

## Gendered Recognitions in Menander's *Sikyonioid*

New Comedy's "recognition plot" is its most common: children lost or exposed are identified by tokens revealing their parentage. The recognition, *anagnorisis*, restores the child to citizen society (Lape 2010, Munteanu 2002). In Menander's plays, recognition reunites the family, the dramatic goal. Furley (2014: 107) suggests that the recognition plot symbolized the self-development and recognition of inner character.

But character development and self-understanding in Menander are reserved for male characters: female characters show resolve, but remain largely invisible and do not experience development or maturity. Reconciliations too occur largely between men: husbands and wives find peace after crisis (*Epitrepontes*, *Heros*), but emotional union occurs between men (*Samia*, *Perikeiromene*, *Misoumenos*, *Dsykolos*; Heap 1998). The recognition plot is thus gendered—most observably, I argue, in *Sikyonioid*. Male recognitions occur in *Epitrepontes* and *Hiereia*, female in *Misomenos* and *Phasma*, *Heros*, *Georgos*, and *Perikeiromene* feature double recognitions of brother and sister. *Sikyonioid* is the only play that shows recognitions of an unrelated man and woman in the same play.

Scholars (Arnott 2000; Belardinelli 1994; Kassel 1965) have pieced the plot together. Two unrelated children were lost: Stratophanes given away by his Athenian parents for unknown reasons, Philoumene kidnapped and sold to Stratophanes' adoptive family. Grown up, Stratophanes brings Philoumene to Athens. Neighbor boy Moschion, an Athenian, hopes to possess Philoumene. Stratophanes discovers he is an Athenian citizen (Moschion's older brother), and when Philoumene's father is found, they may marry.

Philoumene's status creates tension in the men around her and provides the impetus for the play's action (Traill 2008). Three men vie for her: Stratophanes, Moschion, and Stratopha-

nes' creditor. She insists throughout that she is a citizen, but her main actions are to take refuge at Eleusis and put her fate in the deme's hands. She protects her respectability, but is otherwise passive and never gains control over her own body. Once recognized by her father, she is engaged to Stratophanes, and her adventure ends.

After Stratophanes learns that he is Athenian (through his adoptive mother's letter attesting citizenship and recognition tokens, γνωρίσματα), he develops as a person and citizen. When Philoumene claims Athenian citizenship, he facilitates her recognition, relinquishes his plans for concubinage, waives his rights to her rearing costs (τροφεῖα), and begs to help find her father. While Philoumene's quest motivates his transformation, this is Stratophanes' story. Both children have tearful reunions with parents, but Stratophanes alone makes affective relationships with parents and father-in-law. His adventures will continue: having discovered his natal identity, he develops from mercenary (a transient, liminal figure) to enfranchised Athenian citizen, endearing himself to the people, his natal family, and his marital relations.

*Sikyonioi* also demonstrates that not everyone wins in the recognition plot (see *Perikieromene*). While Stratophanes gets citizenship, a family, and the girl, his newfound brother Moschion loses sexual object, status as only child, sense of self, and likely some of his inheritance. He must develop from foppish, selfish, and self-possessed to gracious loser and younger brother. Stratophanes' recognition solidifies his identity and reshapes Moschion's, by putting proper limits on his privileges. Moreover, the sexual contest between brothers puts them into a quasi-incestuous homosocial triangle of erotic competition for a single woman (Sedgwick 1985). This triangle, focused on the active erotic competition between men, highlights the further passivity of Philoumene, who is not participant but prize.

In female recognition plots, women are betrothed and removed from stage immediately. For men, betrothal is only the beginning of their citizen journey and a continuation of character development. The gendering of the Aristotelean *peripeteia* in Menander's recognition plots, as well as his use of *anagnorisis* in character development merit further study. Because *Sikyonioid* highlights both gender disparity in the recognition plot and the positive and negative repercussions of the plot for male rivals, it is a crucial locus for anyone interested in gender relations in Menander.

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