain an important survival skill (see Hall 1993).

<sup>25</sup> Zanker argues that many features of the statue, as reconstructed from later copies, suggest that it was designed to associate Menander with an elitist, anti-democratic ideology.

<sup>26</sup> On these see Blume 1998: 12–15.

<sup>27</sup> Possibly as far as Aristophanes of Byzantium in the second century BC (Nes-selrath 1990: 180–7, Olson 2007: 22–6).

particularly since it was conventional to assign any given poet exclusively to one of the three periods. What can be said is that when Menander's career began, the dominant form of comedy was already in essentials the type with which he is exclusively associated. Aristotle, who died in 322, discusses in the ninth chapter of his *Poetics* the distinction between poetry (by which he means epic or dramatic poetry) and history: history tells what happened to particular persons on particular occasions ('what Alcibiades did or what was done to him'), poetry tells 'the sort of thing that tends to happen' (οἷα ἄν γένοιτο) or 'what kinds of things will inevitably or probably be said or done by what kind of person'.<sup>28</sup> And Aristotle continues:

This has now become clear (ἤδη... δῆλον γέγονεν) in the case of comedy; for they put together their plot using probable events and then apply random names [to the characters], and do not write about individuals in the manner of the iambic poets. In the case of tragedy, on the other hand, the poets stick to real names.<sup>29</sup>

The characterization of contemporary comedy in this passage fits Menander's practice very well, if we assume – as we must in the case of tragedy also – that in speaking of 'probable' events Aristotle is not thinking of the situations which, as it were, generate the plot, and which often, both in comedy and in tragedy, involve highly implausible coincidences,<sup>30</sup> but the decisions and actions of the characters in response to these situations ('what... will inevitably or probably be said or done') and their consequences. And it clearly distinguishes this type of comedy from two other types. One is the type associated with Aristophanes and his contemporaries who often 'wr[o]te about individuals in the manner of the iambic poets' in plays focusing directly and openly on topical events, issues and personalities. Comedy of that kind was not entirely obsolete in Aristotle's time,<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 1451a36-b11.

<sup>29</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 1451b11–16. By 'real names' (τῶν γενομένων ὀνομάτων) Aristotle means the names of persons whom we would now call mythical.

<sup>30</sup> Such as that two travellers who meet and quarrel fatally on a lonely road should be a father and the son whom he had ordered should be left to die at the age of two days; or that (as in both the *Aspis* and *Misoumenos* of Menander) after soldier A had borrowed an item of equipment from soldier B, the former should be killed and the latter taken prisoner, with the result that B is mistakenly reported dead.

<sup>31</sup> Timocles, who stands next but one before Menander in the Lenaea victor-list, wrote several plays whose titles recall fifth-century comedies or their themes – *Demosatyrois* (i.e. womanizing politicians, cf. fr. 5?), *Dionysiazusae*, *Dionysus*, *Heroes*, *Orestautokleides*, *Philodikastes* (i.e. a lover of jury service, cf. Ar. *Wasps*) – and his forty-two surviving fragments contain no less than forty-nine references to thirty-seven different contemporary individuals, including Demosthenes (fr. 4, 12, 41), Hypereides (fr. 4, 17) and about a dozen other men active in public affairs. At an even later date, probably in 302/1, Philippides, himself active in politics and diplomacy (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 657), attacked Stratocles, the leading figure in Athenian politics

and even in *Samia* there are three passages satirizing contemporary individuals,<sup>32</sup> but as a broad generalization Aristotle's statement holds true.<sup>33</sup> The other declining variety of comedy was the burlesque treatment of mythical or tragic stories, which had been so popular in the mid-fourth century that it formed the majority of the output of a dramatist like Eubulus;<sup>34</sup> there are still a few such plays in the output of Menander's older contemporaries Diphilus and Philemon,<sup>35</sup> but Menander himself wrote none.

Of the comedy of his day we possess a sample that is substantial in absolute terms though small in comparison with the total output of the dramatists of the time,<sup>36</sup> comprising papyrus fragments, ancient quotations, and more than a score of comedies by the Roman dramatists Plautus and Terence adapted from plays by Menander, his contemporaries and their successors.<sup>37</sup> This evidence suggests that the genre was dominated (though

at the time, and his patron Demetrius Poliorcetes (Philippides fr. 25, 26) – though he may have prudently left Attica shortly afterwards (O'Sullivan 2009: 64–78; Sommerstein forthcoming (a) 290–1), and in general, after 322, the only political figures mentioned disparagingly in comedy were safe targets – that is, men who were either not in Athens (and not in control of Athens) or else completely out of favour with the current regime (606–8n.)

<sup>32</sup> Diomnestus (504–5), Chaerephon (603–4) and Androcles (606–8).

<sup>33</sup> So prominent and controversial a politician as Demosthenes is mentioned only twice in comic fragments not attributed to Timocles (Antiphanes fr. 167, *com. adesp.* 149); in the 339 fragments of Alexis, whose career had begun over thirty years before Menander's, only four political figures are mentioned – one (nine times) for his love of expensive food, one (three times) for his extreme thinness, one (twice) for his legislative harassment of fishmongers, and one (just possibly) for his political activity (Aristogeiton, Alexis fr. 211; cf. Dem. 25 and 26 and Deinarchus 2).

<sup>34</sup> Hunter 1983: 22 n.3 lists 28 mythological titles out of a total of 57, to which should possibly be added *Echo*.

<sup>35</sup> Diphilus' sixty-two known titles include *The Danaids*, *Heracles*, *Theseus*, *The Lemnian Women*, *The Daughters of Pelias* and *Pyrrha* (wife of the Flood hero Deucalion); to these should be added *Sappho*, since the great woman poet, dead more than two centuries, had become a quasi-mythical figure. Philemon's sixty-one known titles include *The Myrmidons* and possibly *Apollo* and *Palamedes*.

<sup>36</sup> We know that both at the City Dionysia of 312 (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 2323a.36–9) and at the Lenaea of 285 (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 2319.56–9) the number of competing comedies was five. If this was the regular number throughout the period, then over Menander's thirty-year career a total of 300 plays will have been accepted for performance at these major Athenian festivals alone, and perhaps as many more (cf. p. 2 above) were performed elsewhere and their scripts preserved.

<sup>37</sup> For twelve of the twenty-one plays of Plautus, and for all six of those of Terence, a Greek source is identified (in the script or by an ancient commentator) or can be inferred with reasonable confidence. Of the Plautine plays, *Bacchides*, *Cistellaria* and *Stichus* are based on plays of Menander; *Casina*, *Rudens* and *Vidularia* on Diphilus; *Mercator* and *Trinummus* on Philemon; *Poenulus* and perhaps *Aulularia* (see Arnott 1996b: 859–64) on Alexis, *Asinaria* on the otherwise unknown Demophilus, and *Miles Gloriosus* on a play named *Alazon* by an unidentified poet

not monopolized)<sup>38</sup> by plots in which the driving force was heterosexual love, usually (though not invariably)<sup>39</sup> viewed from the male perspective, and the goal of the action was either the achievement of a desired union (sometimes a marriage, sometimes a relationship with a *hetaira*) against opposition from one or more quarters or (as happens in *Epitrepontes*, *Misoumenos* and *Perikeiromene*) the re-establishment of an existing union after it had been disrupted. *Samia* includes both (the disrupted and re-established union being that of Demeas and Chrysis),<sup>40</sup> but is unusual inasmuch as during the greater part of the play there is no opposition whatsoever to the projected marriage between Moschion and Plangon: all the difficulties that arise are caused by the *mistaken belief* of Moschion and his confederates that one or both of the young people's fathers will be opposed to the match, together with their correct belief that at least one of the fathers will fall into uncontrollable rage if he comes to know why it is essential that the marriage take place, with the result that 'the young man unwittingly becomes his own obstructor' (Goldberg 1980: 21).

The formal structure of New Comedy is very simple. Every play, it seems, consisted of five acts, separated by choral interludes. The chorus was still

(the title is not otherwise attested). Terence adapted four of his plays from Menander and the other two, *Phormio* and *Hecyra*, from Apollodorus of Carystus, a dramatist of the following generation. One play of Plautus, *Amphitruo*, has a myth-based plot, and its Greek source may be of somewhat earlier date.

<sup>38</sup> In two plays of Plautus, *Captivi* and *Menaechmi*, the action instead centres on an attempt to reunite separated kinsfolk; in *Menaechmi* the love interest is subordinate, in *Captivi* there is none at all. The (re)union of family members who had been long separated, or who had been unaware of each other's identity, is an important feature in many other plays also, including *Samia* (see §3).

<sup>39</sup> In Plautus' *Cistellaria* (59–95), which is known to have been adapted from Menander's *Synaristosai*, the young woman Selenium declares herself to be hopelessly in love with Alcesimarchus, who is living with her and has sworn to marry her even though she is believed to be of foreign birth; the marriage eventually becomes possible when Selenium is discovered to be a citizen (of Sicyon, where the action is set, not of Athens). If, as is likely, *PHeid* 175 (= *com. adesp.* 1074 K-A) comes from *Synaristosai* (see Arnott 2000: 325–37), it would appear that Plautus is here keeping quite close to his original, though we cannot be quite sure that Selenium's Greek counterpart (whose name, as we know from a Mytilene mosaic, was either Plangon or Pythias) was represented as having such passionate feelings or expressing them so strongly.

<sup>40</sup> In featuring *two* united or reunited couples, *Samia* appears to be typical of Menander's practice. With the possible exception of *Misoumenos* (but cf. *Mis.* 270–4 S = 671–5 A where Kleinias speaks of 'a girl of mine' about whom he is 'in agony' and for whom, if she does not come to his party, he will be searching all over the city), all Menander's seven best preserved plays seem to end with the union/reunion of two couples: in *Dyskolos*, we have Sostratos and Knemon's daughter, and Gorgias and Sostratos' sister; in *Epitrepontes*, Charisios and Pamphile, Chairestratos and Habrotonon (see n. 72 below); in *Perikeiromene*, Polemon and Glykera, Moschion and the daughter of Philinos (1025–6). See Blanchard 2007: 131–4.

an essential part of the performance (737n.) but had virtually no role in the drama; it was conventional for a character to remark, at the end of the first act, on the approach of (usually) a band of drunken youths (119a/b n.), and then to make an exit so as to avoid getting in their way, but in the surviving Menandrian texts the chorus is never, after that point, mentioned at all, except that at each act-break there is a notation χοροῦ ('<performance> of the chorus'). We cannot even tell by direct evidence whether the chorus only danced or whether they also sang (probably the latter, if only because bands of drunken youths are more usually noisy than silent), nor what they did during the acts,<sup>41</sup> nor whether they departed after their last interlude or remained to the end of the play (probably the latter, since they would then be able to sing appropriately in accompaniment to the festive final exit of the principals).

Within the acts, almost all the verse was spoken, except for an occasional solo song,<sup>42</sup> though the piper who accompanied the choral interludes may also have played during, and given a stricter rhythm to, at least some of the passages written in iambic or trochaic tetrameters.<sup>43</sup> The action was in principle continuous within each act, though sometimes the scene may be briefly empty of actors between an exit and the next entrance.<sup>44</sup> No more than three speaking characters are ever on stage at any one time,<sup>45</sup> and it is likely, though not certain, that the plays were written so as to be performable by a troupe of three actors (see §10).

The imaginary location of the action was normally a street or other public space outside two (sometimes possibly three) private houses;<sup>46</sup> each of these houses might belong to a head of family (like Demeas and Nikeratos in *Samia*), to a bachelor (like young Chairestratos in *Epilepentes*, elderly Smikrines in *Aspis*, or the soldiers in *Misoumenos* and *Perikeiromene*), or to a *hetaira* (as in *Dis Exapaton* and *Synaristosai*). Other persons or families of significance to the action might be imagined as living at a little distance (like Kallippides in *Dyskolos*, Smikrines in *Epilepentes*, or the farmer

<sup>41</sup> Possibly they retired to an inconspicuous position at the edge of the *orchestra*; there is some reason to believe that choruses sometimes did this even in Aristophanes' time (see Sommerstein 1990: 202).

<sup>42</sup> E.g. *Theoph.* 6–27 S = 36–57 A; *Leukadia* 11–16 A.

<sup>43</sup> See opening note to Act IV.

<sup>44</sup> In *Samia* this happens only in the first act, once for certain at 95/96 (exit Moschion, then enter Demeas and Nikeratos with servants) and probably also in the lacuna between 57 and 58 (exit Moschion, then enter Chrysis; see 57/58n.). In *Dyskolos* it occurs in all five acts, seven times in all (49/50, 392/3, 455/6, 521/2, 638/9, 665/6, 873/4).

<sup>45</sup> Whereas in Aristophanes there are several scenes involving four speaking characters (MacDowell 1994).

<sup>46</sup> The third door, in the centre, could also represent the entrance to another kind of interior space (e.g. a cave-shrine in *Dyskolos*, a temple in *Leukadia*).

Kleainetos in *Georgos*) or may arrive during the play as visitors from further afield (like Demeas in *Misoumenos*). The action of the drama is essentially the *interaction* of these family members and individuals.

The characters are usually assignable to a limited number of stock types, who appear to have been fairly readily recognizable, even before they spoke or were spoken to, by their masks and costumes (see §10). The main categories were: young citizen men (unmarried or newly-married); older citizen men<sup>47</sup> (of an age to have marriageable children); marriageable maidens (or recently married wives), and young women of obscurer status who are eventually discovered to be marriageable; *hetairai*; professional soldiers; parasites (men who tried to live, so far as possible, at other people's expense);<sup>48</sup> brothel-keepers, male or female (*pornoboskoi*); cooks; slaves or ex-slaves of both sexes and all ages. This is a very limited and skewed sample of society – but it is all that is needed to make a typical New Comedy plot work; and in Menander's hands it was capable of almost infinite variety, because, in the words of Louis MacNeice,<sup>49</sup> he knew 'all the tricks of the virtuosos who invert the usual': he delighted in creating characters who failed to behave in the manner expected of a person of their type<sup>50</sup> and putting them to work in generating new plot structures.

New Comedy resembled tragedy, and differed markedly from what we know of Old Comedy, in that it was usually in broad terms predictable how a play would end. The young man in love would gain the bride he desired; the couple on the point of splitting up would come back together; the soldier reported dead would come back alive and well. Frequently, too, the audience, early in the play, would be let into secrets that remained unknown to the characters, or most of them, by means of a prologue spoken by an omniscient divinity – sometimes at the outset of the play (as in *Dyskolos*), more often, it seems, after an opening scene or scenes had aroused their curiosity. With the conclusion therefore largely known in advance, most of the plot interest would lie in uncertainty about how it would be reached and in the detours that might arise along the way.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> There are virtually no citizen males of intermediate age in New Comedy, just as there are virtually no children who have passed babyhood but not reached adolescence.

<sup>48</sup> Such as the real-life figure of Chaerephon (603n.).

<sup>49</sup> Cited by Turner 1979: 108.

<sup>50</sup> Consider even the minor figure of the Cook in *Samia*, who seems at first a thoroughly conventional example of his self-important, narrowly professional type, but who ends (383–90) by persistently attempting, despite repeated rebuffs, to intervene to prevent an injustice.

<sup>51</sup> In *Aspis*, for instance, we are told in the delayed prologue (97–148), by the goddess Chance, that the supposedly dead Kleostratos will come back alive, and that Smikrines' scheme to marry the young man's sister (now, after her brother's presumed death, a substantial heiress) will fail. Kleostratos actually returns towards

In *Samia* some very important facts are unknown to one part of the cast (Demeas and Nikeratos, returning from abroad), but they are known to the other part (their households back in Athens), and there is no need for a divine prologue; instead Moschion is made to explain the initial situation to us himself – and in doing so, to reveal much to us about his personality and his weaknesses.

### 3 THE PLOT OF *SAMIA*

Although only about half of the first two acts has survived, the essentials of the action can be reconstructed with very little uncertainty, not least because in the early part of the play the action appears to have been rather slow-moving.

Demeas,<sup>52</sup> a wealthy, unmarried<sup>53</sup> Athenian, adopted Moschion<sup>54</sup> as his son when Moschion was a young child<sup>55</sup> (cf. 7–9) and brought him up in affluence (13–16). After Moschion had grown up, Demeas, by then fairly

the end of Act IV (491–509). Up to that point the action has been built almost entirely around a scheme, conceived by Kleostratos' loyal slave Daos, to fake the death of Smikrines' very wealthy brother Chairestratos so that Smikrines will transfer his marital ambitions to Chairestratos' daughter (heiress to a far larger fortune). Kleostratos returns just as this scheme is proving successful – Smikrines learns of Chairestratos' 'death' (471–3) and apparently agrees to renounce his right to marry Kleostratos' sister in favour of Chaireas, whom she knows well and who loves her (484ff, see Arnott 1979: 83–5, Ireland 2010: 104–5) – and thereby makes it unnecessary; but it is Daos' scheme that has been the core of the play, producing some fine comic scenes (especially, in the surviving portions, those involving the bogus doctor), exposing Smikrines' blind avarice and making a thorough fool of him.

<sup>52</sup> One of the names regularly employed for old men in New Comedy; it is found in *Dis Exapaton*, *Misoumenos*, *Imbrioi* (fr. 190), in Alexis' *Pyraunos* (fr. 205), in several papyrus fragments of unidentified comedies (*com. adesp.* 1008, 1014, 1093), and in Terence's *Adelphoe*.

<sup>53</sup> It is not clear from the surviving text whether he is a bachelor or a childless widower.

<sup>54</sup> Moschion ('Bullock') is the most frequent name in Menander for a young man in love (cf. Choricus of Gaza 32.2.73 Foerster-Richtsteig = Men. test. 141 PCG); it appears in at least six other plays of his and in several unattributed papyrus fragments (*com. adesp.* 1063, 1096, 1098, 1129, 1130), but seems to have been avoided by Roman dramatists. It was a fairly common name in the Athens of his time, being borne by a tragic dramatist (*TGF I*, no. 97) and by a parasite who is mentioned several times in comic and quasi-comic texts (Alexis fr. 238, Axionicus fr. 4.14, Machon fr. 6.46 Gow) and who may have been the title character of a comedy by Callicrates.

<sup>55</sup> In ancient Athens the primary purpose of adoption was not to provide a home for an orphaned or unwanted child, but to provide a direct heir for a family that lacked one; accordingly an adopted child had to be of legitimate citizen birth, and a man who already had a son could not adopt another. For Athenian laws and customs regarding adoption see Harrison 1968: 82–96; MacDowell 1978: 99–101; Rubinstein 1993.



advanced in years,<sup>56</sup> fell in love with a *hetaira* from Samos named Chrysis,<sup>57</sup> and Moschion encouraged him to take her into his house (19–28).

Moschion himself fell in love<sup>58</sup> with Plangon,<sup>59</sup> the daughter and only child of Nikeratos,<sup>60</sup> Demeas' much poorer neighbour. Apparently, however, he at first took no steps to seek her hand in marriage, possibly because he was afraid his father would object to his choosing a bride who would bring little or nothing by way of dowry. Then Demeas and Nikeratos went away together on a long business trip<sup>61</sup> to the Black Sea region – which ruled out any possibility of marriage until such time as they returned. Plangon's mother and Chrysis struck up a friendship (35–8), which led to their holding an all-night women's party together at Demeas' and Moschion's house for the festival of the Adonia (38–46) – during which Moschion raped Plangon (see §5) with the result that she became pregnant (47–50). He immediately went to see Plangon's mother and made a sworn promise to marry her when her father returned (53n.).

But Demeas and Nikeratos did not return for many months – so long, indeed, that the baby (a boy)<sup>62</sup> was born while they were still away. Its parents, together with Plangon's mother, Chrysis, and Moschion's slave Parmenon,<sup>63</sup> decided to conceal the birth until Moschion and Plangon were

<sup>56</sup> The Cook calls him a γέρον (361), but this may only mean that he is old enough to have an adult son. Oedipus speaks of the man he killed on the road as a πρέσβυς (Soph. *OT* 805, 807) when, according to Iocaste, Laius' hair was 'just becoming sprinkled with grey' (ibid. (361)).

<sup>57</sup> Chrysis ('Goldie') was a common name for *hetairai* both in real life (*Kolax* F 4; Timocles fr. 27.4; title of a play by Antiphanes; Plut. *Dem.* 24.1) and in comedy (see note on *PBerol* 8450 = *com. adesp.* 1131 at end of commentary).

<sup>58</sup> He probably made this clear in the lacuna between 29 and 30 (see 29/30n.).

<sup>59</sup> Plangon ('Dolly') was a name commonly given to Athenian girls (see e.g. *Dem.* 39.9) and could also be borne by *hetairai* (Anaxilas fr. 22.8; title of play by Eubulus; Timocles fr. 27.2). As a fictive name in comedy, however, it seems always to be applied to young women who are, or eventually prove to be, of citizen birth and marriageable (*Dysk.* 430, see Sandbach 1973: 203; *Heros* 24, 37; and the Mytilene mosaic of *Synaristosai*, where Plangon probably corresponds to Selenium in Plautus' *Cistellaria* who proves to be of Sicyonian citizen birth and can marry her lover Alcesimarchus).

<sup>60</sup> This common Athenian name, most famously borne by the father of the fifth-century statesman and general Nicias, is not found elsewhere in Menander (unless *com. adesp.* 1017 – in which Nikeratos appears to be a young man – is his); it appears in a cook's speech (*Strato* fr. 1.13), alongside the names Moschion and Philinos (*Perik.* 1026), in a list of diners.

<sup>61</sup> We are never, in the surviving text, actually told their purpose of the journey, but it certainly was for business and not for pleasure: both men found the climate, the food and the people distasteful (96–111, 417).

<sup>62</sup> We learn the baby's gender only at 132, but Menander's audience would probably have guessed it long before; in a Menandrian comedy, a baby recently born, or born during the course of the play, is invariably male.

<sup>63</sup> Parmenon ('Steadfast', literally 'Remaining by one's side' – ironically inappropriate to this particular character) had been a regular name for comic slaves at least since the early fourth century (Ar. *Eccl.* 868). Menander used it in *Theophrourumene*

safely married; their reason for doing this is lost in the lacuna between 57 and 58, but given the temperament of Nikeratos as we see it later (492–584), it is highly likely that they were terrified of what he might do if he discovered that his daughter had had a child out of wedlock (see 54n.). As it happened, Chrysis, about the same time or a little earlier, had herself given birth, but her baby had died (55–6n.). It thus became possible for the baby to be taken into her house and for her to suckle it<sup>64</sup> and pretend it was her own. As we shall discover later, everyone in the house knows who the baby's real parents are.

This is the situation when the action of the play begins. Parmenon, who has been sent to the harbour, returns (61) with the news that Demeas' and Nikeratos' ship has arrived, and Moschion knows that for him the crisis is imminent. He resolves, despite considerable apprehension, to ask Demeas immediately for permission to marry Plangon; in the meantime the pretence will be maintained that Chrysis is the baby's mother. Moschion goes off to practise the speech he will have to make to his father, and thus misses Demeas' and Nikeratos' homecoming. From the two men's conversation we learn that they have already agreed (on Demeas' initiative, 117–18) to marry their children to each other, and it may almost seem as though the play is over before it has properly begun. (Act I ends here.)

Demeas is angered to discover that Chrysis has apparently had a child and kept it instead of exposing it (132n.), and threatens to throw them both out of his house (133–4) but is persuaded by Moschion to relent. He then asks Moschion whether he is willing to marry Plangon, and is surprised and delighted by his enthusiastic agreement. Demeas next half persuades, half bullies Nikeratos into agreeing to hold the wedding this very day (167–88); Moschion, evidently not wanting to face Nikeratos before he has to, has gone off to the Agora. Parmenon is sent off to make the necessary purchases for the wedding feast and to hire a cook (189–95), and shortly afterwards Nikeratos also goes shopping. Once again all problems seem to have been solved. (Act II ends here.)

In the midst of the wedding preparations, Demeas overhears an old freedwoman talking half to the baby and half to herself, in terms that make it clear that Moschion is the baby's father; immediately afterwards he sees Chrysis suckling the child, seemingly confirming that she is its mother. Moschion, it seems, must have cuckolded Demeas in his absence. The returning Parmenon is forced to confess that the baby is Moschion's,

(Mytilene mosaic), *Plokion* (fr. 300), *Hypobolimaïos* (fr. 373), and doubtless other plays (fr. 798, 901).

<sup>64</sup> Though Plangon would be able to visit the house from time to time and give the baby some feeds, thus maintaining her milk flow and her bond with the child (57/58n.)

but when threatened with a savage flogging (321–3) he runs away, leaving Demeas in possession of only half the truth. Demeas, being certain that Moschion is of virtuous character, argues himself into believing that the supposed affair must be all Chrysis' fault, and – though still very much in love with her (350, 356) – he resolves to expel her from his house, and immediately does so; for the sake of Moschion's reputation, however, he pretends that he is punishing her only for keeping the baby (374–5). Nikeratos returns home shortly afterwards, hears what has happened to Chrysis, and sympathetically takes her into his house. (Here Act III ends.)

Nikeratos, on his wife's insistence (421), decides to intercede with Demeas on behalf of Chrysis; but when Moschion returns from town, Nikeratos asks him to make the first approach. Demeas sees Moschion's intervention as proof that in the supposed affair with Chrysis, Moschion had not after all been an innocent victim, and that the two are still in league; and there follows a long argument at cross-purposes, in which almost everything Moschion says makes Demeas more and more certain of his guilt, until he loses control of himself and begins to shout, thus revealing the quarrel and its cause to Nikeratos. Nikeratos now denounces Moschion in ferocious terms and declares that he would not now dream of letting him marry Plangon (502–5); and he hardly needs Demeas' urging (517–18) to rush into his house with the intention of expelling Chrysis. Moschion hastily takes the opportunity to confess the truth to his father: the baby is his, but its mother is Plangon. Almost before Demeas can take this in, Nikeratos reappears, thunderstruck at having seen Plangon suckling the baby. Demeas, now sure that Moschion has told the truth, apologizes for his suspicions; Moschion, terrified of what Nikeratos may now do, takes to his heels. Demeas is left to cope as best he can with a near-insane Nikeratos who threatens at one moment to burn the baby alive (553–5), at another to kill Chrysis who is protecting it and encouraging Plangon and her mother to put up a united front (556–62), at another, after Demeas has helped Chrysis escape back into his own house, to kill his wife (580–1). At more than one moment Demeas has to resist or restrain his neighbour by physical force (574–6, 581–2nn.), but eventually Nikeratos is mollified by a combination of soothing assurances that Moschion will marry Plangon forthwith (586, 599, 610) and an absurd attempt to 'prove' that the baby's father was really a god. Final preparations for the wedding can now be completed, and Demeas can thank the gods that his suspicions have proved unfounded (614–15). (Here Act IV ends.)

Moschion returns, indignant that his father should have suspected him, and decides to give Demeas a fright by pretending he is about to go abroad as a mercenary soldier. Demeas, however, does not plead and beseech as Moschion had hoped (664–7) but gives him a lecture on his duty as a son

(694–712). Nikeratos then comes out in search of the bridegroom and, finding him apparently about to decamp, threatens to imprison him as a seducer, at which Moschion draws his sword; but Demeas calms everyone down, the bride is brought out, and the pair are formally betrothed (726–8), after which all depart in the torchlit procession with which a comedy customarily ended, the final words being, as usual, an appeal to the audience for applause and to the goddess Nike for victory in the festival competition.

#### 4 THE CHARACTERS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

##### *(a) Adoptive father and adopted son*

As soon as the Bodmer papyrus made it possible to view and understand *Samia* more or less as a whole, it was quickly perceived (Treu 1969; Mette 1969; Jacques 1971: xxviii–xli; Lloyd-Jones 1972) that the relationship between Moschion and Demeas was a crucial feature, perhaps *the* crucial feature, of the play, even though it is rather rare for them to be on stage together.<sup>65</sup> A major determinant of Moschion's actions, evident from the prologue on, is his awareness of how much he owes to his adoptive father, and his sense of shame at having acted in a way that would lower him in his father's estimation. An even stronger determinant of Demeas' actions is his desire to believe the best of his son if at all possible, to avoid quarrelling with him, and to avoid doing anything that might injure his reputation. In Act II this leads Demeas to condone Chrysis' apparent offence against him (in rearing 'her' baby instead of exposing it, 132n.), contrary to his original intentions, when Moschion urges him to, and then to put pressure on a reluctant Nikeratos to have Moschion and Plangon married that very day; in Act III it leads him to expel Chrysis from his house on the mere presumption that Moschion, being a person of good character, could not have committed a serious sexual wrong, and also to avoid telling her the real reason for her expulsion; in Act IV, and again in Act V, it leads him to apologize (537–8, 702–3) for an 'injustice' that was at least as much Moschion's fault as his own.

Clearly these features of the father-son relationship are to be understood as connected in some way with Menander's unusual decision to make this relationship an adoptive rather than a biological one. One can see at

<sup>65</sup> They appear together in the first half of Act II (120–62), during a long stretch of Act IV (440–539), and in the concluding scene of the play (690–737). All three of these passages, as it happens, are preserved in the Bodmer papyrus alone.

least two general features of adoptive fatherhood<sup>66</sup> that could have engendered the attitudes we see in Demeas and Moschion, and a third that would apply more especially in the particular circumstances of this family.

- (1) 'An adopted son would not have the same claim on his father's affections as a son by birth' (Sandbach in Turner 1970: 77; cf. [Gomme and] Sandbach 1973: 544) – though one should perhaps say rather that an adopted son would not have the same *instinctive place* in his father's affections. Demeas, furthermore, assumes that the converse is also true: he is sure (342–7) that a young man who behaves so well towards those outside his family would never behave atrociously towards his father, 'not even if he is ten times my adopted rather than my natural son' – implying that, were other things equal, one could expect an adopted son to be less filial in his behaviour than a natural son. Each of the two parties might well thus feel that his affection and respect for the other could not be taken for granted and had to be constantly proved; and each, both before and during the action of the play, is at pains to prove it, except when stronger emotions overpower them.
- (2) It must not be forgotten that at Athens an adopted son was almost invariably an *only* (legitimate) son,<sup>67</sup> in whom was invested the entirety of his adoptive father's hopes for the perpetuation of his descent line (οἶκος) as well as for his support in old age (γηροτροφία) and the tendance of his tomb after his death. The father would therefore be more than usually reluctant to believe any serious ill of his son, let alone to repudiate him or provoke him to a breach; and if he sees himself as forced to choose between his adopted son and a mistress, however passionately loved, who cannot give him a legitimate child, he is almost

<sup>66</sup> Adoption in Athens was always adoption by a father, not by a mother or a couple; indeed, when a son was adopted, whereas all legal and religious ties between him and his natural father were *ipso facto* extinguished, his relationship to his natural mother, and his duties towards her, were entirely unaffected (as Isaeus 7.25 puts it, 'nobody can be adopted away from his mother').

<sup>67</sup> A man who had a legitimate son could not adopt another ([Dem.] 46.14–15). In theory a man might adopt a son while childless, and later beget a legitimate son of his own, and the law provided for this possibility (Isaeus 6.63), giving all such a man's sons, adopted or natural, equal rights of inheritance; but we know of no actual case. Presumably a man would only resort to adoption if he was sure he would never have a legitimate biological son, i.e. if he had no wife (or had a wife past childbearing age) and had no intention of (re)marrying. Terence's *Adelphoe* is an exception that proves the rule: Micio, who has an adopted son Aeschinus, is bullied into marrying (*Ad.* 929–46) by his brother Demea – but his bride is long past childbearing age (931; he calls her a 'decrepit old woman', 939), so there is no threat to Aeschinus' inheritance, and indeed Aeschinus, who is the woman's new son-in-law, has himself promised her that he will arrange the marriage (940).

bound to choose the son.<sup>68</sup> Moschion, for his part, must know that he could hardly wound Demeas more deeply than by pretending he is about to go abroad as a soldier, putting in grave jeopardy the life that meant so much to his father: no wonder he expects that Demeas will beg and beseech him not to go.

- (3) In addition to the above considerations, Moschion is also keenly aware that his adoptive father is a very rich man and has given him an extremely affluent upbringing (7–18). We do not know whether anything was said about his birth family in the lost opening of the prologue, but even if nothing was stated explicitly, Moschion's emphasis on the fact that he owes his social status entirely to Demeas (17 δὲ ἐκεῖνον ἦν ἀνθρώπος) clearly implies that his natural father was much less well off. Owing so much to Demeas, Moschion knows that it is his duty to repay him by leading his life in a way that will redound to Demeas' credit (17–18), and he is deeply ashamed to have failed in this (47–8, 67); to a large extent, this is what makes him reluctant to admit this failure to his father, and hesitant to seek his consent to a marriage that can bring the family no social or economic benefit. We may find ourselves wondering whether he would ever, despite the oath he swore to Plangon's mother (53), have plucked up courage to do so, had not the same marriage been already agreed upon by the two fathers and presented to Moschion, as it were, on a plate.

For Moschion, like several of Menander's young men (Zagagi 1979; Lamagna 1998: 58–9), is a rather weak character. He is terrified of Nikeratos and twice runs away from him (161–2, 539). He has to be urged and shamed by his slave into fulfilling his sworn promise to do his duty by Plangon (63–76); in this connection he becomes the only free man in all of known Greek drama to call himself a coward (65n.). When waiting to put into action his plan to frighten Demeas by pretending to go abroad, he gets cold feet, too late (682–6), on thinking of the possibility that Demeas may not react as planned and may thereby force him into a humiliating climb-down. His generosity to those less fortunate than himself (15–16, 30–4n.) is an attractive trait, but he is being generous with Demeas' money, not his own; his swift confession of his rape of Plangon, and his oath to marry her as soon as possible, seem an impressive acceptance of responsibility, but we had probably been told that he was already set on marrying her if he could, and his confession appears to be presented as partly motivated by awareness that he was in any case the obvious suspect (50–1n.).

<sup>68</sup> Even when Demeas has come to believe that Moschion has grievously wronged him and is continuing to conspire with Chrysis against him (cf. 456–8, 469–70, 474–5, 481 ἐνθυμείσθαι), though he rages verbally against Moschion, he seeks to take punitive action only against Chrysis (517–18).

However, Moschion does have some qualities that are beginning (to use language that is thematic in the play) to make a man of him (64n.), qualities that we can see germinating under the stimulus of fatherhood. It is when his son is under threat that he is seen displaying moral and even physical courage (Sommerstein 2012). When Demeas is about to throw Chrysis and the baby out of his house (130–4), Moschion, hitherto so afraid to face him, says immediately ‘Don’t!’ (134) and challenges his father’s assumption that a bastard child is *ipso facto* inferior; we have only the first few lines of his argument and enigmatic fragments of the rest (137–43m), but we know that his persuasion was successful. When Chrysis has actually been expelled, again with the baby, Moschion urges his father to allow her to return, and persists in doing so in the face of strong indications that Demeas’ anger is being increasingly aroused. And when it is Nikeratos’ turn to want to expel her (once more, with the baby), Moschion attempts, though ineffectively, to prevent him from doing so by physically blocking him from entering his own house (519–20nn.). He has his limits: he flees from Nikeratos when the latter discovers that Plangon is the baby’s mother, and it is left to Demeas and the three women to protect the child from its maternal grandfather.

It may at first seem that Moschion’s feelings towards Plangon are only those of passionate desire (ἔρως) – which, in view of her citizen status, could find fulfilment on a long-term basis only through marriage. But in this respect, too, he can be seen to mature. In mentioning the reasons that are impelling him to stay in Athens and marry Plangon (624–5), he places first not desire (πόθος) but his oath; and when the formal betrothal finally takes place, Moschion’s response to it – his last significant utterance in the play – is the fullest and most moving such response in surviving New Comedy: ξῶ, λαμβάνω, στέργω (728–9). Moschion may have begun the play as a spoilt post-adolescent; he ends it as a man capable of playing the role he now holds, that of head of a nuclear family.

Demeas is a man of conventional ethical principles who, like Moschion, has a strong sense of shame, being particularly anxious that it shall not be *known* that he or his son has done anything improper.<sup>69</sup> It is symptomatic that when Nikeratos is raging at Moschion (495–505), comparing him to the worst sexual criminals of myth, telling Demeas he should have put out his son’s eyes as Amyntor did those of Phoenix, and saying he would rather marry his daughter to a blackmailer (?) like Diomnestus (504n.) than to Moschion, the only thing Demeas says to his son (500) is ‘It’s *your* doing that all this has come out into the open’; and that in the centre of his later

<sup>69</sup> In this he strikingly resembles Phaedra in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (see §6); cf. *Hipp.* 321, 393–7, 403–4, 420, 428–30, 687–8, 717–21.

moral lecture (703–9) he places a contrast between his own behaviour during the crisis – keeping the truth under wraps for Moschion’s sake, and not making it public ‘for our enemies to gloat over’ – with the way Moschion is now publicizing their quarrel and ‘making people into witnesses against me of my own folly’. Much earlier, out of shame (23) and likewise fearing that Moschion’s reputation would be compromised (27), he had been reluctant to avow his passion for Chrysis and even more reluctant to take her into his house, until Moschion himself had persuaded him to do so (28n.). He had not been able to conceal the passion itself from Moschion (23–4), and this points us to another leading characteristic of Demeas: he is very liable to be overpowered by strong emotions. One of these is his passion for Chrysis, with which he has a hard struggle when he expels her (350, 356); another, as we have seen, is his love of Moschion. The third, and sometimes the most powerful, is anger. In the surviving text this is first mentioned in the context of Chrysis’ pretence that she is the mother of the baby: Moschion says (80) that Demeas will be angry with her (for not having exposed it), but Chrysis is sure he is so much in love with her that he will be unable to remain angry for long. This proves to be a misjudgement: Demeas does relent from his initial intention to throw Chrysis out, but it is his love of Moschion, not of Chrysis, that mollifies him.

In Act III we see to the full how devastating Demeas’ anger can be – and also that he is aware of its power and strives hard to control it. When he first comes on stage he is outwardly ‘very calm’ (cf. 263), though his words show that he is in fact distraught (206–18), and there follows a long, factual narrative (219–66) and a reflective, logical argument (266–79) – until his rage breaks through in the two words ἐξέστηχ’ ὄλως (279). But then he immediately resumes control again as he sees Parmenon and the Cook approaching. His interrogation of Parmenon is well managed, particularly the smoothly expressed menace of 306–7 (‘For many reasons, I have no wish to flog you’), until Parmenon, believing that he knows all, confesses that an attempt was being made to deceive him (320 λανθάνειν). At this he at once calls for a strap, threatens to beat Parmenon black and blue (323n.) and thereby prevents himself from getting any more information as Parmenon flees. But again, after some paratragic exclamations (325–6; for a detailed discussion of this passage, see Fountoulakis 2011), he calms himself down, and reasons himself into a conviction that Moschion cannot have intentionally wronged him. All his anger is therefore channelled against Chrysis (348–98), taking perhaps an extra edge from the need for him to master his erotic passion, and he takes, or professes to take, a vindictive delight in her present and likely future sufferings; he is so much in the grip of this emotion that the Cook (361, 363), Chrysis herself (415), and Nikeratos when he learns what has happened (416–20), all think he has gone at least temporarily insane.



But there is still Moschion to be thought of, still a wedding to be held; and when we next see him (440–51) Demeas is doing his best to ‘swallow’ his anger (447) so that no one becomes aware of his and Moschion’s shame: he finds a safety-valve, as it were, by briefly letting fly at the servants (440–4). His control is sorely tried by Moschion’s innocent intervention on behalf of Chrysis, but he just about maintains it by alternating between indignant asides (454, 456, 457–8) and desperate appeals to Moschion to leave him alone (454–5, 460, 465–6, 470–1); it is already wearing thin, though, by 461–2, after which Moschion and Nikeratos both feel it necessary to warn him that it is not always good to yield to anger, and by 469–70 he is coming close to revealing the ‘truth’ that he has been so anxious to conceal. His last throw is to reveal to Moschion alone what he thinks he knows (476–9), but Moschion’s baffled replies seem to him like the final proof that his son has lost all moral sense, and he denounces him at the top of his voice (481–4), no longer caring whether Nikeratos can hear (cf. 489). After this Nikeratos largely takes over the role of angry old man – in a more comic mode – and Demeas says little.

After Moschion’s confession, soon followed by his rapid departure, we see a different side to Demeas as he finds himself fighting (sometimes almost literally so) to save the lives of his partner and his grandson. From now on two of his three powerful emotions fade out of the picture. He no longer yields to anger (not even in face of Moschion’s provocations, though Moschion fears he may, 682–4), and as for his passion for Chrysis, if only 568–737 had survived of the play we might almost have thought Chrysis was merely Demeas’ housekeeper.<sup>70</sup> His love for Moschion, on the other hand, is as strong as ever (he even loves him for being angry, 695–6). But what comes to the fore in this last part of the play is Demeas’ ability to reason and to persuade, which he employs to good effect upon Nikeratos at the end of Act IV (see §4(c)) as in Act III he had employed it, to less good effect, upon himself. And it is this rational side of Demeas that is most prominent at the end, as he explains his view of the father-son relationship to Moschion (694–712) and in a few words (720–1, 723) makes sure that Moschion’s play-acting and Nikeratos’ indignation do not hamper the completion of the wedding – though not without having a little fun at the expense of them both as he pretends to Nikeratos that Moschion really is meaning to abandon Plangon and go abroad (715–16). Demeas too, then, has learned from this experience. He was enraged with Chrysis

<sup>70</sup> It is, however, highly significant that a little earlier (561) Demeas had referred to her as his wife (τῆς γυναίκός). She can never actually be that, of course, but in contrast with his earlier sarcastic description of her as a γαμετὴ ἑταῖρα (130), he is now apparently going to give her the respect due to the lady of the house – as the women, free and slave, in both households, have been doing for a long time (35–8, 258n.)

and then enraged with Moschion, when neither of them had in fact seriously wronged him at all: he himself now says he was wrong, foolish, even mad (703, 708). Moschion, as his son, ought not to have rebuked him as he did at 462–3; nevertheless, the rebuke was a deserved one, and Demeas now understands why.

(b) *Chrysis*

Chrysis gives her name, or rather her nationality, to the play, but we should not attach vast importance to this fact. *Samia* is one of no less than eighteen Menandrian plays (one-sixth of the dramatist's entire output) that are named after a person or persons who are actually or supposedly of non-Athenian origin, most often a woman,<sup>71</sup> either a *hetaira* (or ex-*hetaira*) or else, as in Menander's and Terence's *Andria*, a young woman at first believed to be a foreigner but eventually discovered to be Athenian and marriageable. *Andria* provides a good example to show how little significance need be attached to the status of 'title character': in Terence's play, and very likely in Menander's too, the 'girl from Andros' (called Glycerium by Terence) never appears on stage, though she is heard once from offstage, crying out in labour (Ter. *Andr.* 473, cf. Men. fr. 38). Titles of this type (unlike some other Menandrian titles such as *Dyskolos*, *Aspis* and *Perikeiromene*) may be no more than identifying labels. However, Chrysis certainly is in fact an important character in *Samia*; in particular, she is the most striking figure of what was probably its most famous scene, the one portrayed on the Mytilene mosaic (§11), though she fades out almost completely well before the play ends.

It is not clear in the surviving text – indeed Menander may never have made it clear – whether it was she who originated the plan whereby she was to pretend to be the mother of Moschion's and Plangon's baby (57/58n.); but it is certainly she who has the main responsibility, and takes the main risk, in carrying the plan out. The risk is a grave one, too; as a *pallake* (§5) she can be dismissed by her partner without notice or reason given, and she will then revert to her previous life as a self-employed *hetaira* dependent on her personal charms (as long as they last) and her willingness to make them available to anyone who can pay (cf. 390–7), unless she has the good fortune to captivate another rich man's heart. So far as we can tell, her motive for running this risk is simply fondness for the baby and reluctance to see it suffer (84–6n.); she has nothing to gain by it, except the gratitude of Moschion and Plangon. For doing them this service she

<sup>71</sup> In ten of these titles the ethnic is feminine (always singular); in eight it is masculine (three of these are singular, three plural, and in two cases our sources are in disagreement).

is nearly thrown into the street as soon as Demeas comes home, and actually suffers this fate not long afterwards; she finds refuge with Nikeratos, but later has to flee for her life from *him*. Throughout the play she is presented as the main guardian of the baby. She has it with her every time she appears on stage (except at the very end, if she does appear then: 730n.), though when indoors it may be cared for by others, including its real mother (241–50, 535–43), or by nobody (225–6). When its life is in danger from the fury of Nikeratos, she snatches it from the frightened Plangon (559) and declares she will never give it up; and it is in her arms that, shortly afterwards, Plangon's son makes the last of his journeys in the play, returning to the house in which he began it, now known to be his true home.

Chrysis' resourcefulness is a trait that she shares with other Menandrian *pallakai* such as Glykera in *Perikeiromene* and Habrotonon in *Epitrepontes*<sup>72</sup> (Traill 2008, Sommerstein forthcoming (d)); so is her ability to form a network of support among persons of more assured social status. Nikeratos' wife and daughter treat her as a friend (35–8); so do other women of the neighbourhood (40–1); so does Nikeratos himself, until he learns of her supposed affair with Moschion. The slaves in Demeas' house look up to her as their mistress (258n.), and she acts as their manager and supervisor (301–4n., 730). It is only vis-à-vis Demeas himself that she is powerless – or rather, has only as much power as Eros can confer on her, which in this play proves to be very little.

For, considering that Chrysis is a professional *hetaira*, her actual role in the play is a remarkably unsexualized one. Demeas and Nikeratos at certain times find it easy, because of her background, to *think* of her as a promiscuous seductress or a cheap whore (348 χαμαιτύπη); but at no time does she *act* as one. Far from her winning Demeas back by erotic machinations, he simply takes it for granted, once he knows she is innocent, that she can return to her old position in his home – and when he tells her to take refuge there (569ff), she is at first baffled and hesitant, despite Nikeratos' threats and pursuit, because she does not understand, and is not told, why he has changed his attitude. When she re-enters his house, she almost steps out of the play; she is briefly mentioned in the verbal crossfire between Demeas and Nikeratos (577–8) and is then completely forgotten until 730 when she is matter-of-factly told to organize a women's procession as part of the wedding celebrations; it is not even made clear whether she herself comes back on stage as part of it (though she

<sup>72</sup> During most of *Epitrepontes* Habrotonon is actually a *hetaira*, and a slave; but it is likely that during the play Charisios (believing her to be the mother of his child) purchased her freedom, and that she finally became the *pallake* of his friend Chairestratos (Arnott 2004: 274–5; Furley 2009: 134, 208–9, 241–2).

probably does). Overall, her role in the play is less like that of a *hetaira* than like that of a wife (cf. 561) – but a wife who lacks the vital safeguard of an assured refuge from ill-treatment or neglect in the home of her natal family, and of a dowry which they can reclaim if her marriage breaks up for any reason.<sup>73</sup> She does nothing improper or unworthy at any point in the play, not even in what many might think justified retaliation for the atrocious way she was treated by Demeas and then by Nikeratos. And she risks, and nearly endures, expulsion and ruin in order to help a child who is not even hers – and in all her tribulations it never occurs to her to try and save her skin by revealing that it is not hers (Keuls 1973: 16–17). She is the most admirable character in *Samia*.

(c) *Demeas and Nikeratos*

The two fathers are generally seen either together or in parallel scenes, and they make a contrasting pair. Demeas is mostly presented in a serious light: we may pity him for his mistakes (though probably not as much as we pity the victims of those mistakes), we do not laugh at him. Nikeratos does make us laugh, usually without any such intention on his part; his actions and words are consistently inappropriate or incongruous. And, while both men are liable to bursts of anger, Nikeratos' rages, whether verbal or physical, are regularly far more extreme; in Act IV he repeatedly goes to the very brink of murder.

Whereas Demeas is a rich man, Nikeratos is poor. In the script as we have it, this only becomes apparent at 593,<sup>74</sup> when Demeas asks him whether any part of his roof is leaky and he replies 'Most of it'. In performance it will have been evident as soon as the pair first appear, from the contrast in their clothing, the scantiness of Nikeratos' luggage, and probably from his having at most one slave to carry it (96–119a n.). It is not explained in the surviving text why Demeas chose Nikeratos as his companion on a long business voyage, but there would be opportunities for such an explanation, by Demeas himself or by Moschion, in several of the lacunae in Acts I and II. The quality most needed in a business partner is honesty, and whatever else may be said about Nikeratos, he is almost

<sup>73</sup> It is true that Demeas when expelling Chrysis says to her (381–2) that 'you've got everything that's your own' and that he is also giving her 'maids and jewellery'; but this statement, if taken seriously, differs so sharply in tone and attitude from everything else Demeas says that it should probably be understood as sarcastic (381–2n.). Chrysis came to Demeas with virtually nothing (377–9), and she is leaving with the baby, one old woman servant (301–4, 372–3nn.), and the clothing and jewellery that she is actually wearing.

<sup>74</sup> The description of Athens in 101 as having καθαρά πενήτων ἀγαθά, even if uttered by Nikeratos, would not necessarily prove that he was a poor man (see 98–101n.).

incapable of deception: he even feels it necessary to give Demeas prior warning of his intention to murder Chrysis (560–3)! Another quality that might recommend him to Demeas is his tendency to defer to the richer man's views: once Demeas is able to draw Nikeratos into conversation, the outcome is almost inevitably what Demeas wishes it to be. It was Demeas who had first proposed to arrange a marriage between his son and Nikeratos' daughter (117–18), and Nikeratos had readily agreed (cf. 115–17); nothing is said about the financial arrangements, on which in any real-life marriage negotiations an agreement would have had to be reached, but the audience will have realized that Demeas cannot have expected Nikeratos to be able to give a large dowry.<sup>75</sup> In Act II Demeas undertakes to arrange the wedding for this very day, and succeeds, after some resistance, in pressuring Nikeratos into agreeing to this (186–7), though Nikeratos had previously insisted that it was 'impossible' (176); it seems likely that Demeas boldly asserts the blatant falsehood that the two men had already agreed on an immediate marriage (170–1n.), and that Nikeratos, once he perceives Demeas' determination, allows him to get away with the lie. 'That's very sensible of you' (νοῦν ἔχεις), says Demeas (187) on securing Nikeratos' compliance. Demeas uses the same words again, twice (605, 611), when Nikeratos agrees to proceed with the wedding despite having discovered the truth about the baby; he is well aware that Moschion is its father (585–6, 599, 612; cf. 717), but assents to Demeas' absurd pretence that the child is really the son of a god, because he does not wish to 'fight with [him] to no purpose' (604–5). Earlier in the scene, Nikeratos had twice (at 547 and 563) broken away from attempts by Demeas to engage him in dialogue, and rushed into his house intent on violence; at 582, when he is about to do this for a third time, Demeas succeeds in holding him back long enough for him to cool down a little, and from then on the wealthier man begins to regain his mastery. At the end of the play (723) it is Demeas who puts a stop to the bickering between Nikeratos and Moschion, which still looks as though it may lead to another physical confrontation (721–2n.), by ordering Nikeratos to bring out his daughter for the formal betrothal.

Nikeratos' distinctive personality does not emerge very clearly in his earlier appearances<sup>76</sup> – though we may have been told something in the

<sup>75</sup> In the end Moschion receives no dowry at all, but that may be in effect his punishment for the rape (726–8n.).

<sup>76</sup> Regardless of how we divide his first dialogue with Demeas (98–101n.): the two are in agreement that they are thankful to be back in Athens and away from the Black Sea region, and in their remarks about the lack of sunshine there it is Nikeratos who is flatly prosaic (the sun was obscured by fog, 109) and Demeas who is humorously picturesque (the sun didn't shine more than he had to because there was nothing of consequence for him to see, 110–11).

prologue about his fiery temper (29–30, 54nn.); at the end of Act III, and at the beginning of Act IV, his treatment of Chrysis is humane and sympathetic, and his diagnosis of Demeas' mental condition differs little from that offered by other characters, while his one intervention in the first forty lines of the dialogue between Moschion and Demeas (463) merely echoes a statement of conventional wisdom by Moschion (though one that Nikeratos himself will soon be forgetting!). Everything changes at 492, when he has come to understand that Demeas is accusing Moschion of having had an affair with Chrysis, and that Moschion is apparently admitting this and yet brazenly asserting that he has done Demeas no serious wrong and that Chrysis has done him no wrong at all (481–90). At this point Nikeratos bursts out in a frenzied denunciation of the young man whom he was just about to make his son-in-law, and from here to the end of Act IV his seemingly uncontrollable rage is the central feature of the drama.

He begins by wildly exaggerating Moschion's offence, claiming<sup>77</sup> that it dwarfs all the most heinous sexual crimes of myth or tragedy, including those of Tereus, Oedipus and Thyestes (495–7nn.), telling Demeas that he ought to put out his son's eyes (498–500) or sell both him and Chrysis (illegally) into slavery (508–10), and absurdly describing what the pair are alleged to have done as 'murder' (514–15). This time Demeas has no need to bend Nikeratos to his will, for what he wants Nikeratos to do (expel Chrysis) is exactly what Nikeratos was intending to do in any case (516–18), and he goes inside determined to do it.

But if we thought that the tone and content of Nikeratos' words were rather extreme, they are nothing to what we are shortly going to see, when a fresh discovery strikes him a blow under which he can do nothing but lash out blindly and indiscriminately. It is one thing to learn that one's intended son-in-law is a bad lot; one can always find another. It is another thing to learn that one's unmarried daughter has borne a child: it can mean irretrievable ruin for her and for the family's reputation. Nikeratos had urged Demeas to take violent action: now he takes, or tries to take, even more violent action himself, three times declaring his intention of committing murder (553–4, 560–3, 580–1) – the last prospective victim, his wife, being apparently chosen mainly as a substitute for Chrysis and the baby who are no longer accessible, as if the only thing that can satisfy him will be to have killed *somebody*. There is something ridiculous about this, as there is when he takes pains to give notice to Demeas that he is about to murder Chrysis (563); at the same time, lives really are in danger, and nobody knows how to control Nikeratos until Demeas applies physical force, prevents Nikeratos from taking any action, and so compels him

<sup>77</sup> With much use of paratragic language (492, 493, 495–7, 498–500, 507–8, 516, 517nn.).

to engage in talk – which, as on earlier occasions, leads inevitably to his surrender.

It is striking that during Nikeratos' violent phase, he completely forgets about Moschion; Moschion is present when Nikeratos first comes out (532) after seeing his daughter suckling the baby, but that sight has so devastated him that he no longer remembers that he knows who the baby's father is, and Moschion can escape (539) unnoticed or at any rate unchallenged. Only when Nikeratos is in course of being brought back to reason (585–6) does he manage to put his two pieces of knowledge together;<sup>78</sup> and even then he needs to be assured repeatedly by Demeas that Moschion will certainly marry Plangon (586, 599, 610) and thereby put all to rights in the only way it can be done – which does not stop him from muttering darkly about what he would have done to Moschion if he had caught him at the time of the rape (612).<sup>79</sup> When he does come face to face with Moschion (712–28), any threatening edge is taken off the confrontation by the presence of Demeas, and it is hard (and was probably hard for the original audience) to judge whether Nikeratos still hopes to hurt Moschion somehow or whether he only wishes to frighten and embarrass him. His announcement 'before witnesses' (726) of a zero dowry, which is almost the last thing he says in the play, might seem to leave him with the upper hand – but there is no sign that Moschion was ever interested in a dowry, or in anything else except winning Plangon as his wife. And the *very* last thing he says in the play (727–8) again points up his relatively limited intelligence: first of all he explicitly mentions the prospect of his death, on an occasion when nothing of ill omen should be said,<sup>80</sup> then in an attempt to correct this he adds 'which god forbid – may I live for ever', a prayer that he should know can never be granted.

The word that best sums Nikeratos up is the word Demeas uses of him at 550, αὐθέκαστος. In context it means 'harsh' (550n.); but it can also mean – and does mean, elsewhere in comedy – 'one who tells it like it is'. He is naive, easily manipulated, and subject to fits of completely irrational rage; but he is also the only significant character in the play who never tells or acts a lie, and he does desire what is best for his daughter, however poor

<sup>78</sup> Demeas, by contrast, when he first overheard talk indicating that Moschion was the baby's father (248, 253–4) and then saw Chrysis suckling it (265–6), saw at once what the obvious conclusion was, though because of his love of Moschion he was reluctant actually to draw it.

<sup>79</sup> We may well suspect that, given the opportunity, he would have killed the young man (612n.) without reflecting that he was thereby depriving Plangon of the only husband who would probably ever be willing to take her.

<sup>80</sup> As he himself had been aware when he complained that an evil omen had occurred in the midst of the wedding preparations, with the arrival of the expelled Chrysis causing distress and tears among the womenfolk, including presumably the bride Plangon (423–6).