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First Notes on Menander's Samia


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FIRST NOTES ON MENANDER’S SAMIA

These notes are a by-product of work devoted to Menander’s Samia during preparation of a third volume for the new Loeb edition of Menander. In all passages of this play the line-numberings will be those adopted by R. Kasser and C. Austin in their editions of the play (Kasser–Austin, Papyrus Bodmer XXV: Ménandre, La Samienne, Cologny-Geneva 1969; Austin, Menandri Aspis et Samia, I: Textus, Kleine Texte 188a, Berlin 1969), and followed by F. H. Sandbach in his Oxford text of Menander (1st edition 1972, 2nd 1990; cf. his and A. W. Gomme’s Menander: A Commentary, Oxford 1973, hereafter referred to as the Gomme–Sandbach commentary). It will be useful for readers to have at their side the photographs of both the Cairo papyrus (C: The Cairo Codex of Menander: P. Cair. J.43227, Institute of Classical Studies, London 1978, plates XXXVII–XLVI) and the Bodmer codex (B: accompanying the Kasser–Austin edition).

1. The play’s date

Although no didascalic notice survives for Menander’s Samia, there are at least six¹ separate pieces or types of evidence embedded in its text that may be combined to produce a dating that is both precise and plausible.

(a) In 603–604 Demeas mentions Chaerephon as an ever-present on the Athenian scene. Chaerephon² was an Athenian parasite notorious for his habit of gatecrashing dinners, and he became a constant butt of comedians in the city from the time that Menander began writing (Men. fr. 304 Körte–Thierfelder = 265 Kassel–Austin from Orge, his first play³) until about 310 (Apollodorus fr. 29 Kassel–Austin II.499, referring to Ophellas of Cyrene’s wedding-feast some time before 309 B.C., the date of his death).

(b) When at 570 Demeas is confronted by an infuriated Nikeratos, he exclaims monomaxÆsv tÆmeron, ‘Today I’ll have to fight a duel!’ One-to-one gladiatorial contests may have become a topic of conversation in the city after Cassander monomax¤aw ég«na ¶yhken at royal funeral games in Macedonia during 316/5 B.C. (Dyillus 73 F 1 quoted by Athenaeus 4.155a), and in a play produced in the first ten to fifteen years of Menander’s dramatic career it is not unlikely that Demeas’ remark at Sam. 578 was inspired a year or so later by news of that event⁴. In fact four further details in the play would chime in very well with a production date of 314 for the play.

¹ I ignore here both Demeas’ reference at Sam. 606–608 to an otherwise unknown and undatable Androkles, and Nikeratos’ reference at Sam. 504 to one Diomnestos in terms that represent him as an unsatisfactory son-in-law, most probably with reference to a recent Athenian scandal about which nothing is now known. A. Barigazzi, RFIC 98 (1970) 266, and C. Dedoussi in Entr. Hardt 16 (1970) 167 (cf. also Q. Cataudella, Museum Criticum 5–7 (1972) 149–54) have argued instead for identification of this Diomnestos with an Eretrian who is said to have come into possession of a Persian general’s treasury in 490 B.C., before his family lost it through no moral fault of their own (so Heraclides of Ponticus fr. 58 Wehrli, in Athenaeus 12.536f–537b), but the person named by Nikeratos had clearly become a proverbial example of vicious behaviour, not of misfortune.

² See especially my commentary on Alexis fr. 213.1 Kassel–Austin (Cambridge 1996) p. 610, for a full discussion with bibliography.

³ The date of Menander’s Orge has long been disputed, but 322/1 B.C. seems most likely: see now St. Schröder’s fine and convincing discussion in ZPE 113 (1996) 36–38.

⁴ Admittedly duels (along with the use of μονομαξία and its congeners) were a feature of Greek history, myth and literature from Homer onwards (e.g. Iliad 3.264–372 Menelaus and Paris, 23.801–25 Ajax and Diomedes at funeral games, Hdt. 7.104, 9.26, Eur. Phoen. 1220, 1300, 1325 Eteocles and Polynices, cf. A. Septem 798), and it is possible (but, I believe, less likely) that μονομαξία at Sam. 570 was merely a comic echo of that tradition, without any contemporary historical link. Cf. here K. Meuli, Der griechische Agon (Cologne 1968) 39–50, and K.-D. Blume, Menanders »Samia« (Darmstadt 1974) 229–30.
c) One of these is Menander’s choice of nationality for the play’s titular heroine. Chrysis was a native of Samos who was working in Athens as a hetaira and had fallen on hard times (21, 25, 392–97) when the elderly Athenian Demeas fell in love with her and took her into his house as his partner. In 319 B.C. the Athenian cleruchs returned to Samos after a three-year absence and expelled the native Samians who had returned there three years before. If Menander conceived of Chrysis as a young woman who came to Athens as a refugee directly after that expulsion, the period of four or five years before the suggested date of this play would realistically have covered a year or so for Chrysis in her impoverished state to embark on a career as a hetaira, after which would have come her meeting with Demeas, her decision to become his partner, and cohabitation long enough for her to become pregnant and bear a child that she lost but consequently was left with milk enough to suckle Moschion’s baby.5

d) In act V a disgruntled Moschion thinks of travelling to Bactria or Caria6 as a mercenary soldier (628–29). Bactria was being developed and Hellenised from the 320’s until well after Menander’s death, and needed Greek mercenaries throughout this period to supervise these developments and to control an unruly native populace. During the same period military activity in and around Caria was virtually continuous, but it may be relevant to note that in 314 B.C. news would have just reached Athens about the despatch of 13000 mercenaries by Ptolemy son of Lagus to Cyprus and Caria in the previous year (Diod. Sic. 19.62)7.

(e) The fifth detail is provided by Demeas’ chauvinistic praise of Athens in vv. 101–104, which contain a carefully worded implication (v. 102) that all is not well with life in the city. In 314 B.C. Demetrius of Phalerum was Athens’ despotic ruler, and although Menander is said to have been his personal friend8, Demetrius’ regime was unpopular with the vast majority of Athenians9, and so the vague reference here to the city’s troubles could well have been a studied attempt by Menander to kowtow to his audience’s feelings without going out of his way to annoy a friend.

(f) Finally, Moschion’s remark in the prologue τῷ χορηγεῖν διέφερον (v. 13) would have had a topically nostalgic resonance in 314, since during Demetrius’ regime, and most probably in the year 316–15, the χορηγία at Athens had been abolished and replaced by state-funding under the control of an elected ἀγωνοθέτης10.

2. Passages of Text

5–6

Lines 4 to 16 of the first page in the Bodmer codex (B) have sustained a near vertical tear which has removed the first 7 letters of v. 4, the first 6 letters of vv. 9, 11 and 14, the first 5 of v. 8 and the first 4 of v. 15. Confident supplementation is often impossible, but plausible suggestions need to satisfy the

5 The papers by F. H. Sandbach, LCM 11 (1986) 158–60 and S. R. West, ZPE 88 (1991) 11–16 should by now have effectively settled the long dispute about whether Chrysis had become pregnant by Demeas before he set out for the Black Sea, and then lost the baby during his absence; see also n. 15.

6 The main reason why Menander mentioned these two areas was obviously because they were associated with campaigns and Greek mercenaries, but his choice may also have been influenced, as Mr L. Scott, a Leeds research student, suggested to me, by the fact that they perhaps represented to Greeks towards the end of the fourth century B.C. the eastern and western limits of Hellenised Asia.


8 See volume I of my Loeb Menander, pp. xvii–xviii.

9 See W. S. Ferguson, Hellenistic Athens (London 1911) 61–62.

three criteria of matching the available space, providing contextually appropriate sense, and conforming wherever possible to known Menandrean language and style. In vv. 5–6 Moschion seems to be saying that he thinks it a good idea to clarify the situation for the audience by saying something about Demeas’ personality, and B’s otherwise faultless text may accordingly be supplemented as follows:

5 ἡ δὲ τούτ’ ἄν εὐλόγως ὑμῖν ποιέων θέλομι τὸν ἐκείνου διεξάλθων τρόπον.

(i) Here φανερῶν was suggested by A. Barigazzi (RFIC 97, 1970, 151) and J. C. Kamerbeek (Mnemosyne 25, 1972, 379) without their noting that the phrase φανερῶν ποιέων was a favourite Attic expression in the fourth century, with φανερῶν (-άν) either an objective predicate, as here (cf. Pl. Legg. 1.630b ἄν ἰδέ τελευτάν ἦμιν οὗτος ὁ λόγος, καὶ τί φανερῶν ποιήσαι βουλήθης λέγει τεύτων; Isocr. 17.24 φανερῶν ὑμῖν ποιήσειν τὴν τοῦτο πονηρίαν, Men. Epitr. 494–95 τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην / φανερῶν ποιήσεις), or introducing a clause with ὅτι or ὃς (nine times in Isocr.: 4.91, 5.12, 8.66, 9.21, 15.3 and 260, 16.19, 17.2 and Epist. 8.10).


10–13

Moschion is now discussing his own upbringing, and logically the most effective text seems to be:

10 ἐτ’ ἐνεγράφην, οὐδὲν διοικέρων οὐδενός,
    τὸ λεγόμενον δὴ τοῦτο, τῶν πολλῶν τις ὣν
    ὃς γέγονα μέντοι, νὴ Δ’, ὄθλιστερος;
    παχεῖξι γάρ ἐσμέν.


Lines 10–11 have been much discussed11, and the safest assumption is that here Menander wishes to seize his audience’s attention by making Moschion deliver a series of paradoxes which will puzzle and surprise, although possessing a logic which at this stage is clear only to the speaker12: viz. he grew up in luxurious surroundings (vv. 7–9), but was then registered in the deme just like every citizen of Athens, and has now become even more wretched because he belongs to a wealthy family. The wretchedness is presumably the result of his rape or seduction of Plangon, and his fear of telling Demeas on Demeas’ return from abroad about the consequences. Being a member of a wealthy family makes the problem worse for a young man in Moschion’s position, since he would have expected Demeas to plan for him a

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12 On such features in the openings of comedies see especially my paper in Drama 2 (1992) 14–32.
marriage with the daughter of an equally wealthy family, not with a girl like Plangon whose father was much poorer than Demeas\textsuperscript{13}.

(i) In v. 12 γέγονα is the appropriate supplement, but it does not fill the space on its own, while ύν γέγονα (cf. Austin in his edition) would occupy too much space. δς γέγονα fits the gap perfectly, introducing an idiom (with the relative pronoun here becoming a connective equivalent to “and I”) favoured elsewhere by Menander: Dysk. 163–64, Pk. 1018 (1st person, as here), Georg. fr. 4,2 (2nd person), Dysk. 868, Sam. 413–16 (3rd person).

That μέντοι here is affirmative (“really”, “you know”; see Sandbach on Epitr. 510, Denniston, Greek Particles\textsuperscript{2}, Oxford 1954, 399–402) is confirmed by its linkage with the oath νὴ Δί'; cf. e.g. Ar. Pax 1290, Av. 1651, Eccl. 1130.

(ii) Sandbach writes on v. 13 in the commentary “A word to mean ‘rich’ suggests itself as a supplement, but nothing convincing has been found” (p. 546; cf. Austin, ZPE 4, 1967, 165 and his edition II.20). παχεῖς in fact fits the space perfectly, and its use in the sense of “wealthy” may have originated in Ionic Greek (Hdt. 5.30.1, 77.2, 6.91.1, 7.156.2), and become colloquial or slang in Attic (Ar. Vesp. 288 with ΣΥ ἄντι τοῦ πλούσιος, Pax 639 τῶν παχείς καὶ πλουσίους, possibly also Equ. 1139, but not Men. Sam. 98\textsuperscript{14}; cf. also Photius and the Suda s.v. παχεῖς, Ἀττικοὶ τῶν πλουσίων καλοῦσι συνήθως, and Hesychius s.v. πάχητες).

27–28

27 τοῦτο (δὲ) ποῆσαι διʼ ἔμε’ ἵσως αἰσχύνεται'
28 λέγειο λαβεῖν ταύτην’ τὸ μεν ἰ. . .[.]. . π. [.]

27 τουτοποιήσαι B: corr. Arnott, Sandbach. 28 Suppl. Arnott.

It is surprising that hitherto the obvious supplement at 28 has not been suggested: ‘I tell him to take her’, with λαβεῖν colloquial shorthand here presumably for ἀναλαβεῖν (sc. to take into one’s house as a mistress: see my commentary on Alexis fr. 103.4). For λέγει used thus, without object expressed, LSJ (s.v., II.5) cite correctly S. O.C. 856 μὴ ψαύειν λέγει, less securely A. Agam. 925 (λέγει καὶ ἀνδρά, μὴ θέον, σέβετε ἐμέ, a line deleted by Wilamowitz for non-grammatical reasons: see Fraenkel’s commentary ad loc.); cf. also Xen. Anab. 7.6.14 πάντες μὲν ἐλέγετε σὺν Σεβοῦ ἤνεωι, Pl. Theaet. 209d.

51–53

51 ἀλλὰ πρῶτος ἐνέτυχον
τὴν μητρὶ τῆς κόρης ὑπεσχόμεν γαμεῖν
53 καὶ νῦν, ἐπάν ἐλθῇ ποθ’ ὁ πατήρ’ ὀμοσσα.

51 Suppl. ed.pr. 53 καὶ’ (or καὶν) suppl. Handley, νῦν ed. pr.

Although from vv. 36–55 only the first two to four letters are missing from each line in B, supplementation is occasionally still uncertain (39, 53). After prudishly confessing to his rape or seduction of Plangon (47–49), in vv. 51–53 Moschion claims to have met the girl’s mother, promised to marry her when Demeas returned, and confirmed that promise with an oath. At the beginning of 53

\textsuperscript{13} See especially Wilamowitz, SB Berlin (1916) 68 and n. 2 = Kleine Schriften, 1 (Berlin 1935) 417 and n. 4, and E. Keuls, ZPE 10 (1973) 9 and n. 27.

\textsuperscript{14} For obvious reasons the terms ‘fat’ and ‘rich’ are often interchangeable (cf. the modern application of the slang term ‘fat cat’ in English to a wealthy business executive). At Ar. Equ. 1139 the primary meaning is clearly ‘fat’, but an overtone of ‘rich’ may also be present (see R. A. Neil in his commentary, Cambridge 1903, ad loc.). On the παχεῖς γέροντες of Men. Sam. 98 see my discussion of this passage (96–111, ii.2) below. Cf. also J. Taillardat, Les images d’Aristophane (Paris 1962) pp. 264, 314.
three or four letters are lost, then ἱν is clear. Since a promise backed by an oath cannot be conditional, the supplement printed by Kasser and Austin in the ed. pr. of Samia (ὦν ἤν, followed by ἐπανέλθη, compounded with a need to assume scribal omission of a syllable between πατήρ and ὄμοσα) is unacceptable. The simplest solution may be (with Handley, BICS 16, 1969, 104) to supply ἔν before τῷν and (with several scholars) divide ἕπαν ἐλθη, translating ‘I promised to marry (her daughter) now actually, as soon as ever my father arrives’. For this use of καὶ τῇν in Menander see Epitr. 316, Pk. 318, 1018 (‘Ἀπολλω, ὥς καὶ τῇν ἀπόλαυσα παῖς ὁ ἀλίγην’), fr. 674 K.–Th. = 445 K.–A., and compare the use of κἂν τῇν in Mis. 28 Arnott = A28 Sandbach; cf. also Denniston, Greek Particles 2 316–21.

55–57

55 ἀπὸ ταῦταμτου δὲ συμβήκηκα καὶ μᾶλλα εὔκαιρον· Ἡ Ἑρώης — καλοῦμεν τούτο γάρ
57 [αὐτήν — ] . . . οὖνομεν πάλαι

After Moschion has announced the recent birth of Plangon’s baby and its installation in Moschion’s house, he describes a chance event that apparently involved Chrysis but is difficult to interpret with full confidence: the first five or six letters of 56 are lost, much of 57 has been cut off apart from its last eight letters and a few indistinct traces of a few letters that came before, and after 57 a total lacuna follows removing the end of Moschion’s prologue monologue. When in 1970 I suggested (Gnomon 42, p. 18; so also Austin in his Berlin edition, II.53) that the beginning of 56 might have originally run ἅστ’ ἐξελεύσων Ἡ Ἑρώης, the supplement was based on an assumption that Chrysis herself must have borne a child at about the same time as Plangon, for otherwise Chrysis would not have been able to feed Plangon’s baby with milk from her own breast, as described by Demeas at 265–66 (cf. 77–79). That assumption must be correct, as papers by Sandbach (LCM 11, 1986, 158–60, with reference to earlier discussions) and Stephanie West (ZPE 88, 1991, 11–15, in response to C. Dedoussi, LCM 13, 1988, 1–3) have convincingly argued. Yet any supplement based on this assumption now seems unlikely, partly because it requires a postulate of scribal error in the lost opening of 56, and partly because it leaves nothing for καὶ μᾶλλα at the end of 55 to qualify. The most promising suggestion for the beginning of 56 to date is Sandbach’s ἐξελεύσων, synonymous with but preferable to εἰς καὶρόν, advanced independently by Barigazzi and Blume; μᾶλλα very commonly qualifies adjectives in εὖ-, less commonly perhaps qualifies prepositional phrases. But what then of the following Ἡ Ἑρώης; Blume interpreted this as the subject of εἰς θηρό’ in 54, with 55 and the beginning of 56 taken as an interrupting parenthesis. This appears unnatural, and it is preferable (with Barigazzi and in 1990 Sandbach) to take Ἡ Ἑρώης in 56 as the beginning of a new clause, itself briefly interrupted by καλοῦμεν τούτο γάρ (with or without αὐτήν at the beginning of the next verse: ‘for that’s what we call her’, thus introducing her name for the first time; cf. especially for the idiom a fragment of Callimachus’ Hecale, 342 Pfeiffer = 81 Hollis: τοῦτο γάρ αὐτήν / καμάηηται κάλεον περιηγήες), and followed by a statement in 57 to the effect that Chrysis herself had borne a child at about the same time as Plangon, but that it had died, been stillborn or even perhaps exposed.

15 The suggestion that Demeas might have misinterpreted what his eyes saw, and that Chrysis could have offered a milkless breast to the baby, is well refuted by S. R. West, who writes (loc. cit. in n. 5) “a breast-fed baby would be enraged, not placated, at the offer of a breast from which no milk was forthcoming”. As a grandparent to new-born twins, I totally endorse that remark. Cf. now also M. Krieter-Spiro, Sklaven, Köühe und Hetären (Stuttgart & Leipzig 1997) 51–52. In his edition of the Samia Jacques (p. xlii n. 3) aptly compares the situation in Epitrepontes, where Syros’ wife undertook the rearing of a foundling after the death of her own baby (vv. 267–69 Sandbach).

59

The traces in B do not oppose Jacques’ supplement ἐ[νθά]δ’ (pace Austin, Berlin edition II.54); in v. 61 the ε of έλγουσ’ similarly descends notably below the line.

60

At verse end the alternatives are ὀ[λ]χούσομαι (Barigazzi, RFIC 98, 1970, 155–56; Sandbach in the apparatus of Austin’s Berlin edition) and ὄ[ρασόμαι (Sandbach ibid.). Most editors adopt the latter, but elsewhere in Menander ὀ[λ]χούσομαι is normal (Epitr. 238, Mis. 283 Sandbach = 684 Arnott, Sam. 521, probably Phasm. 91, fr. 38 K.–Th. = 42 K.–A. translated by Ter. Andr. 592) and should be printed here (cf. the editions of Sbordone and Sisti).

67–69

ΜΟΣΧΙΩΝ

67 αἰσχύνομαι τὸν πατέρα.

ΠΑΡΜΕΝΩΝ

70 τὴν δὲ παρθένον

ὴν ἡδίκηκας τὴν τε ταύτης μητέρα

69 ὁπως τρέμεις, ἀνδρόγυνε.

So B, with ὁπως unaccented in 69. The one word here that gives pause is ὁπως, which is never followed by a present indicative in the sense “(see to it) that”. Attempts to restore appropriate sense are numerous but unsatisfactory. Keeping ὁπως, Sandbach (in the Gomme–Sandbach commentary ad loc.; cf. Austin’s edition, II.54) suggested aposiopesis, with the clause after ὁπως suppressed and replaced by a questioning τρέμεις, ἀνδρόγυνε; I formerly (Gnomon 42, 1970, 18) unconvincingly cited apparent parallels in post-classical constructions. Conjectures in place of ὁπως include Austin’s οὖ’ ὡς (in his edition, citing Naber’s conjecture at Philemon 2.1, which is relegate to the apparatus in the Kassel–Austin edition; cf. Austin II.54 and the Gomme–Sandbach commentary). Dedoussi’s ομως (ZPE 99, 1993, 19, comparing Sam. 387–88), and Gronewald’s τὴν δὲ παρθένον / ἤν ἡδίκηκας τὴν τε ταύτης μητέρα / οὖ’ πως τρέμεις, ἀνδρόγυνε (ZPE 117, 1997, 19–20). It is surprising that one suggestion that restores both sense and syntax has not so far been advanced: πως οὖ τρέμεις, ἀνδρόγυνε; For the idiom (with πως οὖ = “why not” with the implication that “you ought rather to”) see Barrett’s edition of Euripides’ Hippolytus, commentary on vv. 1060–61, 1290–93; for the use of the vocative ἀνδρόγυνε in the sense of ‘wimp’ cf. [Plut.] Mor. 219f “ἀνδρόγυνε”, ἐπεὶ, “τί δ’ ἄν πάθοιμεν δεινόν θανάστου καταφρονήσαντες”; and for the textual error (an example of common verbal displacement) see e.g. Pl. Resp. 9.579c, where most manuscripts read ὃς μή but Θ and Stob. Flor. 4.8.34 give μή ὃς, and cf. Eur. Med. 1134 (δ’ ὁπως AVB, δὲ πως LP) and Pl. Resp. 10.616a ὅτε εἰς some manuscripts, εἷς ὃ τι Α).

71–75

71 βούλου’ εἶναι τοὺς γάμους

72 ἢδη, πεπαύσθαι τουτοί πρὸς ταῖς θυραῖς

73 κλάοντα ταύτας, μηδ’ ἐκεῖν’ ἀμνημονεύν

74 ὡν ὠμοσαν — θέειν, στεφανοῦσθαι, σησμαίν

75 κόπτειν — παρελθὼν αὐτὸς.

72 πεπαύσθαιτε B; corr. Austin. 74–75 Punctuation by Kamerbeek (Mnemosyne 25, 1972, 381–82) and Lowe (BICS 20, 1973, 96–97): παρελθὼν αὐτὸς B. 75 σησμαίν B with grave accent over the μ.

Parmenon’s comments here have been much discussed, with the dominant subjects of controversy being the text and punctuation of vv. 74–75, where the interpretations of Kamerbeek and Lowe now seem totally convincing. These make θέειν, στεφανοῦσθαι, σησμαίν κόπτειν the three components of the
oath that Moschion swore when he personally entered Nikeratos’ house and promised to Nikeratos’ wife
that he would marry Plangon (cf. vv. 51–52). The infinitives in 74–75 name three actions in an Athenian
wedding ceremony, probably listed in the order of their occurrence17.

θεῖεν must refer to the sacrifice conducted by the bridegroom himself (also Sam. 123, cf. 190) at a
ceremony directly before his wedding, variously called the προτέλεια or προγάμμα (Pollux 3.38, cf.
Men. Sam. 713; Erdmann 251, Garland 219). At such a sacrifice the bridegroom would obviously be
garlanded, but it seems more likely that στεφανούσθαι in v. 74 denotes a bridegroom’s preparation for
escorting (cf. Sam. 732–33!) or driving his bride to her new home; vase paintings of this part of the
ceremony appear to highlight the garlands (Blech 75–81; Oakley and Sinos 11, 16); cf. also Sam. 190.

In that case σησαμίν κόπτειν will follow the sacrifice and the drive to the bridegroom’s house.
Here the Gomme–Sandbach commentary (ad loc.) wrongly interprets the phrase as a reference to the
chopping and pounding of sesame seeds in preparation of the wedding cake, made from roasted sesame
seeds and honey (Steier; Oakley and Sinos 23); that preparation, however, would presumably have come
at a much earlier stage in the ceremony, and there is no evidence that it involved the bridegroom
personally. σησαμίν κόπτειν here indicates rather that the bridegroom took part in cutting up the
finished cake into pieces for distribution to the wedding guests (also Sam. 124–25, cf. 190), probably in
the bridegroom’s house. Thus in 74 σησαμίν must be printed (pace Dedoussi, ZPE 99, 1993, 19); it (cf.
Ar. Pax 869) and σησαμίν (Ar. Ach. 1092, Thesm. 570, Σ Αν. Ε. 277, etc.) are the forms in normal
use for this cake.

77–79

77  : ἐγὼ μὲν οἴμαι : τὸ δὲ παιδίον εξεῖν
οὐτῶς εομέν ὡς εἴχει ταυτίν τρέφειν
αὐτὴν τῇ φάσκει τετοκέναι :

B’s text, printed above, is clearly corrupt; scansion demands οἶ(ο)μαί in place of οἴμαι, and sense
demands not φάσκειν but φάσκειν (so first the Photiades apograph: for this error cf. e.g. Aeschylus fr.
99 Radt, vv. 17, 19), but the identity of the speakers in 77–79 and the text at the end of 77 are still
problematic. ἐγὼ μὲν οἴμαι is usually assigned to Chrysis rather than Parmenon, and the next two lines
to either Parmenon or Moschion. εξεῖν was deleted by Austin, presumably as a scribal aberration
influenced by the presence of ἐξεῖ in the middle and τρέφειν at the end of the following line. Jacques’
deletion of δὲ has won general support, because

(i) B contains many examples of intrusive δὲ elsewhere (the Gomme–Sandbach commentary ad
loc. cites Dysk. 187, 242, 678 (probably), 729, Sam. 22, 356; Austin II.55 notes Dysk. 846, where B has
to δὲ χαριν similarly at line end);
(ii) οἴμαι/οἴμαι with μὲν solitarium (in the sense ‘I think so’: see also below) is an established
idiom (e.g. Eur. Alc. 794, I.A. 392, Andocides 1.22; P. T. Stevens, Colloquial Expressions in Euripides,
Hermes Einzelschrift 38, Wiesbaden 1976, pp. 23–24);
and (iii) τὸ δὲ παιδίον at line end introduces a split anapaest in the first half of the third metron
with only one parallel (Epitr. 299) so far in Menander.

There are, however, two other ways of tackling vv. 77–79 which deserve consideration. The first is
to assign all the passage cited above to one speaker (Parmenon), interpreting the dicon before τὸ as a
change of direction, not of speaker. Secondly, the μὲν in ἐγὼ μὲν οἴμαι (“I think so”: cf. LSJ s.v.

17 On the points discussed here see especially Steier in RE s.v. Sesamon (1923), 1849–53, W. Erdmann, Die Ehe im
du mageiros (Leiden 1982) 32–37, M. Blech, Studien zum Kranz bei den Griechen (Berlin and New York 1982) 75–81, R.
Little attention has been paid to Barigazzi’s repeated claim (RFIC 98, 1970, 159–60, 331; 100, 1972, 341) that Kasser and Austin’s supplement οὖν Κου means in their ed. pr. is too long for the space. The slight traces of the letter before Κου are not necessarily those of κ; they could equally well suit a descender of ρ crossed by the acute accent of στουν in the line below. Could Menander accordingly have written ἐλπίς οὖν? This collocation of particles is common in fourth-century Attic (Denniston, Greek Particles 50: e.g. Pl. Resp. 8.545a, Dem. 18.140, 282), and occurs elsewhere in Menander (Kith. 66) as well as in the (possibly comic) fr. adesp. 1026.14 Kassel–Austin.

96–111

(i) Sandbach’s suggestion (Entr. Hardt 16, 1970, 121) that vv. 98–101 (up to ἄγοθεν’) should be assigned to Nikeratos because he is ‘a man of short sentences, often in asyndeton’ and these lines are ‘in Nikeratos’ style, not that of Demeas’ has won considerable support, mainly in the English-speaking world. It may be time to restate the evidence and weigh the arguments against this suggestion.

1) The Bodmer papyrus assigns 96–105 all to one speaker; there are no dicola before the end of 105, and the presence of νικηρά (ατος) in the left-hand margin of 106 would normally be taken as an indication that Nikeratos’ first speech in the scene began there. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the papyrus is not flawless in its speech divisions and assignments.

2) As Sandbach himself admits, the oath "Ἀπολλόν in v. 100 is nowhere else used by Nikeratos, while Demeas commonly invokes Apollo in this play ("Ἀπόλλων 444, 567, 570; μὲ τὸν Ἀπόλλων 455, 596). Could the favoured use of this oath have indeed been intended by Menander as a linguistic element in Demeas’ characterisation?

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18 This may be preferable to τὸ παιδίου δὲ / οὖν Κου: cf. N. Dunbar on Ar. Av. 1717, following the lead of R. Dawe in his edition of Sophocles (Leipzig, I 1 and II 1975, I 2 1984).


20 Barigazzi’s claim is justified, although the left margin of B on this folio moves slightly to the right as the lines descend.


(4) The pithy comments on Πόντος (see below) and Byzantium in vv. 98–101 have a style, wit and point that in this play are associated mostly with Demeas: cf. e.g. 336–37 (Chrysis as Helen), 555–56, 570–71 (μονομοιχήσω, however it is interpreted24), 588–96 (Zeus, Danae, leaking roof), 603–604 and 606–608 (Chairephon, Androcles). By comparison Nikeratos’ phrasing and imagination seem generally far more pedestrian (e.g. 495–97, 498–500, 503–505), although even he has one moment of imaginative grandeur when he accuses Moschion of oustding Tereus, Oedipus and Thyestes with his sexual misdemeanours (495–97).

(5) Sandbach’s claim that the words ταύτα δὲ / καθαρὰ πενήτων ἀγαθά suit the relatively poor Nikeratos better than the wealthy Demeas has been effectively refuted by R. Kassel (ZPE 114, 1996, 58), demonstrating that πενήτων ἀγαθά is a proverbial expression that need have no reference to its user’s possession or lack of wealth.

The case I have presented is at one point (i.4) based on subjective interpretations and cannot be considered conclusive, but it may perhaps help those adherents of Sandbach who, like me, admire his outstanding scholarship elsewhere – in his Entr. Hardt paper, his text of Menander and the Gomme–Sandbach commentary, for instance – to pause here a little before they leap.

(ii) The descriptions of Πόντος and Βυζάντιον vv. 98–100, 106–109 and 417 have given rise to discussions25 which at times are simultaneously well-informed and unfocussed. The following points need to be made.

(1) If Menander here is accurately recording information available to him, Πόντος in v. 98 will best be interpreted as the Black Sea itself (and especially its western and north-western seaboard, which Strabo 7.7.1 identifies as τὴν (παραλίαν) τὰ Ἀριστερὰ τοῦ Πόντου λεγομένην, ἀπὸ “Ἰστρου ποταμοῦ μέχρι Βυζαντίου), not the territory called Pontus on the Sea’s southern shore26. The key here is the reference in vv. 106–109 to long-lasting mist or thick cloud there that blotted out the sun. Ancient writers other than Menander attributed this climatic feature to the territory of the Scythians west and north of the Black Sea (e.g. Hippocr. Αἰερ. 19 ἤηρ τε κατέχει πολὺς τῆς ἡμέρης τὰ πεδία, with the inhabitants τὸν . . . ἢερον ὀδυτείνον ἐλκοντες καὶ παχύν: cited by Blume (op. cit. in n. 4) 49; Greg. Naz. Epist. 4.4 τὸν ποθούμενον ἤλιον, ὥν ὡς διὰ κάπης αὐγάζεσθε, ὃ Ποντικοὶ Κυμέριοι: cited by Sandbach in the Gomme–Sandbach commentary p. 556; cf. also e.g. Η. Οδ. 11.15–18, Β. Εἰρ. 3.357–59). The accuracy of these remarks has been confirmed by modern climatologists particularly for the area around Odessa, which is still bedevilled by week-long fogs27. No parallel feature has been singled out for the southern coastal belt of the Black Sea, although severe winters, storms and heavy rainfall are recorded there28.

24 See above, on the play’s dating (p. 35–36).
25 E.g. Austin’s edition II.56–57, the Gomme–Sandbach commentary pp. 554–56 and 592 (on Sam. 96–110 and 417 respectively), Blume (op. cit. in n. 4) 38–46, 49–51, Collard (op. cit. in n. 21) 101–102. Cf. also the introduction to the Ποντικὸς τίτλος in my commentary on Alexis (p. 573).
26 The Gomme–Sandbach commentary on Sam. 417 makes two incorrect claims in support of the identification of Menander’s Πόντος as the region to the south of the Black Sea. One is that the use of πόντος in the sense of ‘sea’ is poetic. This ignores the fact that Πόντος was regularly used from the fifth century B.C. onwards as a convenient abbreviation of Ἑξεξεποιηκός Πόντος (18 times in Herodotus alone!). The other is that the identification in v. 417 of the Πόντος as a χωρίον can refer only to land on the south side of the Black Sea. This ignores the use of Πόντος as a convenient label for coastal land on any side of the Black Sea: e.g. in the references at Arist. G.A. 5.3, 782b33 το οἱ μὲν ἐν τῷ Πόντῳ Σκύθω καὶ Θρᾴκης, and Η.Α. 7(8).28, 696b20 to hornless rams ἐν τῷ Πόντῳ περὶ τὴν Σκύθην.
27 See especially the excellent discussion by C. M. Danoff in RE Suppl. IX (1962) s.v. Pontos Euxeinos coll. 943–49.
28 Cf. e.g. F. and E. Cumont, Studia Pontica, 2 (Brussels 1906) 118, 121, 213–14.
(2) With this identification of Πόντος, the παχεῖς γέροντες of v. 98 are likely to be Scythians, in view of the remark in the same passage of Hippocr. that τὰ εἴδεα αὐτῶν (sc. the Scythians) παχέα ἐστὶ καὶ σαρκόδεα; in that case Menander’s παχεῖς at v. 98 will unambiguously mean ‘fat’.

(3) Menander attributes ἄψυχηθον here to Byzantium, not to the Black Sea. The plant (wormwood, Artemisia absinthium: ‘the most bitter herb except rue’29; e.g. Theophr. HP 1.12.1, 7.9.4–5) has been recorded during the twentieth century in the vicinity of Istanbul30. Its leaves have a toxin that is washed out by rain and then tends to affect neighbouring plants, and this fact, as well as the plant’s presumed abundance in the area during Menander’s time, may perhaps lie behind the comment πικρὰ πάντ’ in v. 10031.

(4) Byzantium is presumably mentioned by the speaker because, on any voyage between Attica and the Black Sea, a merchant was obliged to stop off at Byzantium to pay his tolls before being allowed through the straits into the Black Sea (cf. Polybius 4.38)32.

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31 See especially M. Schuster in RE VIII.A.2 (1958) s.v. Wermut, 1553–58. In the Gomme–Sandbach commentary (p. 555) Philostratus’ remark (Vit. Apollon. 1.21), that in Babylonia the abundance of wormwood makes all the other wild plants ἀεθή καὶ πικρά, is appositely cited.
32 Cf. Austin’s edition IL56f., Blume (op. cit. in n. 4) 41 n. 74, and J. Hind in CAH VI2 (1994) 500.