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ANTONIS K. PETRIDES

ἡμεῖς δ' ἴωμεν:

MENANDER AND SOPHOCLES IN INTERTEXTUAL
DIALOGUE (*DYSKOLOS* AND *PHILOCTETES*)



ABSTRACT: Sophocles' *Philoctetes* is an essential but virtually unnoticed intertext of Menander's *Dyskolos*. The *Philoctetes* connection, energised in *Dyskolos*' Acts IV and V, furnishes a negative frame for perceiving Knemon's decision to reject, despite his desperate condition, his family's offer of care in exchange for his return to society.

THE IMPORTANCE of tragic allusion and intertextuality for Menander's dramaturgy escaped neither the ancient¹ nor the modern critics' attention, regardless of the diverse ways it was framed.² Many studies anatomise Menander's engagement with tragedy, primarily but not exclusively the Euripidean. Menander decisively deviates from the Aristophanic norm of paratragedy,³ verging rather on the Hellenistic poetics of allusion. Refining strategies he inherits from earlier drama, both comic and tragic, Menander employs tragic intertexts for various tonal effects, humorous, sentimental, ironical — or genuinely tragic (from the characters' limited viewpoint).⁴ His techniques are multifarious, ranging from simple verbal or rhythmic play

* I am grateful to Professor Stavros Tsitsiridis, Dr Kyriaki A. Ioannidou, and the anonymous reviewer of *Logeion* for their useful comments on this paper.

1. See test. 76 and 81 K.-A. and Satyros, *Life of Euripides*, F 6 fr. 39 col. VII Schorn.
2. Basic bibliography includes Katsouris (1975a) and (1975b), Hurst (1990), Gutzwiller (2000), Cusset (2003), and Petrides (2014).
3. On Aristophanic paratragedy, see chiefly Rau (1967), Silk (1993), Nelson (2016), and Farmer (2017). While parodic treatment remains Aristophanes' norm, Silk (2002), 42–97, shows that especially in 'dark' plays such as the *Clouds*, the Old Comedy master could also adopt a more integrating approach towards the tragic intertext, foreshadowing Menander's.
4. This is the technique Halliwell (2008) 404–15, calls 'perspectivism'.

to verbatim quotations of tragic lines⁵ and from incorporating tragic patterns such as *περιπέτεια* and *ἀναγνώρισις*⁶ as structuring devices to anchoring whole urban stories on themes such as the raped maiden, the exposed infant, a.s.f.⁷ Menander eventually absorbs an array of elements from tragedy into the genome of his comic genre, creating a bona fide hybrid drama. In Menander's comedy, mundane stories and familiar character types from life in the late classical and Hellenistic polis are constantly projected onto mythical archetypes, either for the fleeting effect of surprised amusement thus produced⁸ or in a sustained metatheatrical-intertextual play, which employs various mirroring techniques.⁹

Several aspects of *Dyskolos*' immersion in tragedy are well documented. Most studies focus on large-scale patterns and structuring techniques.¹⁰ However, investigating *Dyskolos*' interplay with specific tragic intertexts has revealed additional, rich nuances in Menander's plot.¹¹ This paper aims to put flesh on a significant but underexplored connection between *Dyskolos* and Sophoclean tragic drama (Euripides is not Menander's exclusive tragic interlocutor), namely, the dialogue of Menander's play with Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.

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5. The lost treatises by Aristophanes of Byzantium (*Παράλληλοι Μενάνδρου καὶ ἀφ' ὧν ἐκλεψεν ἐκλογαί*) and Latinos (*Περὶ τῶν οὐκ ἰδίων Μενάνδρου*) probably collected passages from tragedy and elsewhere that Menander had incorporated into his plays, as he does, for instance, time and again, in *Aspis*, *Samia*, and *Sikyonioi*. A sizeable part of the *Γνώμαι μονόστιχοι* also derives from Euripides and other sources. These may be interpolations by the compilers of this collection, but one should not discount the possibility that they were indeed fished out of Menander's own pool of 'thefts'.
 6. Katsouris (1975a), albeit dated in many respects, is still useful as an inventory of the material. On Menandrian anagnorisis, see Munteanu (2002).
 7. For the tragic provenance of these devices see e.g., Scafuro (1990) and Huys (1995).
 8. Furley (2009: 2–3) amusingly compares Menander's use of tragedy with the use of westerns in an episode of the modern sitcom *Friends*.
 9. For Menander's metatheatre, Gutzwiller (2000). For his comedy as a 'hybrid genre' and his plots as 'mirrors of stories', Petrides (2014), esp. 49–82.
 10. Anderson (1970) associated Knemon's admission of error in Act IV with the Aristotelian concept of *hamartia*. Lowe (1987) showed that the *Dyskolos* adopts the conventions of tragedy rather than earlier comedy in the representation and thematic exploitation of space. The entry of injured Knemon in Act IV most probably on the *ekkyklēma*, introducing a scene of undeniable solemnity and gravitas, has been cogently compared to tragic practice (Handley 1965: 251–3; Katsouris 1975a: 93, 98, 99–100; and Petrides forthcoming). Finally, Scodel (1993) explored how tragic intertextuality helped renovate a stock character from earlier comic drama, the cook.
 11. See Handley (2002) and Petrides (2014, 125–30) on the presence of Euripides' *Electra*; Petrides (2014: 53–8) on the *Bacchae*; Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004, 428) on the *Trachiniae*; and Petrides (2014: 52) on Aeschylus' *Persians*.

The only previous mention of this interplay was Thomas Baier's (2018: 68–70) brief discussion of the manifest divergences between Knemon and Philoctetes.¹² Both live apart from humanity; Knemon is a voluntary recluse and a misanthrope who relishes and staunchly defends his isolation; Philoctetes has been betrayed and abandoned by his comrades on a desert island for ten years, bewailing his fate and longing to return home. Knemon hates all mankind indiscriminately; Philoctetes directs his hatred specifically at the Atreids. The intertext —and such I argue it is— deserves more profound treatment. The *Philoctetes* connection, this paper submits, anchored on palpable verbal and situational echoes and energised mostly in *Dyskolos*' Acts IV and V, furnishes a *negative frame* for perceiving Knemon's decision to reject, despite his desperate circumstances, his family's offer of care in exchange for his return to society, symbolised by the celebrations inside Pan's cave. As such, tragic intertextuality further complicates the Menandrian play's already bewildering final scene.

* * *

The following short scene comes from *Dyskolos*, Act V:

ΣΩ.	οὐδενὸς χροῖ πρόγαματος	860
	τὸν εἶ φρονοῦνθ' ὄλωσ ἀπογνώναί ποτε. ἀλωτὰ γίνετ' ἐπιμελείαι καὶ πόνωι ἅπαντ'. ἐγὼ τούτου παράδειγμα νῦν φέρω ἐν ἡμέραι μιᾷ κατείργασμαι γάμον <ὄν> οὐδ' ἂν εἷς ποτ' ὤιετ' ἀθρώπων ὄλωσ.	865
ΓΟ.	προάγε<τε> δὴ θᾶττόν ποθ' ὁμεῖς.	
ΣΩ.	δεῦτε δὴ. μῆτερ, δέχον τάττας. ὁ Κνήμων δ' οὐδέπω;	
(ΓΟ.)	ὅς ἰκέτευν ἐξαγαγεῖν τὴν γραῦν ἔτι, ἴν' ἦι τελέως μόνος καθ' αὐτόν;	
(ΣΩ.)	ὦ τρόπου	
	ἀμάχον.	
(ΓΟ.)	τοιούτος.	

12. Sallmann (1977) 207–10, commenting on the psychology of the misanthrope, also juxtaposed *Dyskolos* and *Philoctetes*, without postulating any direct intertextual relationship between the two plays.

<ΣΩ.>

ἀλλὰ πολλὰ χαιρέτω.

870

ἡμεῖς δ' ἴωμεν.¹³

- Sostratos: (*Soliloquising*) A wise man should never despair of anything. Every goal is attainable with diligence and effort. I am a living example of this before you. In a single day, I have achieved a marriage that nobody in the world would have thought possible.
- Gorgias: (*To his mother and sister*) Come along, you, hurry.
- Sostratos: (*To the women*) Yes, this way. (*To his mother inside the shrine*) Mother, you receive them. (*To Gorgias*) Knemon isn't here yet?
- Gorgias: You mean the man who begged me to bring even the old woman with us so that he remains all by himself?
- Sostratos: Oh, what an impregnable character.
- Gorgias: That's how he is.
- Sostratos: Well, forget about him! Let us go.¹⁴

The scene has the taste of an epilogue. By this point, Sostratos has secured the consent of Gorgias, the new *kyrios* of Knemon's daughter since her father abdicated his rights, to marry his beloved. Sostratos has also convinced his father, Kallippides, to consent to the marriage of Gorgias to his own sister (*Dysk.* 784–860). Sostratos now boasts about his glorious triumph. Ostensibly, the previously unimaginable marriage he refers to (in the singular) is his own, hindered by the obstacle of Knemon's character (cf. *Dysk.* 336–8). However, both marital unions were a feat if one considers another major obstacle, the class difference between the households involved. From this, Sostratos draws the moral of the story: everything is possible if you never give up — everything, that is, except reforming Knemon, who continues stubbornly to spurn society.

One could counter that this 'epilogic' scene constitutes little more than another 'false closure' of the sort Menander usually employs in the fourth act of his comedies. In plays like *Samia* or *Epitrepontes*, the plot appears fully resolved by the end of Act IV until further complications arise at the beginning of Act V to prolong the play. Nevertheless, the situation in *Dyskolos* is starkly different; Knemon's non-rehabilitation is not a new complication but a clamouring loose end. In Act IV, having adopted Gorgias and

13. The *Dyskolos* is cited from Petrides, forthcoming. [The edition by R. Kassel and St. Schröder (*PCG*, v. VI. 1) became available to the author after the typesetting of this article.]

14. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

admitted to the *hamartia* of a solitary life, Knemon had allowed hopes he would renounce his misanthropic ways. Soon this proved illusory, as the old man, despite his serious injury, insists on ‘living as he wishes’ (*Dysk.* 735). In line 866, Gorgias leads his mother and sister to Pan’s shrine to join the party. As a group, the characters resign any further attempts at conquering Knemon’s implacable nature (cf. *Dysk.* 870–71) — all but Simiche, who is still inside, mounting one last, ill-fated effort to make him follow. She, too, will concede in the end (*Dysk.* 874–78). The characters thus appear resolved never to bother with Knemon again. The audience, however, cannot but expect *something* to happen to address the problem of the misanthrope — poetic justice demands it even if the antisocial man is no longer an obstacle to his daughter’s future.

Truly enough, the drama restarts emphatically at line 880, when the aulete introduces the most ambiguous scene of the play. The manifest closural essence of the scene in lines 860–71 is designed to maximise the surprise of this restart. The aulete’s intervention and the play’s ‘new beginning’ signals that the issue of Knemon will finally be addressed — but no good-willing character is left to do anything benignly constructive about it. In the most ominous premonition of Knemon’s final fate, the family bids the misanthrope a final, exhausted farewell: *ἀλλὰ πολλὰ χαιρέτω | ἡμεῖς δ’ ἴωμεν* (‘Well, forget about him. Let us go!’, 870–71). Despite Sostratos’ advice that one should despair of nothing, Knemon’s relatives, with Sostratos as their new spokesman, now despair of Knemon, judging that his intransigence is ultimately unbeatable (*ὃ τρόπον ἀμάχου*, 869–70) if the danger of death itself failed to overcome it. The misanthrope has finally managed to alienate even the most patient people around him, and he will pay the price.

The following point has gone unnoticed by scholarship. *ἡμεῖς δ’ ἴωμεν* is precisely the phrase Odysseus uses in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* (1061) — in the same metrical position at the beginning of the line — to signal the final decision to forsake the obstinate man of that play. Although it is in his nature, Odysseus says, always to desire victory, he gives up on Philoctetes (*Phil.* 1052–53) — because victory over him is ultimately impossible:

νικᾶν γε μέντοι πανταχοῦ χροῖζων ἔφρον,
 πλὴν ἐς σέ· νῦν δὲ σοί γ’ ἐκὼν ἐκστήσομαι.
 ἄφετε γὰρ αὐτόν, μηδὲ προσψάσσητ’ ἔτι.
 ἔατε μίμνειν. οὐδὲ σοῦ προσχροῖζομεν, 1055
 τά γ’ ὅπλ’ ἔχοντες ταῦτ’· ἐπεὶ πάρεστι μὲν
 Τεῦκρος παρ’ ἡμῖν, τήνδ’ ἐπιστήμην ἔχων,

ἐγὼ θ', ὅς οἴμαι σοῦ κάκιον οὐδὲν ἂν
 τούτων κρατύνειν, μηδ' ἐπιθύνειν χερί.
 τί δῆτα σοῦ δεῖ; χαῖρε τὴν Λήμνον πατῶν. 1060
 ἡμεῖς δ' ἴωμεν. καὶ τάχ' ἂν τὸ σὸν γέρας
 τιμὴν ἐμοὶ νείμειεν, ἦν σὲ χρῆν ἔχειν.

It is in my nature always to desire victory — except when it comes to you! Now I shall willingly step away from you. Let him go, take your hands off him! Let him stay here! We do not need you anyway now that we have these weapons. We have Teucer with us; he commands this skill, and so do I. I don't think I would master them any worse than you or that my hand would be less straight aiming them. What use is there for you? Enjoy walking about Lemnos! Let us go — perhaps your special prize will give me the honour that should have been yours.

I submit that the use in both plays of an identical phrase, under similar exceptional circumstances in comparable critical moments of the plot, is hardly a negligible coincidence: the verbal echo is an intertextual marker that energises Philoctetes as a mythological model for Knemon in his current helpless state. *ἡμεῖς δ' ἴωμεν* is a much more 'marked' phrase than appears to the naked eye. The single jussive *ἴωμεν* is indeed quite common in drama; however, the addition of the personal pronoun —unnecessary, strictly speaking, but inserted to create a strong contrast between society and the lonesome hero— is not: a search in *TLG* reveals that the formula, with *ἡμεῖς δ'* followed by *ἴωμεν*, is attested only three times, twice in *Philoctetes* (spoken by Neoptolemus and Odysseus) and once in *Dyskolos*. In other words, *ἡμεῖς δ' ἴωμεν* is unique in the two plays that concern us.

Knemon, like Philoctetes, is now gravely injured after his fall into the well. However, despite appearances, his situation is not entirely desperate, and neither is Philoctetes's. Both characters are offered salvation, which would restore them to society after years of seclusion, voluntary (Knemon) or involuntary (Philoctetes). Neoptolemus and Odysseus offer to carry Philoctetes to Troy. Should he accept, Philoctetes would reap many benefits in exchange for compromising with the ways of men he despises, such as Odysseus and the Atreids. As Helenus's prophecy goes, in Troy, he will be healed by Asclepius and gain glory by playing the first fiddle in capturing the Trojan citadel.¹⁵ Remaining in Lemnos, he may be upholding his

15. On the prophecy of Helenus and its ambiguities, see Gill (1980).

principles, but he also perpetuates his horrendous physical and psychological tribulation until he eventually expires.¹⁶ Although the root causes of his predicament are different, Knemon faces a similar dilemma. If he consents to re-enter society with all the evils that once drove him to a self-imposed kind of exile, he will receive proper care and protection from his family. If he persists with his misanthropy, in the words of Simiche, ‘a great misfortune will befall him again...even worse than the present one’ (ἔσται μέγα <κα>κὸν πάλιν[τί σοι] |...<καί> μείζον ἢ νῦν, *Dysk.* 877–78). Neither Simiche nor the spectators suspect what this may be, but they shall soon discover.

The responses of Knemon and Philoctetes to their respective dilemmas are also comparable. Stubborn and relentless in his hatred for the Greeks, Philoctetes scorns the entreaties of those most empathetic to his suffering, Neoptolemus and the chorus. Knemon, too, rejects his family’s pleas to join the sacrifice, adamant that he shall still abstain from all community-building social rites: he eschews the sacrificial party as he had disparaged the social protocol of hospitality and kindness to strangers. In other words, both characters, the tragic and the comic, could escape their current vulnerability — it was entirely in their power: *Phil.* 1165–66: γνῶθ’, εἶ γνῶθ’ ἐπὶ σοι | κῆρα τάνδ’ ἀποφρεύγειν;¹⁷ cf. *Dysk.* 694–7: τοιοῦτόν ἐστ’ ἐρημία κ[ακόν], | ὄρᾱις; ἀκαρῆς νῦν παραπόλωλας ἀρτίως. | τηρούμενον δὴ τηλικούτων τῶι βίωι | ἤδη καταζῆν δεῖ).¹⁸ Nevertheless, they both mulishly refuse to make the necessary concessions, thwarting the entreaties of the people who mean best. In the presence of evidently preferable alternatives, rigidly sticking to an equally unyielding moral agenda, they choose the worse outcome for themselves: *Phil.* 1099–100: εἴτέ γε παρὸν φρονῆσαι | λωίονος δαίμονος εἶλον τὸ κάκιον φρονεῖν;¹⁹ cf. *Dysk.* 876–77: πρὸς τὸν θεόν σε βουλομένων [τούτων ἄγειν] | ἀντεῖπας;²⁰ *Dysk.* 932–33: οὐκ ἔᾶις κομίζειν | εἰς ταῦτ’ οἷς θύουσι σαντόν.²¹

The humblest characters in both plays — the chorus in *Philoctetes*, Simiche in *Dyskolos*— make the last cracks at persuasion. However, Knemon

16. The representation of Philoctetes’s excruciating physical pain is such that it sets apart this play of Sophocles even by the standards of tragedy. In the extant Greek dramatic corpus, the only comparable parallel is Sophocles’ own *Trachiniae*. Budelmann (2007) pointed to Seneca’s *Hercules Oetaeus* as possibly emulating Sophocles’ representation of pain. I suggest that in its own toned-down manner, Menander’s *Dyskolos* also belongs to this tradition.

17. ‘Know —and know well— that it is up to you to escape this deadly fate’.

18. ‘Can you see what a pernicious thing living all alone is? You nearly died just now. At your age, you already ought to live in someone’s constant care’.

19. ‘While it was in your power to choose a better fate for yourself, you opted for the worse’.

20. ‘They wanted to carry you to the god [i.e., to Pan’s shrine], but you objected’.

21. ‘You do not let us take you to join the sacrificers’.

and Philoctetes ‘can neither be persuaded nor be forced to comply’. Gorgias puts this as plainly as one can already at the beginning of *Dyskolos*, Act II (250–54):

ζυ]γομαχῶν τοῦτον οὔθ' ὅττωι τρόπωι
 ἀναγκάσειε τις εἰς τὸ βέλτι[ον φρονεῖ]ν
 οὔτ' ἂν μεταπέισαι νουθετῶν δ[ρω̄ σαφῶ]ς,
 ἀλλ' ἐμποδῶν τῶι μὲν βιάσασθαι [τὸν ν]όμον
 ἔχει μεθ' αὐτοῦ, τῶι δὲ πεῖσαι τὸν τρο[όπο]ν.

Antagonising him, you will not make him see reason; there is no way. Neither do I discern how one could change his mind by counsel. With him are the law and his character, which prevent him from being forced or convinced.

Similarly —in another palpable echo between the two plays— as long as Philoctetes’ own insurance policy, the divine bow of Heracles, helps him ward off any assailant, Philoctetes οὐ μὴ πίθηται· πρὸς βίαν δ' οὐκ ἂν λάβοις (‘there is no way he can be convinced, and you cannot take him by force’, *Phil.* 103).

It falls on Sostratos and Odysseus, the individuals least emotionally invested in the two impregnable men, to signal the change: the time has come to cease caring, move on, and abandon them to their own devices. *πολλὰ χαιρέτω* is Sostratos’ parting message;²² Odysseus’ blunt farewell is phrased similarly: *τί δῆτα σοῦ δεῖ; χαιρε τὴν Λήμνον πατῶν* (‘what need is there of you? Enjoy walking about Lemnos!’), *Phil.* 1060). Life will go on without the two obstinate men: this is the gist in both cases.

In neither play, of course, could this be the last word, as the audience realises. There is irony in both farewells — unintentional (authorially produced) in Sostratos’ case, intentional and character-driven in Odysseus’s. Odysseus is cruel: Philoctetes will hardly be ‘stepping’ on Lemnos; he has been described as ‘crawling’ around, like a child (or a serpent), dragging his incapacitated foot (*εἶρε δ' ἄλλοτ' ἀλλ<αχ>ᾱ | τότ' ἂν εἰλνόμενος*, *Phil.* 701–2). Sostratos’ *πολλὰ χαιρέτω* harks back to the exchange between Knemon and Sikon in the second door-knocking scene in Act III, 512–13: (ΣΙ.) *χαιρε πολλά.* (ΚΝ.) *οὐ βούλομαι | χαιρειν παρ' ὑμῶν οὐδενός.* (ΣΙ.) *μὴ χαιρε δή.* It

22. Diogenianus, *Paroem.* 9, attests that this use of *χαιρε-χαιρέτω* was proverbial in antiquity, used to express lack of caring and engagement: *οὐκ ἔστ' ἐμὸν τὸ προᾶγμα, πολλὰ χαιρέτω: ἐπὶ τῶν ἀπραγμόνων.*

also recalls Pan's encapsulation of Knemon's misanthropy (*οὐ χείρων τ' ὄχλωι*, 7). Knemon's torture at the hands of the two slaves in the play's final scene will be a reversed form of Act III's door-knocking sequence and a direct consequence of his general attitude towards mankind, which Pan lambasted in the prologue and remained unchanged to the bitter end despite the lessons learned.

* * *

Menander's intertextual dialogue with Sophocles' play is more profound than the similarities between the 'farewell scenes' analysed above; it touches upon the central themes of the two dramas. *Dyskolos* and *Philoctetes* are both, among other things, subtle investigations of monomania and its consequences on the psyche.

Events belonging to the plot's prehistory have amassed a thick sediment of resentment in Philoctetes's and Knemon's souls, gradually transmuted into congealed, implacable hatred. Philoctetes points this hatred at specific individuals; Knemon turns it indiscriminately against all mankind. In both cases, the hatred threatens to consume them, body and soul. Philoctetes's and Knemon's grievances may be justified, but the extremism of their reaction results in self-destructive behaviours. Knemon's past and the reasons that hardened him against humanity remain relatively obscure compared to Philoctetes's. The misgivings Knemon voices concern generic flaws of mankind: selfishness, avarice, and hypocrisy (*Dysk.* 447–54, 718–21, 742–46). On the contrary, we know precisely how and why Philoctetes was wronged: after the sacred snake of Chryse bit him, causing him awful anguish and a repulsive, incurable wound oozing foul-smelling pus, he was heartlessly²³ abandoned on a desolate island to live on the bare minimum.

Philoctetes' life in Lemnos was harsh beyond measure — like the Attic farmer's in Phyle. Phylasian farmers, Knemon among them, cultivating an unforgiving terrain, 'reap nothing good' for all their drudgery, only pain (*Dysk.* 606: *ὀδύνας ἐπισπᾶ[τ' ο]ὐδὲν ἀγαθὸν λαμβάνων*). Philoctetes, too, endlessly chased the most basic sustenance, but 'no one, as they say, applies a salve for his pains' (*Phil.* 167–68: *οὐδέ τι τ' ἀτῶι | παιῶνα κακῶν ἐπιωμᾶν*). Both men experience their surroundings' harshness in a magnified

23. A more forgiving treatment of Philoctetes' abandonment is provided by Ceri Stephens (1995).

form — Knemon because of his character, Philoctetes, due to his former comrades' perfidy and his disease. Out of severe intolerance even to indispensable human contact, Knemon does not keep a single man around to succour his hard labour, preferring to do everything himself (*αὐτὸς μόνος*, *Dysk.* 326–33). Philoctetes was not afforded any means of survival other than Heracles' bow (*Phil.* 274–75). Thus, for the tenth year now, he has regressed to the primaeval state of a hunter-gatherer (*Phil.* 287–99). 'Oh, what a thrice-wretched man for the kind of life that he leads', the slave Getas cries about Knemon (*Dysk.* 603: ὦ τρισκακοδα[ίμων οἶ]τος· οἶον ζῆμι βίον). *Philoctetes*'s chorus expresses similar sentiments: 'I pity the man... How, oh how does the wretch still endure?' (*Phil.* 169, 175: οἰκτίρω δέ νιν... πῶς ποτε πῶς δύστανος ἀντέχει;).

Philoctetes describes his condition as ἀπαργίωσις, living (and looking) like a wild beast: μή μ' ὄκνωι | δείσαντες ἐκπλαγῆτ' ἀπηργιωμένον ('do not shrink away from me in fear, startled by my wild appearance', *Phil.* 225–26).²⁴ The king of old, who came from an ancient royal house 'lesser than none' (*πρωτογόνων ἴσως* | οἴκων οὐδενὸς ὕστερος, *Phil.* 180–81), has been reduced to living *σμυγερόν σμυγερόως* (*Phil.* 166), scruffy in appearance, malnourished (*Phil.* 186), and diseased, uttering aggrieved growls of agony and frustration (*πικραῖς οἰμωγαῖς*, *Phil.* 189–90; *διάσημα θρηνεῖ*, *Phil.* 209) — causing more fear than pity.²⁵ Philoctetes's cave looms large in the *Philoctetes* setting, like Pan's cave is an imposing presence in *Dyskolos*. Philoctetes' cave, however, achieves an 'intervisual' connection to a different cave, also relevant for Knemon, that of Polyphemus. It has long been recognized that Philoctetes' wild abode is an intertextual/intervisual marker ushering in Polyphemus, the quintessential man-beast of Greek literature, as Philoctetes's model.²⁶ Philoctetes, like Polyphemus, lives in a cave situated in a land apart (*ἔσχαται*). Like the Cyclops, he leads, in Seth Schein's words, a 'technologically primitive existence': makeshift bedding, roughly made cups, which are 'the work of some sorry workman' (*φλαυρογογῶ*

24. The most eloquent commentary on Philoctetes' slippage 'beyond the pale of civilization' is provided by Segal (1981) 296–305. See also, more recently, Eslava-Bejarano (2019).

25. See Worman (2000) for the discourse of disease in *Philoctetes* and especially for the idea that there is a symbolic 'leakage' from the hero's wound to his words that gives the impression that Philoctetes has relinquished even the capacity of human speech and communication. In Petrides (2014: 34–8), I argued that Knemon, too, after years of 'silence', that is, of eschewing human communication, is trapped in and by language itself when eventually, in his *apologia pro vita sua* in Act IV, he decides to speak in defence of his ways.

26. Schein (2013) 17–18.

τινός | τεχνήματ' ἀνδρός), firestones, natural remedies for his wound rather than proper medical care — in general, anything he can 'gather' (θησαύρισμα) from his surroundings (*Phil.* 32–37). His diet is described with vocabulary appropriate for wild animals rather than human beings (φορβή: *Phil.* 43, 162, 707, 711, 1108; βορά: *Phil.* 274, 308). More tellingly — like Polyphemus again or the primordial 'wild man' of folklore²⁷ — for years, he has not tasted bread or wine, these two symbols of civilised society (*Phil.* 708–17). Knemon, too, albeit by choice, is living like an ἄγριος in the outermost part of Attica (*Dysk.* 388). He resides in an urban abode, but a cave dominates the stage in *Dyskolos*, as well, a constant reminder of the wild and its inherent ambiguity (Pan, a wild god, is benevolent; Knemon, a father, who should have taken of his daughter the care the god undertakes, is a savage menace for everyone around him). Philoctetes has been condemned to living δύστηνον, μόνον, | ἐρημον ὧδε κάφιλον κακούμενον (*Phil.* 227–28). Knemon has chosen as much: although, as Gorgias implies (*Dysk.* 327–28), the value of his estate was not small, Knemon, too, survives on the essentials, as shown by the fateful fact that he has only one mattock and one bucket in his house. Elements of Knemon's representation (the isolated milieu, his brutality, his insistence on absolute self-sufficiency, ἀτάρκεια, the threats of 'cannibalism' he hurls against Getas in 467–8, and the fear of the victims) evoke the ogre of folktale²⁸ — the most famous ogre of Greek literature being, again, none other than Polyphemus.²⁹

Sophocles' Lemnos is an uninhabited wasteland where no ship lingers longer than necessary (*Phil.* 220–1, 300–5).³⁰ Knemon's Phyle, quite the reverse, albeit still in the ἐσχατιαί, is frequented by throngs of worshippers swarming to the grotto of Pan. Philoctetes receives too little, Knemon too much human contact for his taste, yet the effect on them is the same: constant reminders of mankind's treachery, exacerbating their psychological condition. Philoctetes effectively relives his abandonment by the Atreids countless times over when the occasional sailors passing by Lemnos keep frustrating his hopes of deliverance: they provide some food and clothing but no safe passage home, abhorring his disease (*Phil.* 306–13). Philoctetes

27. Davies (2003), Finglass (2006), Brillante (2009).

28. Thompson (1932–36), vol. III, sect. G, s.v. 'Ogres'.

29. On Polyphemus as an exemplum for Knemon, see Hunter (1985) 173 n. 9; Petrides (2014) 34–41.

30. Taplin (1987) questions whether we are to imagine Lemnos being uninhabited rather than simply the place where Philoctetes is stranded being unreachable from the rest of the island. Anyhow, the only human contact Philoctetes had was with passers-by.

suspects they even cheated on their promise to carry messages to his father Poias (*Phil.* 494–99) — an even worse double-crossing. What is more (and worse), Philoctetes feels deeply betrayed by the one man in ten long years that appeared to live up to his expectations: Neoptolemus turned out to be nothing but an instrument of Odysseus (*Phil.* 50–3: δεῖ σ'... ὑπονογεῖν, ὡς ὑπηρέτης πάρει, 'you must help as you are here to assist me'). Correspondingly, Knemon's preconceptions about the self-serving nature of man are ostensibly verified by the people who travel all the way to Phyle supposedly to honour the god but, in truth, to indulge in carousal. Their sacrifices are lavish not because of piety but because the god receives only the naked bones of the victim; the meat goes in their bellies. For Knemon, observing the common sacrificial practice —and he gets to observe it, whether he likes it or not, living next to the shrine— is enough to disclose the moral depravity of mankind (*Dysk.* 447–53).³¹

Men ignited and kept feeding the fire of Knemon's and Philoctetes' hatred. Nevertheless, in weak moments, both characters express a yearning for normality. Philoctetes still craves the accoutrements of epic heroism, τιμὴ and κλέος, at least in the form of his peers memorialising his name (*Phil.* 254–56). Moreover, the son of Poias cannot abandon hope that somebody will eventually meet his expectations of common decency and kindness³² or that the gods will prove faithful to their role as guarantors of δίκη (*Phil.* 1035–36). In a rare outburst, Knemon, too, bemoans his ἐρημία. Realising how arduous and dangerous it is for a man of his age to go down a well, he admits, even indirectly, how useful it would be to have a helper around (*Dysk.* 596–99):

[τάλας
 ἐγὼ, τάλας ἐρημίας τῆς νῦν, [τάλας,³³
 ὡς οὐδὲ εἶς. καταβήσομ' εἰ[ς τὸ φρέαρ. τί δὴ;
 ἔτ' ἔστιν ἄλλ';

31. Knemon, in fact, seems to be deriving from his observance of common sacrificial practice the same kind of *δυσχέρεια*, 'moral disgust', that Allen-Hornblower (2016) considers to be one of the conceptual cornerstones of *Philoctetes*.

32. Even after Neoptolemus' revelations, which sparked a violent outburst of fury in Philoctetes, the wronged hero, in a heart-wrenching back-and-forth spanning 130 lines (950–1080), keeps retreating to his cave and coming back to cross-check if Neoptolemus and the chorus have possibly changed their minds.

33. In l. 597, Papyrus Bodmer reads ἐγὼ τάλας τῆς ἐρημίας τῆς νῦν, which is unmetrical. The simplest and most effective solution, suggested by Bingen and Winnington-Ingram, is

I am wretched, wretched for my current desolation, wretched like no one else. I will go [down the well. What?] Is there anything else I could do?

Notably, both men's yearning morphs into fantasising about a relinquished golden age. For Knemon, this is a society without greed or malice, in which everybody behaves as he does (*Dysk.* 743–45). For Philoctetes, this was the equally abstract time when only worthy heroes like Achilles, Ajax or Nestor thrived instead of the scum flourishing now (*Phil.* 411–45). For the present decay, both characters censure the gods or the institutions of civilised life — those naturally placed to safeguard the paradise lost. The gods, theoretically the purveyors of justice, prove quite cavalier in consigning the 'just and the righteous' to Hades while shielding 'the cunning and the villainous' from it (*Phil.* 446–52). Likewise, for Knemon, the courts or the jailhouses, which should defend society against moral decline, prove, by their very need to exist, that moral decline is innate in societies not populated exclusively by the likes of himself — that is, anything other than an asocial utopia.

Knemon and Philoctetes's discontent eventually escalates from a targeted complaint against the specimens of wickedness they encountered to a kind of ideology — a theory of systemic injustice ingrained in civilisation and thus inevitable and deterministic. The only remedy is to fly away from society, to escape men's duplicity by radically removing themselves from their presence. Philoctetes envies not the glories of Troy but the haven of his home, a different kind of self-isolation, still contrary to his nature as an epic hero.³⁴ Knemon, already living in the *ἐσχατιαί* of Attica, retreats to the most secluded part of his estate, although this means further reducing the portion of his land he cultivates and, therefore, his livelihood (*Dysk.* 163–6).

Nevertheless, imperfect as it may be, civil society — symbolised, for Philoctetes, by partaking in the heroic world, for Knemon, by fulfilling the obligations of social protocol — is a condition of humanity. By renouncing it, the two characters gradually slide, unbeknownst to themselves, to a state of psychological bestiality: *ἀπαργίωσις* creeps from their outlook to their souls, endangering their nature at its core. This state of emotional coagulation,

dropping the first *τῆς* and supplementing another *τάλας* at the end of the line, thus creating an evocative triple anadiplosis.

34. In *Phil.* 997–8, Odysseus reminds Philoctetes that following him back to Troy is not an act of submission but of living up to his true epic nature: *ὁμοίους τοῖς ἀριστεῦσιν, μεθ' ὧν | Τροίαν σ' ἔλεῖν δεῖ καὶ κατασκάψαι βίαι.*

which causes them to prioritise their hatred over their survival, bodes ill for their final fate.

Proleptically, in *Dyskolos's* Prologue, Pan characterised Knemon as *ἄνθρωπος ἀπάνθρωπος* (*Dysk.* 6), ‘a human dehumanised’ — in effect, a beast. Knemon gave the impression that he would evade this ‘legacy’ in the first part of his *apologia pro vita sua* in Act IV (*Dysk.* 713–35), only to renege soon after (*Dysk.* 735–47), carrying it with him to the final scene of the play. Before submitting Knemon to the second part of his punishment, the narration of the feast,³⁵ the slaves recapitulate the traits of the misanthrope’s ethos that justify their treatment of him (*Dysk.* 931–34):

κάθου <σὺ> μη<δὲ> γρούζων.
φένγεις ὄχλον, μισεῖς γυναικας,³⁶ οὐκ ἔαις κομίξειν
εἰς ταῦτό τοῖς θύουσι σαντόν· πάντα ταῦτ’ ἀνέξει.
οὐδεὶς βοηθός σοι πάρεστιν. πρῆε σαντόν αὐτοῦ

Sit — and not a peep out of you! You shun the crowds; you hate the women;
you do not let us bring you to join the sacrificers; you will tolerate all this
now! There is no one around to help you. So, sit still and bite your lip!

The slaves’ verdict, raw but fair (barring the issue of who executes the punishment),³⁷ takes the form of a tricolon. The figure implies that Knemon’s

35. Knemon’s punishment by the two slaves unfolds in three stages: first, the old man relives the door-knocking sequence under reversed circumstances (910–30); then, he is forced to sit through a flowery description of the symposium inside Pan’s shrine (931–53); and finally, he is made to join, first the dance on stage and then the party itself (954–69).

36. The text here is uncertain. The reading of Papyrus Bodmer (*γυναικας μισεῖς*) is unmetrical. The choice between Kassel’s *γυναικα μισεῖς* (Kassel, adopted by Handley and others) and the *editor princeps’s* *μισεῖς γυναικας* (preferred by Sandbach) is not straightforward; both solutions have serious disadvantages. On the one hand, *μισεῖς γυναικας* stumbles on the fact that Knemon is not a misogynist per se; he hates everyone just the same (32–3). On the other hand, if Sikon is saying ‘you hate your wife’, one misses the definite article (*τὴν γυναικα*); cf. 33: *τῆς γυναικός*. Gomme-Sandbach (1973), *ad loc.*, opt without strong confidence for *μισεῖς γυναικας* ‘because the energy of three parallel clauses, each beginning with its verb, seems superior to the artificiality of a chiasmus’. In addition, with *μισεῖς γυναικας* Sikon may simply be generalising, without much pedantry, on Knemon’s attitude towards Simiche, whom the old man has just threatened to kill — the last of several such threats against the old woman in the play. Women, after all, his wife, daughter, and slave, have been the most accessible and vulnerable targets for Knemon’s cantankerousness throughout his life. The misanthrope may not entertain a theorised hatred of the female sex per se, but in effect, chiefly women suffered in his hands.

37. The slave Getas and the cook Sikon take the harshest revenge against Knemon, although

antisocial conduct, culminating in his refusal to join the sacrificial party, increased absurdly over time. What happens in the final scene, the slaves suggest, is practically Knemon's doing: he chose to remain *ἄγριος*, and as such, he cannot but be 'tamed' like a wild animal (*Dysk.* 902–5):

τὸ δ' ὅλον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν
*ἄνθρωπος ἡμερωτέος· κηδεύομεν γὰρ αὐτῶι,
 οἰκέϊός ἡμῖν γίνετ'· εἰ δ' ἔσται τοιοῦτος αἰεὶ,
 ἔργον ὑπενεργεῖν, πῶς γὰρ οὔ;*

All in all, we need to tame the man. We are now related to him by marriage; he has become part of the family. If he remains like this forever, he will be exceedingly difficult to bear, is he not?

Sophocles' Neoptolemus adopts a similar rhetorical strategy in his final plea to Philoctetes (*Phil.* 1315–23):

ὦν δέ σου τυχεῖν ἐφίεμαι
*ἄκουσον. ἀνθρώποισι τὰς μὲν ἐκ θεῶν
 τύχας δοθείσας ἔστ' ἀναγκαῖον φέρειν·
 ὅσοι δ' ἐκουσίοισιν ἔγκεινται βλάβαις,
 ὥσπερ σύ, τούτοις οὔτε συγγνώμην ἔχειν
 δίκαιόν ἐστιν οὔτ' ἐποικτίρειν τινά. 1320
 σὺ δ' ἠγγρίωσαι, κοῦτε σύμβουλον δέχηι,
 ἐάν τε ρουθετῇ τις εὐνοίαι λέγων,
 στυγεῖς, πολέμιον δυσμενῆ θ' ἠγούμενος.*

Hear what I require of you. Men need to bear the fortunes afforded them by the gods. Whoever willingly inflicts damage on himself as you do does not deserve the forbearance or the pity of other people. You have become savage. You do not accept counsel, and if anybody gives you advice out of genuine concern, you hate them, considering them enemies and ill-wishers.

Philoctetes, like Knemon, 'has reverted to a state of savagery' (*ἠγγρίωσαι*, *Phil.* 1321), which cannot be mitigated by the circumstances that caused it and can only lead to his doom. The symptoms of this state in both characters are alike: they indignantly refuse the counsel of well-meaning advisors

they are the two people who suffered the least by him.

(*νοθετῆι*, *Phil.* 1322; cf. *Dysk.* 252, quoted above), whom they ‘hate’ (*στρυγεῖς*; cf. *μισεῖς*, *Dysk.* 932) and consider inimical. Neoptolemus brands this attitude of Philoctetes’ as ‘behaving arrogantly in misfortune’ (*ᾧ τᾶν, διδάσκου μὴ θρασύνεσθαι κακοῖς*, *Phil.* 1387), which, in tragedy, leads by necessity to destruction. Simiche bewailed Knemon’s character as the cause of his suffering (*τάλας σὺ τοῦ τρόπου*, *Dysk.* 875). Neoptolemus’ distinction between *τὰς ἐκ θεῶν τύχας δοθείσας* and *ἐκούσιοι βλάβαι* (*Phil.* 1316–17) is especially relevant for Knemon, as well. Even if Philoctetes’s injury in Chryses and his abandonment by his comrades was a misfortune of divine agency, his refusal to be rescued in exchange for rejoining the Greek army is ‘voluntary self-harm’, which is neither excusable nor pitiable (*Phil.* 1319–20). Gorgias had already alerted us to Knemon’s bent for self-inflicted, pointless adversity (*Dysk.* 326–31). As he now lies injured, the slaves remind him how easily the indignities they impose on him could have been avoided and how little sympathy he deserves for them — arguably, even less than Philoctetes; for in Knemon’s case, unlike in Philoctetes’s, the injury itself, not just the behaviour that followed it, was to a certain extent an *ἐκούσιος βλάβη*. A *βοηθός* of some sort (934) — that is, the minimum of sociability — would have saved the old man from a task unfitting for his advanced age. Such a ‘helper’ would also have rescued him from the slaves’ mistreatment now.

Unlike Philoctetes, who is shielded from the consequences of his choices first by Neoptolemus, who offers to guide him home, and then, more decisively, by Heracles *ex machina*, who orders him to return where he belongs, the world of epic, Knemon does suffer disconcertingly in the final scene of the *Dyskolos*. Still, violent as it is, the slaves’ action to force him into society’s fold is salutatory in the long run. Knemon, too, is saved — *malgré soi*. The spirit of comedy is not violated.

* * *

The discussion above unpacked a dense nexus of suggestive similarities between *Dyskolos* and *Philoctetes* — marked, palpable echoes, both verbal and situational, which have all the trappings of authorially driven allusion. In their cumulative effect, these echoes suggest that Menander sustains an intertextual dialogue with Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* on top of the other tragic intertexts he employs to enrich the texture of his drama.

The whole tragic and comic tradition of *μονότροποι* on stage naturally lies behind Menander’s *Dyskolos*. Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, featuring an

involuntary exile turned veritable misanthrope by his congealed hatred for those who wronged him, is an inalienable part of this tradition and thus an essential aspect of the implied spectator's *Erwartungshorizont*, which Menander skillfully exploits.³⁸ Specific verbal echoes resounding in the same critical turns of the two plays' plots, such as the strong and rare collocation ἡμεῖς δ' ἴωμεν, which expresses society's exasperated final desertion of the stubborn man who will not change his mind, mark the allusive connection between the Menandrian and the Sophoclean play, inviting an overall comparison of Knemon's and Philoctetes's situations, their convergences and divergences. The Sophoclean intertext is energised mainly in the final part of *Dyskolos* (Acts IV and V) when Knemon lies incapacitated after his fall into the well. The Philoctetes exemplum highlights the dilemma of Menander's old man — whether he should return to society, accepting its imperfections in exchange for the benefits of communal life, which include the care and protection of his family in his frail state. The *Philoctetes* connection also compounds Knemon's response: like Sophocles' obstinate hero, who will not abandon his animosity towards the Atreids, preferring the obscurity of his homeland to the glories of Troy (the equivalent of epic death for himself and the doom of the Trojan campaign at large), Menander's old man, ever the misanthrope, chooses to keep 'living as he wishes', ignoring his diminished capacity to fend for himself, which leads to the fate he suffers by Getas and Sikon in the final scene. Ultimately, the Sophoclean intertext underscores one of *Dyskolos*' key themes: as Knemon's ἀπανθρωπία and Philoctetes' ἀπαργίωσις converge in an implacable, self-destructive odium

38. It is an open question whether the Sophoclean figure of Philoctetes could have been itself fashioned under the influence of the earlier poetic or legendary traditions about misanthropes. As the anonymous reviewer of this paper comments: 'Little is known about Phrynichus' *Monotropos*; but the Sophoclean tragedy was produced only five years after the *Birds* and two years after the *Lysistrata*, which document the diffusion of the legend of Timon of Athens. Timon bears some similarities to Philoctetes: he is another recluse who isolates himself in a faraway and wild country landscape, he hates people because of their treachery and ingratitude, and he is injured on the leg. Could Philoctetes be read as a heroic variation of the archetypal misanthrope Timon — as a new metamorphosis, perhaps, of the earlier Sophoclean Ajax under the influence of the example of Timon, which had apparently become quite popular in Athens at that very time? In that case, Philoctetes and Knemon would share a complex relationship: the former is an intertextual model of the latter, but at the same time, both of them descend from the same ultimate ethological archetype'. For a history of misanthropy on the Greek stage and beyond, see Photiadès (1959), Jaus (1983), Konstan (1983), Anastasiadis (2016), Gibson (2017). For *Dyskolos* and the Timon legends, Schmid (1959a) and (1959b). For the evolution of the misanthropic type during the period of Middle Comedy, to which Menander's *Dyskolos* undoubtedly owes a great deal, see Konstantakos (2021).

that will not abate regardless of its cost, the consequences of monomania on the psyche come to the fore. Knemon's and Philoctetes's hatred, albeit to a certain extent justified, morphs into an obsession that slowly devours their soul; it becomes the psychological equivalent of Philoctetes' *ἀγρία νόσος*. In this light, the essentially tragic nature of Knemon's misanthropy becomes manifest.

Another gain of the *Philoctetes* connection is the light it sheds on Menander's choice never to explicate the exact causation of Knemon's misanthropy — as opposed to Sophocles' detailed history of Philoctetes' loathing for his enemies. Sophocles' hero did not experience another person's kindness for ten long years — on the contrary, the righteous bitterness he felt by the Atreids' betrayal was compounded by constant reminders of human treachery in the face of indifferent passers-by. Unlike Philoctetes, however, Knemon had prime examples of virtue before him, disproving his foregone conclusions about the general depravity of men — Gorgias first and foremost. He chose to ignore them, clinging to a sweeping and ultimately unexamined condemnation of mankind — a 'tragic' *hamartia* which precipitated his downfall but to which he clung obstinately even after he was obliged to admit its disastrous implications.

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