

Menander's Good Citizen Girls

Most citizen daughters in Menander are silent and invisible, but three—Philoumene (*Sikyonioid*), Krateia (*Misoumenos*), and Glykera (*Perikeiromene*)—stand out for their autonomy and agency. Scholars tend to subsume this anomaly under the male narrative (Goldberg 1980, Lape 2004, Traill 2008) or attribute it to the girls' temporary subaltern status (Henry 1985, Konstan 1987, Lape 2004, Sommerstein 2014); upon discovery of their citizenship and *kurioi*, their voice “is dissolved into the silent role of wife” (Konstan 1987: 139). In Greek literature generally, female agency tends to have negative consequences, and female virtue requires passivity. I argue that these three Menandrian heroines exert an exceptionally positive form of female agency, which leads to the formation and reunion of citizen families, one of the central concerns of Menander's drama, and reflects the indispensability of αἱ Ἀττικάί since Perikles' law of 451/50. The good female citizen is redefined as an agent, who recognizes the value of her citizenship and takes steps to preserve it. Philoumene and Krateia know they are citizens; Glykera, reared on citizen values, knows she might be one. Each reasserts her status by rejecting a lover who threatens it.

Philoumene of *Sikyonioid*, kidnapped from Athens as a child, is under threat from three men. Her owner Stratophanes loves her, but as a slave she has no *kurios*, so any union between them would be illegitimate and disqualify her for legitimate marriage should her citizenship be confirmed; thus she would forfeit her proper function as an Athenian woman. The lurking ephebe Moschion seems to want her as his own slave. The off-stage creditor would perpetuate her slavery by claiming her in repayment of the debt owed by Stratophanes' father. Philoumene takes sanctuary at Eleusis, loudly proclaiming her Athenian citizenship with the help of her father's slave, and a crowd of demesmen gathers to protect her.

In *Misoumenos*, the former war captive Krateia mistakenly believes that her soldier-lover Thrasonides, who bought and freed her, has killed her brother. If he had, he would not have harmed her personal status, but he would have eradicated the line of her father, who seems to have had no other children. By rebuffing Thrasonides, she expresses allegiance to her natal *oikos*; by returning to her father when he comes to ransom her, she volunteers her body for its regeneration.

By cutting Glykera's hair in a jealous rage, Polemon of *Perikeiromene* not only physically violates her, but also treats her like a slave, particularly a war captive. He is fresh from campaign, and haircutting was standard practice, one of several "symbols of humiliation," in andrapodization (Gaca 2010). Glykera calls the haircut an "assault" (ὑβρίζετω, 723) on her person and standing, "wicked" (ἀνόσιο[ν, 723) treatment befitting, perhaps even beneath, a "slavegirl" (θεράπαιναν, 725). She flees his house and takes refuge with a neighbor, refusing to see him despite his repentance.

These three girls agree to reconcile only after the arrival of their fathers neutralizes the threats, confirms their citizenship, and transforms their lovers into suitable husbands. Stratophanes, found to be Athenian, is praised for having kept Philoumene chaste (371-3), i.e., marriageable. Thrasonides did not kill Krateia's brother after all, and, as her first sexual partner (707-9), is her sole hope for a husband. Glykera forgives Polemon not because of his change in character (980-81, 1016-19), but because of her reunion with her father (1021-23). A *kurios* makes marriage possible, but only to the man who took her virginity; should she refuse Polemon now, she would deny herself a legitimate marriage.

These girls, then, are not simply subjected "to the constraints of citizen marriage and to the status of citizen wife" (Lape 2004: 178). Rather, their active choice to be good citizens is

dramatized. Acutely conscious of their status and civic worth, these vulnerable women first protect their respectability in the absence of any *kurioi*, then fulfill it through marriage. The emphasis on their consent, seen especially in the betrothals of Glykera and Krateia (*Mis.* 968-9; *Peri.* 1006, 1021-2), indicates that their choice matters; the support of their *kurioi*, that it is right.

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