

Menander in a Macedonian World

Wilfred E. Major

MENANDER SUFFERED the misfortune of living in interesting times.¹ An Athenian by birth, he was still an infant when Philip scored a victory at Chaeronea in 338. He would have been undergoing his ephebic training during the complementary defeats at Amorgos by sea and Cronnon by land, on the heels of which came Athens' unconditional surrender in 322. A few months after Antipater installed a military garrison at Athens—and, by imposing a property requirement for franchise, officially ended the democracy—Menander made his debut with his first play while still an ephebe.² Tumultuous events dogged Athens during the next thirty years that encompass Menander's dramatic career. In the wake of the maneuvering after Antipater's death in 319, Athenian democrats took charge briefly and bloodily. Subsequently Cassander installed Demetrius of Phalerum to rule over and stabilize Athens. A decade later, however, the Athenians rejected this Demetrius in favor of Demetrius Poliorcetes. After a few more years, with the death of Antigonus Monophthalmus (301) and in Demetrius' absence, moderate oligarchs assumed control. Yet Men-

¹ Unless designated otherwise, text and line numbering follows F. H. Sandbach, *Menandri Reliquiae Selectae*² (Oxford 1990); text and numbering of fragments and testimonials follow A. KÖRTE, *Menandri Quae Supersunt* II, rev. A. THIERFELDER (Leipzig 1959; hereafter 'K-T'); fragments and testimonials of other comic poets follow R. KASSEL and C. AUSTIN, *Poeti Comici Graeci* (Berlin 1983-; 'K-A'); references to Theophrastus follow W. W. FORTENBAUGH *et al.*, edd., *Theophrastus of Eresus: Sources for His Life, Writings, Thought, and Influence* (= *Philosophia Antiqua* 54 [Leiden 1992: 'F']).

² The common statement that this play was *Orge* and that Menander won first prize may not be true. Even the actual year of his debut is not beyond dispute: see H. de Marcellus, "IG XIV 1184 and the Ephebic Service of Menander," *ZPE* 110 (1996) 69-76, for a thorough and up-to-date discussion.

ander would in his last years see Demetrius Poliorcetes once again acclaimed in Athens (294).³

That neither these upheavals nor the machinations of empire-building garner more than rare incidental mention in Menander's plays has accordingly incited reaction and attempts at explanation from numerous commentators, especially in the wake of the recovery over the last century of substantial remains of Menander's work. The absence of topical comment in Menander is all the more notable because his predecessors on the Athenian comic stage produced some of the most topically engaged dramas ever.

Menander's silence has polarized judgments on the playwright's value as an artist and on his plays as literature. Modern historians chronicling the period have inclined towards harsh dismissals. W. W. Tarn, in a much quoted characterization, brushes off Menandrian New Comedy as "about the dreariest desert in literature." Cary considers Menander a hollow, unfunny playwright who "enjoyed a vogue" at Athens. Welles hopes for more substance in the form of political allusions now obscure to us. Green has expanded on this view and mocks Menander's defenders as self-deluded critics clinging to their desperate admiration and professional standing.⁴ For these critics, Menandrian New Comedy is simply escapist fantasy; it has no interface with contemporary reality and merits no attention beyond considering why audiences flocked to this sort of theater.

Other critics have, of course, objected, although they often take the value of their enterprise for granted, usually by citing Menander's towering influence over later theater. If they address the issue of Menander's merits in his own day, it is only in passing. Of the harsh times Menander witnessed, Webster comments simply, "Most of this was too painful to be remem-

³ For an overview of the complex maneuvering in the Mediterranean area in the years spanning Menander's career (ca 322-ca 292), see P. GREEN, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley 1990: hereafter 'Green') 1-134; for the impact on Athens in particular, see C. HABICHT, *Athens from Alexander to Antony*, tr. D. L. Schneider (Cambridge [Mass.] 1997: 'Habicht') 36-123.

⁴ W. W. Tarn and G. T. Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilization*³ (London 1952) 273; M. Cary, *A History of the Greek World from 323 to 146 BC*² (London 1951) 330; C. Bradford WELLES, *Alexander and the Hellenistic World* (Toronto 1970: hereafter 'Welles') 203; Green 77.

bered in comedy.”⁵ Others have mounted defenses to demonstrate the intrinsic worth of Menander’s plays. Turner, for example, takes up Tarn’s dismissal and finds value in Menander’s subtlety and dramatic skill. Goldberg considers it sufficient to explain Menander’s comedy as the creative manipulation of traditional devices. More recently, Zagagi defends Menander by arguing that Menander’s plays do contain a form of realism. Other critics offer hopefully, “Such silence ... shows that the Greeks had arrived at a new concept of what the theater was for,” and hint at the possibility that the reticence resulted from negative pressure external to the theater.⁶

The defense mustered by literary critics does little, however, to repel the historians’ charge. Turner, for example, states, “I must begin by a reminder that Menander was above all an artist, craftsman and poet, not a social commentator and columnist”—an assumption that acts more to short circuit discussion than to resolve the issue.⁷ Assertions that Menander’s plays are indeed sensitive to the pulse of contemporary society lack specificity. Zagagi, though insisting that ancient concepts of “realism” differ from modern notions, never defines or gives criteria for what she considers Menandrian realism.⁸ Saying that Menander in-

⁵ T. B. L. Webster, *Introduction to Menander* (Manchester 1974) 4; cf. 2: “The poets of New Comedy, except on very rare occasions which do not concern Menander, abandoned the comic poet’s license to attack the prominent politician year by year.”; A. W. GOMME and F. H. SANDBACH, *Menander: A Commentary* (Oxford 1973: hereafter ‘Gomme and Sandbach’) 23f, with a similar comment: “[Menander] can hardly have any regrets [about comedy no longer addressing politics]: the politics of his time were far too grim and frustrated to make a suitable subject for an audience that wished to be entertained on a public holiday.”

⁶ E. G. Turner, “Menander and the New Society,” in J. Harmatta, ed., *Actes du VII^e Congrès de la Fédération Internationale des Associations d’Études Classiques I* (Budapest 1984) 243f (=ChrEg 54 [1979] 106ff); S. M. Goldberg, *The Making of Menander’s Comedy* (Berkeley 1980) 22–28; N. ZAGAGI, *The Comedy of Menander: Convention, Variation, and Originality* (Bloomington 1995: hereafter ‘Zagagi’) 94f; J. M. Walton and P. D. Arnott, *Menander and the Making of Comedy* (=Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies 67 [Westport, Conn. 1996]) 30.

⁷ Turner (*supra* n.6) 243; cf. Zagagi 95, responding to Tarn, that it is more “appropriate ... to treat it as an essentially artistic problem rather than a historical one”—another assertion in place of argument.

⁸ See C. Préaux, “Ménandre et la société athénienne,” *ChrEg* 32 (1957) 84–100, for a moderate view of realism in Menander; on the complexities of this problem as a literary concept, see T. Todorov, “The Discourse of Fiction,” in O. Ducrot and T. Todorov, ed., *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language*, tr. C. Porter (Baltimore 1979) 259–63 with relevant bibliography.

fuses his plays with skillful social observation and psychological subtlety does not address the charge of isolationism. Taking the society as presented in Menander's plays on its own terms, or in relief against the backdrop of the conventions of New Comedy, still leaves the plays in limbo.⁹ If the society of the comic stage is irrelevant, then a fortiori the internal workings of the society are no more relevant. Ironically, apologists who look only to the internal dynamic of the plays support the idea that Menandrian comedy is disconnected from the world beyond the theater.

The dispute can make little headway towards resolution for two basic reasons. First, the two sides judge by quite different criteria. The historical critics look for some political significance or at least topical immediacy. Literary critics concentrate on internal phenomena and are content with less specific links to contemporary Athenian society. Secondly, each side argues from generalizations invalid on the available evidence. The historians assert an escapism and detachment that is inconsistent with ancient testimony and scarcely conceivable in the charged Athenian political atmosphere. Literary critics treat Menander as the leading exponent of a monolithic genre, as if New Comedy were a static form of drama that addressed a new cosmopolitan, less politically engaged audience. In between lies the critical problem of assessing the political orientation and degree of involvement that can be assigned to Menander as an individual poet and may thus be reflected in his plays. Lacking in such an endeavor is a consistent and reliable framework for addressing this problem and for discussing the actual mechanism of any interaction between Menandrian drama and its political environment. These deficiencies I mean to address, while leaving open the question of what moral and artistic judgment we ought to render on Menander and his legacy.

The argument of the remainder of this paper runs as follows: (1) dramatic comedy in Menander's time was not uniformly

⁹ D. Konstan, in *Greek Comedy and Ideology* (Oxford 1995) 93–152, collects several of his essays that proceed in this mode. He considers it axiomatic that Menander “reproduces in an altered register tensions that enter into the ideology of the ancient city-state” (165), but does not explain how, identify limitations, give specifics, or attempt to characterize the elements of the ideology distinct to Menander's time and situation. Konstan operates with a definition of ideology different from that employed below (n.50 *infra*) in order to analyze the ideology contained within the society presupposed by the plays. Cf. also III *infra* and n.60.

reticent about political and topical issues; in this environment Menander actively pursued and crafted a form of comedy that is purposefully narrow in focus; and moreover, (2) available evidence is entirely consistent with Menander as a known sympathizer with Macedonian imperialism; (3) Menander's plays operate in a world encased in a sphere of Macedonian control over Athens, indeed the entire Mediterranean area. To illustrate this point, I shall employ principles of political ideology, semiology, and cultural anthropology as assimilated in the methods of Josiah Ober and Barry Strauss. The character of the soldier in Menander's plays will serve as an example to illustrate how the playwright's particular ideological vision affects the shape of his dramas.

I. Menander in the Context of New Comedy

Since Hellenistic times, Menander has been recognized as the leading exponent of so-called New Comedy and has been virtually synonymous with it, even when his works were known only in fragments and by reputation. His adoring admirer Aristophanes of Byzantium may have virtually canonized Menander by defining a new stage of comedy marked by his arrival on the scene.¹⁰ This identification of Menander with New Comedy and his long shadow over later comic drama have left critics dealing with a playwright shackled to dramatic and generic conventions so rigid that originality was possible only in details and subtle variations (e.g. Zagagi 15–45). Menander is thus constrained by his own dramaturgy and that of his successors.

Menander's posthumous prestige should not, of course, automatically translate into dominance during his own day. Likewise, the ancient tradition that Menander was not appreciated during his lifetime should not be accepted uncritically, especially given the partisan debate over Menander's virtues and deficiencies (T32–49 K-T). That only eight of Menander's more than a hundred plays won prizes—the evidence usually cited to prove Menander's struggle for popularity—reveals little.¹¹ Aris-

¹⁰ H.-G. Nesselrath, *Die attische Mittlere Komödie: Ihre Stellung in der antiken Literaturkritik und Literaturgeschichte* (=UAntLitGesch 36 [Berlin 1990]) 180–87.

¹¹ This figure from Apollodorus' *Chronicle* (Gell. NA 17.4) is appended to a certainly fictional anecdote about Philemon's shame at being more popular than Menander. Cf. n.37 *infra*.

tophanes, for example, did not win as many victories in his forty-year career as Menander in thirty years, yet no one challenges Aristophanes' popularity.¹² In fact, Menander's portrait statue erected after his death and the attention he garnered from authorities may point to considerable respect.¹³

The extent of Menander's reputation from 322 to 292 does not confirm that he either dictated or obeyed comic conventions during this period. Indeed, contemporary evidence suggests he did neither. The fragments, despite their paucity, give a sense of the range of comic drama but not necessarily a reliable guide to trends and proportions of various types, devices, and characteristics. Still, the range of these devices and characteristics indicates from what possibilities and sources Menander had to choose when crafting his own plays. Considerable attention has been paid to precedents in fifth- and fourth-century plays for such staples of New Comedy as stock characters, plots revolving around domestic mishaps, and romantic endings.¹⁴ These studies demonstrate that Menander and other poets of New Comedy reconfigure often familiar material from comedy and tragedy at least as much as they overhauled dramatic conventions to suit audiences after 322. New Comedy had deep roots, and in crucial respects represents the survival of vital strands of drama from the classical period. The disappearance from earlier drama, on the other hand, of some fixtures not vital in Menander can be overstated. Although it is a commonplace to observe the rarity of topical jokes and invective compared to Old Comedy and to try in this way to account for the change in taste, the remains of New Comedy do not suggest such a simple progression.¹⁵

¹² The greatest number of victories attributed to any comic poet is Magnes' eleven in the mid-fifth century (τ3.5 K-A). Attempting to judge the quality, influence, and popularity of movies from the Academy Awards or popular music from the Grammy Awards would be comparable.

¹³ Statue: τ19–22 K-T; K. Fittschen, "Zur Rekonstruktion griechischer Dichter Statuen, 1. Teil: Die Statue des Menander," *Ath Mitt* 106 (1991) 273ff. See below (II) on Menander's encounters with Athenian authorities.

¹⁴ See W. G. Arnott, "Moral Values in Menander," *Philologus* 125 (1981) 215–27; H.-G. Nesselrath, "Parody and Later Greek Comedy," *HSCP* 95 (1993) 181–95 for discussion and further bibliography.

¹⁵ Gomme and Sandbach 23 is typical: "Comedy had in any case abandoned the political field for a generation or more before Menander began to write." Cf. also the comments of Tarn, Cary, Welles, Green, and others: *supra* nn.4–8.

The Athenian Timocles indicates some of the complexities. He debuted on the comic stage before Menander, and their careers overlapped somewhat. Although the remains of Timocles' plays include such comic fare as stock parasites (frs. 8–11, 20f, 31), he did not keep silent about the political turmoil in Athens during the second half of the fourth century. His attacks on Demosthenes have real bite. One fragment emphasizes Demosthenes' greed in the context of the Harpalus affair (fr. 4). Another characterizes him as a hypocritical, smooth-talking warmonger (fr. 12; cf. fr. 41; Adesp. 149). The venom here suggests a Macedonian partisan, but two newer fragments give a different picture. Both pillory Aristodemus, son of Aristophon, as a vicious and pathological thief (frs. 14, 19; cf. Philemon fr. 41). Demosthenes likewise paints Aristodemus as a thief, but also as a supporter of Philip's cause (10.70–73). Inferences are speculative with such limited evidence, but Timocles may simply have had a distaste for bribery, corruption, and hypocrisy in politics.¹⁶ Whatever his political convictions, Timocles was still producing plays after Macedon conquered Athens. His *Jury Lover* (Φιλοδικάστης) includes a swipe at Demetrius of Phalerum's sumptuary laws (fr. 34).

The most remarkable political satirist on the comic stage during the period—Philippides, son of Philocles from the deme Kephale—was active alongside Menander and, by all accounts, a vigorous Athenian patriot and formidable comic poet.¹⁷ When Demetrius Poliorcetes had the rites of the Mysteries hurried and compressed for his own benefit, Philippides used the comic stage to skewer Stratocles, Demetrius' underling who facilitated the arrangements (fr. 25; see 22 with n.56 *infra*). In another fragment (26) an unidentified speaker, according to Plutarch, addresses Stratocles: "With her head turned away, you hardly kiss her" (ἀποστρεφομένης τὴν κορυφὴν φιλεῖς μόλις). This line even raises the possibility that Philippides caricatured his victim on stage. Plutarch draws a stirring portrait of Philippides as a successful comic poet of high character with a close

¹⁶ T. B. L. Webster, *Studies in Later Greek Comedy*² (Manchester 1970) 45, argues that Timocles is a pro-Macedonian supporter who could not support Aristodemus because of scandal. E. Constantinides, "Timocles' *Ikaroi Satyroi*: A Reconsideration," *TAPA* 100 (1969) 54–61, surveys the political content of Timocles' fragments in detail.

¹⁷ G. B. Philipp, "Philippides, ein politischer Komiker in hellenistischer Zeit," *Gymnasium* 80 (1973) 497–509: the most thorough review of Philippides.

connection to a bitter foe of Demetrius, Lysimachus of Thrace (*Demetr.* 12.5). Epigraphical evidence bears out Plutarch. Didascalidae testify to Philippides' success in dramatic competition (T7ff). An inscription records an honorary decree detailing his public service, which included lobbying Lysimachus (T3). This is a unity of dramatic comedy and political activism unparalleled even among the poets of Old Comedy.¹⁸ Philippides' active career, including a victory during Demetrius of Phalerum's reign and serving as *agonothetes* (284) for the official festivals, overlaps and extends beyond Menander's.¹⁹ Any claim that Menander knew comedy simply as domestic romances and stock routines must reckon with the success of Philippides.

If Philippides cuts an extraordinary figure, he was not alone in pursuing both politics and comedy. Archedicus had comparable interests. Three of his four surviving fragments consist of typical comic fare (frr. 1ff). But Polybius records that Archedicus slandered Demochares, nephew of Demosthenes, by charging Demochares with sexual misconduct (12.13.7=fr. 4). This attack aligns Archedicus generally with Macedon and Antipater. Habicht has recently identified this Archedicus with the top-ranked registrar (ἀναγραφεύς) in the early years of Macedon's control of Athens.²⁰ Once again we find a partisan comic poet with an active and prominent rôle in politics—this time decidedly in the service of Macedonian overlords.

Other comic poets tossed in political barbs before, during, and after Menander's tenure on stage.²¹ Alexis and Philemon reveal political satire throughout their long careers. Philemon refers to the notorious Harpalus in the mid-320s (fr. 15). He also joins Timocles in attacking Aristodemus (fr. 41). A fragment addressing a character named Cleon may refer to Stratocles (fr. 178), whose notoriety peaked under Demetrius Polior-

¹⁸ E.g. aside from the vexed issue of Cleon's suit, we know of no political life for Aristophanes, except probably serving his term as a *prytanis* (T9 K-A).

¹⁹ Philippides' *Mystis* won in 313/312 (T8). T3.38–50 records his generous service in managing and sponsoring festival contests. Gellius (*NA* 3.15.2) records, for what it is worth, that he died at an advanced age after winning again in comic competition.

²⁰ See C. Habicht, "The Comic Poet Archedikos," *Hesperia* 62 (1993) 253–56 (= *Athen in hellenistischer Zeit: Gesammelte Aufsätze* [Munich 1994] 251–55) for the identification.

²¹ Webster (*supra* n.16: 37–56) surveys most of the topical references, political and otherwise, in comedy after Aristophanes.

cetes.²² A character in Alexis cheers Demetrius Poliorcetes for the bill casting philosophers out of Athens in 307/306 (fr. 99). Alexis sends up another cheer for Demetrius and Antigonus in fr. 116.²³ To Demetrius' ascendancy in the late 390s also belongs Apollodorus of Carystus' call for peace (fr. 5). The spirit of this long piece would suit Old Comedy well, except for the historical allusions to Demetrius' conquests and the markedly Hellenistic interest in Tyche (*cf.* Philemon fr. 74, a less stirring appeal). Even as late as the 270s political invective appears. A drunkard makes a disconcerting reference to the incestuous relationship of Ptolemy II with his sister Arsinoe (Alex. fr. 246).²⁴ As an example of wise restraint, Plutarch reports the reaction of King Magas of Cyrene to Philemon's insult in a comedy (*Mor.* 449E–F, 458A = Philemon fr. 132). After the play, Magas happened to capture Philemon but ordered a soldier just to touch Philemon's neck with a sword. Heaping insult upon injury, Magas gave Philemon a dice and ball, "as if to a senseless child" (ὡς παιδαριῶ νοῦν οὐκ ἔχοντι), and released him.²⁵

This assemblage of politically-tinged material from Menander's lifetime does not mean that political invective thrived as in Old Comedy. Plutarch's story about Philemon and King Magas indicates that by the 270s political authorities still noticed the remarks of a comic poet, but that retaliation was beneath them. Even if the anecdote lacks any kernel of historical truth, it reflects an ancient perception about the earnestness of such political invective, its potential risk to the comic poets, and its ultimate futility in the face of the massive empires under construction by the middle of the third century. Nonetheless, in Menander's Athens comedy included at least a strain of political engagement. When a prolific playwright like Menander consistently avoids political and topical references, he does not do so from obedience to the narrow conventions of contemporary drama. Menander was not a passive recipient of a form of comedy devoid of connection to the tumultuous changes sweeping the Mediterranean world. He made a choice and actively pur-

²² Plut. *Demetr.* 11.2 links Stratocles to the image of Cleon.

²³ See W. G. Arnott, *Alexis: The Fragments, A Commentary* (= *Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries* 31 [Cambridge 1996]) 259–65, 308–11, 324–28 for further details and analysis.

²⁴ See Arnott (*supra* n.23: 16ff, 686–91) for discussion. Even if Bergk is correct that the fragment was added by a hand other than Alexis', the date of the fragment still supports my argument.

²⁵ *Cf.* Philipp (*supra* n.17) 495f on the fragment as political comedy.

sued a type of drama that avoided the bitterness of other contemporary poets.²⁶

The rare historical and topical points of reference in Menander's plays indicate just how restrained his comedy is, compared with the more vigorous work of rivals such as Philpides, Alexis, and even Philemon.²⁷ Such references differ only in how they convey so little information. Without a context, some fragments are simply too slight to indicate the purpose of a given historical reference (e.g. a campaign with Aristoteles, fr. 297 K-T; the battle of Lamia, fr. 47 K-T). Others are too vague or general to be of much interest. The references in *Perikeiromene* to years of war and increasing Corinthian troubles (124ff) and to a crop of misery all over Hellas (532ff) need not be tied to a precise historical or political circumstance. Schwartz's identification of an allusion to the assassination of Alexander, son of Polyperchon (280f)—often repeated—is tenuous at best.²⁸ Adaptation and translation further obscure such vague references as Terence's to Indian elephants in Strato's command (*Eun.* 413ff) and to Pyrrhus (783), and Plautus' to Clinia and Demetrius (*Bacch.* 912). When a specific name or event can be securely identified, it is little more than a name. Alexander the Great, for example, appears thus (fr. 751 K-T):

²⁶ A. Henrichs, "The Case of Menander: A Crisis of Identity?" in A. Bulloch et al., edd., *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley 1993) 180–87, emphasizes the difficulty in general of orienting Menander in the context of Hellenistic culture and literature. Philipp (*supra* n.17: 497) and Habicht (101), each keenly aware of the political dimension of comedy in the early Hellenistic period, both caution against generalizing about Hellenistic comedy from Menander. G. B. Giglioli, *Menandro o la politica della convivenza: La storia attraverso i testi letterari* (= *Biblioteca di Athenaeum* 3 [Como 1984]) 27f, goes further: "La scelta di non parlare di politica potrebbe già essere una scelta politica"—a point of particular importance in the next section.

²⁷ Webster (*supra* n.5: 2–11) gleans as much historical information (and more) as can be squeezed from Menander.

²⁸ E. Schwartz, "Zu Menanders Perikeiromene," *Hermes* 64 (1929) 3f. Gomme and Sandbach (*ad loc.*) rightly consider the basis for the identification weak; attempts to identify the Androcles of *Samia* 606 are still more desperate. Cf. Gomme and Sandbach *ad loc.*

ὡς Ἀλεξανδρῶδες ἤδη τοῦτο· κἄν ζητῶ τινα,
 αὐτόματος οὗτος παρέσται, κἄν διελθεῖν δηλαδὴ
 διὰ θαλάττης δέη τόπον τιν', οὗτος ἔστιν μοι βατός.²⁹

This passage contains an allusion to the reported miracle of the sea opening up for Alexander at the siege of Pamphylia;³⁰ but it is not actually about Alexander, but rather a comparison that uses his name. At *Kolax* fr. 2, Strouthias uses Alexander's reputation for drinking to ridicule the intoxicated Bias. A reference to the fourth-century orator Callimedon uses a common pun on his nickname "crayfish" (fr. 264.13 K-T; cf. the same pun at Alexis fr. 198, and, with more bite, Theophilus fr. 4). Nothing is judgmental in any of this. Athenaeus (12.549C-D) preserves the harshest comments about any historical figure: three jokes at the expense of Dionysius of Heracleia for his notorious obesity and gluttony (fr. 21ff K-T). Athenaeus downplays the force of these insults when he states that Dionysius' reputation for decadence did not impair his successful rule as a tyrant, so there is no reason to relate these jokes to a tradition of hostile invective. Rather, these are occasional witticisms about a renowned figure, like the remarks about Alexander and others. Athenaeus even adds—these jokes notwithstanding—that Menander was not at all prone to viciousness (ἤκιστά γ' ὦν λοῖδορος). This comment from an author versed in a much more complete corpus than we have gives reason to believe that Menander's extant remains are indeed representative. The closest Menander ever comes to addressing a controversial topic is a reference to the *Gynaikonómoi* instituted by Demetrius of Phalerum (fr. 238 K-T). But once again the reference is utterly indifferent: just a detail in planning a banquet, nothing compared to the flamboyance and anger represented by a cook, for example.³¹

To a degree, then, the historical critics are correct: Menander's plays avoid all but a faint touch of political and topical precision. It does not necessarily follow, however, that Menander lived in a fantasy world and set his plays in an escapist environment with no bearing on the world his audience inhabited.

²⁹ "This is just plain Alexander! If I want someone, he's right here. And if there's some need for a way to pass clear through the sea, he'll be my path."

³⁰ Plut. *Alex.* 17.6ff; A. B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander I* (Oxford 1980) ad 1.26.1f, discusses other sources and accounts of Pamphylia.

³¹ R. Scodel, "The Tragic Sacrifice and Menandrian Cooking," in R. Scodel, ed., *Theater and Society in the Classical World* (Ann Arbor 1993) 161–76, explores the tension imbedded in the character of the cook in Greek comedy.

If his audience recognized the world on Menander's stage at all—and ancient comments about Menander's realism suggest they did—they did not perceive a nonsense-world of fantasy and escapism. A fine line divides fantasy and escapism from idealism and representation. Determining to which side Menandrian drama belongs depends significantly on the world and expectations of the audience. Any generalizing is hazardous. To some members of the audience, the plays might indeed have been escapist. The political tumult of the times, however, justifies inquiring how those embroiled in the political and military upheavals reacted to Menander. As it turns out, the inquiry reveals something about Menander individually and about the assumptions that went into formulating his distinct brand of comedy.

II. Menander in the Context of Macedonian Imperialism

If Menander did not express partisan political views explicitly in his plays, he could nevertheless strike a nerve and provoke a decidedly political reaction. Ancient sources in fact document two such reactions. In chronicling the life of Demetrius of Phalerum, Diogenes Laertius (5.79) records a detail from Demetrius' retreat from Athens in the wake of Demetrius Poliorcetes' arrival: Μένανδρος ὁ κωμικὸς παρ' ὀλίγον ἦλθε κριθῆναι δι' οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ ὅτι φίλος ἦν αὐτῷ ἄλλ' αὐτὸν παρητήσατο Τελεσφόρος ὁ ἀνεψιὸς τοῦ Δημητρίου.³² This report contains valuable testimony about the company Menander kept. Although the quality and success of Demetrius of Phalerum's rule is still debated, he was certainly an authority who represented Macedonian domination over Athens. Demetrius Poliorcetes would soon disappoint Athenian democrats, but hope that he would restore the democracy had carried him into Athens with popular support. Diogenes minimizes the pretext for Menander's prosecution, but Menander's connection with the Macedonian overlord was nevertheless close enough and prominent enough to associate him with those of the ousted government brought to trial. Either something in his plays aside from overt political references or some activity aside from the plays drew

³² "Menander the comic poet was nearly sentenced for no other reason than he was a friend to him [Demetrius of Phalerum], but Demetrius' cousin Telesphorus interceded for him."

attention to his link with Demetrius—a link specifically with Macedonian imperial domination. The amnesty granted Menander is unremarkable and may represent no more than Telesphorus' political opportunism.³³

A few years later, in 301, Demetrius Poliorcetes was in retreat and his father Antigonus dead after the battle of Ipsus. Moderate oligarchs soon took over Athens, but Menander was still on the wrong side. Most likely before the Dionysia in 300, the oligarch Lachares blocked production of Menander's *Imbroi*.³⁴ No reason is given. Imbros had been an Athenian colony until Antigonus took it while Cassander controlled Athens, but Antigonus returned it in 305/304. The plot of the play revolves around two poor refugees to Imbros. Only one fragment (213 K-T) of any substance remains:

οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδέν, πάτερ, ἐν ἀνθρώπου φύσει
μείζον λογισμοῦ· τῷ διαθέσθαι πράγματα
ἕκαστός ἐστι καὶ λογίσασθαι κατὰ τρόπον
ἄρχων, στρατηγός, ἡγέμων δήμου, πόλει
σύμβολος· ὁ λογισμῷ διαφέρων πάντ' ἔχει.³⁵

It is conceivable that Menander trod on a sensitive topic of the time, without making any more overt or specific political references than he ever does.³⁶ In any case, he crossed the oli-

³³ Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328F66) states that many who stood trial after Demetrius' flight were, like Menander, not sentenced after all, a passage emphasized by D. Potter, "Telesphoros, Cousin of Demetrius: A Note on the Trial of Menander," *Historia* 36 (1987) 494, who also exposes the weakness in the often repeated assumption that Telesphorus was kin to Demetrius Poliorcetes, as if Menander somehow had supporters on both sides of the fence. Potter raises the distinct possibility that Telesphorus is an Athenian relative of Demetrius of Phalerum.

³⁴ Reported in a papyrus fragment of the *Periochai* of Menander (*P.Oxy.* X 1235), partly printed at K-T 83f. See W. Luppe, "Nochmals zur 'Imbroi'-Didaskalie," *ZPE* 96 (1993) 9f, for recent reconstructions of the text. On the chronology see Habicht 82ff.

³⁵ "There's nothing, father, in human nature better than reasoning; by analyzing situations everyone can reckon in their own way: the archon, general, leader of the people, advisor to the city. The man who decides by reasoning has it all" (reading with hesitation Heimsoeth's conjecture of πόλει for πάλιν in line 4).

³⁶ Despite the great number of *sententiae* preserved from Menander, even such general remarks about politics and leadership as this are scarce. Cf. fr. 546 K-T: δεῖ τὸν πολιτῶν προστατεῖν αἰρούμενον τὴν τοῦ λόγου μὲν δύναμιν οὐκ ἐπίφθονον, ἦθει δὲ χρηστῷ συγκεκραμένην ἔχειν ("One elected to lead the citizenry must have a capacity for speech that is not malicious but blended

garchs in some fashion. The limited testimony, then, has Menander at odds with Athenian democrats and oligarchs alike, but linked to Macedonian authorities.³⁷ Eventually, a tradition will evolve around Ptolemy's attempts to bring Menander to his court, but it is of questionable historical value.³⁸

with good character"). As Meineke observes, this reads more like a tragedy than New Comedy. K-T point out that this is the only appearance of the word *πολίτης* in the Menandrian corpus, a fact striking in itself and increasing the likelihood that it is a tragic quotation, a misattribution, or a character in tragic mode. Cf. Cnemon's brief vision of a political utopia (*Dys.* 743ff) and the range of people who are victims of flatterers at *Kolax* 87–92.

³⁷ It is worth noting that both events place Menander in Athens even during difficult times. Scholars have speculated about the influence of theatrical venues outside Athens. Habicht (101) repeats a commonly held position when he attributes the lack of obscenity and political specificity to comic poets appealing to audiences beyond their local city-states. Walton and Arnott (*supra* n.6: 49–61, 69f) survey the changes affecting theater in general. J. R. Green (*Theatre in Greek Society* [London 1974] 105–10) and O. Taplin (*Comic Angels and Other Approaches to Greek Drama through Vase-Painting* [Oxford 1993] 89–99) examine the spread of theater with an emphasis on archaeological remains. See also N. W. Slater, "The Fabrication of Comic Illusion," in G. W. Dobrov, ed., *Beyond Aristophanes: Transition and Diversity in Greek Comedy* (=APAClSt 38 [Atlanta 1995]) 30–34, for literary evidence and further bibliography. Slater investigates the possible rôle of market forces across the Greek world in broadening the focus of stage comedy in the fourth century. Taplin's work may, however, indicate a strong market for distinctly Athenian products. Like other aspects of Greek drama at this time, the spread has its roots well before Menander and New Comedy, reaching in fact back to the Classical period. For Menander to have produced over a hundred plays in thirty years would seem to require performances outside Athens, but this does not mean that it markedly affected his writing. Athens was still undeniably the center for such activity, and the occasional play set outside Attica does not mean these plays were performed there. Menander was a native Athenian and no testimony ever places him anywhere else. It could even be maintained (along the lines of the argument below) that if Menander did have his plays produced elsewhere in Greece, that he did so relying on the stability and coherence of a Macedonian presence over the whole region.

³⁸ Cf. Plin. *NH* 7.30.111 (Menander refuses to go to Ptolemy's court); Alciphron 4.18f (letters between Menander and Glycera celebrating the same refusal). To this tradition must also belong the lost epistles to Ptolemy listed among Menander's works in the *Suda*. Certainly Alciphron's letters indicate literary embellishment, if not outright creation. Phaedrus 5.1 works up a fable about Menander's first meeting with Demetrius of Phalerum, which Green (72, 755 n.44) vainly attempts to read as historically plausible. Unlike the reports from Diogenes Laertius and the *Periochai* papyrus, Phaedrus is invoking and continuing a literary tradition, not even claiming to transmit historical information.

Additional evidence supports Menander's ties to circles sympathetic to Macedon. Menander's closeness to Demetrius of Phalerum links him not only to Macedonian politics but to Peripatetic philosophy. Scholars have documented in detail passages that betray at least familiarity with, if not subscription to, Peripatetic doctrine.³⁹ These analyses find parallels principally with ethical and literary theory, but the Peripatetic school also had notable political leanings. As John Lynch states flatly in his historical study of the institution, "Aristotle's school depended from the very first on Macedonian rule."⁴⁰ His family was Macedonian and well-connected. Aristotle's father had been a doctor in Macedon's royal court and Aristotle followed suit when he tutored the young Alexander. He continued a friendship with Antipater. After establishing the Peripatos, Aristotle in his last days had to flee Athens when anti-Macedonian sentiment swelled in the shadow of Antipater's approach. Demetrius of Phalerum was quite an active and prolific Peripatetic philosopher in his own right, which could only reinforce the connection in the Athenian mind between the Peripatos and Macedon.⁴¹

Theophrastus, Aristotle's successor, also has strong ties with Macedon in ways that are pertinent for understanding Menander. The tradition that Theophrastus taught both Menander and Demetrius of Phalerum is quite plausible.⁴² Theophrastus kept up direct ties with Macedon. He had an audience with Cassander and at least an invitation from Ptolemy. He may have composed a work on kingship (*Βασιλεία*) for Cassander (D.L. 5.47; cf. Ath. 4.144E=fr. 603 F). As Cassander's appointee, Demetrius of Phalerum was in a position to help Theophrastus obtain

³⁹ Most thorough: K. Gaiser, "Menander und der Peripatos," *AuA* 13 (1967) 8–40. By contrast, efforts to find influence of the emerging Stoic and Epicurean philosophies have not proved fruitful: A. Barigazzi, *La formazione spirituale di Menandro* (Turin 1965) 87–115, reviews and criticizes these attempts.

⁴⁰ J. P. Lynch, *Aristotle's School: A Study of a Greek Educational Institution* (Berkeley 1972) 94f.

⁴¹ J. Williams, "Ideology and the Constitution of Demetrius of Phalerum," in C. D. Hamilton and P. Krentz, edd., *Polis and Polemos: Essays on Politics, War, and History in Ancient Greece in Honor of Donald Kagan* (Claremont 1997) 327–46, extensively documents the relationship between Demetrius' philosophy and political activities.

⁴² D.L. 5.36; cf. Gaiser (*supra* n.39: 9ff) for an overview of the possible iconographic tradition linking the three. On the other hand, the report in the *Suda* that the comic poet Alexis was Menander's uncle expresses more literary than biological pedigree, on which see Arnott (*supra* n.23) 11ff, 26ff.

property for the Peripatos (D.L. 5.39). Agnonides, very likely the same man who brought charges against Phocion (leader of the anti-Macedonian faction in Athens), unsuccessfully brought him up on a charge of impiety.⁴³ When Athenian nationalists came to power and Demetrius of Phalerum was cast out, anti-Macedonian sentiment led to a bill to expel the heads of the philosophical schools, of which the Peripatos was easily the most prominent. Although Menander ultimately avoided penalty in this wave of resentment, Theophrastus suffered exile until the law was declared unconstitutional the next year and he could return.⁴⁴

Theophrastus' own brand of Peripatetic philosophy provides some useful parameters for understanding Menander as a comic poet. The debate about the degree to which Menander can be reckoned a Peripatetic has tended by necessity to rely on Aristotelian doctrine.⁴⁵ Except for comparison with Theophrastus' *Characters*, Theophrastean theory has played little rôle in studying Menander's debt to the Peripatos. The fragmentary works of Theophrastus will not settle the issue of Menander's due, but a few observations can help explain a paradox that emerges in Menander's portrait. Menander moves among the Macedonian elite and Macedonian sympathizers prominently enough to cause friction with opposing political camps. Yet Menander's plays reduce political content to an absolute minimum. Theophrastus enjoyed similar, probably greater, elite connections while his writings on politics and comedy have a dichotomy similar to that in Menander. Particularly striking in view of Menandrian New Comedy is Theophrastus' definition of comedy as

⁴³ J. Sundwall, "Hagnonides," *RE* VIII.2 (1912) 2209.

⁴⁴ See D.L. 5.37ff for the events and Lynch (*supra* n.40: 98, 103ff, 152f) for the politics of Macedon's support of the Peripatos.

⁴⁵ A certain amount of subjectivity and polemic informs the debate about Peripatetic influence on Menander. At each extreme, see Barigazzi (*supra* n.39) who argues Peripatetic philosophy is overwhelmingly important, and S. Luria, "Menander kein Peripatetiker und kein Feind der Demokratie," in F. Zucker, ed., *Menanders Dyskolos als Zeugnis seiner Epoche* (=SchrBerlin 50 [Berlin 1965]) 23-31, who seeks to minimize Peripatetic influence. Gaiser (*supra* n.39) represents a more moderate view, believing that Menander knows Peripatetic doctrine but is independent enough to manipulate it within the context of his plays.

"a story of private affairs involving no danger" (fr. 708.9f F, *ιδιωτικῶν πραγμάτων ἀκίνδυνος περιοχή*).⁴⁶

That comedy defined this way is staunchly apolitical is confirmed by Theophrastus' sharp distinction between the domestic and political spheres. The first-century A.D. Epicurean Philodemus protests against the way Theophrastus circumscribes the field of managing domestic affairs (*οἰκονομική*, fr. 659 F), for Theophrastus, Philodemus charges, claims that *οἰκονομική* is different from politics, *πολιτική*, and that the two are in no way analogous (*μήποτε ἀναλογοῦντ' εἶναι περὶ ἐκετέραν*). Philodemus responds that this is irrelevant and false, and goes on to insist that because establishing a household is logically prior to establishing a city, so, too, household management is logically prior to politics (*καὶ ταῦτ' ἐναργέστατον ὑπάρχον, καὶ τὸ πρότερον οἰκίαν πόλεως συστήναι, διὰ καὶ τὴν οἰκονομικὴν τῆς πολιτικῆς*). By this refutation Philodemus implies that Theophrastus had posited the reverse order, with politics having priority over domestic management.

A rigidly confined domestic world with no detectable analog in the political arena accurately describes the setting for Menandrian drama. The restriction to the domestic realm is so strict that institutions and concepts associated with the public realm must be filtered and reconstituted in order not to disrupt the household setting of a play. For example, Menander actually stages a trial in *Epitrepontes* but recasts every component to keep it a household event. The scene for which the play is named features a trial about custody of a foundling's tokens. The defendant Davus, a shepherd, found the child and retains the objects left with the infant. The plaintiff Syrus, a charcoal burner on the estate, adopted the baby from Davus. To decide who has rights to these objects, Syrus and Davus select a passerby to serve as arbiter. This judge, Smicrines, unknown to all present, is the child's grandfather and remarks on the informality of the scenario, "You worthless garbage, you're wandering around presenting cases in overalls?" (228ff, *ὦ κάκιστ' ἀπολούμενοι, δίκας λέγοντες περιπατεῖτε, διφθέρας ἔχοντες*;). As it turns out, Syrus, incongruously for his occupation, is adept at court procedure; as Daus notes with alarm, "I've gotten myself mixed up with something of an orator" (236,

⁴⁶ Cf. W. W. Fortenbaugh, "Theophrast über den komischen Charakter," *RhM* 124 (1981) 245-60, for Theophrastus on comedy, although he focuses on character in particular: see esp. 258.

μετρίῳ γε συμπέληγμαι ῥήτορι). This humble charcoal burner uses sharp rhetorical questions (313), elevated diction (320ff), sententious remarks (343ff), and, in a perfect blending of a domestic backdrop and public performance, Syrus brings his wife and newly adopted child to "court," going so far as to claim that he is merely speaking on behalf of the child, who is the true plaintiff in the case (303–307). Moreover, a tragic motif overlays the proceedings when Syrus cites tragic *exempla* (325–30). He invokes conventions from stage tragedy when nobles recover their identities by means of tokens. Syrus actually comes close to accusing Davus of larceny, a crime with a heavy penalty in a public court, but the seriousness of such a charge is allowed to pass here (312).⁴⁷ Menander is willing to put the world of the tragic stage on an equal footing with comedy, but the consequences of public and political life are entirely excluded. Theophrastus defines comedy as a story of private affairs. This episode, like all others in Menander, concerns strictly private events. Theophrastus further requires that the story of a comedy involve no danger. In this scene and others, Menander has bypassed or ignored the potential danger that could arise, were these events to take place in a truly public, political setting. Moreover, Theophrastus insisted on a sharp demarcation between the domestic realm and the political environment in which it is couched, a separation Menander also maintains.

Theophrastus' philosophy, then, provides something of a framework that accounts for the sharp exclusion of political activity from Menander's plays. If the analogy with Theophrastus' life and thought holds thus far, one possible additional parallel may be valid. Despite the elite connections Theophrastus maintained and the enormous amount of research he undertook on political topics, he was notoriously ignorant or at least naive about his own political environment. Philodemus in fact chastizes Theophrastus for spending his whole life in private (ιδιωτείᾳ) and in ignorance of regal affairs (βασιλικῶν, fr. 27 F). Citations from Theophrastus' political writings tend to be of historical and legal details and betray an interest mainly in the theo-

⁴⁷ Cf. Gomme and Sandbach *ad loc.* A. C. Scafuro, *The Forensic Stage: Settling Disputes in Graeco-Roman New Comedy* (Cambridge 1997) 154–61, analyzes *Epitrepontes* against the backdrop of what she argues is a social paradigm of dispute settlement by means of pre-trial arbitration. Although her discussion of this paradigm is generally illuminating, her analysis of this play is not as fruitful as might be expected. In any case, nothing in her study goes against the general masking of danger I see as operative in the scene.

retical problem of critical moments (καιροί).⁴⁸ Aelian and Proclus both speak of an occasion when Theophrastus was dismally unsuccessful before the Areopagus. Aelian reports that Theophrastus lost his nerve and that Demochares, a prominent and virulently anti-Macedonian democrat, mocked him for it (VH 8.12=fr. 32a F).⁴⁹ Proclus explains Theophrastus' utter failure on this occasion by saying that the Athenians were not persuaded about topics of which Theophrastus had no experience (ἐν οἷς ἀπείρωσ εἶχεν, fr. 32b F). In short, Theophrastus enjoyed the company and support of the Macedonian elite at Athens but was ignorant of the broader political scene to the degree that he was unable to conduct himself adequately before a political body such as the Areopagus. He lived in private and considered the private, domestic realm quite distinct from the political arena, even if he believed that public government was logically prior to the domestic realm. And he assigned comedy to this domestic field.

We have no explicit testimony that Menander was equally at a loss about politics, unless there is a kernel of historical truth in the tradition of Menander rejecting Ptolemy's overtures (*supra* n.38). Menander did share with Theophrastus Macedonian support and wrote plays congruent with Theophrastus' conception of comedy by setting his dramas in a specifically domestic sphere. In so doing, Menander implicitly manipulates his comedies within a domestic realm that—continuing with Theophrastus—presupposes some sort of political establishment. This implied political establishment can only have been Macedonian.

III. Menandrian Ideology

To recapitulate, Menander pursues a narrowly focused brand of New Comedy, which steadfastly avoids the topical and political content found in contemporary comic poets. In view of Menander's attested associations with the Macedonian elite and with the Macedonian-backed Peripatos, and given the views of

⁴⁸ See frs. 589–665 F, esp. fr. 590 F (=Cic. *Fin.* 5.11), with A. T. Podlecki, "Theophrastus on History and Politics," in W. W. Fortenbaugh *et al.*, edd., *Theophrastus of Eresus: On His Life and Work* (=RutgersUSitClassHum 2 [New Brunswick 1985]) 231–49.

⁴⁹ See G. Marasco, *Democare di Leuconoe: Politica e cultura in Atene fra IV e III sec. a.C.* (=Studi e testi 4 [Florence 1984]) 23–84, on Demochares' politics, esp. 42–46 on his involvement with the charges against Theophrastus.

Theophrastus, the rigidly domestic world of Menander's comedies presupposes the stability of the Macedonian establishment.

This paper began with the contrary judgments of historical and literary critics on Menander's comedy. Much of the argument so far has been historically grounded. This argument refutes the commonly held position that Menander's comedy is disconnected from its historical environment. Rather, it is comedy produced from so deep within one political structure that the plays do not reach beyond this context. To see the effect of this origin on the literary form of Menander's plays, we need to locate Menandrian comedy in a field that tracks the boundaries of a play's literary space as it encroaches on political space. A field and a mechanism for such mapping already exists. Ober has analyzed political authority as it was defined, maintained, and stabilized in democratic Athens during the first three quarters of the fourth century. Using principles of political sociology to study how political ideology is expressed via semiology, especially in rhetorical texts, he finds that from the ouster of the Thirty in 403 until Athens' fall to Macedon in 322, the *demos* maintained the integrity and stability of the democracy by wielding the authority to determine what signs constitute its ideological identity. According to Ober, this authority amounts to more political power and cohesion than even constitutional or legal authority.⁵⁰ Rather, the *demos* exerted power through collective judgment and, "in the ongoing dialectical give and take of public oratory, audience response, and demotic judgement, a set of common attitudes and social rules was hammered out."⁵¹

Although Ober focuses principally on rhetorical and political texts, he has, with Barry Strauss, expanded the application of these sociological models to include performances in the public theater.⁵² Strauss borrows the concept of "social drama" from cultural anthropology: "a public episode that passes through

⁵⁰ J. OBER, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology and the Power of the People* (Princeton 1989; hereafter 'Ober') 22f, 299–304.

⁵¹ J. Ober, "Power and Oratory in Democratic Athens: Demosthenes 21, *Against Meidias*," in I. Worthington, ed., *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* (London 1994) 89. This article is a useful summary of Ober's monograph. See also his "Aristotle's Political Sociology: Class, Status, and Order in the *Politics*," in Cairns Lord et al., ed., *Essays on the Foundations of Aristotelian Political Science* (Berkeley 1991) 112–35.

⁵² J. OBER and B. S. STRAUSS, "Drama, Political Rhetoric, and the Discourse of Athenian Democracy," in J. J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin, ed., *Nothing to Do with Dionysus? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context* (Princeton 1990; hereafter 'Ober and Strauss') 237–70.

ritualized stages of tension, crisis, redress, and reintegration" (Ober and Strauss 245). Thus defined, social drama embraces a variety of public events, from a religious rite to a court trial, from the installation of a public official to a play in the theater. More importantly, episodes from different venues may cross-pollinate. An orator may quote or otherwise evoke a tragedy.⁵³ A play may appropriate a scenario from public life, as Old Comedy did often. Religious ritual in turn permeates many episodes of Athenian communal life. All these episodes of social drama are united in so far as they employ symbolic action and interaction (Ober and Strauss 249). This model is developed primarily to study the interaction of oratorical and dramatic texts of the classical period, where the uneven distribution of remaining texts (a preponderance of dramatic texts from the fifth century and of rhetorical texts from the fourth) make such studies difficult.

Clearly, after 322, Ober's scenario of a stably maintained democracy no longer holds. Still, the model and observations of Ober and Strauss are useful for orienting Menandrian New Comedy in the new political environment. Without denying the very real material and personal losses during the period, we may legitimately characterize the five decades or so after 322 as a time of ideological crisis for Athens. If in the eighty years after the Peloponnesian War the Athenian *demos* enjoyed the power to manipulate civic symbols in order to construct its own ideological image, democrats over the next several decades struggled to regain that power. Likewise, Athenian oligarchs, if not dominant in the construction of popular ideology in those same eighty years, were always an active participant and a force to be reckoned with in the game of symbolically establishing civic identity. Now they faced loss of even this rôle to the Macedonian elite. Macedonian encroachment meant a new ideological force, and new type at that. Alexander and the Successors initiated a process of empire building unlike the tentative and short-lived attempts by various Greek city-states previously. With this process came new methods and types of ideology formation.⁵⁴ Verbal and visual propaganda of individuals flourished and increased in sophistication. At stake was the identity

⁵³ Examples and discussion in V. Bers, "Tragedy and Rhetoric," in Worthington (*supra* n.51) 189ff.

⁵⁴ Bulloch (*supra* n.26) features papers devoted to various aspects of ideology formation in the Hellenistic period. See esp. 3-24, 287-95.

of Athens as an independent democracy, a part of a Macedonian empire, or something in between.

The new Macedonian methods of promoting ideology affected social dramas as well. When Demetrius Poliorcetes entered Athens in 291 with a procession and was hailed in an ithyphallic hymn as a divinity, the whole travesty stood as a prominent example of recasting one social drama, a religious procession, as a different social drama better suited to serve Macedonian imperial ends (Green 55, 126; Habicht 92). The social drama of comic performances was another battleground for rival ideological imagery. Historically, comic drama had a tradition of articulating the character and force of the democratic *demos*. The outright personification of Demos in Aristophanes' *Equites* illustrates this function.⁵⁵ Controlling the imagery of comedy, therefore, meant controlling a portion of the civic ideology of Athens. The politically active comic poet Philippides addressed this issue when Demetrius Poliorcetes in 302 had another prominent social drama, the rites of the Eleusinian mysteries, reworked for his own benefit (*cf.* Habicht 78f). Philippides (fr. 25) attacks Stratocles, the flatterer who facilitated the arrangement:

ὁ τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν συντεμὼν εἰς μῆν' ἕνα,
ὁ τὴν Ἀκρόπολιν πανδοκεῖον ὑπολαβὼν
καὶ τὰς ἐταίρας εἰσαγαγὼν τῇ παρθένῳ
δι' ὃν ἀσεβοῦνθ' ὁ πέπλος ἐρράγη μέσος.
τὰς τῶν θεῶν τιμὰς ποιοῦντ' ἀνθρωπίνας —
ταῦτα καταλύει δῆμον, οὐ κωμωδία.⁵⁶

The health of the *demos* is at stake. Allowing a Macedonian imperialist to subvert so precious a social drama as initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries compromises the ideological identity of the *demos*. Apparently in response to some charge that comedy could harm the *demos*, Philippides adds emphatically that it does not do so.

But could comedy in fact undermine the ideological identity of the *demos*? Did it? To a democrat like Philippides desiring to

⁵⁵ J. Henderson, "The *Demos* and the Comic Competition," in Winkler and Zeitlin (*supra* n.52) 296–99 (=E. Segal, *Oxford Readings in Aristophanes* [Oxford 1996] 95ff).

⁵⁶ "The man cut the year down to a month, managed the Acropolis like a motel, and introduced whores to the Virgin. By him rime froze on the vines. By his unholiness was the middle of the Robe torn when he dedicated human honors to the gods. *This* ruins the democracy, not a comedy."

restore the integrity of the *demos* or to an Athenian oligarch intent upon warding off the intrusion of the Macedonian elite, the narrow domestic setting of Menandrian comedy does nothing to advance their cause. It may even be a hindrance if it originates from within the Macedonian establishment and represents a settled society where the mass of the population has no interest in the political concerns of parties, factions, and empires.

That Menander wrote plays thus compatible with pro-Macedonian ideology does not make him a conscious propagandist for the Macedonian cause nor reduce him to a mere pamphleteer. Rather, for someone in Menander's position to write the play he did, he had, at least for purposes of composing plays, to take certain things for granted and make certain a priori assumptions, which include the existence (but not the explicit presence) of communal political stability, so that household and family members can make their primary concern the conjugal, financial, and emotional rectitude of their homes. Any external forces that interrupt the proper function of the home can be addressed and rectified entirely by action within the home (perhaps with the participation of a neighboring household). External circumstances are such that household members feel no compulsion to mix political with domestic concerns. Neither democratic nor oligarchic ideology called for this isolation of the domestic sphere, especially when the proponents of these ideologies had been knocked on their heels in 322. Macedonian presence is once again implicit.

A number of studies suppose a certain homogeneity in Menander's audience as pertains to their mores, social rank, material status, and political aspirations, if any.⁵⁷ Some scholars have reacted against this generalization by aligning Menander with some class or faction, and still others have responded by promoting Menander as a playwright who undermines class distinctions.⁵⁸ In terms of the image projected on stage, however—an image that contributes to the ideological vision expressed in the plays—Casson makes a salient point: the lead characters in Menander have means and finances (or are at-

⁵⁷ Most recently, Zagagi (*passim*) speaks as if there were a monolithic spectator perception and reception in Menander's comedy.

⁵⁸ Bodei Giglioli (*supra* n.26) 39–43; Konstan (*supra* n.9) 166f.

tached to households of such means) at a level found only among the extremely rich in Athenian society.⁵⁹

Households not politically engaged but materially prosperous thus form the core of the Menandrian world. Family structure, occupation, and personality are allowed to vary appreciably within certain parameters. This variation consumes the interest of most literary critics. Konstan has mapped this literary variation onto an ideological plane, but his interests lie almost exclusively with these internal differences, not with the boundaries of the ideological vision of the play or what lies beyond them.⁶⁰ Menander sharpens the execution of his craft at the point where an element in the play threatens to pass beyond the ideological boundaries of Menandrian comedy. Here literary technique and political ideology meet and interact; here Welles hopes to find political allegory, and here Wiles claims that such an allegory operates in the *Dyskolos*, with Cnemon representing the oligarchic leader Phocion.⁶¹ Both Welles and Wiles seek a way for politics to become visible on stage, when in fact Menander works for anything but. When an event or character might stray beyond the confines of the apolitical domestic realm of eventual prosperity, Menander clearly imposes a limit. *Sikyoniōs* contains several such potentially disruptive points. Each reveals Menander's determination to keep everything within his range of vision. A snatch of heated dialogue introduces some of the hazards, as well as Menander's absolute control (150–61):

— ὄχλος εἰ φλυάρου μεστός, ὃ πόνηρε σύ,
 δίκαια τὸν κλάοντα προσδοκῶν λέγειν
 καὶ τὸν δεόμενον· τοῦ δὲ μηδὲ ἐν ποεῖν
 ὑγιὲς σχεδὸν ταῦτ' ἐστὶ νῦν τεκμήριον·
 οὐ κρίνεθ' ἀλήθεια τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον,

⁵⁹ L. Casson, "The Athenian Upper Class and New Comedy," *TAPA* 106 (1976) 57ff; cf. the brief summary and critique at Bodei Giglioli (*supra* n.26) 21 n.17.

⁶⁰ Konstan's focus on the internal dynamic of ideological tension may explain the relative homogeneity of his approach and readings, whether he discusses Aristophanes, Menander, Plautus, Terence, or Molière. His collaboration with Matthew Dillon on Ar. *Plut.* comes closest to considering the intrusion of ideological forces from beyond the play (*supra* n.6: 75–90, a slight revision of his "The Ideology of Aristophanes' *Wealth*," *AJP* 102 [1981] 371–94).

⁶¹ C. B. Welles (*supra* n.4) 203; D. Wiles, "Demetrius of Phalerum's Dilemma," *Gar* 31 (1984) 170–79.

ἀλλ' ἐν ὀλίγῳ πολλῷ γε μᾶλλον συνεδρίῳ.
 — ὀλιγαρχικός γ' εἶ καὶ πονηρός ...
 — ὦ Ἡράκλεις, ἀπολείτέ μ' οἱ σφοδροὶ πανύ
 ὕμεις. τί γάρ μοι λοιδορεῖ βαρυ ...
 — μισῶ σε καὶ τοὺς τὰς ὄφρῦς ἐπηκότας
 ἅπαντας· ὄχλος ὦν δ'⁶²

In a political context, the terminology of ὄλος, ὀλίγος, and ὀλιγαρχικός would be provocative and potentially divisive. Here it is mere generic banter between two characters at home. The anger and bitterness is between two individuals.⁶³ Whereas Philippides took on a Macedonian overlord and stood up for the sanctity of the Athenian democracy, the cause of the dispute in this passage is much more modest. The exact incident cannot be pinpointed, but the “mob” character goes on in the ensuing fragmentary lines to accuse the “oligarch” of theft (163–66). Then either the “mob” character or another messenger reports to the “oligarch” about a trial, which took place at Eleusis. Like the trial staged in *Epitrepontes*, this reported trial is about custody, this time over a female slave. Philippides invoked the *demos* in face of Demetrius Poliorcetes’ profaning the rites of the Eleusinian mysteries. Menander has a jury in Eleusis preside over a case about child custody, citizenship, and right to marriage. In the *Epitrepontes*, Menander narrows the trial’s topic but also casts the litigants as characters far removed from urban political life. Critical in the testimony of the plaintiff Syrus was the self-conscious use of tragic *exempla*. Menander smothers the trial in *Sikyonioides*, a much more public event, with more literary coloring. The entire report is modeled on a tragic messenger speech, specifically that of Euripides’ *Orestes*.⁶⁴ Within the trial, the plaintiff, this time the young man Mos-

⁶² “– You’re a mob full of rubbish, you fool, expecting a man who cries and begs to be right. These days it’s practically a sign of being up to no good. Don’t judge the truth that way. It’s far better with a small, elite committee.
 – You’re a real oligarch and a fool...
 – By Heracles, you’re absolutely ruining me! Why are you picking on me?
 – I hate you and all your arrogant kind. Even if I am just a mob...”

I follow Kassel’s supplement to line 158, but see W. G. Arnott, “Further Notes on Menander’s *Sikyonioides* (vv. 110–322),” *ZPE* 117 (1997) 24.

⁶³ The identity of the two speakers is not completely certain. The “oligarch” is very likely Smicrines, who may be Stratophanes’ father. The “mob” may be Bleps, who delivers the speech about the trial.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Sic.* 176–271 with *Or.* 866–956. See W. G. Arnott, “Menander and Earlier Drama,” in J. H. Betts *et al.*, edd., *Studies in Honour of T. B. L. Webster* (Bristol 1986) 3–6.

chion, once again brings up tragedy when he complains that his opponent uses a tragic story (τραγῳδία, 262) to sway the jury. The more public the setting and potentially political the events, the more Menander casts the events in specifically literary terms. To put it another way, when any part of a comedy crosses into political space, Menander covers it or replaces it with literary space.

Stratophanes, Moschion's opponent and the girl's surprise advocate in the trial represents another volatile element in Menandrian comedy: the soldier. Too little remains of *Sikyonios* to show how Menander handled Stratophanes' rôle.⁶⁵ The treatment is of interest, however, because the soldier is one element of the comic tradition that Menander did not—perhaps could not—excise from his plays, although the character carries along an inherent risk of crossing the boundaries of Menander's ideological vision of the comic stage.⁶⁶ By his very existence, even a stereotypical soldier threatens to disrupt Menander's ideological continuity in two basic ways. First, the soldier's military occupation serves political ends, so the soldier's identity does not bind him to a private household. Second, unless the play is set in a military environment, which would be utterly incompatible with a domestic setting, the soldier cannot pursue his occupation except outside the home and beyond his local community. In both space and function, then, the soldier is a difficult character to keep integrated in the rigidly domestic culture of Menandrian comedy. Often, therefore, a soldier's identity is not crucial to his actions and rôle in the domestic plot. Nothing, for example, reveals Stratophanes' identity as a soldier in the account of the trial. Occasionally, however, a soldier's identity and occupation play some rôle in the events and Menander keeps very tight artistic control so that the ideological illusion is not broken. At these critical moments, the juncture between Menander's craft and ideological vision is once again revealed.

An exchange early in the *Misoumenos*, despite some irreparable gaps in the text, gives a good idea how quickly Menander can dispense with the ideologically unsuitable component of a soldier's character. The soldier and protagonist of the play, Thrasionides, opens the play with a plaintive address to the night

⁶⁵ Similarly, the few fragments of *Thrasyleon* (frs. 203–207 K-T), apparently named for its boorish soldier, reveal nothing about the treatment of the soldier.

⁶⁶ W. T. MacCary, "Menander's Soldiers: Their Names, Roles, and Masks," *AJP* 93 (1972) 279–98, surveys the known references.

(A1-14). His slave Getas now finds him and works to uncover the source of Thrasonides' distress. Getas reveals that Thrasonides returned home only the day before. Next we hear (A34ff):

τοῦ στρατοπέδου γὰρ ὡς ἀπήρα καταλιπὼν
 ... εὐψυχος ... δὲ τάττομαι
 ἐπὶ τῆς παραπομπῆς τῶν λαφύρων ἔσχατος.⁶⁷

Aside from the reference to an expedition in the service of some king of Cyprus (fr. 5), this is all the information revealed about Thrasonides' military activity. Getas immediately follows up by asking directly by whom Thrasonides has been hurt, and the soldier replies (A37-40):

... ἐπὶ τῆς αἰχμαλώτου· πριάμενος
 αὐτήν, περιθείς ἐλευθερίαν, τῆς οἰκίας
 δέσποιναν ἀποδείξας, θεραπαίνας, χρυσία
 ἱμάτια δούς, γυναῖκα νομίσας.⁶⁸

The captive woman goes from prisoner of war to a wife at home in a few lines. The military scenario behind her capture never gets a word.

A similar transformation appears in *Perikeiromene*. The transformation, this time of the soldier, occurs in the context of an event very much part of a soldier's life but not at all part of a stable, domestic environment: a siege. Just as Menander mutes the public event of a jury trial in *Epitrepontes* and *Sikyonios*, he subverts the siege even before allowing the event on stage. While the presence of a soldier in the play has already prompted some military metaphors and talk of a siege (270, 294f, 371f, 380ff), it is only well into the domestic action, and once again over identity and custody, that the siege actually proceeds. Matters come to a head toward the end of the second act, when Sosias, in service to the soldier Polemon, is arguing with Daus, a servant in the house next door where Polemon's mistress Glycera has taken refuge. Sosias suspects Daus of harboring Glycera and issues a threat (388-94):

⁶⁷ "For when I departed the camp, leaving behind ... courageously ... assigned to the train of spoils, at the rear." The ellipses indicate text damaged beyond repair. See P. C. McC. Brown, "Menander, *Misoumenos* A31-6," *ZPE* 84 (1990) 8ff, for recent problems with attribution and interpretation of these lines.

⁶⁸ "... by a prisoner of war. I paid for her, freed her, set her up as mistress of the house, gave her servants, gold, clothes, recognized her as my wife."

Σω· ... κατὰ κράτος τὸ δυστυχῆς
οἰκίδιον τοῦτ' αὐτίκ' ἐξαιρήσομεν.
ὄπλιζε τὸν μοιχόν.
Δα· πονηρόν ἄθλιε·
ὥσπερ παρ' ἡμῖν οὖσαν ἐπιμένεις πάλαι.
Σω· οἱ παῖδες οἱ τὰ πελτί' οὗτοι πρὶν πτόσαι
διαρπάσσονται πάντα, κἂν τετρωβόλους
καλῆς⁶⁹

In the next act, the promised attack takes place, such as it is. A tipsy Polemon plods along with a very drunk Sosias in an attempt to retrieve Glycera. The siege does not go far before Pataecus, an old man, subdues the soldier in a remarkable fashion (492–503):

Πα· ἀπελήλυθεν δ' οὐ κατὰ τρόπον σου χρωμένου
αὐτῆ.
Πο· τί φῆς; οὐ κατὰ τρόπον; τουτί με τῶν
πάντων λελύπηκας μάλιστ' εἰπών.
Πα· ἐρᾶς·
τοῦτ' οὐδ' ἀκριβῶς· ὥσθ' ὃ μὲν νυνὶ ποεῖς
ἀπόπληκτόν ἐστιν. ποῖ φέρει γάρ; ἢ τίνα
ἄξων; ἑαυτῆς ἐστ' ἐκείνη κυρία.
λοιπὸν τὸ πείθειν τῷ κακῶς διακειμένῳ
ἐρῶντι τ' ἐστίν.
Πο· ὁ δὲ διεφθαρκῶς ἐμοῦ
ἀπόντος αὐτὴν οὐκ ἀδικεῖ με;
Πα· ὥστ' ἐγκαλεῖν
ἀδικεῖ σ' ἐκεῖνος, ἂν ποτ' ἔλθῃς εἰς λόγους.
εἰ δ' ἐκβιάσει, δίκην ὀφλήσεις· οὐκ ἔχει
τιμωρίαν γὰρ τὰ δίκημ', ἔγκλημα δέ.⁷⁰

69

S: We'll lay siege to this miserable hovel by force right now. Get the adulterer ready.

D: That's foolish. You're pathetic, the way you've been waiting for her as if she's with us.

S: Our boys with the shields will plunder the whole place before you can spit, even if you consider them four-obol men.

70

Pa: She's gone, since you've not been treating her properly.

Po: What do you mean? Not properly? You hurt me most when you say that!

Pa: You're in love. I know that clearly. Consequently, what you're doing is stupid. What are you up to? Taking her? She's her own master. Persuasion is the recourse of the suffering lover.

Po: And the man who seduced her in my absence doesn't wrong me?

Pa: He's wrong to the point that you can have him indicted, if you ever come to terms. If you force it, you'll lose your case. The crime allows for indictment, not for punishment.

Even this siege, premised on attacking a single home for a single resident, is quickly downgraded and eliminated. Pataecus in a rapid exchange reduces Polemon to a desperate lover and then hinges the struggle on Polemon's legal redress for the wrongs suffered against him. Pataecus makes clear that Polemon's use of force, his prerogative as a soldier, invalidates his rights as a lover and husband. Polemon offers no resistance or reluctance in laying down his military identity. In doing so, he can proceed toward reconciliation with Glycera.⁷¹ Earlier in the play, the maid Doris commented on the lawlessness and untrustworthiness of a soldier as a husband (185ff). Now, Polemon will be reunited as a husband, but not as a soldier, and thus integrated into a Menandrian ideology.

The disruption to a household posed by a military identity plays a carefully guided rôle in two other scenes in Menander. In the opening dialogue of *Aspis* and the closing scene of *Samia*, Menander mentions military campaigns abroad, but these campaigns are reckoned solely for their impact on families back home. This reckoning points to an ideology by which members of society can be full and productive citizens in the sense not of those with full political franchise, but those who discharge adequately all the responsibilities the community places on them—maintaining a stable family situation and keeping their household secure despite any disruptions from external forces.

Just such a disruption is the subject of the first scene of the *Aspis*. The tutor Davus is returning from the Lycian battlefield where his master Cleostratus has perished. The first speech forms a tragic apostrophe to the deceased youth. "I'm not calculating my accounts as I'd hoped I would be," says Davus (2f, οὐδὲ διαλογίζομαι παραπλήσι' ὡς τότ' ἤλπισ' ἐξορμώμενος). He explains what plans he had and why they fell through. He wanted his master to retire from the army to a decent life. In addition, Cleostratus was also supposed to provide for his sister, in part by securing a proper marriage for her. Moreover, for her sake Cleostratus originally enlisted in the army (8ff, τὴν ἀδελφήν, ἥσπερ ἐξώρμας τότε ἔνεκα, σεαυτοῦ νυμφίω καταξίω συνοικιεῖν ποθεινὸν ἦκοντ' οἴκαδε). Finally, Davus notes his hope that Cleostratus' golden years would mean security for the old tutor (11f). The entire purpose and hoped-for result of

⁷¹ Ter. *Eun.* 771–816 offers a comparable attempted siege that is immediately quelled in the face of a love interest. The scene derives from Menander's *Eunuchos* or *Kolax*, or perhaps a *contaminatio* of both, but not enough remains of either play to know exactly how Menander handled the scene.

the young man's military expedition was for house and home, specifically, to achieve domestic stability and economic well-being. No hint of patriotism or desire for military recognition, no matter how generic or bland, appears even indirectly.

Smicrines, the missing soldier's uncle, now enters the scene and asks how Cleostratus was lost. Davus reports that Cleostratus had been enjoying some success on the battlefield at the Xanthus River in Lycia. To the delight of the miserly Smicrines, this success is measured not in terms of military prowess but in terms of the loot that Davus now has in tow (30–39). Next we learn that the military campaign took a turn for the worse. We hear of desertions (43) and of ambushes (50–62) so damaging that for several days corpses piled up and eventually required a mass cremation (75–79). Nothing of this situation elicits any remorse except for the apparent loss of Cleostratus in the disaster. We do not know even the ultimate fate of the campaign. Neither Davus nor Smicrines offers even a perfunctory line of support for the expedition, worries about its final fate, or regrets Cleostratus' lost chance for military glory. Rather, Menander keeps the audience's attention on the impact Cleostratus' reported death has on his household. Cleostratus had joined the campaign originally to benefit his home and family, his sister in particular. His failure has now brought comparable disaster. This disaster propels the rest of the play. The ensuing plot revolves around the struggle to restore the sanctity of the household by securing a proper marriage for Cleostratus' sister and keeping Cleostratus' booty out of the hands of his miserly uncle. The entire mechanism must compensate for the failure of a nominally military expedition, but in fact a failed mission for the benefit of the household.

Instead of initializing the plot, the military campaign of the *Samia* catalyzes the plot's final resolution. The disruption in this play results from the young man covering up the birth of his illegitimate child, but the goals are the same as in *Aspis*: obtaining a proper marriage and economic security. By the last act of the *Samia*, both these goals are met, but the young man Moschion still feels that he and his father Demeas have not yet been properly reconciled. Moschion forces the issue by threatening to disrupt the newly repaired household yet again.

Moschion makes the threat in the form of preparing to leave on a mercenary expedition for Bactria or Caria (628).⁷² By this

⁷² Note *Sic.* 6, 130–39 for other casual references to a soldier's activity in Caria.

point in the play, Moschion is legitimately engaged and wedding preparations are underway. Menander gives Moschion a soliloquy at the beginning of the act in which Moschion declares that he will not, in any case, actually dodge the wedding (630ff). In other words, there is never a serious possibility that external affairs could take precedence over responsibility to the family. To make his threat anyway, Moschion orders his slave Parmenon to bring out a cloak and sword in preparation for the excursion (658-63). Parmenon objects and Moschion insists (668-81). Parmenon never even argues against the idea of the mercenary excursion. He simply keeps telling Moschion that the wedding preparations are continuing in the house. For Parmenon, then, it does not matter whether Moschion goes to distant Bactria or nearby Caria. Moschion will simply be absent from the wedding, further disrupting the house. Eventually, Moschion's father joins the fray. Demeas does not argue the merits of the expedition either. He immediately sees Moschion's gesture for what it is: an expression of dissatisfaction with the current domestic situation (691ff). Demeas pleads with Moschion on just this level (695ff). Moschion's soon-to-be father-in-law then turns up and berates him for not participating in the wedding preparations, again with nary a word about the military expedition. Eventually, Moschion relents and the wedding rituals begin as the play comes to a close. Throughout the entire scene, the idea of Moschion going abroad is significant only in that Moschion will not then be at the wedding.

To an activist working to throw off the Macedonian presence, this vision of military activity would be myopic at best. Neither democrats nor oligarchs planned to take over Athens by keeping Greeks at home busy with their private lives. To any Greek yearning or struggling to recapture the local sovereignty and independence of previous generations, such theater is irrelevant, perhaps even propagandistic. To a populace caught in the throes of political and cultural change, it is perhaps escapist. The Macedonian leaders, on the other hand, had little interest in fighting off yet another democratic insurrection or oligarchic coup. The vision of Menandrian comedy represents an ideology they would like to see take hold: let the citizens set their own houses in order, guard the stability of their families, and secure their own economic livelihood. Do so and the community will prosper. None of this interferes with the political machinations on the level of empire.

Positing such an ideological orientation for Menander's plays does not, it must be emphasized, reduce Menander to a pamphleteer for the Macedonian cause or his plays to Macedonian propaganda. It does, however, expose the foundation upon which the full weight of Menandrian New Comedy rested. It further raises the question of what ideological structure sustains the New Comedy of other playwrights. Even more importantly, what changes must this support undergo when later playwrights adapt Menander for theaters, stages, cultures, and political systems quite different from Menander's? Plautus presents a formally diverse range of plays derived from a multiplicity of authors, including Menander. Menander's ideological distinctiveness may not abide in the face of Plautus' vibrant reworking. Terence, however, adapts Menander within a much narrower framework. In the *Adelphoe* and the *Eunuch*, at least, Terence mixes Menandrian creations and drives them to awkward, even painful, conclusions, resolving conflicts in ways quite unparalleled in Menander.⁷³ Perhaps the sharp young poet from Africa, now facing the strictures and customs of the Roman elite, crafts his plays with a unique new ideology, which culminates in formal changes in the very plays Menander formed within his own ideology.

Menander's ideology had its roots in his experience of his own times. The world depicted in his plays operates within his ideological perception of the world, not outside it. Displaying this world to the spectators of the theater required faith in the relevance of his vision. For Menander to believe that his narrowly focused comedies had any relevance and that the strict resolution of domestic conflict was at all intelligible, he had to take for granted that the citizenry of Athens and other city-states would prosper best if they considered it their civic duty to maintain a strong household. Insurrection and revolution can only weaken the underpinnings of the community and cause more disruptions for individual households. Leave the politics of governing and empire to the elite and the professionals. Relying on such a belief, then, Menander put plays before the public that show the people how best to serve themselves and their communities by channeling their energies toward *oikos* and away from *polis*. By doing so, Menander participates in the

⁷³ See *Ad.* 938 with R. H. Martin, *Terence: Adelphoe* (Cambridge 1976) *ad loc.* on our knowledge (going back to Donatus) of Terence's modification of Menander's original.

struggle to form a dominant, coherent popular ideology. He dramatizes that particular ideology operating successfully and yielding prosperity. In this ideological vision, Greek families care for themselves, each other, and their homes, homes in a Macedonian world.⁷⁴

SAINT ANSELM COLLEGE

April, 1998

⁷⁴ An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the American Philological Association Meeting in San Diego, December, 1995, as part of a panel on "Ideology and Poetic Form." I owe thanks to Charles Platter, Paul Allen Miller, and Jeffrey Carnes for their support and suggestions. An earlier version of section II was delivered as "Menander, Politics, and the Peripatos" at the Louisiana Classical Association in November, 1996. I also owe a debt of gratitude to David B. George, T. Davina McClain, and the anonymous reader for *GRBS* for numerous corrections and improvements. All errors, along with infelicities grand and small, remain entirely my own.