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ROMAN EXPERIENCE OF MENANDER IN THE LATE REPUBLIC AND EARLY EMPIRE*

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Behind the title of this paper lurks a problem which I have tried to address by examining two different types of ancient evidence. The problem is to determine the medium or media through which educated Romans from the time of Cicero to that of Pliny and Juvenal knew Menander: in the original Greek, or through more or less faithful Latin adaptations; in written form, in undramatised recitation, or in stage production; in excerpts, or as complete plays; performed in private or in public, at Rome or in the Greek communities of Campania and Greece itself. So many variables justify a careful reconsideration of the established literary testimonia. But at the same time, if we are to go beyond acknowledging the familiarity of these generations with Menander as a literary text, we have to sift the much vaguer evidence for the performance of comedy, and relate the known use of *comoedi* in rhetorical training to their less verifiable activities as private or public entertainers. This may seem negative and unrewarding in comparison with questions that could be raised about Menander's general influence on the major writers of the period, but it will, I hope, provide a clearer background against which we can measure the discrepancy between Menander's reputation at Rome and his direct influence.

The abundant papyri of Menander and allusions to his plays in Greek authors of the early Roman Empire leave no doubt that he was more than a recognised classic: he was a favourite of the Hellenistic world, alongside Homer, Euripides, and Demosthenes. Indeed the *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* attributed to Plutarch shows that he was not only studied but performed both publicly and on private occasions. "He has made his poetry, of all the beautiful works Greece has produced, the most generally accepted subject in theatres, in discussions and at banquets, for

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reading, for instruction, and for dramatic competitions."[1] Two details drawn from Plutarch's comments in the Table-Talk, however, may suggest some reservations about the level at which Plutarch and his contemporaries appreciated Menander's artistry. At 711F, he praises Menander because guests who are entertained by his work are not disturbed by eroticism, but return to their wives content with their lot: an earlier passage (673B) shows that actors performed Menander at parties as an alternative to mime-artists and the character-sketches of ethologi; this suggests the selection of scenes or long monologues rather than complete plays.[2] It is probable that the twin evils of post-classical society, moralising and excerpting, were already at work in the Greek part of the Empire.

How different was the situation at Rome itself? In Cicero's time? In the generation of Horace or Ovid? The time of Seneca and Pliny the Elder, or that of Quintilian? We cannot assume a constant level of interest, or even a linear increase or decline in familiarity. Would it be fair to compare Roman experience of Menander with, say, the knowledge of Molière enjoyed three centuries after his death by Americans or Britons with a literary education? Or would it be closer to their knowledge of Shakespeare? We refer quite casually to his plays, and bandy quotations from them; yet this too can be misleading. We may have seen a live performance of the play, whether professional or amateur;[3] we may have studied the play formally, subjecting it to the type of analysis favoured in examinations; we may have read it from curiosity or merely met the synopsis and some passing critical comment, inheriting fragments of quotation as we read. We may not even know the source of our allusion.

Attempts to assess the Romans' familiarity with Menander's plays must also take into account the popularity of Latin adaptations, including what we know of the lost *palliatae* of Caecilius[4] with the surviving plays of Terence and Plautus. The *plebs Romana* in Cicero's day might still attend Roman versions of New Comedy, but educated contemporaries had the choice of reading either the *Andria* of Terence or that of Menander. There is only one undisputed reference to Menander in

[1] Plut. *Comp. Ar. et Men.*, *Moralia* 854B (Loeb Classical Library edition, vol. 10, p. 469). This is Testimonium 41 in Menander, *Reliquiae* vol. 2, ed. Koerte-Thierfelder (Leipzig 1953). All excerpts cited in Koerte-Thierfelder will be provided with references in these notes.

[2] *Quaestiones Convivales* 5, *Moralia* 673B. The Loeb translation "performances of mimes, impersonations and scenes from Menander" (LCL vol. 8, p. 375) is more specific than Plutarch's text, which literally reads "men performing Menander." As a referee has kindly pointed out to me, the verb *hupokrinomai* would allow us to understand this either as a full dramatisation, or as declaiming in a recitation.

[3] I would consider film or television versions of the plays as equivalent to stage productions from this point of view, and compare radio-productions with ancient recitation.

[4] The best recent study of Caecilius is in John Wright's *Dancing in Chains: the Stylistic Unity of the Comoedia Palliata*, MAAR 25 (Rome 1974) 87–126.

Cicero, and it occurs not in a speech, but in the preface to a philosophical dialogue.[5] Now Cicero often quoted lines from Roman adaptations of Menander in court, and when he alluded to his plots, in tact or deference to national feeling referred his audience to the Roman playwrights, Caecilius for the *Hypobolimaeus*, or Terence for the *Adelphoe*.[6] But in the preface to *de Finibus*, when Cicero argues against Varro the case for adapting Greek philosophy into Latin, he conjures up the figure of an intellectual snob pretentious enough to object to reading Caecilius or Terence instead of the original plays of Menander.[7] This figure may well represent a trend in the next generation, for twenty years later Caecilius is forgotten, and by the time of Quintilian it is Menander's text of the *Hypobolimaeus* which is recommended to the trainee orator.[8]

Thanks to the work of Glen Bowersock and Jasper Griffin[9] we now appreciate the strong influence of Greek culture at all levels in the early Principate and the extent to which fashionable and leisured Romans adopted Greek dress, manners, and entertainment at home and in social gatherings. Their reading too seems to have become more Greek. Certainly Ovid mentions Menander as reading for the young of both sexes,

[5] I do not accept the authenticity of *de optimo genere oratorum*, but it may well belong to the period under study in this paper. The pamphlet contains two references to Menander: at 6, where the author argues that Menander did not wish to imitate Homer because he was writing in a different genre, and at 18 where the corrupt text seems to be a reminiscence of *de finibus* 1.4 (cited below). The manuscripts reads: "quid istas legam potius quam Graecas? Idem Andriam et Synephebos nec minus Terentium et Caecilium quam Menandrum legunt." Note that the sole quotation attributed to Menander in Shackleton Bailey's edition of Cicero *ad Atticum* (13.42.1 = 354 SB) is only probable, though the parallels cited on the authority of Lloyd-Jones ad loc. (vol. 5, p. 397) give strong support. The excerpt is certainly from New Comedy, which is highly appropriate to the domestic scene with the young scapegrace Quintus *filius*.

[6] Cicero uses an episode from *Hypobolimaeus* in his first speech, *Rosc. Am.* 47, with the tag *senex ille Caecilianus*, and again contrasts the *patrem . . . Caecilianum . . . vehementem et durum* (illustrated by three excerpts from Caecilius' version) with *leni vero et clementi patre* (Micio from Terence's *Adelphoe*, so well known that he needs no identification) in *Cael.* 37–39. Varro himself quotes the play as *apud Caecilium in Hypobolimaeo* in *R.R.* 2.11.11, see K-Th pp. 146–47.

[7] *Fin.* 1.4: "Synephebos ego, inquit, potius Caecilii aut Andriam Terenti quam utramque Menandri legam?"

[8] Quint. 1.10.18 and 10.1.70. We should note that like Menander's and Terence's *Adelphoe*, this play was concerned with the moral education of young men, which might explain its popularity both with the Romans and (in Greek) with the Byzantine moral excerptors (Stobaeus preserves nine fragments amounting to 41 lines; K-Th frr. 416–24). As Quintilian recommends the memorizing of excerpts from the Menander play to his students, so Caecilius' text may have been known from the schools rather than the theatre.

[9] G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford 1965) and Jasper Griffin, "Augustan Poetry and the Life of Luxury," *JRS* 66 (1976) 87–105.

like his own elegy.[10] Did they read the plays for diversion, as they read elegy—on a bench while awaiting a rendezvous? Or was this educational? Both Propertius and Horace talk in the same breath of reading Menander and Plato, Horace when at leisure in the country, while Propertius plans to go to Athens to do so.[11] But what did Menander and Plato have in common? Surely their depiction of human behaviour and their marvellous dialogue. It rather looks as though Menander is to be a means to an end, providing raw material for Horace's *Satires* and Propertius' *Elegies*. Propertius is also planning to study Demosthenes to provide fighting argument: what he is seeking, then, is to enrich his rhetorical invention and perhaps also his wit from Menander.

But oddly, when Propertius or Horace or Ovid, or even the sober Manilius, evoke Menandrian comedy, they give no hint of the subtle family dramas, pregnant with misunderstandings, which we value in *Epitrepontes* or *Samia*, but only the standard features of a comedy of deception. The poets list the stock types of a hetaera-comedy, or name certain roles, but neither the names nor the details of action evoke a particular known play. Consider Prop. 4.5.43–44: "sed potius mundi Thais pretiosa Menandri / cum ferit astutos comica moecha Getas." We know of no play in which the courtesan cheats a slave; usually they are allies in cheating some aged father or intrusive soldier. We know that Plautus and Terence alike changed the Greek names of roles, from Syros to Chrysalus, or Chrysis to Thais,[12] but it seems most likely that Propertius has simply associated a famous title character of Menander with his own conception of a Menandrian plot—a conception which in fact resembles more closely the plots of Plautus than any extant play. Horace in the *Ars Poetica*[13] comes close to Terence, since Davus and Simo were certainly adversaries in *Andria*, but it is Pythias, found only in *Eunuchus*, who is said to cheat Simo, and yet neither of these plays involves the cheating of an old man under any name.

[10] *Tr.* 2.369–70: "fabula iucundi nil est sine amore Menandri / et solet hic pueris virginibusque legi" (K-Th Test. 35). On Ovid's use of Menander see L. Alfonsi, "Ovidio e Menandro," *Aegyptus* 40 (1960) 73–76 and note 14 below.

[11] Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.11–12: "quorsum pertinuit stipare Platona Menandro / Eupolin Archilochum, comites educere tantos?" and Prop. 3.21.25–28: "illic aut stadiis animum emendare Platonis / incipiam, aut hortis, docte Epicure, tuis: / persequar aut studium linguae, Demosthenis arma, / libaboque tuos, docte Menandre, sales." (*Docte* is an unusual epithet for Menander; if genuine, it presumably alludes to his philosophical education, but it seems likely that in either 26 or 28 *docte* has displaced the original epithet by a dittography.)

[12] Chrysalus actually plays on his original name Syros at *Ba.* 649: "non mihi isti placent Parmenones, Syri"; see F. H. Sandbach, ed., *Menandri Reliquiae* (Oxford 1972), *Dis Exapaton* 59. For Chrysis as the original name of Terence's Thais in *Eunouchos/Eunuchus*, see Schol. Pers. 5.161 (K-Th 2, p. 66).

[13] *A.P.* 237–38: "Nil intersit Davusne loquatur et audax / Pythias, emuncto lucrata Simone talentum."

The allusions of Ovid and Manilius, without names, offer only stock types and a stock intrigue, again, however, closer to the surviving Roman than Greek scripts.[14] Even Horace, after opening *Sat.* 2.3 with talk of reading Menander, later in the same Satire adapts line for line Terence's famous opening scene from the *Eunuchus*, portraying the weak, irresolute lover who cannot leave his mistress's door.[15] There is a clear contrast here with the treatment of the same episode by Persius, who uses the names given by Menander in the original Greek play;[16] indeed not only Persius, but the scholiast on this satire is able to quote the names of Menander's roles from his own reading.[17]

But if we grant that the authors of this generation read and were influenced by Menander, can we believe they ever saw a whole play staged? The evidence is uncomfortably vague. Strabo stresses the Greek festivals of Naples with their performances of poetry: one would expect this to include dramatic poetry.[18] A peculiar passage in Statius' encomium of his native city seems to suggest dramatic performances of Menander, but the allusion is out of context and strained: should it be emended out of the text or harmonised instead by tampering with its context?[19] Again, Suetonius,

[14] Ovid *Am.* 1.15.18: "Dum fallax servus, durus pater, improba lena / vivent et meretrix blanda, Menandros erit" (K-Th Test. 34). Compare Manilius 5.471f. (K-Th Test. 35), enumerating "ardentis iuvenis raptasque in amore puellas / elusosque senes agilesque per omnia servos." The single instance in which Ovid names a Menandrian character (but does not name Menander himself) is at *A.A.* 3.332: "cuive pater vafri luditur arte Getae." Writing in the first years of enthusiasm for the newly discovered *Dyskolos*, Alfonsi (above, note 10) wanted to understand this as a specific reference to the baiting of Knemon by Geta in the last act of that play. But (i) without an identifying adjective such as *truculentus* no reader would think of Knemon, rather than of the standard situation in which a slave tricks his young master's father; (ii) *luditur* implies a material deceit, as in the parallel allusions of Propertius and Horace; (iii) Geta is a name common to many plays: *Heros*, *Misoumenos*, and *Perinthia* of the extant plays of Menander and two of the six plays of Terence. It is more probable that like Propertius (4.5.54, cited p. 302) Ovid has inserted the name to give specificity to a general allusion.

[15] Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.259–71, cf. Ter. *Eun.* 46–49 and 57–73. For a brilliant analysis of Horatian adaptation from Terence disguised as autobiography, see E. W. Leach, "Horace's *pater optimus* and Terence's Demea: Autobiographical Fiction and Comedy in *Sermo* I, 4," *AJP* 92 (1971) 616–32. Horace has clearly built on the inspiration of Ter. *Ad.* 414–19 to portray the moral lessons he received from his father in *Sat.* 1.4.103–39.

[16] Pers. 5.161f.: "Dave cito, hoc credas iubeo, finire dolores / praeteritos meditor, crudum Chaerestratus unguem / adrodens ait haec" (K-Th 2, p. 66).

[17] Donatus adds that in Menander Chaerestratus' father is called Simo.

[18] Strabo 5.4.7 (on Greek theatrical performances at Naples): "At the present time a sacred contest is celebrated among them every four years, in music as well as gymnastics: it lasts for several days, and vies with the most famous of those celebrated in Greece."

[19] Statius *Silvae* 3.5.91–94: "et geminam molem nudi tectique theatri / et Capitolinis quinquennia proxima lustris. / quid laudem litus, libertatemque Menandri / quam Romanus honos et Graia licentia miscent?" Baehrens proposed *lusis* for *litus*: Phillimore, however, follows earlier editors in regarding the name *Menandri* as corrupt.

after noting Augustus' interest in Greek literature (*Aug.* 89), mentions his love of *vetus comoedia*. Is this the Greek old comedy or the old Roman comedies, as most editors assume? Is there reason to relate his apparent preference for comedy to his attendance at the Neapolitan games, from which he was returning when he died in A.D. 14? Greek old comedy can hardly be cited by Suetonius as a source of *praecepta salubria*, but Menandrian reflective monologue and one-liners would be highly apposite in this context. Again we are told that Augustus put on productions of *vetus comoedia* at public shows: this hardly suggests performance of Greek rather than Latin comedy.

From the Neronian period the evidence points to tragedy and para-dramatic forms like mime and melodrama rather than to public staging of comedy: the Emperor clearly had neither a sense of humour nor a sense of proportion, so that interest in comedy would be surprising at the time. Seneca on one occasion quotes what looks like a reminiscence of Dyskolos: "aut illud Menandri . . . omnes ait malos vivere et in scenam velut rusticus poeta prosiluit, non senem excepit, non puerum, non feminam, non virum et adicit non singulos peccare, non paucos, sed iam scelus esse contextum."[20] This looks like a genuine quotation, whereas the many citations of Menander by the Elder Pliny for various herbs, spices, and gems are more likely to be taken over second-hand from his Greek prose authorities.[21]

Whenever we have explicit reference to recitation of Menander, it occurs in connection with a significant but ambiguous figure in Roman life attested from the time of Cicero (if not earlier) to that of Quintilian. The name *comoedus* is applied to Cicero's great contemporary, Roscius, the knight of Lanuvium, who performed into his old age; it is also applied to what seem free-lance drama-coaches employed in the training of young orators, to individual private slaves valued as recitalists, and to troupes of seemingly young or artificially boyish performers who may be assumed to have given performances in private houses, if not in public. Apart from implying the ability to perform or recite comedy, the title does not specifically guarantee performance in Greek rather than Latin; certainly Trimalchio, who had bought himself a troupe of *comoedi*, claims to have used them to perform Atellanes because he found them more amusing than

[20] Sen. *N.Q.* 4a pr. 19. It seems to represent Men. *Dysk.* 718–21, but as paraphrase rather than translation.

[21] Pliny *NH* 23.169 is exceptional in naming the play from which the item of diet is drawn, but cf. 13.13 (fr. 920 K-Th), 18.72 (863 K-Th), 19.113 (831 K-Th), 20.252 (832 K-Th), 32.69 (not in K-Th), 36.44 (875 K-Th), and 37.106 (908 K-Th). Despite his claim in book 1 (index of book 31) to have used Menander, it would be rash to assume that he had personally consulted the text.

comedy.[22] But to return to the beginning of our period: Cicero came quite early in his career to defend the great actor Roscius in a civil suit brought by a partner over their share in an acting pupil. How had they met? He puts into the mouth of his protector, L. Crassus, at a dramatic date of 91 B.C., an eloquent account of Roscius' method of pupil selection and training.[23] This could be referred to pupil actors, were it not for the fact that Cicero is so aware of the usefulness of this kind of training for young speakers. There were social factors inhibiting him from direct admission that he had taken coaching from a man of the theatre, but his repeated and well-informed analogies from theatre to courtroom in this work bear out the suspicion that he had met Roscius as a pupil and incurred the obligation which he discharged by his defence in 76 B.C. Quintilian makes it very clear that the *comoedus* was a valuable part of the teenage student's basic training in his own day. The student is to avoid vulgar mimicry, but learn diction from the *comoedus*, correcting faults of enunciation and deportment; he will also learn how to narrate, how to persuade with conviction, and how to stir up anger and fear by his excited or pathetic tone.[24] He will use as the medium passages selected from comedy which are closest to *actiones*—disputes; but this is seen only as a preliminary before he is able to read and absorb whole speeches. Earlier in the first book, dealing with this transitional phase of education, Quintilian had singled out comedy, but especially Menander, for this function; the Latin authors are mentioned only as a concession.[25] When he comes in Book Ten to his advanced programme there is the same stress on Menander;[26] even alone, Quintilian declares, Menander can supply the orator with all the resources he needs of argumentation and diction, since he adapts himself to every circumstance, role and mood. Quintilian commends especially the scenes of dispute from *Epitrepontes, Epicleros, Locroe*, and the *meditationes*[27]—practice-scenes—from *Psophodees, Nomothetes*, and *Hypobolimaeus*. We

[22] *Sat.* 53.13: "reliqua acroamata tricas meras esse, 'nam et comoedos,' inquit, 'emeram, sed malui illos Atellanam facere, et choraulen meum iussi Latine cantare.'"

[23] Cf. *De Or.* 1.129: "saepe enim soleo audire Roscium, cum ita dicat, se adhuc reperire discipulum potuisse neminem . . . ipsi illi Roscio, quem saepe audio dicere caput artis esse decere." Cf. also *De Or.* 2.233 (on gesture) and 3.221 (on the effect of the mask in concealing expression).

[24] *Inst.* 1.11. Avoidance of unmanly mimicry (11.1) and theatrical excess in gesture (11.3); training in enunciation (11.4–8), in correcting grimaces and facial ticks (11.9–11), and in adjusting delivery to the functions of narrative, proof, and emotional impact (11.12–13).

[25] 1.8.8: "nec tamen excluserim alios; nam Latini quoque auctores adferent utilitatis aliquid."

[26] 10.1.6: "vel unus meo quidem iudicio diligenter lectus ad cuncta quae praecipimus effingenda sufficiat."

[27] *Nomothetes, Locroi*, and *Psophodees* are known only from this reference and isolated glosses in the lexicographers. *Epitrepontes* survives in the Cairo papyrus and three others, plus ten fragments; Menander wrote two plays called *Epikleros*, one, translated by Turpilius,

might note that this list includes a different selection from those plays preserved for their literary merits. Quintilian recommends the playwright equally as a training for declamation, since he provides samples of different social types and temperaments. His praise of Menander is second only in enthusiasm to his treatment of Homer, and he is explicit in noting that other Greek comic dramatists were far inferior for his purpose.[28]

If this training, either from the *comoedus* for the technique of delivery or the rhetor for techniques of composition, laid such stress on Menander, then he would have become a major part of the young public speaker's stylistic, if not literary, equipment. But Quintilian had also watched the *comoedi* perform Menander. Where and what did *comoedi* perform in the generations after Nero's death?[29] Was there a revulsion from his philhellenism or a decline in interest in the theatre?

The sober society of Pliny's friends offers a parallel to Plutarch's dinner: in an early self-descriptive letter to Septicius Clarus he describes his dinner entertainment as *comoedos vel lectorem vel lyristen vel . . . omnes* (1.15). The plural might suggest a whole troupe; elsewhere his claim is more modest; his skilled recitalist in 5.19.3 is technically a *comoedus* but he can also read prose or sing to the lyre. Usually he talks of *hearing* comedy: *comoedias audio et specto mimos et lyricos lego* (5.3.2); and Sherwin-White, following Guillemin, notes that recitation became the principal means by which the educated classes heard drama. But although he is right in general terms to add that "the *comoedus*

Terence's immediate successor, involved a court scene cited by Cornutus (a protege of the Senecas); see Spengel-Hammer, *Rhetores Graeci* 1.359 (K-Th 2, p. 63). On *Hypobolimaeus* in both versions, see above, note 6.

Meditationes may refer to the practice speeches reported by Menander's young men in *Sam.* 121 (*meletêsas*) and *Perik.* 550; cf. Ter. *Andr.* 406–7: "venit meditatus alicunde ex solo loco: / orationem sperat invenisse se." There is a fine example of such a set speech at Ter. *Phormio* 270–77.

[28] 10.1.72: "habent tamen alii comici, si cum venia legantur, quaedam quae possis decerpere, et praecipue Philemon."

[29] For a review of the evidence on comedy and *comoedi* in the early empire, see L. Friedländer, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms* 2 (Leipzig 1920[9]) 119–21 (unchanged from the seventh edition, translated as *Roman Life and Manners* by L. A. Magnus and J. H. Freese [New York 1908–13] 2.95–97; this translation will be cited as the first reference to Friedländer in subsequent notes). More recent studies have not been able to recover much additional evidence about the performance of comedy in the first century A.D.: for archaeological evidence see M. Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theater* (Princeton 1961) 241–42 and 244. Charles Garton, *Personal Aspects of the Roman Theatre* (Toronto 1972) has put together a register of Augustan actors (Appendix 2, 267–83) making full use of the epigraphic material, but comments in his introductory note on the dearth of information. He estimates seven actors (tragic and comic) known from the period 31 B.C. to A.D. 60, while a further seven can be assigned to the first century A.D. without the possibility of a more precise date (272). Ten of his entries report performers of comedy (273) but add no information about performance.

recited plays of the New Comedy—Menander, Plautus, Terence,"[30] I do not see a way of establishing whether Pliny and men of his seriousness and culture would normally listen to the Greek versions.

From Statius, and from closely similiar allusions in Martial and Juvenal, we catch a glimpse of a rather unpleasant aspect of these domestic *comoedi*. Lamenting the death of Atedius Melior's boy favourite in *Silvae* 2.1, Statius praises his talents as a reciter/performer:

> Alcides pensaret Hylan; seu Graius amictu
> Attica facundi decurreret orsa Menandri
> laudaret gavisa sonum crinemque decorum
> fregisset rosea lasciva Thalia corona;
> Maeonium sive ille senem Troiaeque labores
> diceret aut casus tarde remeantis Ulixis,
> ipse pater sensus, ipsi stupuere magistri. (*Silv.* 2.1.113–18)

This pretty slave-child certainly declaimed, perhaps enacted, Menander; so too it would seem, did the troupe upon which Martial composed two epigrams. The first is entitled *pueri comoedi* and puns on the leading-roles of two famous Menandrian comedies:[31]

> non erit in turba quisquam *Misumenos* ista
> sed poterit quivis esse *Dis Exapaton*. (14.214)

The second (14.215) interprets the infibulation of *comoedi* and *citharistae* as designed to make them more expensive and less accessible as sexual partners. In the first epigram, strong evidence for the performance of Menander, the allusion may also be sexual. Because the boys are *delicati*, encouraged to stay feminine and youthful, none of them will be shunned by a lover, like the Hated Captain, but any of these charmers could be a Double Deceiver. Juvenal bears out this method of inhibiting the sexual activity of *comoedi*: the diatribe against women sees matrons as clients for their expensive services (6.73) but the third Satire stresses instead the ability of the *comoedi* to act in drag, whether as Thais the courtesan, as a matron, or as the Soubrette Doris (all roles to be found in Terence), they

[30] See A. S. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (Oxford 1966) 161 on *Ep.* 1.15.2. Apparently (cf. *Ep.* 6.21.4) some of Pliny's friends attempted to compose Roman comedies in imitation of Menander. Caligula had written Greek comedies (Suet. *Calig.* 3): compare the epitaph of Pomponius Bassulus (H. Bardon, *La Littérature latine inconnue* 2 [Paris 1956] 217), who also claimed to have translated several plays of Menander into Latin.

[31] On the popularity of *Misoumenos* see Gregson Davis, "Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3.442f. and the Prologue to Menander's *Misoumenos*," *Phoenix* 32 (1978) 339–42, who argues for Ovid's direct use of the *Misoumenos* prologue; in his view "Thrasonides' plight was an exemplum of unrequited love," a "well-known anthology piece" which "Ovid surely knew and expected his audience to recognize." Beside the allusion found by Davis, cf. Martial and Epictetus 4.1.19 citing the soldier as an instance of a man who lost his freedom for love. (This is *Mis.* fr. 3 in K-Th 1 [1957]; fr. 2 Sandbach, relying on the new papyri of this prologue.)

can flatten their underbellies and act like seductive women.[32]

But Juvenal also overlaps with the most precise information we have from Quintilian about the public performance of Greek comedies. Quintilian's chapter on *actio* contains several references to contemporary comic acting. At 11.3.91 he criticises professional *comoedi* who adopt the quavering voice of an old man or a woman, when they are playing a young man's role but reporting the conversation of a second person, as in the prologue to Menander's *Hydria* or in his *Georgos*.[33] We could relate this to recital or a private staging, and perhaps we should not assume a public performance. Later, however, at 11.3.178f. his account of the two specialist *comoedi* Demetrius and Stratocles certainly belongs to the stage; they are called *maximos actores comoediarum* and their stage movement is praised as well as their voice and gesture: phrases such as "dulces exclamationes theatri causa producere et ingrediendo ventum concipere veste . . ." or "risus quem non ignarus rationis populo dabat" must imply performance in the public theatre. Indeed Juvenal follows his praise of the female impersonations of *comoedi* with allusions to precisely these two actors: "aut Stratocles aut cum molli Demetrius Haemo: / natio comoeda est" (3.99–101).

But were they performing Greek comedy? No doubt they were Greek or Greek-speaking Levantines in origin (unless like some modern ballet-stars they assumed an exotic name to commend themselves in an exotic art). No doubt they could perform Menander and his contemporaries, but is there a single record that they did so in Rome, and for the general public?

My reluctance to draw conclusions may seem perverse, contrasted with Friedländer's optimistic assessment that "The New Comedy of the Greeks (represented chiefly by Menander, and imitated by Plautus and Terence) retained the firmest hold on popular favour. In Rome, in Italy and the provinces the stock figures . . . delighted audiences for centuries. To keep interest alive in these well-worn plays, known to most of the spectators, at least at Rome, good acting must have been essential. A comedian's training was at the end of the first century a strict tradition. . . ."[34]

We need, I think, to discount this estimate in three ways, all clearly indicated by Friedländer's material. Firstly, although the theatrical games occupied some 48 days in the time of Augustus and up to 101 days in the

[32] Juvenal 3.93–97: "an melior cum Thaida sustinet aut cum / uxorem comoedus agit vel Dorida nullo / cultam palliolo? mulier nempe ipsa videtur / non persona loqui: vacua et plana omnia dicas / infra ventriculum et tenui distantia rima."

[33] Quint. 11.3.91: "cum mihi comoedi quoque pessimi facere videantur qui etiamsi iuvenem agant, cum tamen in expositione aut senis sermo, ut in *Hydriae* prologo, aut mulieris, ut in *Georgo*, incidit tremula vel effeminata voce pronuntiant" (K-Th 2, p. 142).

[34] Friedländer 2.96 = *Darstellungen* 2.119–20.

fourth century,[35] they were third favourite with the Roman audience, well behind the gladiatorial and circus games, and there is evidence that *ludi circenses* and *theatrales* might occur simultaneously. More to the point, in the theatre itself tragedy and comedy were less favoured than pantomime, whether tragic or comic in type, which was the delight of the upper classes, or than the mimes and Atellanes favoured by the groundlings.[36] Secondly, although Suetonius and Tacitus both attest participation by Greek-speakers in games sponsored by Caesar, Augustus, and above all Nero—who may himself have performed his operatic one-man shows in Greek—we do not know what kind of act was in question; the most likely would be pantomime to a Greek libretto.[37] Finally, when the English text of Friedländer speaks of "actors," it represents *histrio* in the Latin sources, and this word had come to denote Pantomime dancers, rather than "straight" actors.[38] Only when we read of successful *comoedi* can we be sure that actual comedy is in question: but the only allusions that certainly relate to *comoedi* performing in Greek come from Plutarch and from Epictetus reported by Arrian. And Epictetus' fascinating story of the procurator who was victimised by a riot in favour of the *comoedus* Sophron is set in Epirus, just as we assume Plutarch is speaking about mainland Greece. The evidence takes us no further.[39]

While the cultured and sophisticated Romans of Domitian's day may have seen Menander staged, it is more likely that they read him only as a schoolbook, when they were still immature, and used him as a quarry for figures and arguments in the declamation hall. Between the schoolroom and the symposium the dramatist's real artistry must have gone unrecognised by readers concerned with momentary pathos or brilliance of riposte. A few scholars and men of leisure read whole plays, as Gellius did the *Plokion*,[40] but the tendency would be to excerpt monologues or *sententiae*, without interest in the relationships between different scenes and phases of the drama. Menander had become a classic, but it was as a textbook, frozen in black and white stills, with little chance of recovering the continuous action and living colour of the theatre.

[35] Friedländer 2.11–12 = *Darstellungen* 2.13–14. The source for simultaneous performances in the theater and circus is Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 8.10.24.

[36] On the upper-class predilection for pantomime etc., see Friedländer 2.109 = *Darstellungen* 2.137.

[37] Suet. *D.J.* 39 and *Aug.* 43 speaks rather oddly of *omnium linguarum histriones*; Tac. *Ann.* 14.15 declares that Nero let no obstacle prevent well-born Romans "quominus *Graeci Latinive histrionis* artem exercerent usque ad gestus modosque haud viriles." Suet. *Nero* 46 quotes Nero's self-condemning line from the "Oedipus in exile" as a Greek trimeter.

[38] See Friedländer 2.109 = *Darstellungen* 2.137.

[39] Plut. *De Tranq.* 13, *Moralia* 473B declares that "men envy successful comoedians in the theatre"; for Epictetus' tale of the riot in support of Sophron, see *Diss.* 3.4.

[40] See Gellius 2.23, but note that he began by reading Caecilius, in conformity with his antiquarian interests, and only turned to Menander on whim (*libitumst*) as a control over Caecilius.