

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

A NOTE ON *CLOUDS* 1104-5

At the conclusion of the *agon* in the *Clouds*, Right acknowledges his defeat with the words: 'Ἡττήμεθ', ὧ κινούμενοι. Πρὸς τῶν θεῶν δέξασθέ μου θοίματιον, ὡς ἔξαντομολῶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ("We are defeated, you pathics. By the gods, take my *himation* as I desert to you"). The commentators reach no consensus on the identity of the "you" (δέξασθε and ὑμᾶς),¹ on the precise actions which accompany the lines, or on the purpose of surrendering the outer garment. K. J. Dover, the most recent commentator, suggests that δέξασθε is addressed to Strepsiades and Pheidippides, the ὑμᾶς are the audience, and Right "bounds out of the orchestra into the audience" to return quietly to the actors' area at the end of the scene; the purpose of the elimination of the garment is to facilitate flight from one's pursuers.² Other scholars offer various solutions,³ but none of these takes into account the humorous associations carried by the *himation* throughout the play. When this recurring joke is examined, the problems connected with these lines find ready solution.

At 177-79 the Student tells Strepsiades about Socrates' clever scheme to steal a cloak in order to obtain food for dinner; the λωποδύτης is in fact a frequent target of Old Comic humor, where he is viewed as a base, common type of thief.⁴ The same accusation against Socrates is implied again at 497-98, when the philosopher instructs Strepsiades to remove his *himation* for entrance to the Thinkery. This is not merely a prerequisite for initiation,⁵ but another instance of the same joke: Socrates pilfers another cloak, and Strepsiades is shown to be a gullible fool. At 856, Pheidippides' sarcastic words, διὰ ταῦτα δὴ καὶ θοίματιον ἀπώλεσας; ("For

1. The "you" implied in the vocative κινούμενοι is, however, a subject of general agreement. On the basis of the preceding lines, it clearly must be addressed to the audience.

2. *Aristophanes: "Clouds"* (Oxford, 1968), ad loc.

3. W. J. M. Starkie, *Aristophanes: The "Clouds"* (London, 1911; repr. 1966), ad loc., has Right address both δέξασθε and ὑμᾶς to the "inmates" of the Thinkery, toss the cloak (Starkie does not say to whom), and exit into the Thinkery. As to the purpose of tossing the cloak, Starkie suggests that either it is symbolic of a change in way of life or that it is an admission of defeat; he rejects the suggestion of the scholiast (see below) on the ground that strenuous activity would not be required in order to join the spectators. B. B. Rogers, *The "Clouds" of Aristophanes* (London, 1916; repr. 1930), ad loc., provides a useful summary of prior comments, in which he notes that Hermann, Dindorf, and Mitchell went along with the scholiast's idea that the cloak is tossed to facilitate flight (ἵνα μὴ ἐμποδίζοιτο τῷ δρόμῳ); Brunck (also cited by Rogers), however, disagreed and referred to 498, where Socrates states that it is necessary to enter the Thinkery without a *himation*. Rogers himself goes back to the scholiast's idea because he believes that ἔξαντομολῶ suggests a military line of thought. W. W. Merry, *Aristophanes: The "Clouds"* (Oxford, 1879; repr. 1955), ad loc., assumes that the cloak is tossed to the audience and that Right "spring[s] down as if to join them, and run[s] off at a side door." F. H. M. Blaydes, *Aristophanis "Nubes"* (Halle, 1890), ad loc., is close to Merry, assuming that Right sheds his cloak in order to jump more easily over to the spectators. J. van Leeuwen, *Aristophanis "Nubes"* (Leyden, 1898; repr. 1968), ad loc., follows Brunck in referring to 498 and assuming that Right enters the Thinkery at this point; he also repudiates the idea of throwing the cloak into the audience, since it puts too much action into δέξασθε.

4. See *Av.* 497, *Thesm.* 817, *Ran.* 772 and 1075, *Eccl.* 565, *Plut.* 165, and Cratinus, frag. 206 (Kock).

5. Brunck and van Leeuwen (see n. 3) appear to view 498 as a simple statement of a rule rather than as a joke.

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this you lost your cloak?"), again indicate that Strepsiades has been taken and that Socrates is a λωποδύτης. Finally, the reformed and angry Strepsiades identifies himself at 1498 as ἐκεῖνος οὐπερ θοιμάτιον εἰλήφατε ("The one whose cloak you snatched"). Aristophanes has thus developed a humorous identification of Socrates as a cloak thief which operates much as do the depictions of Cleon as a tanner and Euripides as the son of a chervil-seller: the joke increases with repetition.

The *himation* therefore has a special, humorous association with Socrates in this play. There can be no doubt, then, that Right yields his cloak at 1104 as a sign of surrender not only to his immediate opponent but to the whole Socratic way of learning: Right is prepared to "lose his shirt" to the thieving Socrates. The "you" in δέξασθε and the ὑμᾶς both refer primarily to Wrong, the representative of Socrates' point of view. The plural is used because it is clear that the audience are now on the side of Wrong, but the cloak is tossed to Wrong, and Right exits through the Thinkery door. We should not be surprised that Right surrenders the cloak to the same party to whom he deserts,⁶ since we know that a move to Socrates' side necessitates the loss of one's *himation*. The purpose of tossing the *himation* is not to facilitate flight but to demonstrate surrender to Socrates. In choosing this particular gesture to symbolize the defeat of Right, Aristophanes provides a fitting and humorous punch line to the *agon* scene.

This interpretation of the lines shows the tossing of the cloak to be a sensible and appropriate gesture. Moreover, it accounts for the use of the word ἐξαυτομολῶ in that Right is deserting his own position and going over to the side of the enemy, represented clearly on the stage by the Thinkery. In addition, by having Right exit through the Thinkery door, we avoid the practical difficulty of getting this actor out of the audience and back behind the *skene* for his next costume change. Right, like Strepsiades before him, surrenders his cloak and enters the Thinkery, and the *agon* dissolves in laughter.

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6. Dover, ad loc., rules out the possibility that the recipient of the cloak and the party to whom Right deserts can be one and the same, but he is following the military imagery too rigidly here, thus missing the joke.

CODEX T OF PLATO

Codex Venetus Marc. gr. IV 1 (colloc. 542) is the last of the four leading manuscripts of Plato in the order of age, now usually known as codex T. The old part of the codex is 208 parchment leaves numbered 5–212 and contains tetral. I–VIII 3, breaking off in *Republic* 3. 389D, the rest lost. The rest of *Republic* is supplied fol. 213–55 by a fifteenth-century hand. *Timaeus* is added fol. 256–65 written by Caesar Strategus, and *Timaeus Locrus et alia* are on fol. 1–4 written by Joannes Rhosus, both at the end of the fifteenth century. We are interested now only in the old part.¹

1. Not having inspected codex T recently, I rely on the accounts of it by M. Schanz, *Über den Platocodex der Markusbibliothek in Venedig* (Leipzig, 1877), pp. 1–6; W. W. Waddell (ed.), *The "Parmenides" of Plato* (Glasgow, 1894), pp. cxxii–cxxv with photographic facsimile of fol. 78v; E. Mioni, *Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum codices graeci manuscripti*, vol. 1, part 2 (Venice, 1972), p. 199.