INTRODUCTION

1 MENANDER'S LIFE AND CAREER

Menander, son of Diopeithes (of the Athenian deme of Cephisia) and his wife Hegestrate,[1] was born in the Athenian year 342/1 BC;[2] 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 Chaeronea, 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;[3] 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.[4] 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.[5]

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 Thurii, to learn the craft.[6] At any rate he was still an

[1] 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* II² 1926.17–19) during which his sixtieth birthday must therefore have fallen ([Arist.] *Ath.Pol.* 53.4).

[2] *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.

[3] 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).

[4] 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.

[5] 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.

[6] *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)*,[7] the first of his 108 plays.[8] 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*.[9] The following year he won at the City Dionysia for the first time;[10] in total, however, he was to gain in his career only eight victories[11] – though this may still have been more than any of his numerous rivals achieved in the same period.[12] 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.[13]

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 (Antigonus 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

[7] *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.

[8] 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.

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

[10] *Marm.Par.* (*FGrH* 239 B 14).

[11] A. Gellius 17.4.4, citing Apollodorus. At least four of these successes were at the City Dionysia (cf. *IG* ii² 2325.160).

[12] Philemon, widely regarded in antiquity as second only to Menander in the genre (Quintilian 10.1.72), gained only three Lenaean victories in a career of some sixty-five years (*IG* II² 2325.161). In the Lenaean 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.

[13] 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.[14] Menander was not a philosopher (though according to one source he too had studied with Theophrastus),[15] but he had been, or was believed to have been, a friend of Demetrius,[16] and he is said to have 'come close to being put on trial' for that reason[17] but was 'begged off' by Telesphorus, a kinsman of Antigonus and his son.[18]

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;[19] 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.[20] 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;[21] 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,[22] says (*Mor.* 853f) that while Menander right from the start of

[14] 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 Democharés, nephew of Demosthenes).

[15] D.L. 5.36, citing Pamphile.

[16] It is striking that Menander's only two datable victories came in the first two years of Demetrius' rule.

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

[18] D.L. 5.79. [19] Alciphr. 4.18–19.

[20] Accordingly Alciphron makes Glykera speak of 'the play you've put me into' (4.19.20).

[21] 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.

[22] 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);[23] 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.[24] 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. 1.21.1; see Papastamati-von Moock 2007, Zanker 1995: 78–83);[25] its inscribed base survives (*IG* II² 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.[26]

2 NEW COMEDY

The periodization of Athenian comedy into 'Old', 'Middle' and 'New' phases, though it goes well back into antiquity,[27] 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.

[23] All our sources (Apollodorus *FGrH* 244 F 43; *IG* xiv 1184; *Prolegomena de Comoedia* 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).

[24] The identification of the comic poet who, in Ovid's words, *liquidis periit, 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).

[25] 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.

[26] On these see Blume 1998: 12–15.

[27] Possibly as far as Aristophanes of Byzantium in the second century BC (Nesselrath 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 ἂν γένοιτο) or 'what kinds of things will inevitably or probably be said or done by what kind of person'.[28] 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.[29]

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,[30] 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,[31]

[28] Arist. *Poet.* 1451a36-b11.

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

[30] 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.

[31] 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 – *Demosatyroi* (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 (frr. 4, 12, 41), Hypereides (frr. 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* II² 657), attacked Stratocles, the leading figure in Athenian politics

and even in *Samia* there are three passages satirizing contemporary individuals,[32] but as a broad generalization Aristotle's statement holds true.[33] 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;[34] there are still a few such plays in the output of Menander's older contemporaries Diphilus and Philemon,[35] 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,[36] 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.[37] This evidence suggests that the genre was dominated (though

at the time, and his patron Demetrius Poliorcetes (Philippides frr. 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.)

[32] Diomnestus (504–5), Chaerephon (603–4) and Androcles (606–8).

[33] 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).

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

[35] 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*.

[36] We know that both at the City Dionysia of 312 (*IG* II² 2323a.36–9) and at the Lenaea of 285 (*IG* II² 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.

[37] 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)[38] by plots in which the driving force was heterosexual love, usually (though not invariably)[39] 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),[40] 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.

[38] 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).

[39] 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.

[40] 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,[41] 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,[42] 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.[43] 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.[44] No more than three speaking characters are ever on stage at any one time,[45] 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;[46] each of these houses might belong to a head of family (like Demeas and Nikeratos in *Samia*), to a bachelor (like young Chairestratos in *Epitrepontes*, 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 *Epitrepontes*, or the farmer

[41] 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).

[42] E.g. *Theoph.* 6–27 S = 36–57 A; *Leukadia* 11–16 A.

[43] See opening note to Act IV.

[44] 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).

[45] Whereas in Aristophanes there are several scenes involving four speaking characters (MacDowell 1994).

[46] 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 *inter*action 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[47] (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);[48] 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,[49] 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[50] 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.[51]

[47] 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.

[48] Such as the real-life figure of Chaerephon (603n.).

[49] Cited by Turner 1979: 108.

[50] 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.

[51] 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,[52] a wealthy, unmarried[53] Athenian, adopted Moschion[54] as his son when Moschion was a young child[55] (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.

[52] 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*.

[53] It is not clear from the surviving text whether he is a bachelor or a childless widower.

[54] Moschion ('Bullock') is the most frequent name in Menander for a young man in love (cf. Choricius 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 (*TrGF* 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.

[55] 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.