

OSTRACISM IN MENANDER'S *SAMIA**

ABSTRACT

This article identifies an ostracism joke in Menander's Samia (364–6) during a climactic scene in which the Athenian Demeas ejects the titular Chrysis from his house. The joke, uttered by a cook who is reacting to Chrysis' expulsion, plays on the usage of ὄστρακα—broken pieces of pottery—as ballots in the institution of ostracism. The article proposes that the joke references the final abolition of ostracism during Demetrius of Phalerum's reign and reveals Menander's support for the regime.

Keywords: Menander; *Samia*; ostracism; Demetrius of Phalerum; New Comedy; democracy

ἄστεϊον πάννυ
εἰ τὰς λοπάδας ἐν τῷ μέσῳ μου κειμένας
ὄστρακα ποιῆσαι.

Well it would be just great
if he took my pans lying in the middle of the house
and turned them into sherds. (Men. *Sam.* 364–6)¹

The cook of Menander's *Samia* utters this comment in response to a tumultuous event taking place inside the house behind him. While the cook himself is in the dark on the specifics of the event, the audience, who has just witnessed an angry monologue from the Athenian citizen Demeas, knows that he is ejecting his concubine—Chrysis—from his house. Overtly, the cook brings much-needed comic relief to the situation by worrying about his cookware as Demeas forces destitution on Chrysis.² Below I propose a second meaning to the phrase playing on the multiple interpretations of the word ὄστρακα.

In addition to reflecting the cook's concern about his pots and pans, the comment also alludes to the institution of ostracism, in which the assembly votes to eject a citizen from the *polis*, using broken pieces of pottery—*ostraka*—as ballots.³ The phrase

* I thank *CQ*'s anonymous reader and *CQ*'s editor for their helpful suggestions, and Michael Halleran whose comments on an early draft of this piece greatly improved its quality.

¹ Greek text from F.H. Sandbach (ed.), *Menandri reliquiae selectae* (Oxford, 1990). In this passage, however, I adopt sentence-end at ποιῆσαι, as proposed by M. Gronewald, 'Bemerkungen zu Menander', *ZPE* 107 (1995), 57–9, at 58–9 (*probante* A.H. Sommerstein [ed.], *Menander Samia* [Cambridge, 2013], 216). Sandbach extended the sentence with two more words (πάνθ' ὅμοια). All translations are mine.

² See K.B. Frost, *Exits and Entrances in Menander* (Oxford, 1988), 107–8, who sees the cook adding a 'comic dimension' to the scene. The cook performs a similar function in Menander's *Dyskolos* (641–65). Sommerstein (n. 1), 213 proposes that the cook provides the perspective of a 'third party' to Demeas' actions.

³ H. Blume (ed.), *Menanders Samia* (Darmstadt, 1972), 129–35 and Sommerstein (n. 1), 213–16 provide fruitful analyses of the cook's scene, but neither addresses the mention of *ostraka*. Blume (this note), 129–30 notes that the cook's complaint that Parmenon has 'run away' (ἀποδεδράκε, 358) plays off the slave's status as a fugitive; such a turn of phrase strikes the same subtly humorous tone as the play on *ostraka*.

‘making pots *ostraka*’ encourages the audience to reimagine the destruction of the pans as a political act of creating the necessary voting sherds for the ostracism of Chrysis. Through the double meaning of the *ostraka*, Menander humorously reframes Demeas’ personal act of ejecting Chrysis from his household in political terms.

Such humour—in which characters talk about comic domestic events in terms suitable for different (and often more elevated) situations—has parallels in the Menandrian corpus. In the *Perikeiromene* (467–81) Polemon besieges his romantic rival’s house and acts as if he is sacking a city. His slave Sosias even employs the language of siege (πολιορκίαν, 483). Earlier in the same play, Moschion, in considering a reward for his slave Daos, who claims to have secured for him a romantic relationship, proposes to appoint him προστάτην ... πραγμάτων Ἑλληνικῶν | καὶ διοικητὴν στρατοπέδων (‘minister of Greek affairs and treasurer of the armies’, 279–80)—an exaggerated and impossible promise.⁴ The cook in the *Dyskolos* acts as if the misfortunes of his nemesis, Knemon, stem from the gods themselves (639–47). Earlier in the *Samia*, Demeas describes his own domestic woes using tragic language.⁵ The expression in which the house replaces the *agora* as the site of ostracism fits into a Menandrian pattern of humour in which a comic domestic calamity, for a moment, takes on a political, martial, or tragic hue.

For the above interpretation to resonate with the audience, ostracism must have possessed enough cultural relevance in the late fourth century for some of Menander’s audience to associate the mention of *ostraka* with the institution. At first, this scenario seems unlikely as it had been approximately a century since the last ostracism had taken place.⁶ The *Athenaiōn Politeia*, however, provides near-conclusive evidence that ostracism still maintained a presence, even if significantly diminished since the fifth century, in Athenian politics. Just before the passage on ostracism, the author makes it clear that he is describing institutions as they exist in his own time (ἔχει δ’ ἡ νῦν κατάστασις τῆς πολιτείας τόνδε τὸν τρόπον, ‘the constitution is now arranged in this fashion’, *Ath. Pol.* 42.1).⁷ In the section on the contemporary structure of government that follows, the text clarifies that a preliminary vote on ostracism still occurs every year in the sixth prytany (περὶ τῆς ὀστρακοφορίας ἐπιχειροτονίαν διδῶσιν, εἰ δοκεῖ ποιεῖν ἢ μὴ, *Ath. Pol.* 43.5). While there exists a debate concerning the history and nature of ostracism from 415 until the date of the *Athenaiōn Politeia*, scholars almost unanimously agree that the Athenians held a preliminary vote well into the late fourth century.⁸ Nor does the fact that the preliminary vote in

⁴ E. Schwartz, ‘Zu Menanders *Perikeiromene*’, *Hermes* 64 (1929), 1–15, at 3–4 sees these lines (and Daos’ response) as a reference to general Alexander (the son of Polyperchon). For scepticism, see A.W. Gomme and F.H. Sandbach (edd.), *Menander: A Commentary* (Oxford, 1973), 482–3.

⁵ A scholium from the Bodmer papyrus identifies Demeas’ exclamation in lines 325–6 as a quotation from Euripides’ *Oedipus*; see Sommerstein (n. 1), 203–4.

⁶ According to Plutarch (*Nic.* 11.7) the Athenians never ostracized another citizen after Hyperbolus in 415. See S. Forsdyke, *Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy: The Politics of Expulsion in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, 2005), 170–5, who rejects the notion (proposed by Plutarch) that the Athenians considered Hyperbolus’ ostracism a misuse of the institution.

⁷ See P.J. Rhodes (ed.), *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaiōn Politeia* (Oxford, 1993), 51–8, who argues that the evidence for dating the *Athenaiōn Politeia* points to the late 330s as the likely date of the original work, with updates added to the text (preserved by the London papyrus) in the 320s.

⁸ R.M. Errington, “Ἐκκλησία κυρία in Athens”, *Chiron* 24 (1994), 135–60, at 151–8 argues that the Athenians revived ostracism as part of a series of wider reforms to the ἐκκλησία system in 337/6 in the fallout of the battle of Chaeronea. P.J. Rhodes, ‘Ekklesia Kyria and the schedule of the

Menander's time never succeeded in bringing about an official ostracism preclude a reference to it in one of his plays. The *Athenaiōn Politeia* shows that some Athenian citizens—certainly very recently before Menander's career and probably during part of his career—interacted with the institution on a yearly basis, if only to reject its usage. We have no reason to doubt that a large swath of Menander's audience would get the joke.

The ostracism reference might shed light on two issues—the political nature of Menander's plays and the end of the institution of ostracism. The date for the final dissolution of even the preliminary ostracism vote remains somewhat elusive. In a close analysis of a fragment from Theophrastus' *Nomoi* (fr. 18a–b Szegedy-Maszak), Heftner makes a convincing argument that ostracism saw its final demise sometime after the fallout from the Lamian War in 322 and perhaps during the reign of Demetrius of Phalerum, sometime between 317 and 307.⁹ Heftner contends that Theophrastus' description of the end of ostracism only makes sense if the initial vote was no longer taken (fr. 18a Szegedy-Maszak):

ἐπὶ τούτου [*sc.* Ὑπερβόλου] δὲ καὶ τὸ ἔθος τοῦ ὀστρακισμοῦ κατελύθη, ὥς Θεόφραστος ἐν τῷ περὶ Νόμων λέγει.

With this one [Hyperbolus], the custom of ostracism was ended, as Theophrastus says in the *Laws*.¹⁰

While Theophrastus and the scholium to Lucian's *Timon* 30 quoting or paraphrasing him are referring to the ostracism of Hyperbolus, the aorist passive (κατελύθη) seems unlikely to refer to an institution that still had a preliminary vote (and thus a chance of enactment) in the philosopher's own day. As Heftner also notes, a fragment from Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328 F 30, early third century) uses phrasing (κατελύθη τὸ ἔθος) similar to that of Theophrastus when referring to the decline of ostracism.¹¹ The shift in language between Aristotle on the one hand and Theophrastus and Philochorus on the other likely points to a legal shift in ostracism. This conjecture puts the dissolution of ostracism somewhere between the composition of the *Athenaiōn Politeia* in the 330s or 320s and that of the *Nomoi*, which Szegedy-Maszak hesitantly proposes occurred during Demetrius' reign.¹²

While *Samia* has no certain date, internal evidence points to a production early in Demetrius' regime.¹³ Might Menander's mention of ostracism nod to its recent total abolition—either by Demetrius himself or by his oligarchic predecessors who ruled

assemblies in Athens', *Chiron* 25 (1995), 187–98, at 197–8 challenges Errington's theory, pointing out, among other objections, that none of the surviving sources indicates any difference in the interest in ostracism either before or after Chaeronea. H. Heftner, 'Ende und "Nachleben" des Ostrakismos in Athen', *Historia* 52 (2003), 23–38, at 25 sees Aristotle's note as proof that the preliminary ostracism vote still took place in the 320s. He provides (29–32) a detailed account of the sources between 416 and 337/6 that indicate, but do not altogether prove, that the initial ostracism vote stayed intact during those years.

⁹ Heftner (n. 8), 37 with n. 45.

¹⁰ I have modified the translation of A. Szegedy-Maszak (ed.), *The Nomoi of Theophrastus* (New York, 1981), 51.

¹¹ Heftner (n. 8), 38.

¹² Szegedy-Maszak (n. 10), 81.

¹³ See Sommerstein (n. 1), 44–6, who lays out evidence that the play was produced before 314. W.G. Arnott (ed.), *Menander*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA and London, 2000), 3.8–12, in reviewing all the possible references to contemporary events in the play, makes a convincing case for 314.

after 322? In two scenes leading up to the ejection of Chrysis, Demeas delivers monologues that resemble forensic speeches, even addressing the crowd as though they are a jury in each scene (ἀνδρες, 269, 329).¹⁴ The spectators themselves know that Demeas is unjustly judging Chrysis based on incomplete information about the paternity of the baby. The first speech (206–82) features an extensive narrative in which he comes to all the wrong conclusions, the second (324–56) his rash reaction to these conclusions and thus the decision to expel Chrysis. The joke, then, places Demeas as the misinformed and unjust initiator of ostracism, colouring the institution as one ripe for abuse through rash action and bad deliberation. Thus the reference offers implied support for ostracism's abolition and, as a result, hints at Menander's pro-Macedonian leanings.¹⁵

The joke, the dating of the play, and previous scholarship on Menander's pro-Macedonian leanings all fit perfectly with Heftner's theory about the abolition of ostracism. Furthermore, as Arnott has demonstrated, the *Samia* has more references to contemporary political events than any other surviving Menandrian play, including a nod to a piece of Demetrius' legislation—the abolition of the *chorēgia* (13).¹⁶ Nor is the *Samia* the only play in which Menander addresses recent oligarchic legislation. A fragment of the *Kekryphalos* (fr. 208 K.–A.) references the Demetrian sumptuary laws as well as their enforcers (the γυναικονόμοι).¹⁷ Despite existing uncertainty, the revelation of an ostracism joke in Menander adds fresh detail to the ever-expanding picture of the historical, political and literary contours of his plays.

William & Mary

MITCH BROWN

mdbrown02@wm.edu

doi:10.1017/S0009838823000113

LUCRETIUS 6.391: AN EMENDATION

ABSTRACT

This article argues that at Lucr. 6.391 (icti flammas ut fulguris halent) fulguris is a corruption, and proposes to read sulphuris instead. While the case against fulguris may in itself not be incontrovertible, the advantages of sulphuris include the acquisition of a new Homeric intertext in Il. 8.135 δεινὴ δὲ φλόξ ὄρωτο θεοῦ καιομένου.

Keywords: Lucretius; textual criticism; Latin poetry; lightning; Homer; intertextuality

¹⁴ See A. Scafuro, *The Forensic Stage: Settling Disputes in Graeco-Roman New Comedy* (Cambridge, 1997), 95 for the legal undertones of this address.

¹⁵ For arguments in favour of Menander's support for the Demetrian regime, see W.E. Major, 'Menander in a Macedonian world', *GRBS* 38 (1997), 41–73 and W.M. Owens, 'The political topicality of Menander's *Dyskolos*', *AJPh* 132 (2011), 349–78. For a contrary interpretation—that Menander's plays supported Athenian democracy—see S. Lape, *Reproducing Athens: Menander's Comedy, Democratic Culture, and the Hellenistic City* (Princeton, 2004).

¹⁶ Arnott (n. 13), 3.8–12 identifies six such references.

¹⁷ Sommerstein (n. 1), 45 n. 133.