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# OVERDETERMINING SPACE IN MENANDER'S *DYSKOLOS*

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A conference focusing exclusively on staging Menander is an important event. For a while now, classicists have been fully aware of how critical it is to incorporate the visual into any reading of ancient plays that aspires to epistemological accuracy: theatre is a three-dimensional art and a performative event. Still, much research remains to be done on visuality for particular plays, especially Menander's, which remain under-explored despite the advances of recent decades. Scholarly analyses of 'staging' should not confine themselves to the practicalities of 'stagecraft', that is, the configuration of the *skene*, the exits and entrances of the characters, masks, props, *skenographia*, gestures, movements, number of actors, dancing, music, etc. These are the fundaments, but beyond these, using the tools of modern theory (semiotics, semantics, narratology, intertextuality and its emerging sister, intervisuality), research needs to encapsulate, despite the inevitable degree of speculation, how the visual creates meaning in performance.

"The literary work", writes EAGLETON (1996, 88-89), unpacking the work of Soviet semiotician Yury Lotman,

> continually enriches and transforms mere dictionary meaning, generating new significances by the clash and condensation of its various 'levels'. And since any two words whatsoever may be juxtaposed on the basis of some equivalent feature, this possibility is more or less unlimited. Each word in the text is linked by a whole set of formal structures to several other words, and its meaning is thus always *'overdetermined'* [my emphasis], always the result of several different determinants acting together.

One should never forget that, in the theatre, visuality is one of, perhaps even primary among, those "several different determinants". The visual overdetermines the spoken word and is itself overdetermined, in turn, through various theatrical, dramatic, and

cultural codes playing off one another. The result is a complex semiotic and semantic field actively engaging the spectator. The visual is a decisive ma(r)ker of meaning, both contextual (through the syntactic relationships between semiotic systems onstage) and intertextual/intervisual (by energising literary/theatrical memory and cultural awareness). In my 2014 monograph *Menander, New Comedy and the Visual*, I explored the semantic depth produced in New Comedy performance by reading the genre's novel, heavily semiotised mask. In this article, I study how a different visual factor, space, overdetermines the script. My case study is Menander's *Dyskolos*.

Why space? New Comedy pays close attention to this central parameter of dramatic narrative and performance, often meticulously mapped to foster a realistic and coherent chronotope. Yet, few are still the theoretical discussions of Menandrian space, and even fewer are the consistent applications of theory to reading specific plays. Characteristically, there is no Menander chapter in Irene DE JONG (2012)'s otherwise very significant and valuable volume dedicated to space in ancient Greek literature. Nonetheless, Menander, too, does much with space that calls for scrutiny through the lens of modern performance theory, semiotics, and narratology. WILES (1991) broke ground with a structuralist overview of New Comedy's use of architectural (or "theatre") space, stressing the symbolic antitheses constructed by the left-right axis as the most crucial spatial principle in New Comedy. LOWE (1987), Ariana TRAILL (2001), and others also did valuable work on *Dyskolos,* which will be referenced below.

*Dyskolos,* I submit, is *Menander's most spatially aware play*. New Comedy invariably pays close attention to space, a central parameter of dramatic narrative and performance, often meticulously mapped to foster a coherent chronotope. *Dyskolos* is not unique in constructing a detailed dramatic geography that extends beyond the spectators' vision. However, no other extant Menandrian comedy places so much thematic and symbolic weight on specific loci onstage and off or mixes the ordinary and the extraordinary, the conventional and the unconventional, in the same intricate fashion. Space as a signifying ensemble is *Dyskolos'*s primary matrix for generating meaning. This youthful play of Menander's is arguably singular in its use of space to highlight its two most eccentric dramatic components, the misanthropic protagonist and the ambivalent prologue deity, Pan.

In this article, I do not aspire to construct a complete theoretical model of how to do things with space in New Comedy; I try, however, to offer a space-sensitive reading of *Dyskolos* that could hopefully serve as a methodological exemplar and enhance our appreciation of visuality in Menander. I first look briefly into the *determination* of space in *Dyskolos*, how Menander uses the theatrical and dramatic subcodes of his genre both to assign meaning to the physical locations of the Theatre of Dionysus to which the audience has direct visual access and to create a coherent 'diegetic' space beyond the visible zone[1]. I show that the *communis opinio* regarding the configuration of the various spatial categories (scenic, extra-scenic, distanced space) still stands despite some recent counter-argumentation. Subsequently, I examine five strategies whereby the *Dyskolos* space is

[1] For the narratological and semiotic theories of space informing this article, the terminology used, and further bibliography, see mostly DE JONG 2012 and ELAM 1980, 34-42.

"overdetermined", that is, how it acquires additional signification surpassing its "mere dictionary meaning". These are what I call: (a) *chronotopic overdetermination*, that is, how the charged prehistory of the plot is mapped onto the topology of the stage; (b) *breaking of expectations*: how the rarity of presenting two socio-economically uniform stage houses is compounded by the fact that they belong to members of the same *oikos*; (c); *thematic and symbolic overdetermination*: the emblematic symbolism of Knemon's door and his well; and finally, two elements consistently overlooked in discussions of *Dyskolos*: (d) Pan as the *focaliser* of the play space and (e) the concomitant *intervisuality* that comes with acknowledging Phyle as a Panic milieu.

Before foraying into the play, let us recapitulate, in their likeliest form, the archaeological data most relevant to Menander's stagings[2]. Menander presented *Dyskolos* (316 BC) and probably most if not all his other comedies in the refurbished Athenian Theatre of Dionysus, whose completion is ascribed to Lycurgus[3] but, as recent archaeological studies have shown, must have begun before and finished after this great statesman's time[4]. This 'Lycurgan' theatre now had, among other things, a stone *skene* with three doors, of which the central one was most probably much larger. The two side entrances represented urban dwellings with one or two stories[5], while the central door was, as a rule, a public place (a temple, a shrine, an inn, *vel sim.*). In rarer cases, the central door remained unidentified and thus inert. There is no secure Greek evidence (as opposed to evidence from the *palliata*) that it ever represented a third urban house[6]. The fundamental machinery of 5th-century theatre, the μηχανή and the ἐκκύκλημα, continued to be used, although two things must be noted vis-à-vis Menander. First, Menander's gods, who are exclusively prologue deities, must never have entered ἀπὸ μηχανῆς; they appeared invariably at stage level, entering from the central door. Menander may never have used the μηχανή, and he was probably not alone among his New Comedy peers. Second, the ἐκκύκλημα was not restricted to the central door but could be associated with the side entrances, too. The spaces by the doors were adorned by σκηνογραφία (scene paintings), abetting the theatrical 'illusion'. The περίακτοι mentioned in some sources was probably a development later than Menander. The orchestra where the chorus positioned themselves from the end of Act I formed a semicircle. By Menander's time, the chorus's role in the plot had been practically nullified. However, this development happened gradually and must not be used to support the argument that the 'Theatre of Lycurgus' now had a raised stage dissociating the acting from the dancing and singing area. Christina PAPASTAMATI-VON MOOCK (2014)'s recent forceful argumenta-

[2] Cf. PHILIPPIDES 2019 for a more detailed discussion.

[3] Since DÖRPFELD/REISCH 1896, 36-40.

[4] PAPASTAMATI-VON MOOCK 2014, esp. 23-35.

[5] PHILIPPIDES (2019: 307–11) discusses the exceptional New Comedy scenes that probably demanded a two-story house. In Aristophanes, this need must have been served by a temporary structure. We cannot say what solution the Theatre of Lycurgus offered, but it seems unlikely that a two-story *skēnē* was a permanent fixture.

[6] On the third door, see Poll. 4,124-125 (not a dependable testimony) and Vitr. *De arch*. 5,6,8-9. Some scholars postulate a third stage house for *Aspis* (belonging to the deceased brother of Smikrines and Chaerestratos), but the surviving text cannot verify the theory. For the theory that the third door representing a house was only a *palliata* development, see LOWE 2016.

tion in favour of a flat performance space seems to seal the issue: the 'Lycurgan' reconstruction, which, we remember, had started by the time of Eubulus, picks up and completes the unfinished 'Periclean' design which did not envisage a *proskenion.* The 'Lycurgan' theatre had two side entrances (*parodoi*/*eisodoi*), probably covered by a colonnade. In Papastamati-von Moock's reconstruction, the area between the two *eisodoi* was roughly 20 meters long. The older idea that the house-left parodos led to the fields and the house-right one to the country was influenced by later sources; it may have been a tendency but never a fixed rule. If there was a New Comedy standard, this seems to have been that the left eisodos led to closer offstage locations and the right eisodos to more distanced ones (fig. 1).

Turning to the *Dyskolos,* let us first establish what the audience sees – or better, what they are invited to imagine: the so-called scenic space, on the one hand, and the extra-scenic and distanced space, on the other. I remind the reader that by extra-scenic space, we mean the locations immediately behind the spectators' field of vision, whereas by distanced space, we mean loci further removed.

As Pan informs us, the scenic space, probably abetted by the relevant σκηνογραφία, represents a snapshot from the rural Attic deme of Phyle, deep in the Attic countryside, crosscut by a grotto, the famous shrine of Pan in the area. Realistically speaking, Pan's grotto lay some distance from Phyle's houses, yet the *Dyskolos* wants it to lord over the stage by occupying the central opening. Along the road to the shrine lie two houses on the left and right of the grotto, the houses of Knemon and Gorgias. There are two critical extra-scenic locations in the play, the first accessed through Pan's cave (the spring where Sostratos draws water for Knemon's daughter) and the other through the door of Knemon (the well where Knemon falls). The inside of the grotto furnishes another critical extra-scenic location as there happens the wedding party where Knemon is forcefully dragged. A fourth extra-scenic location is characterised by the spatial hybridity caused by using the *ekkyklema* in Act IV. This is the interior of Knemon's house where the old man lies injured. The distanced space represents, on the one side, Knemon's and Gorgias's fields and, on the other, Kallippides' estate plus the deme of Cholargos and further down the ἄστυ of Athens, where Sostratos spends much of his plentiful leisure time.

There has been some confusion as to the exact location of the stage houses and their corresponding distanced space locations. Entering from the shrine and facing the audience, Pan first presents to them Knemon's house, which lies "on the right" ([ἐ]πὶ δεξί̣, 5). Since the *editio princeps,* this expression is almost universally taken to mean Pan's right-hand side; that is, stage right/audience left. This puts Gorgias's house on stage left/audience right. Correspondingly, the stage right/audience left eisodos (by Knemon's house) leads to the fields, and the stage left/audience right one (by Gorgias's house) goes to the city. This corresponds to the aforementioned New Comedy tendency to associate the audience-left eisodos with places nearby (in this case, the Phyle fields) and the audience-right eisodos with more distant locations (here, Cholargos and the ἄστυ)[7].

The 'orthodox staging' was unconvincingly challenged by Rambelli (1960), who thought that Knemon's house should be in the centre, Pan's grotto on stage

[7] See Blanchard 2007, 120-124.

right/audience left, and Gorgias's house on stage left/audience right. Rambelli's asymmetrical stage arrangement is based on ll. 11-12, Knemon 'having' to pass by Pan on his way to the fields, according to Rambelli. Nevertheless, the latter is the Italian scholar's inference. Pan talks generally; he does not mention that Knemon greets him as he sets for his ἀγρός. "When Knemon returns from his fields (153ff.), he does not greet Pan. Presumably, however solitary he may have been, there were occasions when he had to go to the village and would thus pass the cave if it occupied the central position"[8].

A more compelling challenge to the orthodox arrangement was put forth by QUINCEY (1959, 3), followed more recently by WILES (1991, 233 n. 41) and others, who argued for the opposite: that Pan adopts the audience's viewpoint, so Knemon's house is on stage left/audience right, and Gorgias's on stage right/audience left. Quincey's thesis stems from (correctly) interpreting εἰς δεξιὰν ("to the right") in l. 909 to mean Getas's right (Getas must exit facing the audience, Sikon having his back to them). Quincey believed that Knemon's torture is too important a scene not to be played at centre stage: if Knemon's house is on stage left, a right turn places him on the left edge of the stage, as far removed from the cave's entrance as possible. However, this is exactly what must have happened, and for good reason. To quote GOMME/SANDBACH (1973, 136), "It is quite intelligible that Getas and Sikon should set Knemon down on that side of his door which was furthest from the shrine since they do not wish their goings-on to attract the notice of those in it. Moreover, it may be noticed that when, at the end of the play, Knemon is carried in triumph into the shrine, it will be scenically more effective if there is some distance to be covered".

Recently, RZEPKOWSKI (2012) attempted to revive Quincey's staging, in support of which he formulated five arguments. His approach is thoughtful but does not rebut the 'orthodox' staging:

(a) For RZEPKOWSKI (2012, 591), ἐνθένδε (50) does not mean "from this area" but "from this house", Knemon's house. If that is on stage-left/audience-right, it is the first Chaireas and Sostratos encounter as they enter from the direction of the city (the right parodos). This way, "Menander gives the audience another stage direction after the prologue: ἐνθένδε meaning 'from this house', additionally supported with a gesture, leaves no doubt as to where Knemon and his daughter live". However, verisimilitude demands that ἐνθένδε means "from this general vicinity" unless we believe that Chaireas knows which house exactly is Knemon's, which he cannot.

(b) If, RZEPKOWSKI (2012, 592) argues, Chaireas and Sostratos are standing on stage left/audience right when Pyrrhias bursts on stage from the audience-left eisodos, the running slave will have enough space to perform his routine before he stands in front of them. This, however, disregards ἄπελθ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ μέσου ("get out of the way") in l. 81. Entering in dialogue from the right parodos, Chaireas and Sostratos cross the stage from audience-right to left, ending up in front of Knemon's house. Rushing in from the left eisodos, Pyrrhias *cuts through them* and turns back when he realises that mad Knemon is no longer chasing him. This is a much funnier arrangement.

[8] GOMME/SANDBACH 1973, 137.

(c) Rzepkowski (2012, 593) also writes: "If Knemon's house were on the right side of the stage, he would have enough time to deliver the monologue [in ll. 153-168, as he enters from the left parodos]. However, if it were on the left, he would immediately have stumbled upon Sostratos and Chaireas at his doorstep, delivered his monologue in their presence and then realised that someone was standing next to him". However, Rzepkowski again forgets two things: first, that Chaireas is already gone; then, that Sostratos has "receded a bit further away" from Knemon's door (ll. 148-149), at enough distance for Knemon not to notice him at once, but close enough to qualify still as "standing by his door" (ll. 167-168).

(d) Knemon repeatedly complains about throngs of people walking past his house. "If Knemon's house is on the right, all visitors headed from the city to the cave must indeed pass by his windows. […] It seems that a better comic effect is obtained through a staging in which hoards of intruders and trespassers walk right past the house of the grouchy old man"[9]. This makes sense. Nevertheless, if Knemon's house were on stage left/audience right, opening his door at l. 428, he would bump straight into Sostratos' mother as she entered from the right eisodos. If, on the contrary, Knemon's house is on stage right/audience left, he has time to see the crowds approaching and respond the way he does.

(e) Rzepkowski's fifth and final argument is his weakest. In ll. 487-521, he argues[10], "Sikon comments on [Knemon's] boorishness (vv. 515-521) and goes back to where he was before, or into the cave. At this moment, Sostratos comes back exhausted from the field and speaks of his struggle with the hoe and farm work (vv. 522-545). If Knemon's house were on the right, the actors would be positioned across the entire *proskênion* and optimal use would be made of the stage space: Knemon leaves the stage on the right and Sikon in the centre, while Sostratos appears on the left". This is a subjective approach, not necessitated by any practical expediency. One could easily counter that concentrating the action on the left befits the dramatic emphasis on Knemon's intransigent waywardness.

This arrangement provides the initial stimulus for interpretation. The *Dyskolos* space is first overdetermined by the processes I have termed 'chronotopic overdetermination' and 'breaking of expectations'. 'Chronotopic overdetermination' is a common occurrence, not specific to *Dyskolos:* space is never a static expanse; it always incorporates a dynamism produced by the interplay with time. Narratologically speaking, as the spectators experience story-time in story-space (the plot unfolding before their eyes), they reconstruct the equivalent fabula-time in fabula-space; that is, they put the events in proper chronological order, filling the gaps and simultaneously bringing in crucial spatial 'frames', lived experiences and memories informing (or 'overdetermining') story-space. When the *Dyskolos* spectator sees two houses occupying two opposite ends of the stage at the start of the performance, they are unsurprised: this is the generic rule. Soon, though, as they are informed about the prehistory of the plot, they realise that this proxemics indexes a peculiar situation: a young boy having grown up alone, a wife having

[9] Rzepkowski 2012, 593-594.
[10] Rzepkowski 2012, 594.

left her husband, and a young daughter having grown up with her wild man of a father – as LOWE (1987) puts it, an *oikos* broken and separate into two symmetrical parts: on the left, the husband, the young daughter, and the female slave; on the right, the wife, the young son, and the male slave. The physical distance between the two houses – the maximum one could have – concretises the strained relations between the characters, especially the psychological gap between intransigent Knemon and his prospective saviour and stepson. Thus, the playwright assigns additional meaning to ('overdetermines') a standard generic convention, reframing the topology of the stage as a charged locus of familial dysfunction.

Proxemics has revealed the play's tendency to toy with the audience's spatial expectations. Another aspect of New Comedy spaces that the spectator anticipates is, as WILES (1991, 44) has shown, that they are polarised in a way that embodies the pivotal binaries of the dramatic conflict. These are, as a rule, material oppositions of age (young/old), gender (male/female), status (citizen/non-citizen), class (rich/poor), or a combination of those elements. The polarisation between the two distanced space locations is palpable. Knemon's and Gorgias's fields are accessed from the house-left eisodos as one passes by Knemon's door. Kallippides's house is accessed from the house on the right, passing by Gorgias's door. Although the separation between the two distanced space locations is not envisaged as being too long in physical terms, their symbolic distance is to be seen, at first, as practically infinite. Knemon abhors the city, and for Sostratos to intrude into Knemon's turf would spell doom. Thus, the scenic space of *Dyskolos* is framed by two extremes: the 'wild' country of Knemon and the 'civilised' city of Kallippides. Knemon's house verges towards the former extreme, and Gorgias's house towards the latter.

However, as we move closer to where the plot mostly unfolds, *i.e.* from farthest (distanced space) to closest (extra-scenic and scenic space), these clear-cut, simplistic polarities become blurred. As the audience learns in due course, the extra-scenic space, at first glance, conforms perfectly to this polarisation. It involves a couple of singularly symbolic places: two dark entrances into the depths of the earth, one a human construction (a well), the other a natural creation (a cave). Correspondingly, it also involves two sources of water, which play a significant part in the plot – water being a common symbol of transition and liminality, both central elements in New Comedy narratives. Here, however, lies the first element of surprise. On the one hand, the supposedly 'tame' *qua* civic water source in Knemon's house will end up swallowing first Knemon's bucket and then his body and will help Sostratos's case to win the girl only indirectly, thanks to Gorgias's gallantry. On the other hand, the notionally precarious, mythically and ritually burdened spring of the Nymphs has already secured a happy resolution for the girl because of the rites she had been piously performing there. This supposedly 'centrifugal' location, Pan's cave, to which we shall return in greater detail below, will ultimately become the epicentre of revelry for the integrated comic universe. In other words, the 'civic' and the 'wild' extra-scenic locations, the well and the cave, reverse their expected roles in the plot, the first being only incidentally productive, the second proving mercifully beneficent.

Things become even hazier in the scenic space. Even before we learn who their residents are, we know by their appearance that the two houses onstage could not

correspond to the city/country polarity set by the distanced space: both are residential abodes of a 'country' deme. The houses also cannot serve a class conflict plot. In *Samia,* for example, the houses of Demeas and Nikeratos must demonstrate the wealth inequality separating the two old friends. A similar antithesis also structures the *Georgos* setting. On the contrary, in *Dyskolos*, there does not seem to be an immediate class disparity between the two houses: they must be equally humble, downtrodden even, solidifying, most probably, the extreme environmental and social harshness of Phyle, on which Pan emphatically comments (ll. 3-4). This *Dyskolos* setting could evoke a uniformity that could promise social stability and peace. But how firm is stability fostered by negative factors, such as poverty and social injustice, and, thus, not idealised or valorised? The confusion grows when we learn who occupies the stage houses: since any New Comedy plot revolves around marriage, what is the point of representing onstage the *disiecta membra* of the bride's *oikos* rather than, as usual, the two *oikoi* that ultimately come together? The two houses are not on the opposite ends of an eventual marriage negotiation: whence will the dramatic conflict derive? Could the social uniformity of the two houses conceal a moral antithesis, as, for instance, in *Aspis*? Pan puts much emphasis on Knemon's disagreeable and conflictual character. Yet, from their theatrical *paideia,* the spectators should know that misanthropes are not villains; they cannot be cardboard baddies of the Smikrines sort. Will Sostratos's rich city oikos be the external destabilising factor that generates movement? Evidently, but which will the catalyst be if Knemon's intransigence rules persuasion out? Rape, perhaps, as it so often happens? Is this what Pan, the god of rape, means by securing a happy outcome for the girl, an urban version of 'the girl's tragedy'[11]?

Menander configures a stage space pregnant with heavy questions. Pan's Prologue leads the audience to assumptions that prove partly valid. Nevertheless, here lies a major surprise: the *Dyskolos* conflict will *not* be of social status and class despite the initial emphasis on the rich/poor binary. The real danger, after all, lies in that "inhuman man" who repels all human contact. There is balance, symmetry, and apparent stability in the *Dyskolos* stage, but this is enforced by fear, isolation, and total immobility. The ostensible equilibrium of Phyle is a deception, a shaky peace resting on prejudice and an unnatural avoidance of socialising. The genuine offstage threat is thus not Cholargos and what it stands for (because that will prove liberating) but the interior of Knemon's house, which he guards ferociously against intruders, where he tortured his wife until she left, where he keeps his daughter essentially imprisoned, and where he will have the life-threatening accident that leads him partially to amend his ways at long last.

The locus of that experience, the well, is the most critical offstage location of the play, and the entrance to Knemon's universe, Knemon's door, is the play's most potent visual symbol. Ariana Traill (2001) has superbly unpacked the multifunctionality of Knemon's door (thematic, symbolic, characterising), showing how a simple stage 'index', situated at the 'negative' end of the *skene* (the association of 'left' with negativity is cross-cultural) becomes the play's most potent spatial symbol. The door, hermetically shut and fiercely defended even against people looking for the minimum hospitality, is the spatial

[11] On the motif of 'the girl's tragedy', see Scafuro 1990.

symbol of Knemon's prejudiced, indiscriminate and sweeping denunciation of all humanity. The well, involved in a virtual rite of *katabasis,* becomes the locus of symbolic death and rebirth – albeit partial and still defective. The repetition (or leitmotiv) technique that Menander generally uses to bolster the *Dyskolos'* plot unity promotes the well's spatial symbolism: the audience is repeatedly made aware of the well's presence and significance, from Daughter's first frantic entry (189ff.) to the ἔκτοπος θέα, "strange sight" (690), of Knemon emerging from it partly re-educated. The falls into the well are organised as a triple crescendo: first the bucket, then the mattock along with the bucket, and finally the bucket and mattock's stubborn owner who made an insignificant everyday event like dropping something almost escalate into genuine tragedy. Knemon's insistence on living below his means to avoid human contact but, more importantly, his inhumanly (ἀπάνθρωπος) violent reactions terrified the women of his house, causing poor Simiche to complicate the problem rather than resolve it. Eventually, Knemon's behaviour inside his oikos – structured around the well – presented the audience with a first-hand experience of the dangers to which the misanthrope has exposed both his daughter and himself.

Thus, even this primary spatial reading of *Dyskolos* reveals something profound: that the illusory stability reflected by the socio-economic parity of the two dwellings is, in reality, *stagnation,* which prevents Knemon's daughter from fulfilling her civic destiny, marriage and procreation, and also keeps Gorgias socially static. The intrusion of the ἄστυ into the ἀγρός, wealth into poverty, and urban extroversion into country reclusiveness indeed causes tremors. These, however, will prove to be salutary – the *élan* needed to break otherwise impregnable barriers, shocking Phyle into change and pushing it away from its centrifugal liminality towards the centre of a new civic integration. This process works wonders for the city itself: it transforms the ἄστυ into a more φιλάνθρωπος version of itself.

Kallippides's wealth is benign; it threatens to foster instability only momentarily when Gorgias responds to it with class prejudice. This forces us to reopen the discussion about the polarisation of the distanced space loci with reference, this time, to Gorgias and his own spatial positioning in connection with his social staticity. If the function of the distanced-space arrangement is to create a 'characterising' country/city polarity, associating Knemon with wild nature and Sostratos/Kallippides with civic culture, where does this leave Gorgias? His house is on the audience's right; Gorgias is closer to 'culture'. However, in terms of physical space, the 'city' being offstage, Gorgias, the mirthless young man "who has no time for love", is closer to Knemon, oscillating in the liminal space between country and city and between Knemonian misanthropy and Sostratean φιλανθρωπία.

Take note of the following. This play delves not so much into the ethos of the misanthrope as into the processes that create him – and for its longest part, the play allows the suspicion that misanthropy is either a form of mental disorder (a less privileged theory as low-status characters propound it) or the result of bitterness caused by socio-economic injustice. Until the moment that he chooses to *hear Sostratos out* (a luxury Knemon never accords his interlocutors), and, more importantly, until he makes good of his earlier proclamation not to imitate Knemon's δυσκολία, Gorgias retains many of Knemon's

external trappings: he is too stern, too abrupt, verbally aggressive, and full of class prejudice. If misanthropy is an extreme reaction to social iniquity, is Gorgias a Knemon in waiting? The play space exacerbates this disconcerting suspicion by placing Gorgias's house between 'country' and 'wildness' on the left, 'city' and φιλανθρωπία on the right. Gorgias verges towards the latter rather than the former, thanks to the intervening power of Pan, who, occupying the central door, literally mediates between Gorgias's and his stepfather's houses.

It is now time to turn to the elephant in the room, Panic space, the element that mostly distinguishes *Dyskolos* from other known Menandrian plays. *Dyskolos* mixes the ordinary and the extraordinary, the conventional and the unconventional, on various levels. Nothing is more unconventional and extraordinary than a grotto cross-cutting an inhabited area. The grotto is also an element incongruent with civic habitation in symbolic terms, beyond the obvious defiance of realistic geography: it belongs not to the civilised space of a human community but rather to the wild world of the mountains, which the Greek imaginary associated with forces alien or tangential to organised civic life. The central door, representing Pan's grotto, infuses into the standard residential space of New Comedy something radically 'other'. The realistic landscape on the left and right of the stage is dynamically disrupted by a transverse 'magical' element whose importance is underscored by the monumentality of the central door. At first glance, claiming that the grotto's presence is an anti-realist element sounds counter-intuitive. The Parnes Nymphaion was a real place, undoubtedly well-known to the audience. As already noted, the Parnes Nymphaion was not adjacent to the Phyle settlement but situated considerably far from it. It may not have been uncommon for New Comedy, bending the rules of logic, to have, rather than the empty intermediary space mentioned above, a temple or a similar structure dividing the two houses. Still, Pan's grotto is no ordinary public space; it is not a temple per se but a 'natural' *locus mirabilis* with symbolic reverberations of its own. Any grotto would typically lie in the extra-scenic or distanced space (as in Euripides' *Ion*). In *Dyskolos*, however, it thrusts itself onto the lives of its inhabitants. From the margins, where it belonged, it is transferred to centre stage – and the epicentre of the plot – constantly claiming the spectator's attention. The grotto is where it all begins and ends.

*Dyskolos* begins by impressing a strong sense of location – crucially, through Pan's privileged focalisation ('privileged' because it profits both from the focaliser's divine station and the special function of the play's prologue). Pan asks the spectators to imagine that the unusual sight in front of them coincides with what they know as the deme of Phyle. However, the topographical details dispersed all over the play are but the mere springboard for jumping into a world where reality magically expands to accommodate the unimaginable – in this case, the upward double marriage of an intransigent misanthrope's daughter and stepson thanks to the providence of Pan but also, no less, to the φιλανθρωπία of all the human players but Knemon himself. The fact that a significant feature of the historical landscape is glossed over – namely, the fort and the Macedonian garrison stationed there by Cassander after the fall of Phocion – contributes to this sense of 'transduction' into a fictional world with different norms and mechanisms which, of course, culminates in the epiphany of the god himself. Pan was a powerful personal deity with a mythology and a widespread cult, not an abstraction like Agnoia or a generalised

figure like Heros. The appearance of a deity like Pan among the prologue speakers of New Comedy is uncommon. Moreover, as Socrates' experience in Plato's *Phaedrus* reveals (238c4-d4), Pan was a territorial deity who created a zone of magical influence around his presence. Panic landscapes, such as Plato's Ilissos, are filled with the god's energy, which inundates the mind. Although more discreetly, since the influence of Pan on the action is not asserted explicitly after the Prologue, Menander's Phyle emerges as another such heterotopia – a Panic space.

The realistic and the magical, 'culture' and 'nature', are fused in the *Dyskolos* setting. A technological achievement like a human dwelling is juxtaposed with a cave, a precultural milieu, where beasts and gods reside; organised civic life comes into contact with a divine element unpredictable and fluid. On the *Dyskolos* stage, the docile and the wild, the controlled and the uncontrolled, the human and the bestial face off. These are the forces that in (tragic) myth clash directly (as in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*) or more obliquely (as in *Philoctetes)* or symbolically in cases where the bestial emanates from the depths of the human psyche (as in Euripides' *Medea* or *Hecuba*). The *Dyskolos* setting gives visual dimensions to that same fraught palindromic movement between the centripetal and the centrifugal, characterising both the prologising divinity and the play's protagonist. In mythology, including tragedy, Pan – half man, half beast – represents a force that violently disrupts order. The goat god is invested with dangerous powers and is given to practices less than benign in his dealings with humans, even if their outcome is salutary. Violence is, after all, the greatest catalyst, creating new realities by smashing old ones. Pan's violence mostly materialises as μανία, possession of the human mind – and rape. However, Pan's wild, centrifugal side is counterbalanced by his more benign association with marriage, the protection of the flocks, and the tellurian forces that preserve and perpetuate life even through brutal means. In my 2014 book, I explored the intervisuality ushered into *Dyskolos* by the imposing presence of Pan's grotto[12]. I will not reiterate those thoughts here. I shall stress, however, that this intervisuality is the last and most intricate way of overdetermining space in this play.

For his part, as a peculiar misanthrope, Knemon is as ambivalent and contradictory as Pan. Knemon is a man who hates men, yet even at the heights of his intransigence, he cannot live in total isolation from them. He considers mankind a universal, undifferentiated evil (cf. ll. 173, 481, 595-601), yet he chooses to marry and reproduce (ll. 13, 14). He hates the polis, yet he lives in an organised society and in the middle of a crowded avenue (ll. 163-165) – in fact, he chose to build his house at that very spot (ll. 444-447). Knemon wished he belonged to his part of the distanced space, the fields, extending to house-right – an even more isolated spot than the already 'eremic' deme of Phyle. Yet, he cannot but oscillate between his ἀγρός and his house, between his dream of a Timonian, thoroughly autarkic lifestyle and the reality of a genre which situates him ineluctably among men and expects him to honour the father's actant by abandoning that of a 'blocking' character. The *Dyskolos* setting ostensibly associates the wild element with Pan, but in reality, bestiality resides mostly with the misanthrope, a peculiar hybrid of man and beast himself. Unlike the man-goat god, the misanthrope lacks the external

[12] PETRIDES 2014, 41-46.

accoutrements of a beast but possesses an ethos that upsets social harmony and threatens to cause permanent, irreparable damage. Like the god, however, Knemon is not entirely animalistic and wild. The play gradually reveals his human, more sympathetic qualities – only to have him treated like a wild animal in need of 'taming' (903) exactly when he finally appears less bestial.

The *Dyskolos*, I repeat to conclude, is Menander's most spatially aware play. Its setting, which mixes the conventional and the unconventional, is thus *determined* to furnish the tantalising first visual stimulus that whets the spectator's appetite for an extraordinary plot involving two unique characters in the New Comedy universe, Knemon and Pan. More importantly, the play's space is heavily *overdetermined* in all its dimensions (scenic, extra-scenic, distanced space) visually to impress the play's central themes: What is a misanthrope? What is his place in organised society? Whence does misanthropy originate? Is it preventable? Is it curable?

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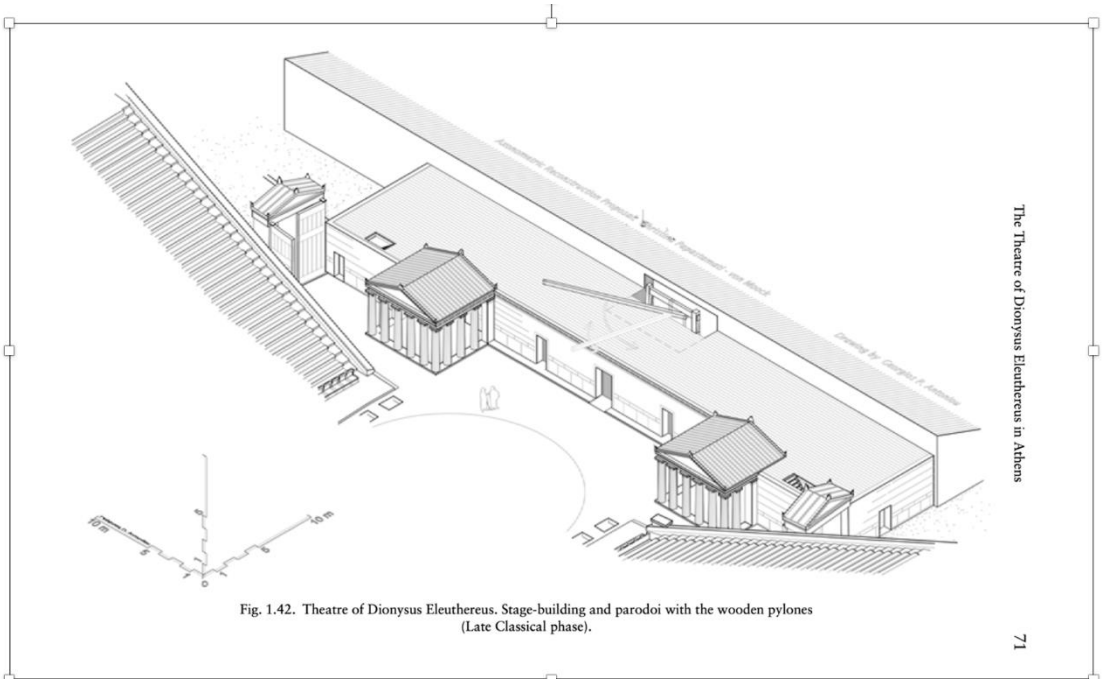


Fig. 1.42. Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus. Stage-building and parodoi with the wooden pylones (Late Classical phase).

Fig. 1. Lycurgan Theatre of Dionysus.