

## Knocking on Knemon's Door: Stagecraft and Symbolism in the *Dyskolos*\*

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Ambivius Turpio would have found the *Dyskolos* exactly the sort of play his troupe was always commissioned with (or so he complains), a *fabula laboriosa*.<sup>1</sup> Much of the play's physical humor involves characters busily coming and going at the shrine of Pan, with many of them knocking—at their peril—on Knemon's door.<sup>2</sup> Given that these stage buildings figure so prominently in the action, it is no surprise that their important thematic role, as well as the play's distinctive use of stage space, have attracted scholarly attention. Two stimulating studies, published within a year of each other in the late 80s, elucidated the spatial symbolism of the *Dyskolos* in terms of binary oppositions. G. Hoffmann revealed the sociological opposition of rural poverty vs. urban wealth encoded in the two houses, arguing that their juxtaposition created an *atopia*, a setting at the periphery of society where these groups could effect a reunion impossible in any real place and time. Independently, N. J. Lowe identified similar “thematic polarities” (though these are based, he cautioned, on oppositions more complex than simple class divisions) and explored how these are mapped onto both visible stage space and imagined spaces off-stage. Just as the left parodos and Knemon's house carry different meanings from the right parodos and Kallippides'

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<sup>1</sup>*Heauton* 44.

<sup>2</sup>Mooney 49–58 used entrances and exits as a rough measure of the amount of action in a play and was able to demonstrate a significant difference between tragedy (Aeschylus averages 16.7 entrances and exits per play, Sophocles 25.7, and Euripides 25) and comedy (Aristophanes 41.6, Plautus 40.7, Terence 53.2). His figure for Menander (32.7) is based on a much smaller corpus than we have now. Frost 42–64 identifies 76 entrances and exits in the *Dyskolos* alone.

house, so the private interior of Knemon's house contrasts with the public space in front of it.<sup>3</sup> In this, Lowe convincingly demonstrated, Menander adopts the techniques of late fifth-century Attic tragedy.<sup>4</sup> Both studies showed well how Menander could project the thematic tensions of the play onto visual elements of the stage. In an effort further to connect symbolism and stagecraft, this paper will explore how the playwright individualized the stage door allotted to Knemon, making it a symbol, unique to this play, of the old man. It is actually the door, not the house, that stands for Knemon when he is off-stage, frightening and provoking other characters, keeping the Girl in and her suitor out, and marking the boundary he so obsessively defends against outside world. This makes it possible for characters to enact the play's thematic conflicts as they dispute the meanings attached to the door and quarrel over its physical use. The play's famous door-knocking scenes will be shown to draw on an old tradition, the "hostile doorkeeper" routine familiar from Old Comedy. This study will conclude by attempting to situate these scenes within New Comic stagecraft conventions, arguing that they are unusual but not uncharacteristic of Menander and may have a precedent in Euripides.

### Setting the Stage

It is impossible to discuss any point of Menandrian stagecraft without considering briefly the physical layout of the performance space. Most of his plays were initially produced in the stone theater attributed to Lycurgus and we may assume that they were written, at the very least, to be performable there (although they had to travel and could not be too dependent on specific facilities).<sup>5</sup> For present purposes, there is no need to go into the vexed question of the *skene* in this theater. It must have met the minimal requirements for staging these

<sup>3</sup>Lowe 127. See Wiles 1991: 54–55 for a similar interpretation, also emphasizing the opposition between interior and exterior space.

<sup>4</sup>These include (Lowe 134): "the thematic opposition of left and right, inside and out, the extension of the stage world into fictive offstage spaces, the use of exit and entrance as moments of special significance in the traversal of spatial and symbolic boundaries, the elaborate patterns of frustrated exits and repeated or role-reversed echoes of previous action."

<sup>5</sup>Menander wrote more plays (either 105 or 108) than the city of Athens could be expected to have produced during his 30+ year career. He may have written for other cities (so Martin 269, following Koerte) or smaller Attic festivals (Gomme and Sandbach 1), although he is not known to have traveled or written on commission for other cities. There is no reason to believe he only wrote for definite performance occasions.

plays: three functioning doors, with a usable performance area in front of them.<sup>6</sup> Most, perhaps all, of Menander's plays involve only two houses, but the *Dyskolos* and the *Aulularia* have a shrine that requires a third stage-door.<sup>7</sup> Service as a public building may have been the normal use for the larger central door that both "high" and "low" stages are believed to have had. On the question of the height of the stage, the *Dyskolos* is of limited help. The play only distinguishes between space near Knemon's door and space further away to which characters retreat in order to watch the door. This may take advantage of the deeper (15ft.) "low" stage, but could certainly be staged on shallower (9ft.) "high" stage.<sup>8</sup> If there was, as has been suggested, a colonnade running in front

<sup>6</sup>The three doors attested in Pollux (4.124) and Vitruvius (5.6.3), although not absolutely necessary for fifth-century tragedy, which could have made do with one (Arnott 1962: 42, Webster 1970: 10, Taplin 1977: 438–40), have been thought essential for Aristophanes (Webster 1970: 11 [for the *Acharnians*], Pöhlmann 137 [for the *Peace* and *Lysistrata*]; *contra* Dover 1966: 2–17, Dale 1969: 103–18, Olson xlv–xlvi [on the *Peace* only]), and were standard for Menander (Pickard-Cambridge 173, Bieber 115, Webster 1974: 80–82). Pollux' assignment of the central, right, and left hand doors to protagonist, deuteragonist, and "lowest character," respectively, appears incompatible with Menander (see n. 7 below; Gomme and Sandbach 11; Wiles 1991: 44). Simon 45 n. 90 and Ashby 69–75 argue for the possibility of two-door sets in tragedy, but interpretation of the vase paintings (the Würzburg fragment and Louvre krater) on which their different arguments are based is highly contentious. Webster 1970: 104–6 argues for three doors. Pickard-Cambridge 170–72 accepts the vases as evidence of real two-doored *skenai*, but not at Athens.

<sup>7</sup>Mette (24–35 "Zahl der Häuser") examines the major fragments and identifies three houses in the following plays: *Sikyonios* (but he is mistaken in assigning Malthake her own house; she is in fact living with Polemon), *Adelphoe A* (as reconstructed from the *Stichus*) and *Perikeiromene*. The last has been challenged by Webster 1974: 169, who identifies the third building as an inn, not Pataikos' house. The *Kolax* does not appear to require three houses, although it is not clear who should be denied one (Bias, according to Mette 30 and Webster 1974: 158; Pheidias, according to Pickard-Cambridge 173). The central door may have served only as a shrine or an inn (Webster 1974: 81 lists possible examples). The stage altar, he notes, would serve the shrine (but, on the other hand, this might complicate use of the central door as a private house). On the side doors as a distinguishing feature of New Comedy, see Wiles 1991: 45–46 who sees a left-right opposition as fundamental to the spatial organization of the genre. Lowe 129 also views the two *Dyskolos* houses (Knemon's and Gorgias') as paired "mirror images."

<sup>8</sup>Arguments for a high stage are set out in Winter 44–45; for a low stage, in Bieber 115–16 (Goette 31 also dates the introduction of the high stage at Athens relatively late). Wiles 1991: 51–53 has a good discussion of the implications of the high stage for performance.

of these (“low”) stage doors,<sup>9</sup> this play presumes that it did not obstruct the view, since several scenes are set close to—within knocking distance of—Knemon’s door. Although my argument does not hinge on the placement of this door, I see no reason to disagree with the scholarly consensus that takes Pan’s designation in line 5, τὸν ἄγρὸν δὲ τὸν ἐπὶ δεξι’ οἰκεῖ τουτονὶ, to put it on stage right (the audience’s left).<sup>10</sup> This makes for an imbalanced use of space in this play, with most of the action off-center. It is important to recognize that the neat binary oppositions Hoffmann and Lowe have identified in the play’s spatial language receive very unequal treatment in stage.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, it should be noted that scene painting would not have modified the appearance of the doors themselves.<sup>12</sup> All of the individualizing effects set out in this paper lie in the text. Just

<sup>9</sup>Townsend 423–33, following Dörpfeld.

<sup>10</sup>Lloyd-Jones 5, Handley 22, Gomme and Sandbach 136–37, Arnott 1979: 185 n. 1, Jacques 2–5, Ireland 13–14. *Contra* Rambelli 38 (center); Wiles 1991: 233 n. 41 (right). Wiles 1997: 138–39 has more recently argued, in a fascinating analysis of the horizontal polarities of tragedy, that entrances from the audience’s left should, for physiological reasons, make a stronger impression than entrances on the right. This might in fact support placing Knemon’s house on the left (as would the association between “wildness” and the left Wiles recognizes (154) as the normal *schema* of tragedy). Citations are from the Oxford Classical Texts of Sandbach (Menander), Hall and Geldart (Aristophanes), Diggle (Euripides), and Lindsay (Plautus) except where noted.

<sup>11</sup>Hoffmann’s (275) three-part spatial plan of the play, with Knemon’s house dominating in the first section, balanced opposition in the second, and the cave of Pan winning out in the third, downplays the importance of Knemon’s house in the fourth and fifth acts, which set much of their action in front of it. If the side doors were normally used for the two households of the play, an off-center focus of the action must have been common (this is noticeable in the *Dyskolos*, and the *Aulularia* offers a similar case).

<sup>12</sup>Webster 1962–63: 249–50 suggests that stock sets may have included a rocky landscape (on *pinakes*) normally used for tragedy but appropriate here for the shrine of Pan. Wiles 1991: 44–45 argues that doors could be differentiated through ornament, citing a famous relief in Naples depicting a comic scene (Naples 6687 = MNC<sup>3</sup> 4XS 1): “the ornateness of the doorway is probably not just a Roman decorative feature, but also a stage sign signifying wealth.” But these decorative elements, which are Flavian at the earliest (Brein 229; MNC<sup>3</sup> 373, q.v. for a select bibliography), offer no evidence for the fourth century *skene*. Wiles’ citation of Webster (“Webster cites *The Brothers B*, *The Necklace*, and *Faithless* as plays where the doors may be visually differentiated according to wealth”) is misleading. Webster 1974: 82 mentions *Adelphoe B*, *Georgos*, and *Plokion* (and *Apistos* and *Aspis*, in a footnote) as plays that raise the question of external differentiation, but he reaches the opposite conclusion: “the probable answer is no, and Menander

as the playwright used verbal description to give the fictional setting of this play the topography and quirky rural character of Phyle, so he gave Knemon's door a distinctive character to play against its deceptively normal appearance.

### **Knemon's Door in the *Dyskolos***

Knemon's door monopolizes attention. Of the 23 references to a θύρα in the play, 20 are to Knemon's, and two more to doors defined as *not* his (516 ἐτέραν θύραν, cf. 925).<sup>13</sup> There is no direct reference to the other doors on stage. One reason for the prominence of this particular door is its structural function. Menander organizes almost half the play around approaches to Knemon's door, described by one critic as a "cumulative running gag."<sup>14</sup> But these scenes also build up a portrait of Knemon and his community as successive characters play out their relationship with him at/through his door. Everyone in the play personalizes the door: it is Knemon's, not his household's. The door serves as his barrier, intermediary, and even surrogate, as characters invest in *it* the various emotions they feel for *him*. The first characters to approach the door, for example, Pyrrhias, Sostratos, and the Girl, view Knemon as an object of fear. The slave Pyrrhias enters on the run with a story about being chased by an old farmer and pelted by pears (81–123). As the visible demarcation of a property from which he is trying to flee, Knemon's door plays a role in the on-stage conflict between Pyrrhias and his master, Sostratos. Pyrrhias' whole narrative is an attempt to talk Sostratos away from the door (and this scene must be staged near it), beginning and ending with pleas to depart.<sup>15</sup> Of course, Knemon is not at this moment in his house and the pear incident happened off-stage. But Pyrrhias takes pains to connect it with on-stage space, emphasizing that it began where he is *now* standing (99–100 αὐτόθεν δ' οὗ νῦν λέγων / ἔστηκ') when the old woman answered the door. By transferring the point of danger from an imaginary hill to a visible door, he brings his conflict with Knemon onstage as well, and his pleas to retreat implicitly recognize Knemon's claim to control of the space in front of the door (a claim that will be ruthlessly challenged in the final act). As

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made it clear by his description that the inside of the houses was different." Arnott 1962: 99–100 makes a similar argument for *skene* doors in tragedy.

<sup>13</sup>For comparison, it may be noted that characters talk about Knemon's *house* (rather than his door) only six times in the play (74, 90, 132, 443, 446, 624).

<sup>14</sup>Lowe 129. Goldberg 74 makes a similar point.

<sup>15</sup>86–87 (Πυ.) ἀπαλλαγῶμεν, ἰκετεύω σε. (Σω.) ποῖ; / (Πυ.) ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας ἐντεῦθεν ὡς πορρωτάτω; 123 ἰκετεύω σ', ἄπιτε.

Hoffmann has observed, “dans toute cette partie [sc. I.i–II.ii], l’espace scénique devient l’antichambre de la maison de Cnémon.”<sup>16</sup>

In this scene Menander also introduces the motif, developed throughout the play, of a danger lurking behind this door. Pyrrhias’ overblown description paints the old man as an almost superhuman monster with a quasi-mythical lineage (88 Ὀδύνης ... ὅς) and the habits of a folk-tale ogre. He “eats” people (124–25 κατέδετα / ἡμᾶς), beats Pyrrhias with a stake, and then chases him for fifteen stades.<sup>17</sup> At his first appearance Knemon actually fantasizes about transforming his own world into a mythical one, with himself as the monster: using Perseus’ κτήμα, he would turn everyone in the neighborhood into statues (153–59). This idea of predatory violence recurs when Knemon later threatens to “eat” Getas (467–68 ἐγὼ σε νῆ Δία, / καὶ κατέδομαί γε ζῶντα), who fittingly calls him an ἔχισ πολίος (480) behind his back, but Menander does not otherwise develop the notion of a Polyphemos or a Laestrygonian lurking in his cave. Indeed, both Chaireas and Sostratos immediately attempt to rationalize Pyrrhias’ story (Knemon must have been in pain 125–26, Pyrrhias was probably up to no good 141–42). But what looks like fantastic exaggeration serves a dramatic purpose. The underlying folk-tale pattern of his story situates the “ogre” in his house (a point Pyrrhias emphasizes: 89–90 οἰκῶ[ν ἐνθαδ]ι / τὴν οἰκίαν),<sup>18</sup> guarantees that the “warner” will be ignored (Sostratos is already scoffing at 123 δειλίαν λέγεις), and thus sets up the sequence of confrontations at the door.

It is not difficult to recognize a folk motif as well in the ill-treated daughter, pious and compassionate, who is befriended by a supernatural power. Her famous tragic entrance, pitcher in hand, continues the stage business at the door with a surprise (and one we are warned by the entrance cue at 188 not to

<sup>16</sup>Hoffmann 275.

<sup>17</sup>κατεσθίω, commonly of animals in Homer (*Il.* 3.25, 21.24), is the word for what Scylla does to six of Odysseus’ crew (*Od.* 12.256). But it has good comic credentials too, being a favorite verb in Aristophanes to describe human gluttony and greed (e.g., *Frogs* 560, *Knights* 258, *Wasps* 896, 956).

<sup>18</sup>Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* lists five types of stories about entering an ogre’s house under the category “Falling into Ogre’s Power” (G400–402.2). On expectations created by recognizable folk-tale patterns in tragedy, see Dale 1967: ix, Lattimore 1964: passim). The useful staging device of a mock transfer of fear, from the “dangerous” resident to the door of his/her house, was also used by Plautus and Terence (e.g., *Mos.* 506–31, where fear of the “ghost” is played out against the door; *Ph.* 743–44 (So.) *quid has metuis fores?* / (Ch.) *conclusam hic habeo uxorem saevam*). It appears to be a convention of New Comic stagecraft, probably not original to the *Dyskolos*.

miss).<sup>19</sup> By now thoroughly associated with the dangerous old man, the door releases the Girl, briefly, to give us a glimpse of the other side. She literally opens the door into a realistic household off-stage, with its courtyard well, old maidservant, and household chores. The door, from her perspective, is both an outer boundary and a source of conflict with a very human father (ὁ πάππας to her: 194, 204) who will beat her if he finds her outside (205–6). The Girl happens to be mistaken in her momentary fear; the door-noise she hears is Daos' entry (from Gorgias' house), not her father's. But the suggestion that it may be Knemon (204 τίς ἐψόφηκεν; ἄρ' ὁ πάππας ἔρχεται;) serves to direct both her gaze and ours back to *his* door, thereby associating it, once again, with fear of him.<sup>20</sup> Knemon's restrictions on the Girl—in sharp contrast to the freedom Sostratos' roving mother enjoys<sup>21</sup>—are, I think, meant to invite censure. Although it is certainly improper for her to be seen in the doorway, in using the house as a prison instead of giving the Girl an “appropriate” guard (223–24 φυλακὴν οὐδεμίαν ὡς προσήκον ἦν / ποιούμενος), Knemon effectively prevents her from exercising the very religious duties for which the play rewards her.<sup>22</sup> This idea of imprisonment is later developed, in a less melodramatic vein, in Simiche's slapstick scene before the door (574–601), with its overacted fear, ridiculous predicament, and equally absurd solution (Knemon proposes lowering her with the rotten rope after the lost tools).<sup>23</sup> The main point of conflict in this short scene is whether the old woman will flee, as Getas advises, or return indoors, as Knemon repeatedly demands (589–90, 596). Both Simiche and the Girl associate external space with escape and community assistance, internal space

<sup>19</sup>On the tragic elements of this scene, see Handley 164–65. Frost 44 remarks on the striking effect of this entrance (for similar reasons). Cf. *Pk.* 154–55, which also sets an encounter with the love-struck youth at the woman's threshold.

<sup>20</sup>Hoffmann 275 perceptively notes that ignorance of Knemon's whereabouts in this scene serves to expand the physical area he is felt to dominate (“la menace incarnée par le misanthrope envahit toute la scène. Il peut surgir de n'importe où.”). Euripides had used the device of directing attention to one entrance while bringing a character on stage through another to great effect in the *Medea* and *Orestes* (Arnott 1973: 59–60, Halleran 42–43), and it may have been associated with him.

<sup>21</sup>Colorfully overstated by the young man: 262–63 περιέρχεται θύουσα τὸν δῆμον κύκλωι / ἅπαντ'.

<sup>22</sup>Locking the door during the day was not a normal Greek practice (Ireland 143, Bader 48, Gomme and Sandbach 377 ad *Epit.* 1075). On the immodesty of standing in the doorway, see Ussher 196 ad *Eccl.* 884.

<sup>23</sup>This joke is similar to one at *Eccl.* 1002–4 (also about lowering an old woman down a well), a small—if bizarre—point of continuity between Old and New Comic humor.

with Knemon's violent authority.<sup>24</sup> By simply using the door, the women challenge from within the boundary Knemon has set his household, just as Sostratos and company had challenged it from without, and in so doing affirm their membership in the larger community. They also demonstrate the door's inadequacy as an instrument of segregation.

It is Knemon's *idée fixe* throughout the play that his door should serve as a protective barrier against the outside world. This is particularly obvious in his demand to be readmitted—*quickly* (454 θᾶττον)—when the Pan worshippers come in sight. He regards the door as existing for his personal use *only* (he instructs Simiche: 427–28 ἀνοιγε μηδενί, / ἔως ἂν ἔλθωι δεῦρ' ἐγὼ πάλιν) and as personal property (note his repeated possessives: 167 ταῖς θύραις / ... ἡμῶν, 174 τὰς ἐμὰς θύρας). When a character has the temerity to knock, Knemon responds in language of almost personal assault: 466 τί τῆς θύρας ἄπτει.<sup>25</sup> This is the first hint of an equation, to be taken up in the final scene, between attacking the door and attacking Knemon. Knemon's transparent efforts to isolate himself by isolating his door make its symbolic function, already noted by Lowe,<sup>26</sup> very clear. He suggests, for example, that a contract (469 συμβόλαιον) or personal relationship (481–82 ὥσπερ πρὸς φίλον / κόπτουσιν) might justify knocking, but this is pretence since kin and their dependents have already been forbidden

<sup>24</sup>Note Getas' advice at 587 φεῦγ' ὦ πονηρά, and the old woman's offer to summon Daos ἐκ τῶν γειτόνων (594). Both the Girl (at 205) and Getas (587 ἀποκτενεῖ σε, γραῦ) testify to Knemon's violence.

<sup>25</sup>For this use of ἄπτομαι cf. *Sam.* 576 (Nikeratos to Demeas) πρότερος ἄπτει μου σὺ νυνί· ταῦτ' ἐγὼ μαρτύρομαι.

<sup>26</sup>Lowe 129. The symbolic identification of Knemon and his door may be a comic adaptation of the "palace-hero equation," a dramatic device Wohlberg 154 has credited to Euripides, and whose influence he detects behind its appearance in the *Mostellaria* (from Philemon's *Phasma*). The house often serves as a dramatic symbol in tragedy, most famously in the *Oresteia* (Taplin 1978: 32–33, Wiles 1997: 168). Wiles 1997: 169 argues more generally that the whole tragic *skene* may take on shifting meanings, like an actor's mask ("just as the character is a mask, so the *skênê* is a façade, and both alike have meaning laid on them by the dense language of the play"). Although the "door-hero equation" I have posited in the *Dyskolos* is not precisely analogous (the play is very clear about singling out the door, not the house, for attention), it does appear to adopt a device more familiar to tragedy than to Old or Middle Comedy. The closest parallel in Aristophanes is a momentary bit of wordplay in the *Ecclesiazusae*, when the Old Woman demands that the Youth "knock on her door" first (989–90 (Nε.) τηνδεδί μοι κρουστέον / (Γρ.) ὅταν γε κρούσης τὴν ἐμὴν πρῶτον θύραν). On the double-entendre in these lines see Ussher 213–14 ad *Eccl.* 989–91. See Padel 355–56 on symbolic meanings of the door in tragedy.



access (247–49). His protectiveness not only points out the inadequacy of the door as a physical barrier; it also prefigures, at a symbolic level, the failure of his gruff, misanthropic manners. He soon feels the need to prohibit the community en masse: 508–9 εἶρηχ' ἀπλῶς / μὴ προσιέναι πᾶσι τοῖς ἐν τῷ τόπῳ.

This general order is part of an ongoing attempt to control public use of the area before the door and, if possible, beyond—he even resents the Nymphs for being too close (444–47). The door simply has no public function in Knemon's view. As he snaps at Sostratos, it is not a stoa or a shrine, and there are not any seats (173–77). His remarks imply a claim to the space in front of the door. Sostratos, for example, incurs his anger by merely *approaching* the door. He recognizes Knemon's claim, withdrawing out of fear (148–49 ἐ[πανάξ]ω βραχὺ / ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας, an unusual use of a phrase associated with eavesdropping). Daos later makes no bones about how it provokes the old man (248–49 [ἐ]ὰν γὰρ τῇ θύρῃ προσιόντα με / [λάβη, κ]λεμᾷ παραχρῆμα) and Knemon orders Sostratos not to approach at 501–2 (πρὸς τὴν θύραν / μὴ προσιέναι) and 507 (cited above). The figurative meaning of this simple stage action (and the word προσιέναι significantly occurs four times in connection with Knemon's door in this play) is made clear in his famous *apologia pro vita sua*. “Approaching the door” heads a list of normal forms of social contact, all of which Knemon has refused, or has been described as refusing, earlier in the play. Knemon describes himself as (724–26)

τὸν γὰρ οὐκ ἐῷντά <τ' ἀλὺτὸν προσιέναι >καὶ τῇ θύρῃ  
οὐ βοηθήσαντά <τ' ἀλὺτῷ πῶποτ' εἰς οὐδὲν μέρος,  
οὐ προσείποντ', οὐ λαλήσανθ' ἡδέως.

the man who wouldn't let him even approach the door, who would  
never help him in any way, or greet him, or speak a friendly word.

It is important that he singles out “not allowing approach” as his characteristic offense, and the one Gorgias might mention to justify refusing assistance, in the lines that follow. Here Knemon imagines what Gorgias might have said (727–29):

“οὐκ ἔᾱς με προσιέναι·  
οὐ προσέρχου· οὐδὲν ἡμῖν γέγονας αὐτὸς χρήσιμος·  
οὐδ' ἐγὼ σοὶ νῦν.”

“You won't let me approach, so I'm not approaching; you haven't  
been any help to me, so I'm not being any to you now.”

The second two clauses gloss the first. “Approach” thus stands more broadly for reciprocal social exchange. In refusing to allow anyone near, Knemon has re-

fused to trade normal services (that is, to be “useful,” χρήσιμος) within the community.<sup>27</sup> In voluntarily opening the door at 690, he has signified his willingness to participate in this exchange vicariously, through his newly adopted son, Gorgias, who is promptly commissioned with marrying off the Girl and managing the property (729–33). Knemon’s attempts to exempt himself at 735 and 747 are followed by a symbolic retreat into the house at 758, which also marks his ceding of the space in front of the door.<sup>28</sup> This last act of resistance of course only invites us to expect that the community will insist on a complete surrender.<sup>29</sup>

The play’s final scene accomplishes this surrender and at the same time carries out a symbolic punishment. Getas and Sikon conceive and execute a simple plan: to drag Knemon out of his house, knock on his door, call for slaves and make demands, all in order to “incense” him (899 ἐπιφλέγωμεν).<sup>30</sup> The point is certainly to punish Knemon (891 τιμωρίαν ... λαβεῖν), but in a less brutal way than criticisms of this scene have sometimes implied.<sup>31</sup> Getas and Sikon direct

<sup>27</sup>There is a similar ban on approach at *Aul.* 442–43 (*si ad ianuam huc accesseris, nisi iussero, propius, / ego te faciam miserrum mortalibus uti sis*). Like Knemon, the speaker, Euclio, had earlier insisted on locking his door (89, 103–4) and he associates shutting it with refusing the basics of hospitality (91–94 fire and water). His list of cooking implements (95 *cultrum, securim, pistillum, mortarium*) which “the neighbors always ask for” hints at a traditional cook-miser borrowing scene like those of the *Dyskolos*, but the play actually develops this conflict differently and Euclio’s door prohibition is not challenged. Without entering the debate over Menandrian authorship of the original, I would like to note that the *Aulularia* recognizes—without developing it—the dramatic device of using the door as a disputed barrier between the antisocial individual and his community.

<sup>28</sup>735 ἀλλ’ ἐμὲ μὲν, <ἄν ζῶ>, ζῆν ἐᾶθ’ ὥς βούλομαι, 747 ἐκποδὼν ὑμῖν <ὁ> χαλεπὸς δύσκολός τ’ ἔσται γέρον.

<sup>29</sup>Hoffmann 276 also reads Knemon’s retreat to his temporary refuge as entailing further incident ( “la victoire de Pan est donc partielle”), although she identifies Pan, not the community, as the instigator.

<sup>30</sup>897–99 πρῶτον / ἔξω προελκύσωμεν αὐτόν, εἴτα θέντες αὐτοῦ / κόπτωμεν οὔτω τὰς θύρας, αἰτῶμεν, ἐπιφλέγωμεν.

<sup>31</sup>The scene has been deplored in strong terms (e.g., Arnott 1968: 13 “in the final act we see Knemon viciously bullied by a pair of louts”; at 1986: 2 he softened this to “the ragging of Knemon”). The word “torment” is often used (e.g., Wiles 1984: 176 “the injured Knemon is tormented by two servants”; Gomme and Sandbach 272 *ad* 900ff. “it is clear that first one of Knemon’s tormentors attacks him ... and then the other”; Dedoussi 1986: 79 “the tormenting of Knemon is conceived ... as a kind of punishment”). Gomme and Sandbach interpret 910–30 as an attack of Knemon’s person, but 910 προάξω

all of their physical violence against the door, which they knock so violently in fact that Knemon accuses them of trying to “break” it (921–22 μαίνει, / ἄνθρωπε· τὴν θύραν κατάρξεις). This is not the physical torture of an injured old man but an attack against the symbol of his stubborn isolationism. The attack proves it ineffectual and teaches him that there can be no effective barrier between himself and his community. His door is, ultimately, indistinguishable from any other (925–26) and he is merely an old man. At 913 either Getas or Sikon (speaker attribution in these lines is very uncertain) pretends not even to recognize him, let alone fear him (913 τίς οὗτος; ἐντεῦθεν τις εἶ). This is why it is so important for Knemon to be forced to see his door from the outside: it confronts him with a humbling new view of himself, showing him that his misanthropic demeanor, like his locked door, has offered only an illusory protection. Only intervention by the very community he has rejected would stop Getas and Sikon,<sup>32</sup> and his real punishment is to realize he needs the very people he has rebuffed. It is no small point that Knemon calls for the humblest member of his household, Simiche (recently evicted, of course), in his distress.<sup>33</sup> Sikon delivers the moral, 932–34 φεύγεις ὄχλον, μισεῖς γυναῖκας ... οὐδείς βοηθός σοι πάρεστιν, forcing upon him a truth that he has partly, but not completely, understood (cf. 713–14 ἐν δ' ἴσως ἡμαρτον ὅστις τῶν ἀπάντων ωἰόμην / αὐτὸς αὐτάρκης τις εἶναι καὶ δεήσεσθ' οὐδενός): true self-sufficiency is and always has been impossible.<sup>34</sup> Just as Getas' and Sikon's extravagant requests for tapestries and cauldrons express a thinly veiled contempt for Knemon's

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πρότερος “I will start first” is ambiguous, whereas 922 and 925–26 specify the door as the object of attack. As Dedoussi 83 notes, this is actually a “safe punishment” by which Knemon is not physically hurt.

<sup>32</sup>As Sikon admits: 900–1 τὸν Γοργίαν δέδοικα / μὴ καταλαβὼν ἡμᾶς καθαίρηι.

<sup>33</sup>*Dysk.* 924, 926.

<sup>34</sup>Konstan's (34) remarks on the social reintegration of the miser and the misanthrope raise this point to a general truth of the type: “They must rather be made to realize the insufficiency of their isolation, so that they turn back of their own will to the community of men .... The recusant forgoes his specious autarky, recognizes his insufficiency and the insufficiency of the ideal or symbol which he had made the sole object of his desire, whether it is the miser's gold or the misanthrope's virtue and sincerity.” The chapter from which this passage is excerpted is a study of the *Aulularia*, but the author alludes to Knemon's fall down the well as a parallel case (40). I would only add to this that the fall initiates Knemon's “lesson of insufficiency,” to be completed in the final scene, and that he learns the insufficiency of symbol and ideal together. Almost as vigorously defended (and to as little purpose), his door functions symbolically and dramatically much like Euclio's pot of gold. On the philosophical context of line 714, see Schottländer.

material wealth, so the cook's insistence on Knemon's participating in the wedding celebration hints that the virtues he has cultivated in isolation hold as little value as the modest possessions he hoards.

### Door-knocking in Aristophanes

If the boisterous finale of the *Dyskolos* resolves a symbolic conflict centering on Knemon's door, it also wraps up a series of door-knocking scenes that has served as the play's major structuring device. Menander may have been the first to organize a play around these scenes, but the basic elements date back to Old Comedy (and indirectly, no doubt, to older traditions of folk humor). These include exaggerated and sometimes violent knocking, loud yelling for slaves, and meeting with a hostile reception from the character who answers the door. Overzealous knocking is already a familiar motif in Aristophanes. Strepsiades exhibits his boorish ignorance when he knocks too hard on the *phrontisterion* door; Dionysus manages (with prodding) to live up to his costume by knocking καθ' Ἡρακλέα; and, in an interesting variant on this device in the *Plutus*, the door opens before Hermes has a chance to knock "too hard" (1101 οὕτως σφόδρα), which was naturally his intention (1102 ἀλλ' ἐμελλον).<sup>35</sup> Knocking hard enough to "break" (*frangere*) the doors is so common in Plautus that it becomes a stock accusation and a stock threat.<sup>36</sup> The motif of yelling noisily for the household slaves (*Dysk.* 911–12, 921) also has Aristophanic precedents. The Hoopoe's slave, for example, describes Euelpides' calls as "shouting" (*Birds* 60 τίς ὁ βοῶν τὸν δεσπότην;) and *Clouds* 132 may offer another example, if Strepsiades calls as loudly as he knocks. Summoning the slave can sometimes pro-

<sup>35</sup>*Clouds* 135–36 ἀμαθὴς γε νῆ Δί' ὅστις οὕτως σφόδρα / ἀπεριμερίμνως τὴν θύραν λελάκτικας; *Frogs* 462–63 (Aristophanes had used the gag earlier when Dionysus knocked on Herakles' door "like a centaur," 38 κενταυρικῶς). At *Lysistrata* 424–30 the Magistrate threatens to use crowbars. On Greek verbs of violent knocking, see Mooney 22. Petersmann 91 n. 3 has a brief note on Greek and Roman comic words for knocking.

<sup>36</sup>The accusation is made at *Am.* 1022, 1026; *Bac.* 584–86, *St.* 326; *Truc.* 256, and *As.* 382–91 (of a pre-empted attempt); the threat, at *Bac.* 1117–18, *Capt.* 831–32. A character tries to make good on this threat at *St.* 309–14. *Eun.* 285 also mentions kicking the door as a method of knocking. Mooney 23 found 11 references to violent knocking in Roman comedy, all in Plautus. It is such a comic cliché that there are jokes about *not* knocking violently at *Bac.* 579–81 and *Men.* 178. Brown 1995: 83 traces this tradition back to Aristophanes, noting that these scenes, like most door scenes in New Comedy, serve to build up audience expectations for what follows. He gives a complete list of Plautine door-knocking scenes at 87 n. 34 and n. 35.

duce the master instead, as at *Frogs* 464–65, *Clouds* 1145 (cf. *Dysk.* 459–67).<sup>37</sup> These scenes are not, however, always played for comic effect. By the end of the fifth century, summoning the slave doorkeeper was a normal preliminary to speaking with the master in rich Athenian households, as well as on the comic stage (it is not played up at *Acharnians* 395–96, *Peace* 255, or *Birds* 850).<sup>38</sup> This is not a Plautine convention. Characters in Plautus rarely call for a slave; they ask only if “someone” is at home, *ecquis hic est?*<sup>39</sup> Of course, these summons can be voiced as obstreperously, and meet with as hostile a response as any in Aristophanes. That most of the “Aristophanic” door conventions in the *Dyskolos* can be abundantly paralleled in Plautus suggests a continuous tradition. If the rest of the corpus is representative (and it may not be), Menander was atypical, even among New Comic poets, in rejecting much of the physical humor conventionally used in door-scenes.

Well before the final door-knocking scene, Knemon's abusive reception of Getas (whom he calls τρισάθλιε at 466 and μαστιγία at 473) had already put him in the tradition of the “characteristically irascible doorkeeper”—to use W. B. Stanford's phrase—exemplified by Aeacus, Hermes, and the Student in the *Clouds*.<sup>40</sup> Uncooperative, barely civil doorkeepers like Euripides' equivocating slave (*Acharnians*) or the Hoopoe's slave (*Birds*) work a similar vein of humor as they exploit their momentary authority over the heroes. Examples in Plautus confirm that Knemon's gratuitous insults and irrational hostility are stock elements of the genre, presumably in consistent use since Old Comedy.<sup>41</sup> Response

<sup>37</sup>On calling for slaves as an emphatic form of entrance announcement, see Webster 1962–63: 257; as a comic convention, see Dover 1993: 194, *ad* 37.

<sup>38</sup>Schneider col. 693.

<sup>39</sup>This standard phrase and variants thereof occur at *Am.* 1020, *Bac.* 581–83, *Capt.* 830, *Mil.* 1297, *Mos.* 339, 445, 899, *Poen.* 1118, *Rud.* 762, *Trin.* 870 and *Truc.* 254–55. The person summoned is described as a *ianitor/-trix* only at *Men.* 673 and *Cur.* 76 (although the practice is mentioned at *As.* 390).

<sup>40</sup>Stanford 113–14 *ad* 464ff. *Frogs* 465–78, *Peace* 182–84, *Clouds* 133. See Gelzer 13 n. 8 and Brown 1995: 84 n. 47 for further examples. Comic door-scenes were probably as common in ancient Greek as in later folklore. Radermacher 210, in his commentary on the *Frogs*, cites folk-tale parallels for knocking on the door of hell with a club. Both Stanford and Dover note, in connection with this scene (*Frogs* 460–78), the traditional jokes told of St. Peter as door-keeper of heaven. The rude door-slave was familiar enough to make an appearance in Plato's *Protagoras* (314d) for a bit of humor at the sophists' (and Socrates') expense. See Brown 2000: 15 n. 42 for bibliographic references.

<sup>41</sup>Pistoclerus (*Bac.* 583–86) and “Truculentus” (*Truc.* 256–68) answer the door with angry threats, and Mercury begins threatening Sosias long before the latter even

in kind to a hostile doorkeeper is not uncommon. Trygaios answers Hermes' questions about his name and parentage with the insolent *μιαρώτατος*, a key word in the god's initial greeting (183 καὶ μιαρὲ καὶ παμμίαρε καὶ μιαρώτατε). Getas plays his part with characteristically Menandrian restraint, confining himself to sarcasm and punning on the word *συμβόλαιον* ("business contract," but sometimes tantamount to "debt," hence 470–71 "no, we have no *συμβόλαιον*; I'm not here to collect money") and disparaging Knemon's stinginess (474–75 "Oxen! I don't suppose you would sacrifice a snail"). Alternatively, in these scenes characters may use cajolery. In the *Frogs*, Dionysus is already joking about varying his manner of knocking in the underworld to conform with local custom,<sup>42</sup> and Sikon's borrowing art, which requires the practitioner to be "flattering" (*κολακικόν*) in his choice of titles—calling old men "father," old women "mother," and slaves "good fellow"—has precedents in the *Acharnians* and *Knights*, where the heroes sweeten their requests with flattering forms of address.<sup>43</sup> Dikaiopolis also uses other rhetorical tricks, including repetition of Euripides' name at 410 and 414 and a gesture of supplication (414 ἀλλ' ἀντιβόλῳ πρὸς τῶν γονάτων σ' Εὐριπίδῃ), of which Sikon would no doubt approve, although he is not given the chance to try them. Although Sikon's emphasis on formal craft (489 τέχνη, or lack thereof, 498 ὦ τῆς ἀμαθίας), probably belongs to the Middle Comic stereotype of the cook, this pairing of the resistant lender/helper (Knemon, cf. Aristophanes' Demos, Euripides, and the Student) and the cajoling borrower/petitioner at the door (Sikon, cf. Aristophanes' Kleon, Dikaiopolis, and Strepsiades) is well established in Old Comedy. This motif appears in Plautus as well, notably in Astaphium's attempts to make a client of the hostile Truculentus (her request to see the "women of the house" [*Truc.* 283] is mere pretext) by means of *blandimentis*, *hortamentis*, *ceteris meretriciis* (318).

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approaches the door (*Am.* 300–33). There is hostility and verbal abuse on both sides in the door scenes in *Am.* 1021–34 and *Mos.* 1–10. The notion of a "monster" behind the door also has Old Comic roots. Cf. the prologues of the *Wasps* and *Knights*. Gelzer 3 discusses the surprise appearance of the monster as an Aristophanic technique in the *Birds*.

<sup>42</sup>*Frogs* 461 πῶς ἐνθάδ' ἄρα κόπτουσιν οὐπιχώριοι. Dover 1993: 253 *ad* 460f. takes this unduly seriously ("for the palace of the King of the Dead is necessarily intimidating, but the Greeks were also aware that the conventions of arrival at a house are not identical everywhere").

<sup>43</sup>*Acharn.* 404 Εὐριπίδῃ, Εὐριπίδιον; *Knights* 726 ὦ Δημίδιον <ὦ> φίλτατον.

### Door-knocking in Menander and Euripides' *Helen*

The conventional door routines performed by Knemon, Sikon, and Getas clearly derive from Old Comedy, but the lines of descent pose an intriguing problem. It may be possible to trace these conventions through late Euripidean domestic tragedy, which has definite affinities (even if we must be careful not to overstate them) with Menander.<sup>44</sup> Menander generally uses his stage doors in un-Aristophanic ways closer to the conventions of tragedy. Vigorous fights at the door like the one in the *Wasps* (144–57) never quite get off the ground in the *Perikeiromene* or *Eunuchus* (where the attack scene probably derives from Menander's *Kolax*).<sup>45</sup> Menander's characters draw attention to a door in order to identify a building (*Th.* 28–29) or to announce an entrance (*Epit.* 874–75, 906, *Mis.* 207, 442–43, *Pk.* 316) and sometimes to emphasize one (e.g., when Daos pleads with Chairestratos through the closed door at *Asp.* 299–304). Approaching or withdrawing from the door permits selective communication between characters, as for example when they move aside for private conversation (*Asp.* 457, *Mis.* 429, *Sam.* 304) or they spy/eavesdrop (*Asp.* 399–403, *Dysk.* 821–22, described off-stage *Epit.* 883–84, perhaps *Pk.* 526 and 783–826).<sup>46</sup> Apart from the shut-out lover traditionally pacing and lamenting before the door of his beloved (*Mis.* A6–8, *Pk.* 299, *Sam.* 72–73), characters put doors to realistic, everyday uses.<sup>47</sup> Knocking is discreet after the manner of tragedy, which was never entirely comfortable with the practice.<sup>48</sup> A decision whether or not to knock

<sup>44</sup>Euripides' influence on New Comedy was first noted by Satyrus in his *Life of Euripides* (*P. Oxy.* IX.1176 fr. 39, col. vii). On Euripides' influence on Menander, see the studies of Katsouris, Webster 1960: 153–94 “Menander and earlier drama,” and Arnott 1986. Menander no doubt knew the *Helen*, one of Euripides' most famous plays. He may even have quoted from it (Webster 1960: 155–56, following Sehr).

<sup>45</sup>Webster 1960: 163 cites both scenes as instances of borrowing from Old Comedy. I have found only one comparable example in tragedy: Menelaos' attempt to rescue Hermione in the *Orestes* (Orestes orders him away from the door at 1567 κλήιθρων τῶνδε μὴ ψάύσης χερσί). In the *Hecuba*, Polymestor attacks Hecuba's door but this is not seen on-stage (he batters it from within at 1040–46).

<sup>46</sup>Dedoussi 79–83 identifies door-eavesdropping at *Asp.* 399ff. See also Blundell 16–20 on overhearing generally in Menander, and Frost 1988: 60, 73, 96–97, 100 on eavesdropping at the door.

<sup>47</sup>There is another exception in the convention, discussed in detail by Webster 1962–63: 258–61, of disregarding the door in “interior” scenes played in front of it.

<sup>48</sup>Mooney 19 may be the first to note that tragedy avoids it. On the comic associations of door knocking see Taplin 1978: 105, Petersmann 91 n. 3, and Frost 9, 51. (Frost also points out (24) that Menander avoids door-knocking at *Asp.* 162–67 where he wants to

may serve dramatic purposes (e.g., revealing the fears of a youth, *Georg.* 17, or building suspense, *Mis.* 188–94), but the knocking itself usually attracts no special attention. Like calling for slaves, it merely summons a character on stage (*Asp.* 499, *Mis.* 206–7, *Pk.* 188–90) and may be presented as a routine practice, neither offered nor received as an act of aggression.<sup>49</sup> Door scenes of a more Aristophanic type are not outside Menander’s repertoire, but he uses them sparingly and takes care to integrate them into the dramatic structure of the play. An example from outside the *Dyskolos* may best illustrate this. At *Epitrepontes* 1075–77, Smikrines initiates an exchange of hostilities with his hollering and perhaps with his loud knocking as well.<sup>50</sup> He calls for the slaves three times and upbraids them for not answering quickly enough. But the playwright has toned down the language (Smikrines uses one term of abuse, 1080 τρισκατάρατε, not Hermes’ three lines’ worth at *Peace* 182–84) and provided a rationale for

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establish a serious tone.) Orestes knocks and calls for a servant in *Choephoroi* 653–56, a scene Garvie 224 *ad* 653 describes as “characteristic of comedy.” In connection with this passage Taplin 1977: 340–41 discusses other possible instances of door-knocking in tragedy. Both commentators note the colloquial tone of Orestes’ language here. I must thank an anonymous reader for *TAPA* for drawing this scene to my attention. More recently, Brown 2000: 2 has argued that door-knocking is in itself a neutral device, comic only when it is explicit and extended. On the use of this motif in satyr-plays see Zagagi 208–9.

<sup>49</sup>As Frost 34 observes, a non-comic door-knocking scene like the one at *Asp.* 499–506 is over quickly. For comparison, it is worth noting that Terence, who followed Menander more closely than Plautus, alludes to violence at a door as a familiar motif (*Eun.* 285, *Ad.* 88–89, 102–3, 120) but does not show it. Brown 1995: 72–74, 84–85 identifies a more traditional, though non-violent, Terentian door scene at *Ad.* 632–43. Menander could also refer to scenes of this type without staging them. At *Georg.* 25–27 the hot-tempered old servant Philinna threatens a similar confrontation with the delinquent youth of the play (μικροῦ δέω / πρὸς τὴν θύραν ἐλθοῦσα καὶ καλέσασα τὸν / ἀλαζόν’ ἔξω τοῦτον εἰπεῖν ὅσα φρονῶ). She is capable of quite Aristophanic abuse (29 οἰμωζέτω, 30 ὁ μιαιφάνης οὗτος). The *Samia* also makes extensive use of the stage doors for physical humor (including, at one point, having two people try to go in and out at the same time (359–60), perhaps an Aristophanic tradition, cf. *Knights* 1110.) See Brown 1995: 77–81 for an excellent survey, with more detailed discussion, of the door-knocking scenes in the major Menander fragments.

<sup>50</sup>*Epit.* 1075–77 ἡ θύρα παιητέα / κεκλειμένη γάρ ἐστι. παῖδες, παιδίον / ἀνοιξάτω τις. παῖδες, οὐχ ὑμῖν λέγω; Smikrines talks of “banging” on the door but the phrase may be a common idiom. Cf. *Asp.* 499. Gomme and Sandbach 377 *ad loc.* note that the word “may suit Smikrines’ bad temper.” Frost 9 n. 66 takes it to reflect “the urgency of the speaker.” Brown 1995: 79–90 suggests that Smikrines expects to be able simply to walk into the house, as he did at 161–63.



behavior that requires none in Aristophanes.<sup>51</sup> Menander motivates both the old man's anger and Onesimos' refusal to cooperate in terms of character traits demonstrated earlier in the play. A curmudgeon from the start, Smikrines has had no patience with Charisios or his household, and his angry visit in order to reclaim daughter and dowry brings a well-developed conflict to a crisis. Onesimos, on the other hand, has loyally defended Charisios' interests and suffered for his pains. He brings to the conventionally obstructive role of the doorkeeper the double motivation of protection and revenge. Here Menander clothes the doorkeeper's normally gratuitous abuse in a pseudo-philosophical guise and subordinates it to a larger dramatic purpose. Like the mocking of Knemon in the final scene of the *Dyskolos*, it serves to punish Smikrines for his misbehavior throughout the play and his stubborn efforts to break up his daughter's marriage.

Although New Comedy has placed its stamp on the hostile doorkeeper scenes of the *Dyskolos*, signs of a similar process of adaptation may be detected in the one scene of this kind in the surviving tragic corpus. In Euripides' *Helen*, an Old Woman tries to shoo a bedraggled, shipwrecked Menelaos away from the house of Theoklymenos (437–514). She plays the comic doorkeeper true to type: rude, impatient, angry, and threatening. Her language is marked by colloquialism and comic diction (e.g., 437 οὐκ ἀπαλλάξῃ δόμων, 439 ὄχλον παρέξεις, 452 ὄχληρός ἴσθ' ὦν), and her grabbing and shoving provides an element of physical humor. As commentators have noted, there is no danger she will be able to arrest the Trojan hero.<sup>52</sup> Here we see Euripides adapting his comic paradigm in ways that anticipate Menander. He gives most of the comic elements in this scene to the Old Woman, no doubt in order to preserve a little more of

<sup>51</sup>Cf. *P. Köln* 203 fr. C col. I (= Arnott 2000, *Fab. Incerta* 8.58–93), where a slave carrying wine to a party knocks on the door first with his hand (as described by his interlocutor, 68 [μαίνει· κατάξεις] τ[ῆ]ν θύραν τῇ χειρὶ), then with his foot (69–70 νῦν δὲ τῷ σκέλει πάλιν / [κό]ψας). The physical comedy at the door lasts for some time: “knocking” is still under discussion in line 79 (κόπτειν is the only word preserved of this line), and may continue until line 84 (ἐπίσχες, perhaps an order to stop). The original editor, Maresch (cited in Nünlist 267 *ad* C I 11ff.), compared this scene to *Dysk.* 921–22; hence his supplement in line 69 μαίνει· κατάξεις (printed by Arnott, but not Nünlist). As in *Epit.* 1075–80, there is comparatively little name-calling here (only 69 [ὦ λῆ]στ' ἀναιδές) and the slave's aggressive knocking is given some explanation: he appears to be slightly drunk.

<sup>52</sup>Kannicht 130 *ad* 435–82, 132–33 *ad* 445; Dale 1967: 96 *ad* 437. Kannicht identifies in the Old Woman's 452 καὶ ταχ' ὠσθήσῃ βίαι a sarcastic reference to Menelaos' earlier complaint of violence (445 μηδ' ὤθει βίαι). Brown 2000: 6–8 cautions against overstating the comic elements of this scene.

Menelaos' tragic dignity. Although a few comic-sounding phrases escape him (e.g., 445 μή πρόσσειε χεῖρα μηδ' ὥθει βίαι), Menelaos expresses himself more politely than an Aristophanic character would in calling for a πυλωρός rather than a παῖς, and in phrasing his request to be announced within, as Kannicht notes, in a courteously indirect form.<sup>53</sup> In addition to recasting this comic scene in language more appropriate to tragedy, Euripides has also provided a motivation for the Old Woman's πικροί λόγοι. Both fear of her master and a personal affection for Greeks, who lie under his death threat, move her to keep Menelaos from the house (481–82). Although she does not return in the play (the scene still shows marks of the self-contained Old Comic incident it adapts), the motif of guarding Helen against abduction does recur (1171–74),<sup>54</sup> and the villain she serves, Theoklymenos, plays a significant and sustained role. Like the *Dyskolos*, the *Helen* shows how a folk-tale plot about an imprisoned woman whom none may approach (*Hel.* 444 μηδέννα πελάζειν) and who is held by a man-killing “ogre” could easily accommodate the comic figure of the hostile doorkeeper.<sup>55</sup> This play also shows that tragedy by the late fifth century had already borrowed and modified this Old Comic motif.<sup>56</sup> Here I do not mean to exclude transmission of this motif through Middle Comedy, but to suggest an additional source and another link between Old Comedy and New, perhaps casting a new light on Dover's apt description of New Comedy as “the product of a long-standing convergence of Comedy and Tragedy.”<sup>57</sup>

I have argued that Knemon's door functions as an ever-present, visible symbol of the old man: an object with which other characters may interact when he is not on stage, to which they transfer emotions they feel towards him, and through which they challenge both his rejection of the community and his overvaluation of isolation. These values are given physical manifestation in his

<sup>53</sup>435–36 τίς ἄν ... μόλοι / ὅστις διαγγείλειε τᾶμ' ἔσω κακά. Kannicht 131 *ad loc.*

<sup>54</sup>Noted by Kannicht 130 *ad* 435–82.

<sup>55</sup>On folk-tale elements in the *Helen* see Post 101–2 and Dale 1967: ix.

<sup>56</sup>Euripides was perhaps more willing to experiment with comic door conventions in his later escape plays. Violent knocking precedes the messenger's report to the duped king Thoas in *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (1304–8, especially 1308 πύλας ἀράξας). Pace Taplin 1977: 340, ἀράττω here seems to mean “knock, batter at,” not “shake” (cf. *Eccl.* 977).

<sup>57</sup>Dover 1968: 150. So Arnott 1986: 2. My present effort to trace an Aristophanic motif in Euripides and Menander is in a sense a corollary to Arnott's study, which looked at ways Aristophanes and Menander used material from Euripides.

efforts to ban normal uses of the door by his household, kin, and community, and consequently the play's major conflict takes place at Knemon's door. There is not space here to treat the philosophical influences behind Knemon's initial dedication to isolation (ἐρημία), his defense of self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια), and his final, reluctant recognition of the value of communal ties. I have tried only to show how Menander figures these thematic conflicts around one of the stage doors. By inviting the audience to "see" this door differently, he effectively individualizes a stock element of the fourth century *skene*. He further emphasizes its distinct character by differential treatment. Whereas Pan's door sees frequent but unremarkable use, fully in accord with New Comic conventions, scenes at Knemon's adapt the hostile doorkeeper routine of Old Comedy. Associated with hospitality, sociability and festivity, the god's door also offers a thematic antithesis which the playwright emphasizes through staging cues, making his characters approach the shrine in noisy hordes (433–34 σιωπῇι φασί, τούτῳι τῶι θεῶι / οὐ δεῖ προσιέναι) while they approach Knemon's house silently and individually. By associating the opening and closing of this door with acceptance or rejection of membership in a broader community, Menander created a mechanism to translate the thematic tensions of a play into visual, stageable terms and turned the play's figurative conflict of values into a physical conflict over Knemon's door.

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