

conviction, were to suffer erosion or distortion, some reinforcement was needed, some new standard of probable or acceptable human behaviour. It came with the fourth century's growing interest in the human individual and his relationships – in a word, with the science that came to be known as ethics. Fine distinctions between motives and personal qualities are the common ground of later fourth-century philosophers and of the higher reaches of the Comedy of Manners, with the foundation of which we credit Menander.

II. MENANDER AND THE NEW COMEDY

Menander's *Perikeiromene* takes its title from the incident which begins the action. 'The girl who has her hair cut off' has it cut off by the man she is living with, a young Corinthian who is a professional soldier. He cuts it off in a fit of fury when he is told that she let another man kiss her. She then leaves him. Here is part of a conversation between the soldier, Polemon, and a friendly neighbour, Pataikos:¹

POLEMON I've always treated her as my wife.

PATAIKOS Don't shout at me. Who gave you her?

POLEMON Gave me her? She did.

PATAIKOS Very good. Perhaps she fancied you then, and now she doesn't.

She's left you because you're not treating her properly.

POLEMON Not treating her properly...?

Polemon is deeply hurt by this, and not at all reassured to be told that violence will get him nowhere. The girl is her own mistress, and if he wants her back all he can do is try to persuade her; the man, if he can be found, can be brought to face a legal action, but the use of force would put Polemon himself in the wrong. 'Glykera has left me, Pataikos; she's left me, Glykera' – that is still the overpowering fact for Polemon; and (he urges) Pataikos must go and plead with her. 'If I ever did her any wrong at all...if I don't love, honour and cherish her...if you could just see her things...' At that, Pataikos backs away, but he is persuaded. Among the girl's clothes and jewellery, which for Polemon are a proof of his generosity, Pataikos will find the trinkets which were given her as a baby, and so discover that she is his own daughter. He had abandoned her together with a twin brother when their mother died after childbirth and he lost his livelihood in a shipwreck. It is the twin brother who is the cause of all the trouble. He is the man who was seen kissing Glykera; they had been brought up separately, and though he did not know who she was, she had been told about him. From these complications, one can see, will eventually come reconciliation and marriage.

All this seems a long way from Aristophanes, with his Trygaeus in *Peace*

flying to Heaven on a dung-beetle to put an end to the war, or Praxagora in *Ecclesiazusae* packing the Assembly with women dressed as men in order to create her social revolution. But time has moved on. If it is rightly reckoned that Menander's first play, the lost *Orge* 'Anger' was produced in 321 B.C., that is the hundredth anniversary of the production of *Peace*; his death at about 50 in 292/291 or a neighbouring year is – near enough – a century after *Ecclesiazusae*. It is typical of the genre of New Comedy, the comedy of Menander and his contemporaries, that the plot of a play should be set in the domestic world of family relationships, and that it should have, prominently, what the cliché calls a love interest – anything from the intrigue by which a young man secures a desirable woman to a quarrel and reconciliation, as in *Perikeiromene*, between partners who are already attached. It is typical of Menander to have seen in this domestic world, which occupies the thoughts and daydreams of so many people for so much of their time, the material for a form of entertainment which would prompt serious reflection in its audiences as well as amusement. The balance is delicate. The headstrong and self-centred Polemon may make us laugh as he meets his match in the calm and civilized Pataikos; but if so, we laugh quietly, for there is a sense in which we are laughing at ourselves, at feelings we could admit to having experienced or could recognize among family and friends. Glykera's position in law and by the standards of fourth-century society was different, as commentators explain, from what it would be in twentieth-century Britain or many another modern society; but we overload the comedy if we make it, in any terms, too much of a tract on women's rights: the serious point, as is typical of Menander, is not just verbally asserted but woven into the plot, and it is that there are standards of equitable behaviour in human relationships which may lie deeper than the surface reactions of one person to another.

The Cairo codex of Menander was published in 1907. It gave, for the first time, large parts of *Epileptontes* 'The Arbitrants', *Perikeiromene* and *Samia* 'The Woman of Samos' – three plays which were (not untypically) known beforehand from a total of about 20 lines of text between them in the form of identified quotations – and for good measure the beginning of *Heros* 'The Hero' and some lesser items.¹ This body of text, amounting to some 1,600 lines, was the basis of work on Menander for the next half-century. Around it there clustered a number of interesting lesser discoveries, sometimes from plays which could not be securely identified and have in some cases been identified since. From this material it became possible for the first time in the modern world to form a first-hand impression of the dramatic art of the author in such matters as the handling of dialogue, the articulation of plot through

¹ Gomme-Sandbach (1973) 39ff. and 30ff. give descriptions and lists of papyri. There has since been a new photographic edition of the Cairo codex with a preface by Koenen (1979).

¹ *Pk.* 239-43 (489-93 Sandbach) and continuing in what follows.

sequences of scenes, and the delineation of character.¹ At the same time, the recovery of substantial portions of continuous Greek text gave a new impetus to the comparative study of Menander and his contemporaries with Latin adaptations of their plays by Plautus, Terence and other authors less fortunate in their survival.² There were now fresh reasons for taking an interest in the rich visual material relating to New Comedy, in the shape of scenes from plays, actors and masks represented in a wide range of media – terracottas, bronzes, mosaics, paintings, sculptures, gems – and produced over a period of several centuries for admirers of Greek comedy in all parts of the Graeco-Roman world.³ A second stage of this story is briefly told in terms of a single event – the publication in 1959 from the Bodmer codex in Geneva of a play that is virtually complete, the *Dyskolos* or 'Misanthrope'. The third stage, that of the following twenty years, has not so far yielded any more complete plays, but the first and last of the three in the Bodmer codex, damaged at beginning and end, proved to be *Samia* and *Aspis* 'The shield'. When these followed the *Dyskolos* into print in 1969, they went together with the previously known remains to yield the last three acts of *Samia*, with portions of the first two; and the first two acts of *Aspis* with the beginning of the third and some fragments from later in the play.⁴ Among other discoveries of the sixties and seventies were large portions of *Misoumenos* 'The man she hated' (1965ff.),⁵ *Sikyonios* (-oi) 'The man – or men – from Sikyon' (1965) and a hundred-odd lines of *Dis exapaton* 'The double deceiver' (1968), many of them in poor condition, but giving much the most extensive text to date which is available for direct comparison with its adaptation into Latin, namely a stretch of the *Bacchides* of Plautus, beginning at 494ff. While work on these texts was in progress, there became known a most remarkable series of mosaics of scenes from Menander which were found in a house of the latter half of the third century A.D. at Chorapha, Mytilene: they are a fascinating complement to what we have learnt from the papyri and have opened up possibilities for the recognition of more illustrations of famous scenes from particular plays among the growing stock of visual material which has come down to us.⁶

This outline of the progress of rediscovery will be in place here if it serves to show how much the basis of modern criticism of Menander has been chang-

¹ Of course, many good and interesting things were said about Menander and New Comedy before 1907: see (e.g.) Lefèvre (1979) quoting Goethe and A. W. von Schlegel, and Leo (1895) III.

² Fraenkel (1922) remains exemplary in this field.

³ E.g. Robert (1911); Webster (1969) gives an extensive catalogue, of which a revised edition is currently (1983) in preparation.

⁴ *Aspis* absorbed 87 lines first published in 1913, and previously quoted as *Comodia Florentina*; line references to *Samia* in books published before 1969 are to the 341 lines from the Cairo codex.

⁵ Gomme-Sandbach (cf. p. 415 n. 1) under the sigla I, O10, O11; and add O19–O22, which are, respectively, *P.Oxy.* XLVIII 3368–71; for discussion, see Turner (1973) 15–21, 48–50 and (1978).

⁶ Charitonidis-Kahil-Ginouvés (1970).

ing.¹ The impact of sheer novelty is complemented by the challenge of revaluing what we previously knew or thought we knew. Three questions at once suggest themselves: one asks what proportion of Menander's work we now have; whether there are likely to be more discoveries; and whether there are implications for the study of other writers of New Comedy. A recent calculation by W. G. Arnott reckons that the amount of Greek text available to us is something less than eight per cent of Menander's total output.² That would give a figure of the same order as our sample of Sophocles; for Aristophanes we can probably reckon that we have as much as 25% to 30% of the total amount of text known to the librarians at Alexandria. But the reality of the matter is both better and worse than the raw figures suggest. It is worse, in that we still only have one complete play of Menander in Greek; better in that there are eight (perhaps more) Latin plays by Plautus and Terence which are adapted from him. The list, with Greek titles in brackets, is as follows:

Plautus: *Aulularia* (*Apistos* or another); *Bacchides* (*Dis exapaton*); *Cistellaria* (*Synaristosai*); *Stichus* (*First Adelphoi*)

Terence: *Andria* (*Andria*, with additions from *Perinthia*); *Heauton Timoroumenos* (same title); *Eunuchus* (*Eunouchos*, with additions from *Kolax*); *Adelphoe* (*Second Adelphoi*, with a scene from *Diphilus, Synapothneskontes*).³

By a prudent estimate (leaving out of count many texts of unproved identity) there are now known more than fifty ancient copies of plays by Menander. These range in extent from the Bodmer and Cairo codices to scraps of a few letters only; and they range in date from the third century B.C. to the sixth or perhaps the seventh A.D.: Menander is in fact one of the best-represented ancient authors among those that survive on papyri.⁴ The chances are therefore good that if collections of papyri continue to be published Menander will continue to be represented; and new methods of taking apart mummy cases in order to recover written papyri offer promising prospects for the future.⁵ It is noticeable that though there are among papyri of Later Greek Comedy a number which do not appear, on stylistic or other grounds, to represent plays by Menander, there is very little which is certainly identifiable as a copy of a play by another writer in the genre.⁶ It could well be, if enough papyri of the Hellenistic and early Roman period are recovered, that we shall be lucky enough to find and identify

¹ For more detail, see Arnott (1975) and (1979) xxvi–xxx, xlvii–lii; Handley (1979); Luppe (1980).

² Arnott (1979) xxx.

³ Some doubt *Aulularia* (but the likeness to *Dyskolos* seems decisive); several other plays, including *Miles gloriosus* and *Pseudolus*, have been claimed as Menandrian.

⁴ See for instance on an unidentified papyrus Handley (1975b) and (1977).

⁵ See Maehler (1980).

⁶ Examples are *P.Heid.* 183, third/second century B.C., Posidippus, *Apokleiomene*; and *P.Oxy.* 427, third century A.D., Antiphanes, *Anthropogonia*: respectively CGFP nos. 218 and *3.

a specimen of the work of Philemon, Diphilus or another of Menander's rivals and successors; but on present evidence the chances must be rated much lower than for Menander himself. Latin adaptations by Plautus from Philemon and Diphilus and by Terence from Apollodorus of Carystus do something to fill out the picture that can be formed from the Greek fragments, but the texts on which we depend for our knowledge of Menander's work are so much greater in extent as to make a just comparison problematical. If, on the other hand, it were possible to set aside a large part of our Menandrian material and reduce him to the size of a Philemon or a Diphilus, how much that is now taken for granted should we have to unlearn? We noted in our approach to fifth-century comedy that the new discoveries of Menander can be useful as a reminder of the differences between whole, partial and fragmentary knowledge (above, p. 356), and the point is equally to be taken now that we have come to Menander's own time. It will therefore be well to resume our attempt to form an impression of his literary qualities before we try to see how far the writing of others can contribute to an overall picture of New Comedy.

There is in Plutarch a story about Menander and playwriting which, true or not, has become virtually canonical in modern writing about him, ever since it was used by Wilamowitz to open his much-admired discussion of 'The Art of Menander'.¹ A friend is said to have pointed out that the time of the Dionysia was approaching 'and you haven't composed your comedy for it, have you?' 'Composed my comedy?' said Menander, 'I most certainly have composed it: I have my treatment of the theme worked out – I just have to set the lines to it.' It is perhaps a pity that we do not have Aristophanes on record in a similar situation, for there is a sense in which the two stand at opposite poles of comic writing. With Aristophanes, brilliance of language is primary, and sometimes we can see how stage spectacle and action are actually generated by a verbal concept transformed into visual terms.² With Menander, it is not that the dialogue is dashed off anyhow (one need only read some to test that); simply that the overall design of the play comes first. That Menander should have been conscious of this principle, even (as it might seem) to the point of being able to turn it, half-jokingly, against himself, is something which accords well with what we have seen earlier of the development of organized dramatic composition in comedy.³ A similar insight can be derived, perhaps, from the very well-known portrait-relief of Menander sitting looking at the mask of a young man, which he is holding up in front of him, with two more masks on a table nearby.⁴ This is one of a long series of representations in art of poets with masks,

¹ Plutarch, *Moralia* 347e; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1925) 119; cf. Handley (1965a) 10.

² See above, p. 388 with n. 4 and p. 389 with n. 1.

³ See above, p. 400 with n. 1 and p. 413.

⁴ Two versions are known: Webster (1969) nos. AS6 and IS10; Bieber (1961) figs. 316–17; on the series see Webster (1965) and Handley (1973).

and in showing Menander looking at one of a group such as this, the artist may well have been thinking of him precisely in the act of 'setting the lines' to the scene he has now reached in his plan.

It should follow, unless our impressions so far are seriously at fault, that plot and character-drawing in a comedy of this kind will be integrally related. A central feature of the design of the *Dyskolos* can be used to show how this is so.¹ The play is fashioned around a single character, Knemon the misanthrope, the 'Angry Old Man' who gives it its title. He is in fact on stage for about a quarter of the time the play would take to act – hardly more – and half of that quarter is allotted to Acts IV and V. For the rest, he is in the background, dominating the play largely through what we learn from others of him and his extraordinary way of life, and being built up for his one great moment, the major speech in Act IV at 708ff., made as if from his deathbed. The main line of the action is given from the first by the attempts of young Sostratos to gain Knemon's consent to marry his daughter. It is through the lover's story, with its ups-and-downs of unreliable helpers and unexpected allies, that the portrait of Knemon is built up; and as it proceeds the audience see him through the eyes of other characters. Thus, the god Pan gives a prologue speech, and with it the outline of the man, a sketch which will accumulate details as the play goes on and in some ways look different as it does so.² We next see Knemon through the eyes of a frightened slave whom he has chased off his land, and can observe the reactions of Sostratos and his friend Chaireas to this (81–146); then at last Knemon himself makes a brief appearance, and Sostratos is seen in his first direct confrontation (147–88); a little more is added by what we see of and hear from Knemon's daughter, and the first act ends with a portrait of Knemon as he appears to the slave from next door who inclines, as slaves do, to see the worst of things (220ff.). This description could be continued further into the play, but perhaps enough has been said to suggest how the technique works. While the action itself flows in a plausibly motivated sequence (that is, we accept that the people we are seeing would probably or necessarily behave as they do if the given circumstances were real), the various characters are presented in such a way that we have a clue to the value of what they say about Knemon from what they themselves are shown to be; but in turn, by defining him, they also define themselves. Chaireas, for instance, is soon recognized by the audience as a specimen of a familiar dramatic type, the parasite, a man who makes friendship a profession. Of course he can help in a love-affair; of course he knows just what sort of man Knemon is; and of course, when the moment comes, he will deal with the matter 'first thing in the morning'.³ In watching

¹ Cf. Handley (1965a) 11f.

² For references, see Handley (1965a) 23f. and index s.v. *prologue-speech*.

³ See particularly 57ff., 125–34; and above p. 398 with n. 1.

the play, we see with a smile how hollow Chaireas is, but we also see how much more idiosyncratic a character Knemon is than Chaireas thinks. It happens that we have, in the hero of Plautus' *Aulularia*, a close dramatic relation of Knemon's, the self-centred old miser Euclio; and it also happens that in the broad structural terms with which we are dealing the plays are the mirror-image of each other, with Euclio very much in evidence at the beginning, and on stage in all for more than half, and possibly near three quarters of the play's acting time (to judge from Plautus' version as we have it); the lover's story, which corresponds to that of Sostratos, is correspondingly in the background until late on. The contrast in the presentation of the hero is very striking.¹

It is sometimes said that there is no development of character in New Comedy, and it is perhaps useful to say so if the standard of comparison is the novel, or the kind of drama with an action extending over a considerable period of time. What does develop, and what gives a forward movement to plays with a serious interest in character, is the portrait which the audience is given, and the system of contrasts by which that portrait is built up and reinforced.² A character like Knemon differs from a real person in that he exists only in the linear dimension of the play's performance. For the purposes of the play, his character is what it is seen to be at a chosen moment; and a summation, such as we make for a programme note or an academic essay, is a creation which misses something of his essence. Just so, a retelling or summary of a plot made for the same purposes will easily trivialize and flatten action which was conceived in terms of a different medium than narrative.

If we now move a step away from the strategy of dramatic composition towards the tactics, narrative speeches can in fact be taken to illustrate some of the ways in which Menander varies his presentation of an incident. Our examples come from *Sikyonios*, *Misoumenos*, *Aspis* and *Dyskolos*. The action of the *Sikyonios* involves a slave and a young girl taking refuge at the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis. She will eventually prove to be freeborn and marry the hero, but at this point she and the slave are runaways, and in the narrative their status is being debated in front of a crowd which has gathered round. A debate of this sort can be presented by means of antithetical speeches from two actors, as is commonly done in drama: such a scene is the Arbitration from which *Epitrepontes* takes its title.³ But by presenting a debate in narrative and not on the stage, as in *Sikyonios* 176–271, the dramatist exchanges the immediate impact of the speakers' presence for the ability to set a more elaborate scene in the audience's imagination; he can use more speakers, he can characterize them through the narrator's eyes, and – not least – he can abbreviate and select in a

¹ See p. 419 n. 1 above and *Entretiens Hardt* (1970) 100–1.

² See above, p. 409 with n. 2 and Webster (1950) 190ff.

³ *Epitr.* 43–200 (219–376 S): the underlying pattern is that of the tragic agon, not the form we associate with Aristophanes.

way which would not work with direct presentation. On this occasion, a further dimension is given by echoing, in words and pattern, what was (and is) a classic example of its kind, Euripides' narrative in *Orestes* 866–956 of the debate in Argos which decided the fate of Orestes and Electra. The echo offers a kind of justification (if one were felt to be needed) for the unusual length and prominence – by Menandrian standards – of the narrative; but it also points the analogy between the slave and the girl in one perilous situation, and the tragic hero and heroine in another.¹

The narrative which concerns us in *Misoumenos* is that of a quarrel. After a long search, Demeas has rediscovered his daughter, Kratea, a war-captive. He wants to ransom her from Stratophanes; Stratophanes wants to make her his wife; she utterly refuses, for he is at this time (in the words of the title) 'the man she hated': she had a special reason for doing so and – as it will prove – a mistaken one. All three parties are thus in a storm of conflicting emotions. Menander does not tackle the problems of managing this scene in direct presentation: it would have been a difficult peak to climb and to descend from. Instead, he brings on a slave, Getas, who has been there in the background, and is now reliving, quoting to himself and commenting on some of the high moments of the scene. He has an audience, in the shape of young Kleinias, who knows still less of what has been going on than the audience in the theatre; Kleinias paces up and down with the slave, listening, working things out for himself and eventually breaking in. The presentation thus exploits several different viewpoints at once, and blends almost the whole range of comic effects from high drama to farce. Something of this can perhaps be seen in a short excerpt:

GETAS Lord help us, he couldn't just be reasonable about it, could he? It was pig versus mule, as they say. But that's not so bad as her – looks away, she does, while he's speaking. 'Oh, Kratea', he says, 'don't leave me, I beg you, don't. You'd never had a man when I took you, and I was your man, the first to love you and cherish you; and I do love you, Kratea, my dearest. What is there about me that pains you? I'll be dead, you'll see, if you leave me.'
No answer, none.

KLEINIAS What is all this?

GETAS A barbarian, the woman is, a lioness.

KLEINIAS Damn you, you still can't see me. How strange.

GETAS Completely out of his mind. By Apollo here, I'd never have set her free...²

The interruptions to the narrative, which seem at first sight to reflect the randomness of real life, are in fact an integral part of its structure; and a similar technique

¹ See *Entretiens Hardt* (1970) 22f., and for more detail Handley (1965b) 4[–] with n. 10; on Menander and tragedy, Webster (1974) 56ff.; and cf. above p. 373 with n. 3 and p. 404 with n. 2.

² *Mis.* 302–15, taking for granted restorations etc. which do not affect the point: being argued.

is used very effectively, if less elaborately, in the long narrative at the beginning of *Aspis*.¹

The shield which gives *Aspis* its title is part of the spectacle that opens the play. It is broken; it is carried by the late owner's batman, and there follows a procession of captives with bundles and boxes, the spoils of a campaign. With the party, but somehow not of it, is an old man who for some time looks on in silence. The occasion is a sad one, strikingly so for the start of a comedy; the batman laments the loss of his young master, who had gone to war to provide a dowry for his sister and been killed. 'What an unexpected calamity, Daos.' 'Terrible.' 'Tell me, how did he die, what was the way of it?' The story proceeds, punctuated by comments from the old man. It was not a glorious campaign, but a tale of a force grown over-confident after easy success and good plunder; there was a surprise attack by night, and they were routed. The verse-rhythms are sombre, to match the mood of the story, and the manner is akin to that of tragedy, though without specific allusion or parody. The old man's interventions articulate the narrative, but they also gradually add a new colour to the scene. It becomes plain that his concern is no more than a mask for greed. He means to get his hands on the spoils, even if he has to marry his ward, the surviving child of the family, to do so. The plot proceeds through the intrigues by which he is frustrated, and comes to a peak with the return of the young soldier who had been supposed killed in battle: it was a case of mistaken identity, as Fortune, the prologue speaker, tells the audience immediately after the opening scene we have described. This is a remarkable piece of dramatic writing, and an interesting contrast with it is given by the narrative of a battle in Plautus' *Amphitruo*. Plautus makes a lyric of this, and there is a strong Roman colour to its language, but in Plautus we have war with 'the thunder of the captains and the shouting', not the death of a young mercenary after an ordinary military blunder.²

A further contrast is given by our last narrative, at the end of the *Dyskolos*, which looks back to the comic rather than to the tragic side of New Comedy's ancestry and is remarkable in being a musical scene – not, it is true, in any way resembling the full-blooded Plautine lyric of the *Amphitruo* narrative just mentioned, but at least with the accompaniment of a piper.³ The slave Getas and the cook Sikon take revenge on Knemon, the old misanthrope, for the way in which he drove them from his door when they wanted to borrow a cooking-pot; and in a scene which is in effect a farcical reprise of the borrowing scenes of Act III they carry Knemon out from his house and go through a ballet-like routine of knocking at the door and shouting fantastic demands for party

¹ See Turner (1980) 9f. and 11, quoting Bozanic.

² *Amphitruo* 186–262, esp. 219–47, cf. Handley (1975a) 129f.

³ *Dysk.* 880 (piper), 935–53 (narrative).

equipment. Finally Sikon forces the old man to listen to a recital of the proceedings at the betrothal feast which he has insisted on missing, and they then carry him in to the party under threat of being made to dance with them instead. Comedy has an interesting tradition of euphoric elevated style for descriptions of feasts and the like, for which it borrows freely from the language of higher poetry, especially perhaps dithyramb, and in calling old wine 'the Bacchic grizzlehead' (to take one phrase), Menander is alluding to this tradition, just as he is conscious in constructing the whole scene that comedy can by tradition end with a revel (and if the revel avoids the problem of shaping any more serious end, so much the better). As before, the narrative is punctuated by interruptions, and its festive note is diversified by Knemon's misery and Getas' triumphant sarcasm.¹

The four narratives which have just been described and contrasted can be offered as a token of Menander's dramatic range; but they can also perhaps be taken together to make a fundamental point about his playwriting. Here, as so often, he takes a basically familiar situation, and diversifies it by giving it a novel context, a new variant, an unexpected additional dimension, an artifice of structure. One could show these same broad principles at work in his treatment of characters, when he takes typical figures, often recognizable from the outset by their costumes, masks and even by standard names; and then, in the way we have seen, he builds up through the action of the play a portrait which shows that the typical is not, in this or that way, what it seems to be on the surface. Examples ready to hand are Polemon, Stratophanes and Thrasonides, the three soldiers of *Perikeiromene*, *Sikyonios* and *Misoumenos*, each of whom is fixed by type in the tradition of the 'miles gloriosus', but is shown by the play as an individual with characteristics that evoke a response of sympathy and interest rather than superiority and ridicule.²

An important consequence of this concept of playwriting for the critic is that it matters very much to have a full context for whatever it is in a play by Menander that one wants to interpret. That, in the fragmentary state of much of the author, is something we very often do not have, or have to achieve by conjecture. To take a single example, fr. 111 'Whom the gods love, dies young' is several times quoted as a moral maxim in antiquity (and known in English from Byron); but in the context given by Plautus' adaptation (*Bacchides* 816f.) it is said by a slave at the expense of his elderly master.³ It is appropriate here to remember that Menander is a poet of the Hellenistic Age. Though approaching by a different route, from concepts in social anthropology, T. B. L. Webster's treatment of the plays in his last book in terms of armatures and codes rather

¹ Cf. Handley (1965a) on 946–58; and see above, p. 365 with n. 5, p. 366 with n. 1, p. 368 with n. 4, p. 369 with n. 2 and p. 391 with nn. 1–2.

² See above, p. 410 with n. 5, and for New Comedy Hofmann and Wartenberg (1973).

³ Handley (1968) 6, quoting Webster.

than tradition and innovation is extremely revealing if viewed in this light; and in regard to more detailed matters of language and dramaturgy both Sandbach and Arnott (in a discussion entitled 'The Cleverness of the Hellenistic Poet') have mapped out some interesting new territory.¹

A difficulty which criticism of this kind of writing always faces is that of seeming to be too clever in turn (or indeed of being too clever).² Whether Menander's rivals and successors were often equally subtle is, as will have been plain from the state of the evidence, something very much harder to judge. Greek fragments apart, we know Philemon from Plautus' *Mercator*, *Mostellaria* and *Trinummus*, and Diphilus from *Casina*, *Rudens*, the fragmentary *Vidularia* (probably) and a scene in Terence's *Adelphoe*.³ It is eminently credible from the scale on which some motifs are treated in the fragments that both poets had a more relaxed, more traditional, and in a sense more comic attitude to comic writing;⁴ and a story which may be well found if not true has Menander saying to his rival 'Tell me, Philemon, don't you blush when you beat me?'⁵ Philemon, on the evidence of the Latin plays, excelled in comedy of situation; in the Greek that we have the pompous heavy-footedness of some of his writing, as opposed to Menander, reminds one of Plautus as opposed to Terence, and suggests a man with broader rather than subtler theatrical effects in mind.⁶ Diphilus, judging from *Rudens*, had a colourful way with a romantic comedy in a remote setting. Though the extent of Plautus' modifications is (as ever) a problem, it is likely that the original was both more expansive and more comic than *Dyskolos*.⁷ A certain sharpness has been seen in his writing, both in some of his verbal felicities and in the way in which (both in *Casina* and in *Rudens*) there are groups of black-and-white (as opposed to Menandrian pastel) characters in confrontation.⁸ But it remains hard to be confident from what we have of these authors that one is not imagining more than one sees.

It happens that, with the loss of Menander at the end of antiquity, the world of New Comedy reached modern times through Plautus and Terence. The idea of amusing, civilized fiction based on ordinary people's everyday affairs has proved to be an immensely fruitful one, with its myriad descendants and influences from ancient times onwards, and now including not only drama on radio and cinema or television screen, but above all, the novel. Popular fiction

¹ Webster (1974); Sandbach in *Entretiens Hardt* (1970) 111ff.; Arnott (1979) xxxviii-xlv.

² Cf. *Entretiens Hardt* (1970) 7f.

³ Webster (1970b) has well-documented chapters on Philemon, Diphilus and (from the next generation) Apollodorus of Carystus, from whom Terence took *Hecyra* and *Phormio*.

⁴ E.g. long speeches by cooks, Philemon 79 K, Diphilus 43 K; and parasite, Diphilus 60-1 K; and compare Philemon 28 K with *Samia* 206ff., 98 K with *Georgos* 35ff., Diphilus 17 K. 11ff. with *Samia* 99f., 55 K with *Dyskolos* 402ff.

⁵ Aulus Gellius, *N.A.* 17.4.

⁶ E.g. frs. 23, 69, 91, 106 K.

⁷ Compare for instance *Rud.* 414-84 (asking for water) with *Dysk.* 189-214.

⁸ Sharpness: e.g. 24 K with Menander, *Kolax* 85ff., and frs. 60, 72, 83, 91, 107 K.

of this kind has two very obvious characteristics: its characters and stories offer many people an escape into a world of wish-fulfilment, a world with which they can easily identify, but neater and more entertaining than the real one often is; and secondly, there is, to a greater or less degree, an enlightening or educating influence.¹ There is, of course, a very great part of human life, even everyday life, that does not enter into Menander's portrayal of it² (the same is often felt about others: for instance Jane Austen). There are times when our assent is strained by the role he accords to Fortune, or Ignorance, or whatever other divine or abstract force has contributed to the fashioning of a situation.³ There are other ways also in which he is noticeably an ancient and not a modern writer, not least in regard to his characters' behaviour, which he often accounts for very precisely (this is part of the art of dramatic structure) but in ethical, not psychological (certainly not post-Freudian) terms.⁴ The test of his rating through modern eyes could easily be the passage and the play from which we began: can Polemon and Glykera still survive in modern company?

¹ Cf. Thierfelder (1956) on Roman comedy in this regard.

² Handley (1965a) 12f. with some further references.

³ See Webster (1950) 198ff.; Ludwig in *Entretiens Hardt* (1970) 45-110; Bozanic (1977) 145-58; Lefèvre (1979) 320-8.

⁴ Handley (1965a) 13 and n. 3; Webster (1974) 43-55.