

CLASS MATTERS IN THE *DYSKOLOS* OF MENANDER

Most plays of Menander (indeed, of New Comedy) are structured around the romantic interest of a wealthy young man in a poor or otherwise marginal young woman. This is also the case with the *Dyskolos*, where the wealthy young Sostratos, with the help (and eventually consent) of the poor young Gorgias, gains permission to marry Gorgias' half-sister, the daughter of the curmudgeonly Knemon (who at least behaves as a poor man). In other plays, however, the social statuses of the young man and his beloved are rarely discussed, and then typically only in terms of the opposition which the young man's father shows to his son marrying beneath his class. By contrast, as we shall see, matters of class are an important part of the *Dyskolos*, in terms both of characterization and of the evolution of the plot.

Generally speaking, in Attic literature society is divided into two classes, οἱ πλούσιοι ('the wealthy', also called εὐποροῦντες/εὐποροί, 'the well-to-do') and οἱ πένητες ('the poor'). The adjective πένης is derived from the verb πένομαι, which appears originally to have meant simply 'toil' (LSJ s.v.), an etymology that reflects the primary difference between the two classes: οἱ πένητες have to work for their living while οἱ πλούσιοι are wealthy enough to have others do the work for them. In the *Dyskolos* the two classes are represented principally by Sostratos, a rich young man who usually spends his time in the city (αστικὸν τῇ διατριβῇ, 41),¹ and Gorgias, a poor farmer much the same age as Sostratos. We are first told of Sostratos' and Gorgias' respective wealth and poverty by the god Pan who speaks the play's prologue,² so we can reasonably assume that these are not incidental details, but are important to the young men's dramatic *personae* and to what the play will be about.

While out hunting in the countryside (39–44)³ Sostratos fell in love at first sight with an unnamed young woman. Wishing now to marry her, he comes on stage in order to find her father, and quite by accident encounters the young woman herself, whom he helps with a pitcher of water, exchanging a few brief words with her as he does so. When Gorgias, the young woman's half-brother, learns that Sostratos has been speaking with her he suspects the worst of him—that he is out to seduce the young woman or to rape her (κατεργάσασθαι πρᾶγμα θανάτων ἄξιον / πολλῶν, 292–3)⁴—and he comes at once on stage to confront him.

Gorgias has no trouble recognizing that Sostratos is rich since he is wearing a

'Gomme–Sandbach' = A. W. Gomme and F. H. Sandbach, *Menander: A Commentary* (Oxford, 1973). The text followed throughout is that of F. H. Sandbach, *Menandri reliquiae selectae*, revised with appendix (Oxonii, 1990).

¹ Which I take to mean that he ordinarily spends time in the city, not that his permanent residence is there.

² 39–41 (Sostratos' wealthy father and urban lifestyle); 23–7 (Gorgias' small farm and difficulties he has supporting himself and his mother with only one slave; cf. the slave's lament about Poverty [*Penia*] at 208–11).

³ Recreational hunting was clearly a pastime of wealthy young men, if we may judge from its description in Xenophon's *Kynegetikos*; note especially *Kyn.* 2.1, and see further J. K. Anderson, *Hunting in the Ancient World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985), 37.

⁴ Literally 'to do a deed worthy of many deaths', on which see further P. G. McC. Brown, 'Athenian attitudes to rape and seduction: the evidence of Menander, *Dyskolos* 289–93', *CQ* 41 (1991), 533–4.

khlanis (cf. 257), a particularly fine sort of cloak; by contrast Gorgias himself is almost certainly wearing a *diphthera*, an overcoat made from animal skin and the typical attire of poor workmen, especially farmers.⁵ Gorgias addresses Sostratos at length (271–87, 288–98) in a style that Sandbach has rightly characterized as ‘comically formal, almost pompous’.⁶ It is, I suspect, a poor man’s attempt to put himself on a more equal footing with his wealthy addressee, approximating as best he can what he takes to be the diction of the better educated élite.⁷ He begins with a sermon on prosperity,⁸ that it lasts only as long as its possessor (τῶι . . . εὐτυχοῦντι, 274) refrains from wrong-doing, but changes immediately once the possessor, led on by his prosperity (προαχθείς τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, 278), turns to doing ill; conversely poor folk can look forward to a change for the better if they nobly bear their current fate (280–3). Gorgias then applies these generalities to Sostratos (284–7):

Even if you are yourself very well off, don’t
trust in this, and though we are beggars⁹
do not look down on us; rather, always
show yourself to those who see you as someone worthy of continued good fortune.

μήτ’ αὐτὸς εἰ σφόδρ’ εὐπορεῖς
πίστευε τούτῳ, μήτε τῶν πτωχῶν πάλιν
ἡμῶν καταφρόνει· τοῦ διευτυχεῖν δ’ ἀεὶ
πάρεχε σεαυτὸν τοῖς ὀρώσιν ἄξιον.

It is significant for our discussion that Gorgias addresses Sostratos here in terms of their respective wealth and poverty. At this point Gorgias knows nothing about Sostratos as an individual, only that he is wealthy (which he could infer from his attire). He nonetheless immediately forms a judgement about Sostratos based solely on the latter’s class and on his prior assumptions about that class, that their wealth leads the wealthy to look upon the poor with contempt (cf. καταφρόνει, 286)¹⁰ and that, by

⁵ For Sostratos’ *khlanis*, see 364; on the *khlanis* as a mark of luxury, see Gomme–Sandbach, ad loc. For Gorgias’ *diphthera*, see 415; on the *diphthera* as a poor man’s attire, see Gomme–Sandbach on *Epit.* 229.

⁶ In Gomme–Sandbach on *Dysk.* 272. Cf. W. G. Arnott, *Philologus* 125 (1981), 224. To be fair to Gorgias, he is, after all, an ‘ill-educated young rustic, and consequently not the sort of man from whom well-turned philosophical arguments . . . would be expected’, and Menander has written his speeches accordingly (Arnott, 225).

⁷ W. G. Arnott contrasts Sostratos’ ‘assurance born of good breeding’ with Gorgias’ ‘inferiority complex’ in the presence of his social superior (‘The confrontation of Gorgias and Sostratos’, *Phoenix* 18 [1964], 110–23, at 118). Cf. the poor Hegio’s overuse of asyndeton when addressing Demea in somewhat similar circumstances at *Ter. Ad.* 469–506.

⁸ In this entire speech Gorgias consistently refers to the rich (but never the poor) in terms of *tukhē* (‘luck, chance’: τοῖς . . . εὐτυχοῦσιν [272]; τῶι εὐτυχοῦντι [274]; cf. τύχην [276], διευτυχεῖν [286]; the exception is εὐπορεῖς (284, speaking to Sostratos), where, interestingly enough, *P.Oxy.* 2467 has εὐτυχεις as a variant reading. In fact, Gorgias’ speech is cast as a disquisition on *tukhē*, though the view of *tukhē* it presents, as a kind of cosmic force that punishes the wicked and rewards the good, seems more like justice, not *tukhē* at all. Perhaps it is part of Menander’s portrayal of a maladroït Gorgias (cf. above at n. 6) that he has him misunderstand what *tukhe* really is (on Gorgias’ ‘misuse’ of *tukhē*, see also F. E. Brenk, *ICS* 12 [1987], 33–4). Elsewhere in the play, *tukhe* is always used in its conventional sense of amoral random chance.

⁹ πτωχός (‘beggar’) is used here, as often elsewhere, as an exaggerated synonym of πένης. Gorgias is speaking pre-emptively, assuming that the wealthy Sostratos would use the word pejoratively to describe the likes of Gorgias and his sister (as in fact Sostratos’ father later does [at 795]).

¹⁰ For an example of just such attitudes cf. 608–9, where Sostratos’ slave Getas reacts with the

freeing them from the need to work, their wealth also provides the opportunity to turn that contempt into deeds that unjustly harm the poor (293–5):

It is not right at any rate
that your leisure become an evil
for us who have no leisure.

οὐ δίκαιόν ἐστι γοῦν
τὴν σὴν σχολὴν τοῖς ἀσχολουμένοις κακὸν
ἡμῖν γενέσθαι.

Gorgias closes his lecture with a warning (295–8):

Know that of all things
a poor man when he is wronged is the hardest to satisfy:
first he has the sympathy of others, and second he interprets
whatever he has suffered not as injustice but as *hubris*.¹¹

τῶν δ' ἀπάντων ἴσθ' ὅτι
πτωχὸς ἀδικηθεὶς ἐστι δυσκολώτατος[ν].
πρῶτον μὲν ἐστ' ἐλεινός, εἴτα λαμβάνει
οὐκ εἰς ἀδικίαν ὅσα πέπονθ', ἀλλ' εἰς [ὑβριν].

These words could easily be a veiled threat to take Sostratos to court, where a poor man might expect the sympathy of the Athenian jurors,¹² but something else may be involved as well. *Hubris*, for the Athenians, we may recall, was particularly a vice of the rich and the young.¹³ In a legal context the word describes something which one does not merely to wrong one's victim, but to have the pleasure of dishonouring him as well.¹⁴ Like all Greeks, the Athenians had a strong sense of personal honour. The implication of Gorgias' statement, I believe, is not merely that the poor man will brand his mistreatment at the hands of the rich as *hubris* to gain the sympathy of a jury, but that he will make it a matter of honour, and so will not rest until whoever has wronged him is punished and his own honour is thereby restored.

To repeat, what we see then in Gorgias' address to Sostratos is a poor man's suspicion of the wealthy *as a class*, that they typically think themselves better than the poor whom they will accordingly mistreat when they have the opportunity, and that the leisure which their wealth affords them will provide them with that opportunity. If his suspicion should prove valid, Gorgias has little to counter Sostratos beyond a threat to pursue him relentlessly—to what effect, is unclear—and a pious assumption that Fortune will deprive Sostratos of his wealth if his wealth leads him astray. It

words ὡς τῆς ἀτοπίας ('how odd!') when he sees his master bringing ἐργάται ἐκ τοῦ τόπου τινέες ('some workers from the area', namely Gorgias and Daos) to his mother's post-sacrificial party. The sense of superiority which the leisured rich felt toward the working poor is perhaps understandable, even if indefensible, when we remember that the poor did the same kind of hard physical work slaves did, exactly as Gorgias does in our play, working side by side with his slave Daos (E. Méron, *BAGB* [1972], 59).

¹¹ The supplement [ὑβριν] (298) has been generally accepted by editors. For the translation of ἐλεινός as 'has the pity of others' see Gomme–Sandbach, ad loc.

¹² As first suggested by E. W. Handley, *The Dyskolos of Menander* (Cambridge, MA, 1965), ad loc.

¹³ On the combination of *hubris*, wealth, and youth, see e.g. Aristot. *Rhet.* 1378b26, and see more generally N. R. E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, 1992), 19–21, 96–9, 102–4.

¹⁴ Cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1374a13–15, 1378b23–5.

should be noted that Gorgias does not believe that the wealthy will inevitably be corrupted by their wealth—indeed the possibility that Sostratos will keep his wealth if he rises above its temptations is Gorgias' strongest and concluding argument for Sostratos to refrain from doing wrong. Nonetheless, the clear assumption underlying Gorgias' speech is that the rich, as a group, are prone to mistreat the poor, such that Sostratos is suspect precisely because he is rich. And behind Gorgias' words we may also sense the resentment at the leisure (*σχολή*, cf. 294) of the wealthy felt by those who have no such leisure (*οἱ ἀσχολούμενοι*, cf. 294).

Sostratos immediately answers Gorgias' suspicions by insisting that he wishes to marry the young woman and that he has now come to see her father to this end (304–9). Further, being of 'sufficient' means (*βίον ἱκανὸν ἔχων*, 306–7),¹⁵ Sostratos is willing to take the young woman without a dowry, despite which, he assures Gorgias, he will cherish her for life (307–9). With this pledge of lasting love Sostratos anticipates yet another assumption about rich and poor, that the rich young man will quickly lose interest in the poor young woman, at which point he would not hesitate to divorce her since, in the absence of a dowry, he has nothing to lose from the divorce.¹⁶

A few lines from Sostratos (300–14) are enough to convince Gorgias to put aside his suspicions—this is comedy, after all, not real life—but at this point in the play Sostratos must still convince Knemon, the young girl's father, to give him his daughter in marriage. Gorgias explains that although Knemon is quite prosperous, he does all the farm work himself (327–33),¹⁷ that is, he has chosen to live as a poor man rather than as a rich one. Indeed, earlier Sostratos' companion Khaireas had in fact assumed that Knemon was a 'poor farmer' (*πένης γεωργός*, 130) simply because he was working in his fields. More importantly, Knemon also *thinks* like a poor man, and Gorgias and Daos expect him to reject the wealthy young Sostratos if he sees him as a 'lazy pest' (*ὄλεθρον ἀργόν*, 366), 'at leisure and living a soft life' (*σέ δ' [ἄγοντ' ἄν] ἔδηι σχολήν τρυφῶντά τ'*, 356–57).¹⁸ And again according to Gorgias, Knemon refuses to marry off his daughter until he finds a son-in-law just like himself (*ὁμότροπον αὐτῷ*, 337).

Given Knemon's view on wealth and leisure, Gorgias and Daos recommend that Sostratos put aside his *khlanis*, the external symbol of his wealth (cf. 364–5), and join them as they work Gorgias' own field near Knemon's. Their plan is that if Knemon

¹⁵ One notes the euphemism, an act of courtesy in addressing the poor Gorgias.

¹⁶ For a dowry as a wife's insurance against divorce, see e.g. Isaios 3.36, and more generally S. C. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (Oxford 1993), 215–16. Sostratos' willingness to marry the young woman without a dowry (*ἄπροικον*, 308) is an act of condescension that no one (including Menander) seems to notice. Later, when Knemon's gift of his farm gives Gorgias something of value, he considers it a matter of honour to offer it as his half-sister's dowry (844–5).

¹⁷ Cf. Pan in the prologue speaking of Knemon 'carrying wood and digging and always working' (*ξύλοφορῶν σκάπτων τ', αἰεὶ / πονῶν*, 31–2), where the emphasis on toil suggests that by choice he works harder than he needs to (rather like Menedemus in Terence's *Heautontimoroumenos*). While Knemon is hardly as rich as Sostratos and his father (which would explain how his father could call Knemon's daughter a 'beggar', 795), his property worth two talents (327–8) would still qualify him for the franchise even under the restrictive rules imposed by Antipatros in 322, which disenfranchised more than half of Athens' citizens (Diod. 18.84.4; Plut. *Phok.* 28.4). For some calculations on the potential profitability of Knemon's property, see E. Cavaignac, *BAGB* (1960), 367–72.

¹⁸ Indeed, in a brief encounter earlier in the play when Sostratos told Knemon that he was waiting for someone with whom he had made an appointment (171–2), Knemon had berated him and his kind (he uses the second-person plural) as idle loungers (173–78), and had then left the stage into his house before Sostratos could get in a word of reply.

sees Sostratos working¹⁹ he might tolerate a word from him, thinking him a 'poor man in his way of life, one who works his farm himself' (αὐτουργὸν . . . τῷ βίῳ πένητα, 369–70). Daos, who has far less sympathy for Sostratos than Gorgias does, wishes only that Sostratos, who is unaccustomed to real work,²⁰ will throw out his back trying to keep up with himself and his master, and so stop coming around to bother them (371–4).

We note in this description of Knemon and in the plans to deal with him the connection between farming, poverty, and hard work, and the contrast between the toil of working farmers like Gorgias and Knemon and the leisured luxury of Sostratos and his wealthy ilk. Rather tellingly, as he is about to follow Gorgias off-stage to his farm, Sostratos, who is unaccustomed to real work, at first complains about the weight of the mattock Daos has given him (390–1; cf. 375), but then continues 'all the same, no softening now that I've begun to toil at this business' (οὐ μαλακιστέον δ' ὅμως, / ἐπεὶ περ ἤργημαι καταπονεῖν τὸ πρᾶγμ' ἄπαξ, 391–2); the effete (μαλακός) Sostratos is about to enter the poor man's world of hard physical work (πόνος).²¹

Sostratos gladly accepts Daos' and Gorgias' advice, takes up Daos' mattock (and possibly his *diphthera*²²) and joins Gorgias offstage at work in his field. There is nothing to suggest that Sostratos works any harder than an ordinary farmer, but his relatively brief effort is enough to strain his back muscles severely (as he tells us in extensive detail, 523–34), and he is happy enough to stop as soon as he can (540–1). His aches and pains are exactly what Daos had anticipated (371–4), and with good reason, for the pampered Sostratos is unaccustomed to physical labour.²³ Of course the same day's labour has had no ill effect on Gorgias, who is used to it. The contrast between the two implies the superiority of the poor farmer over the rich urban wimp, an implication likely to be approved by Menander's audience, the bulk of whom were likely to have been working farmers like Gorgias.²⁴

Unfortunately for Sostratos, Knemon does not come to work his field, and so Sostratos' back strain and sunburn (cf. 535) are apparently for naught. Through the play's complex plotting, however, Sostratos' efforts will indirectly benefit him in two

¹⁹ The Bodmer papyrus is badly damaged at 351–3, but apparently Gorgias suggests only that Sostratos stand beside him as he works in the field (cf. παρασῆς, 351), and that it is Daos' idea for Sostratos actually to do some work himself (cf. 364–7).

²⁰ He even fails to realize that he cannot do field work in his *khlanis* (364–5).

²¹ For the link between *τρυφή* ('luxury') and *μαλακία* ('softness') cf. Arist. *EN* 1150b1–3, which describes *τρυφή* as 'a kind of softness' (*μαλακία τις*) and the *μαλακὸς καὶ τρυφῶν* as someone who cannot endure what most other people can. Later (521) Sostratos similarly describes himself as at least having begun his digging as someone who loves toil (*φιλοπόνως*).

²² There is no clear statement in the text that he substitutes a *diphthera* for his *khlanis* (rather than simply removing the latter), but his mother's dream that she saw Pan giving him a *diphthera* and mattock (415–16) certainly suggests that he does. Further, when Sostratos returns from his field work his own slave does not recognize him (552), indicating that he has been in some way visibly transformed. Wearing a *diphthera* might well do the trick. On other clues in the text that Sostratos dons a *diphthera*, see E. Keuls, 'Mystery elements in Menander's *Dyscolus*', *TAPhA* 100 (1969), 209–20, at 211–12 with notes 13–15.

²³ Rather tellingly he says that he worked ὡς ἂν ἐργάτης, 'as would a labourer' (527). We see something of the same contrast between Gorgias and Sostratos when it comes to hard work in the rescue of Knemon from the well into which he has fallen (670–85), where Gorgias does all the hard work while Sostratos does nothing (672) but let the rope slip as he gazes at his beloved (682–3).

²⁴ Even as late as Menander most Athenian citizens still lived in the country demes outside the urban agglomeration (V. J. Rosivach, 'The distribution of population in Attika in the fourth century B.C.', *GRBS* 34 [1993], 391–407).

ways. First, when later, and quite by accident, Sostratos meets up with Knemon, Knemon is misled by his sunburn into asking whether he is a farmer (*ἐπικέκασται μὲν γεωργός ἐστι;*, 754), to which Gorgias²⁵ replies that Sostratos is 'indeed a farmer, not someone who lives a soft life, nor a do-nothing who spends the whole day strolling about' (*καὶ μάλ', ὦ πάτερ. / οὐ τρυφῶν οὐδ' οἶος ἀργὸς περιπατεῖν τὴν ἡμέραν*, 754–5). Again we note the same contrast which we saw earlier between the hard-working farmer and the pampered (*τρυφῶν*, cf. 357) idler (*ἀργός*, cf. 366). Gorgias' assurances about Sostratos are apparently²⁶ enough for Knemon, and he consents to the marriage of his daughter to Sostratos.

At this point in the play, however, it is no longer Knemon, but Gorgias who will decide whom the young woman will marry.²⁷ It thus turns out to be very much to Sostratos' advantage that by his physical efforts this day he has also proven himself to Gorgias. Gorgias observes that although Sostratos is a 'softy' (*τρυφερός*, 766) he was still willing to do the hard work of farming²⁸ if that was what it would take to marry the young woman (765–7). In this, Gorgias says, Sostratos showed himself to be a 'man' (*ἀνὴρ*, 767) because, 'although wealthy, he endured putting himself on the same footing as some poor man' (*ἐξισοῦν ἑαυτὸν . . . ὑπομένει τινὶ εὐπορῶν πένητι*, 768–9). We note once more the equation of hard work with poverty, the assumption that wealthy people typically believe themselves to be better than the poor, and the implied condemnation of such belief. By toiling as he has, Sostratos has given Gorgias 'a sufficient proof of his character' (*πεῖραν ἱκανὴν τοῦ τρόπου*, 770), making him, in effect, acceptable despite his wealth.²⁹ Sostratos has shown that if something should go wrong in the future he could endure poverty ('a change of fortune', as Gorgias euphemistically puts it, 769–70). It is not that Sostratos must continue working, which would hardly make for a happy ending, but that he was once capable of working when the need arose, and will still be capable should the need arise again.

Gorgias is an attractive character, in many ways the most attractive in the play, and this attractiveness predisposes the audience to accept his values, which thus may be seen as the values of the play. For Gorgias, and for the play, it is not so much that work makes a man good, but rather that work is a test (cf. *πεῖραν*, 770): people who have the capacity to do hard work, especially the hard work of farming, are good people. This is true of Sostratos, but it is also implicitly true of the working poor in general, that they are all—especially farmers—good by virtue of their capacity for work, especially in contrast with the idle (and effete) rich.

Having passed the test of hard work, Sostratos is rewarded by marriage to the young woman he loves. But what of Gorgias, the poor young man who had earlier told Sostratos that his difficult circumstances left him with no time to fall in love (341–4)? The obvious solution is to marry him into Sostratos' family and, with the help of a generous dowry, raise him up to the same level of wealth and leisure as the rest of the

²⁵ Following the distribution of lines in Sandbach's text, but the speaker of these lines is less important for our purpose than the contrast they contain. On other possible ways of distributing the lines see Gomme–Sandbach, ad loc.

²⁶ The papyrus is in particularly bad shape in the lines immediately after 755.

²⁷ In return for rescuing him from the well into which he had fallen, Knemon adopted Gorgias as his son and made him responsible for his daughter, including finding a husband for her (*ἄνδρα αὐτῇ πρόρισον*, 733).

²⁸ 'You picked up the mattock, you dug, you were willing to toil (*πονεῖν*)' (766–7).

²⁹ In a way Sostratos' working has also made his own father willing to accept the proposed marriage since he sees in what his son has done for love a proof that the proposed union will be a solid one (786–90).

family.³⁰ Gorgias, however, has too much self-respect, at least initially, to take advantage of such an arrangement. When Sostratos offers his sister to be Gorgias' bride (with the unspoken assumption that she will, of course, come with a suitable dowry) Gorgias politely refuses, explaining that 'I do not think it would be pleasant to live a life of luxury (τρυφαίνειν, 831) through others' hard work (πόνους, 830), but only if I will have gathered together the means myself' (οὐχ ἡδύ μοι / εἶναι τρυφαίνειν ἀλλοτρίοις πόνους δοκεῖ, / συλλεξάμενον δ' αὐτόν, 829–32). In a play whose ideology has privileged the working man's labour over the wealthy man's luxury and leisure—particularly in its contrast of Gorgias and Sostratos—it is to be expected that the working man will not accept a life of luxury and leisure which he has not earned through his own personal efforts.

But, again, this is comedy, and so Gorgias' virtue must be rewarded. After a few lines of persuasion from Sostratos' father (836–40, details lost because of the poor state of the text) Gorgias reluctantly³¹ agrees to accept an arrangement that brings him a dowry of four talents, an unusually large one in New Comedy, for marrying Sostratos' sister (843–4). It also allows him to keep all that he already has, including the farm which his stepfather Knemon had given him earlier in the play and which, as a matter of honour, he had offered as dowry for his own half-sister's marriage to Sostratos (844–6).³²

To summarize briefly, what we see in the *Dyskolos* is a construction of class based upon work: 'the poor' work and 'the rich' do not. To be sure, the comfortable life of the rich is seen as better than the life of hard work led by the poor, but the rich themselves are not automatically viewed as superior to the poor. Rather, in the persons of Sostratos and Gorgias the *Dyskolos* privileges the poor over the rich by requiring the wealthy but effete Sostratos to prove himself through physical labour to the poor hard-working Gorgias, while it rewards Gorgias by allowing him to accept, albeit with appropriate reluctance, the life of wealth and leisure marriage to Sostratos' sister will bring. The role that poverty and wealth and work and leisure play in the *Dyskolos* is quite unusual for New Comedy. In other plays the young man's access to wealth is usually instrumental in obtaining his happy ending, making him rich enough to marry his beloved when she is discovered to be herself of wealthy birth (or providing the wherewithal to purchase a slave *hetaira*, *vel sim.*). What makes the *Dyskolos* different is not simply that it achieves its resolution through the dynamics of class but that these dynamics require at least the temporary resignation of the privileges of wealth and leisure to the moral superiority of work.

As estimable as work may be, it is still not as good as wealth. Sostratos, after all, does not become a working man. He only acts like one, and only for a brief testing period; but by doing so he dispels Gorgias' suspicions (and perhaps those of the

³⁰ This is, in fact, exactly why Sostratos' father is initially unwilling to give his daughter in marriage to Gorgias even as he allows his son to marry Gorgias' half-sister (νύμφην γὰρ ἅμα καὶ νυμφίον πτωχοὺς λαβεῖν / οὐ βούλομ', ἱκανὸν δ' ἐστὶν ἡμῖν θάτερον, 975–76).

³¹ For his reluctance note his unenthusiastic 'but one must' (ἀλλὰ χρῆ, 849) in agreeing to the marriage arrangements.

³² Interestingly enough, Gorgias' marriage is an arranged one (he has never even seen his future wife), not a romantic marriage like Sostratos'. N. Zagagi, *The Comedy of Menander: Convention, Variation & Originality* (London, 1994), 111–13, sees this contrast as an illustration of the 'creative tension between comedy and reality' which Menander sought to exploit, which may well be true; perhaps, however, it is also a consequence of the fact, as Gorgias had implied earlier (341–4), that only the rich have the leisure for love while the poor like himself are too busy working.

audience) about wealthy people in general. Having proven himself, Sostratos is now free to enjoy his wealth and, indeed, to enrich the poor but admirable Gorgias in the process. The play's happy ending thus leaves the impression, by its allocation of rewards, both that wealth is a good thing and that everyone in the play who is wealthy (Sostratos, his reformed father,³³ and eventually Gorgias) deserves to be.

The play's ideological message is thus not exactly an appeal for reconciliation between the classes, much less a call addressed to the rich generously to help the poor as Sostratos and his father help Gorgias.³⁴ The message is a bit more complex, that the working poor are to be respected, but also that the leisured rich are entitled to their privileged position as long as they, like Sostratos, also respect the poor.³⁵ Like all of Menander's messages (and in contrast with those of Old Comedy), it commends private behaviour rather than political action. In a play that was probably seen by a large part of the Athenian citizenry, both rich and poor, this message, which flatters the poor while at the same time justifying the advantageous situation of the rich, is, I would suggest, one quite appropriate to 316, when the *Dyskolos* was first performed,³⁶ at a time when Athens had but recently lost her democracy, large numbers of the working poor were disenfranchised, and the timocratic regime of Demetrios of Phaleron had just begun.³⁷

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³³ Enriching Gorgias also involves converting Sostratos' father, who at first comes across as a rather unpleasant person, unwilling to share his wealth and with a real contempt for the poor (794–6). Sostratos, however, quickly convinces him to accept Gorgias as his son-in-law and share the family's wealth.

³⁴ For the play as an appeal for reconciliation, see e.g. L. A. Post, 'Virtue promoted in Menander's *Dyskolos*', *TAPhA* 91 (1969), 152–61. E. Ramage, 'City and country in Menander's "Dyskolos"', *Philologus* 110 (1966), 194–211, sees the play endorsing the view that there is no real difference between rich and poor (a rather comfortable view for the conscience of the rich), and that any schism between the two groups can be overcome by decency and generosity. For the *Dyskolos* as an illustration of the impossibility of finding a middle ground see, in their different ways, G. Hoffmann, 'L'espace théâtral et social du *Dyskolos* de Ménandre', *Métis* 1 (1986), 269–90, and D. Wiles, 'Menander's *Dyskolos* and Demetrios of Phaleron's dilemma', *G&R* 31 (1984), 170–80.

³⁵ This mixed message is also conveyed, in its way, by the play's setting and staging. The *Dyskolos* is set in the deme of Phyle, where farmers farm the rocks (as Pan tells the audience in the opening lines of the play, 1–4), i.e. in a place of hard agricultural labour. As a rich young man leading a life of leisure, Sostratos is an intruder into this world of agricultural labour, but at least for a time he is absorbed into it when he goes off-stage with Gorgias to labour on the latter's farm. Sostratos, however, is not the only leisured outsider who intrudes into this world of work: his mother comes to the shrine of Pan located on-stage, where she will sacrifice and have a party. In effect his mother and those associated with her (including the cook, the slave Getas, and other party-goers including her husband, Sostratos' father) establish their control, as it were, over the shrine, which now becomes an extension of their world of leisure. And it is into this outpost of leisure and wealth that the working folk are absorbed, first Gorgias, his mother and half-sister, and then, in the play's finale, Knemon himself. For some further thoughts along these lines (but coming to a quite different conclusion) see Hoffmann (n. 34).

³⁶ The date is given in the didaskalia in the Bodmer papyrus as emended, on which see Gomme-Sandbach, 128–9.

³⁷ In 317. For the historical background, see W. S. Ferguson, *Hellenistic Athens, An Historical Essay* (London, 1911), 39–48. For a very different reading of the *Dyskolos* in its historical context, see Wiles (n. 34).