

Menander in the Admiring Eyes of Epigram  
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One emblematic aspect of the ancient biographical and critical traditions about the New Comic poet Menander is the idea that his work is reflective of real life and specifically of the poet's own erotic nature, his passionate love of women. This paper examines a Latin epigram (Martial 14.187) and a set of three Greek epigrams inscribed on a herm (IG XIV.1183 = Kassel-Austin VI, T170) in relation to the biographical and critical traditions about the poet, and particularly the eroticism that was thought to have pervaded both his life and art. Through these texts we can see the traditions not in the desiccated form we find crystallized in the Suda, but as it were "living and breathing", and serving a definite purpose within the literary society of the time.

In the first half of the paper I offer a defense of an unorthodox reading of Martial XIV.187:

Μενάνδρου Θάϊς  
*Hac primum iuvenum lascivos lusit amores*  
*nec Glycera pueri, Thais amica fuit.*

Shackleton-Bailey offered an unusual reading of this poem in both his Teubner and Loeb Martials, but never defended it in print. In his view the pronoun *hac* refers not to a woman, but to the *fabula* or *comoedia* contained in the bookroll to which the epigram would have been (notionally, at least) attached. In support of this view, I argue that Menander's poetry is described here by Martial using loaded "genre" terminology—*iuvenum lascivos amores* and *lusit*—immediately suggestive, to a late first century AD Roman reader, of the subject matter and style of Roman elegy. Then, as Shackleton-Bailey suggested, the *pueri* in the pentameter is not Menander (the usual interpretation) but rather the τρώφιμος of Menander's play *Thais*. Thus in the first line, I argue, Martial draws a parallel of style and subject matter between Menander and the elegists; in the second, he draws a parallel of poetic method: Menander's Thais bears the same relationship to his Glycera as, for example, Gallus's Lycoris was thought to have borne to Cytheris, or Catullus's Lesbia to his Clodia.

The second text examined in the paper comprises three epigrams about the poet Menander inscribed on a herm bearing on one side his likeness and on the other that of Homer. Under the overarching theme of poetic and personal eroticism, the epigrams here cleverly collapse numerous details of the biographical and critical traditions about Menander. The first two epigrams focus on the poet's eroticism as manifested in his life (epigram 1) and his work (epigram 2); the third focuses on his posthumous *fortuna*: his standing relative to Homer as judged by Aristophanes of Byzantium, whose name was ingeniously positioned so as to suggest a secondary comparison between Menander and the comic poet Aristophanes. Taken all together, the epigrams form a kind of compendious biographical-critical "lemma" to accompany the portrait bust.

Each of these texts, then, contributes to our understanding of Menander's reception in antiquity. More importantly, each is illustrative of the intersections between biographical and critical traditions about poets and epigrams written about those poets. Where the Suda shows us the after-life of these traditions, these texts give us a glimpse of how they might be put to productive use in the hands of a clever poet.