

## CARIO AND THE NEW WORLD OF ARISTOPHANES' *PLUTUS*

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Aristophanes' final extant comedy, *Plutus*, is a story of fantastic good fortune, and of ultimate (if illogical) universal blessedness.<sup>1</sup> The plot centers on the impoverished old Athenian farmer Chremylus, who encounters the blind god Wealth, and subsequently hits on the brilliant comic idea of taking him to the Asclepieion to be healed. Chremylus' ultimate goal is to correct the economic and moral inversion of the contemporary world (cf. 28–31) and, as the play closes, not only have the good been enriched and the evil impoverished (cf. esp. 802–958) but, paradoxically, prosperity has been promised to the city as a whole (1191–93).<sup>2</sup> It seems that all is finally right with the world, and the whole final third of *Plutus* (802–1209) consists of illustrations of the wide-ranging consequences of the god's recovery of his vision. These paradigmatic scenes and their implications have been studied in considerable detail.<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that the question of the extent, character and significance of slavery in Athenian society has recently become a topic of intense scholarly interest and debate, however, the profound transformation that takes place in the relationship between Chremylus and his servant Cario has not received similar careful attention.<sup>4</sup> This is unfortunate, for in the altered relationship between master and

<sup>1</sup> Thanks are due Richard Hamilton, Gregory Dickerson, Ruth Scodel and the anonymous referee for this journal, for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

The most recent full-length commentary on *Plutus* is Karl Holzinger, *Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar zu Aristophanes' Plutos*, SAWW Band 218 (Vienna and Leipzig 1940), which concentrates almost exclusively on text-critical matters. The commentary of Benjamin Bickley Rogers, *The Plutus of Aristophanes* (London 1907), remains valuable.

On the social and political background to the play, cf. esp. Jan Pecirka, "The Crisis of the Athenian Polis in the 4th Century B.C.," *Eirene* 14 (1976) 5–29; E. David, *Aristophanes and Athenian Society in the Early Fourth Century B.C.*, *Mnemosyne* Suppl. 81 (Leiden 1984); and Barry S. Strauss, *Athens After the Peloponnesian War: Class, Faction and Policy 403–386 BC* (Ithaca NY 1986).

<sup>2</sup> On the problem of the "double plot" of the play, cf. most recently David Konstan and Matthew Dillon, "The Ideology of Aristophanes' *Wealth*," *AJP* 102 (1981) 371–94.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. Wilhelm Suess, "Scheinbare und wirkliche Inkongruenzen in den Dramen des Aristophanes," *RhM* 97 (1954) 306–13; Helmut Flashar, "Zur Eigenart des Aristophanischen Spaetwerks," in Hans-Joachim Newiger (ed.), *Aristophanes und die alte Komödie*, Wege der Forschung Band 265 (Darmstadt 1975) 425–28; Gregor Maurach, "Interpretationen zur Attischen Komödie," *Acta Classica* 11 (1968) 9–12. To these "ironic" views of the action, cf. esp. the responses of A. H. Sommerstein, "Aristophanes and the Demon Poverty," *CQ* 34 (1984) 323–33; Konstan and Dillon (above, note 2) 378–79 n. 10.

<sup>4</sup> The most important recent contribution to the question is Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Agricultural Slavery in Classical Athens," *AJAH* 8 (1983) 1–47. Cf. also M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London 1980), and the

slave we have a particularly clear indication of the character of the ideal new Athens, and thus a valuable insight into some of the internal tensions in Athenian society in the early fourth century BC.

As *Plutus* opens, all is not well in the relationship between Chremylus and his servant. Cario is not a docile, obedient, and essentially secondary figure like the slaves in *Wasps* and *Peace*, or devoted to his master like the good slaves in *Knights*. He is, first of all, a thief, as Chremylus points out when he calls him both his most trusted and his most light-fingered slave (27). Cario later admits that he does, in fact, habitually steal from his master (318–21; 1139–45). He also seems to think himself the equal or better of Chremylus, and is openly resentful about his subordinate position as a slave (1–7, esp. 3–5: ἦν γὰρ τὰ βέλτισθ' ὁ θεράπων λέξας τύχη, / δόξη δὲ μὴ δρᾶν ταῦτα τῷ κεκτημένῳ, / μετέχειν ἀνάγκη τὸν θεράποντα τῶν κακῶν). As Dover observes, he and his master “act more like a pair of friends than slave and master,” and his behavior is reminiscent not only of that of Xanthias in *Frogs*, but also of the undisciplined Athenian slaves about whom the Old Oligarch complains ([Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.10).<sup>5</sup> This may be in part a sign of some sort of social development in the emerging Middle Comedy.<sup>6</sup> Above all else, however, Cario's behavior is a mark of a very real problem in the dramatic world, and one that is firmly corrected in the course of the action.

Cario's “typically” slavish character is particularly apparent in the initial confrontation with Plutus. Although outspokenly cynical about the cleverness of both Apollo (8–12) and his master (12–17; 48–50), and about the moral probity of Chremylus (104–6) and of the Athenian populace at large (97–99; cf. 153–59), Cario is the first to resort to violence and abuse with Wealth (56–57; 67–70; cf. 60: σκαίῳς γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ χαλεπῶς ἐκπυθάνει).<sup>7</sup> His baseness is further illustrated when he and his master make their case for Wealth's unique importance by thinking of other things of which men seek satiety. While

extensive bibliography provided there. I. E. Stefanis, ὁ δοῦλος στίς κωμωδίες τοῦ Ἀριστοφάνη, *Επιστημονικὴ Επετηρίδα Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς* 29 (Thessaloniki 1980) (hereafter “Stefanis”) 13–16, supplies substantial bibliography on slaves and slavery in Aristophanes, but denies that Cario develops in any way whatsoever (160). On slaves in Aristophanes, cf. also Victor Ehrenburg, *The People of Aristophanes* (Oxford 1951) 165–91.

<sup>5</sup> K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1972) 205. Carlo Ferdinando Russo, *Aristofane: Autore di Teatro* (Firenze 1962) 357, also comments on “la promozione a personaggio autonomo del Servo.” Cf. also Stefanis 140–41, on the peculiarity of the situation. Xanthias' dominance in the first half of *Frogs* is above all else a pointed commentary on the effeminacy and cowardice of his master, Dionysus. Cf. esp. the comments of Yvon Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca and London 1988) 17.

<sup>6</sup> W. Thomas McCary, “Menander's Slaves: Their Names, Roles and Masks,” *TAPA* 100 (1969) 277–94, however, concludes that the typical slave in Menander's New Comedy is still afraid of his master and constrained by social rules.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Stefanis 159, on Cario's “slavish” behavior in the scene.

The staging here is routinely misunderstood and mishandled by editors and translators. Chremylus and Cario cooperate in pinioning Wealth, as is clear from the first and second person plurals in 75 (μέθεσθε; μεθίμεν). This is done somewhere between 63 and 66, and Cario's remark at 63 (δέχον τὸν ἄνδρα) is probably an allusive reference to it. At 75, they allow him to go. (“Ἀφετὸν με νῦν at 100 means “Let me leave,” i.e., “Let me go where I will, rather than staying here to talk to you.”)

Chremylus thinks of the delight in social and political goods such as ἀνδραγαθία, τιμή and στρατηγία, and of love and music, Cario is concerned only with something to fill his belly (188–92).<sup>8</sup> He is accordingly presented as a glutton throughout the play (190–92; 318–21; 672–95; 1141–43). It is also Cario who interrupts Chremylus' catalogue of decent human occupations such as shoe-making, bronze-working and carpentry (162–64), in order to bring up disreputable activities such as mugging and burglary (165). The first real demonstration of Wealth's inability to tell good men from bad (90–91) is thus the fact that he treats Cario and his master in precisely the same way (56–62).

The most telling illustration of Cario's character occurs when he returns from his mission to fetch the citizen farmers who make up the Chorus (cf. 222–26). When Cario and the Chorus appear, they have a section of iambic tetrameters (253–89), followed by a song (290–321). At its most basic, each section is an attempt to hurry the Chorus along (253–56; 292–95; 308), although by 290 they have already been onstage for a good forty lines. The second section is thus actually a reiteration, rather than an advancement of the action. Its real purpose is to cast the social conflicts articulated in the preceding lines in clearer and more polemical terms.<sup>9</sup>

Both tetrameters and song feature a struggle for dominance between Cario and the Chorus. In the dialogue, Cario first refuses to give a straight answer to the Chorus' questions about the reason for the great need for haste (265–67; 270), and then tries to stand on his honor, despite his servile status (273–74). Cario is thus breaking the social rules here with his presumption and abuse of his betters. The Chorus in response threaten him with their sticks (272) and with chains (275–76), and, when Cario remains insolent (277–78), denounce him as the archetypal proud slave, the helot's child (μόθων εἰ 279). Given the somewhat ludicrous figure the Chorus cut here (cf. their regret over the roots of thyme they missed [283], and their comically advanced age [esp. 258, 277–78]), however, it is difficult to know how seriously to take these undercurrents.

The song that follows resolves all such doubts. Rogers may be right to suggest that the action onstage here is reminiscent of a good-humored traditional rural game of pursuit and verbal oneupsmanship.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the social

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the comment of the Scholiast ad 190: τοῦ δεσπότου περὶ σπουδαίων πραγμάτων διαλαμβάνοντος, ὁ δούλος τὰ περὶ βρωμάτων φησίν, and Stefanis 161. Cario's final thought before he leaves is for τουτοῦ τὸ κρεάδιον (227–28). If the phrase is actually a derogatory reference to Plutus, it would further characterize the servant as someone who can only think of Wealth in terms of something to eat.

<sup>9</sup> A parallel phenomenon is visible in the imagery of the two passages. There is a consistent concern with shape-changing throughout (cf. 317 ὑμεῖς ἐπ' ἄλλ' εἶδος τρέπεσθ'), with the Chorus in particular regularly taking on the role of domestic animals. This imagery is less pronounced in the trimeters, appearing only in the references to the Chorus browsing on wild thyme (253; 283), and to their potential resemblance to donkeys (287). In the song, however, they are metamorphized specifically into sheep and goats (292–95) and swine (304–8).

<sup>10</sup> Rogers (1907) ad 290. The Scholiast ad 290 tells us that the specific literary model for the Cyclops-song in *Plutus* is a composition by Philoxenos of Sicily. The answer to the crucial question of why this song has been included precisely here in this particular comedy, however, must be sought in the larger poetic context of the play. On the popularity of the Cyclops-theme in antiquity, cf. Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy* (2nd ed. revised by T.B.L. Webster, Oxford 1962) 56.

undercurrents are significant. Going far beyond his earlier attempt to exchange his position as a servant for that of a free citizen, Cario now chooses as prototypes for his actions the Cyclops (290–95) and Circe (302–8), Homeric villains with whom no real sympathy is possible. The mythic exemplars Cario has chosen thus demand that his behavior be rejected and punished, and the Chorus for their part adopt the arch-heroic role of Odysseus and his companions (cf. esp. 300–301; 312).<sup>11</sup> In the event, the Cyclops is blinded (301), while Circe is hung up by “her” testicles and has her nose rubbed in excrement (313–14). Beneath the surface good humor here, therefore, the same sort of fate seems to be promised symbolically for the insolent servant.

Cario remains a βωμολόχος in the Asclepieion, and persists there in his devoted service to his own appetites (esp. 672–95).<sup>12</sup> Even the healing of Plutus *per se* brings about no sudden change in his character. When Cario returns onstage from the Asclepieion at 627, he has come in advance of Plutus and his master, deliberately leaving them behind in order to be the first to announce the good news of Plutus’ healing (627–36). His guiding interest is clearly the tasty reward he may get from his mistress, and he exits with that in mind (770).<sup>13</sup> Only the actual arrival of Plutus and his blessings in Chremylus’ house brings

<sup>11</sup> Odysseus’ struggle after he returned to Ithaca was also to set a disrupted social world back in order.

<sup>12</sup> Asclepius himself pointedly ignores the unfortunate behavior in 699 (704). On this scene, and Cario’s outrageous behavior, cf. Ervin Roos, “De Incubationis Ritu per Ludibrium apud Aristophanem Detorto,” *Opuscula Atheniensia* 3 (1960) 55–97.

<sup>13</sup> Most editors and translators assume Cario exits by the parodos at 770, intending to go back to meet Plutus and Chremylus as they come to the house. (Thus e.g. Rogers [above, note 1] ad loc.; Victor Coulon, *Aristophane* Vol. 5 [Paris 1930] ad loc.; Holzinger [above, note 1] ad loc.) Since Cario has just left Chremylus and Plutus, however, he lacks any obvious motivation to turn around again and head off to seek them once more. He also fails to speak in 771–801, and at 788 the Wife specifically greets only two new-comers. Finally, the timing of Cario’s supposed reappearance is a problem. Since Plutus and Chremylus enter separately (771 and 782 respectively), Cario either fails to accompany them both onstage (but cf. ἐκείνοις 770), or must engage in a distracting and pointless amount of to and fro.

Cario’s exit by the parodos and (potentially repeated) reappearance as a mute is thus a dramatic embarrassment, and one which serves no obvious positive purpose in the drama. As Beer (cited by Holzinger ad 770) alone seems to have seen, it is also unnecessary, for the text itself suggests that Cario enters the house with the Wife at 770, and does not reappear until 802. The gluttonous Cario (190–2; 318–21; 672–95; 1141–43), seems tremendously excited by the Wife’s offer of a “necklace of baked meats” (764–66). His remark at 766 (μή νυν μέλλ’ ἔτι) cannot refer to the preparations for Plutus’ arrival, for those are not announced until 768–69. Instead, he is asking that his mistress hasten to see about his promised personal treat, for time is running short (767). That his words at 770 are ambiguous is part of the humor of the scene. ἀπαντᾶω is a relatively rare verb in Aristophanes. Of the other three examples, the word is used once absolutely (*Lys.*13), once with an (implied) dative of person encountered (*Cl.* 425) and once with a dative of thing encountered (*Peace* 940–41). The play here is between the second and third senses. “Those things” which Cario wishes to encounter (770) might be the ἄνδρες (767) or the ὀφθαλμοῖς (769), or, more characteristically, the καταχύσματα (768) or the κριβανωτῶν (765). While the audience may initially conclude that Cario is going back to join Plutus and Chremylus, he quickly makes his real interests and allegiance clear—by entering the house.

about a significant change in the troublesome servant. Although Chremylus' home is full of good things (802–20), Cario is blinded and driven out by the smoke of sacrifice (ἐμὲ δ' ἐξέπεμψεν ὁ καπνός. οὐχ οἶός τε γὰρ/ ἔνδον μένειν ἦν. ἔδακνε γὰρ τὰ βλέφαρά μου, 821–22). The insolent slave who offered himself as a guide for the blind while attacking Apollo (11–16) has thus suffered the same fate as the good-for-nothing demagogue Neocleides (716–25; 747).<sup>14</sup> This is a decisive moment of crisis. In the scenes that follow, the fantastically enriched Chremylus remains the decent, honest citizen he has been from the start. Cario, on the other hand, undergoes a radical evolution, as his character as an insolent slave is decisively repudiated and changed.

As the Just Man confronts the Sycophant (823–958), Cario's secondary, servile status is explicit from the first, in the threat of torture with which he is confronted (874–76). He accordingly stays largely in the background, as the Just Man quarrels with, interrogates, and finally attacks his enemy.<sup>15</sup> Throughout all of this, Cario remains basically an onlooker, watching, but rarely participating, except to object to the possible impiety of what is being done (937; cf. 958).<sup>16</sup> The implications of his scene with Hermes (1097–1170) are even clearer. The old Cario and his social equal Hermes (τὸν σάντου φίλον, 1134) were two of a kind, and cooperated in pillaging Chremylus' house (1136–45). When Hermes appears, he is still a "typical" slave, ready to lie for no apparent purpose (1101–

<sup>14</sup> Blinding is precisely what the Chorus had threatened Cario/Cyclops with earlier (300–1). Conversely, it is the curse from which both Plutus (727–38) and the Young Man (1048) are freed.

<sup>15</sup> At 928–29, the Sycophant issues a challenge, couched in the language of the preceding dispute over a citizen's duty to his city (cf. 906–20), to anyone who might wish to oppose him: προσελθέτω πρὸς ἔμ' ὑμῶν ἐνθαδὶ / ὁ βουλόμενος. The Just Man's immediate response (οὐκοῦν ἐκεῖνός εἰμ' ἐγώ 929), and his adoption of the role of ὁ βουλόμενος in the place of the Sycophant (cf. 918), illustrate the reversal of the social status of the χρηστοί and the πονηροί expected in the new world (cf. e.g. 95–97). Both Hall and Geldart and Coulon fail to see this, and assign Cario not only 929 and 931, but also the active role in stripping the Sycophant, reclothing him in the Just Man's wretched old clothing, and driving him from the stage (931; 934; 935–36; 938–40; 942–43). This is manifestly mistaken. First of all, it makes no sense for the slave, Cario, to take over a citizen's legal part here (928–29), particularly after his status *vis-a-vis* the others has been so clearly marked out by the threat of torture at 874–76. Secondly, the apparent misunderstandings and corrections in 926–27 only make sense if the Sycophant can automatically interpret the commands here to strip as addressed not to himself, but to someone else. This would be possible if the Just Man were speaking, since he might be taken to be addressing the socially inferior Cario (cf. esp. the orders to strip given to slaves at *Peace* 933–34, 946–47; *Frogs* 495–98, 525–28). It would make no sense, however, to believe that the Sycophant would take Cario to be addressing his own ally, the Just Man. Finally, it is only logical that it be the Just Man who disposes of his own old shoes and clothing by draping them about the Sycophant's neck. He has, after all, come specifically in order to get rid of them, by dedicating them to Wealth (842–48), and he completes his purpose here by hanging them up as on a tree for an offering to the gods (cf. the Scholiast ad 943). 929, 931, 934, 935–36, 938–40 and 942–43 ought thus all to be assigned to the Just Man. Cario speaks 937 and 941.

<sup>16</sup> Cario is sufficiently reduced as a threat, in fact, that the punishment reserved for him in the role of Circe can now be transferred to the Sycophant, who is to be dragged out of the bathhouse "by the balls" (955–56; cf. 312). This is the same Sycophant who refuses to have anything to do with a "sheep's life" (922; cf. the characterization of the Chorus in 292–97; 299).

2), and concerned for himself alone, and above all for his belly (1120–38; 1141).<sup>17</sup> He has no larger loyalties (1118–19; 1149; 1151), and feels no responsibility for services rendered him (1117; 1124–25; 1144–45).<sup>18</sup> He is ready to desert Zeus (1147–49), and wants Cario to continue his old pattern of thievishness by bringing him something out from the house to eat (1136–38). The new Cario, however, prefers ἀπλῶν τρόπων (1157–58), and refuses to steal anything for his old friend (ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκφορά, 1138). He also seems appalled at the idea of deserting one's master (ταυτομολεῖν ἀστείον εἶναι σοι δοκεῖ; 1150). If Hermes wants to enter Chremylus' household as a servant, Cario tells him, he will have to come up with a whole new way of living, one which is in no way δόλιον (1152–65), and which qualifies him as διακονικός (1170). Hermes' acceptance of these terms (οὐκοῦν ἐπὶ τούτοις εἰσῶ; 1168) is thus essentially a re-enactment in miniature of what has happened to Cario over the course of a thousand lines. It is also a signal that the new world will have none of the disturbances of the master-slave relationship that distinguished the old.

There is still a servile class in the new world. It is their labor, after all, upon which it is to be based, and they are guaranteed, if anything, only a harder lot there (ταῦτα γὰρ ἡμῖν πάνθ' ὅσα νῦν δὴ κατέλεξας/ οἱ θεράποντες μοχθήσουσιν 517–18; cf. 1105;<sup>19</sup> 1168–70; 1194; 1196). Plutus himself, in fact, is received into the house precisely as a slave (768–69; cf. 789–95). Cario remains in some ways a “typically slavish” character to the very end. He is still concerned above all else with food (1169), and, whereas the citizen Chremylus moves to extend his good fortune not only to his friends (esp. 222–26; 345), but even to the city as a whole (1191–93), Cario still endorses absolute selfishness (1118–19).<sup>20</sup> Perhaps most importantly, however, Cario is never liberated, despite his repeated laments earlier in the play about his servile condition (1–7; 147–48).<sup>21</sup> This is not an ironic reflection on the new world, but a simple consequence of Old Comedy's exclusive orientation towards the concerns and fantasies of the male citizenry, and thus of the need to return this overbearing slave to his proper place. Neither Cario nor any of the characters associated primarily with him, the Wife, the Just Man, the Sycophant, or Hermes, even participates in the exodus (1191–1209). The triumphant final procession with Plutus to the Acropolis is instead reserved for Chremylus and characters associated with him

<sup>17</sup> Cf. his equally “slavish” behavior in *Peace* (esp. 192–94; 423–26).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. his designation as a τοιχωρῦχος at 1141. For the fundamental hostility between the burglar and Wealth, cf. 203–7.

<sup>19</sup> Cario's position in this social hierarchy as Hermes defines it, sandwiched in between the dog, a semi-intelligent figure halfway between servant and animal, and the pig, is a calculated insult (1105–6).

<sup>20</sup> Note also the way in which Cario and Hermes quarrel over their past division of spoils (1139–45). One is reminded particularly of the scene between Aeacus and Xanthias at *Frogs* 743–55, where the two servants discover their mutual delight in various “slavish” behaviors.

<sup>21</sup> There is thus a fundamental difference here from the sort of social reversal that Erich Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 29 (Cambridge 1968) esp. 99–169, sees as central to the master-slave relationship in Plautine comedy, to which the action in *Plutus* might otherwise seem comparable.

alone, the Old Woman and the Priest.<sup>22</sup> If slaves do accompany it, they are anonymous and obedient (cf. 1194–95).<sup>23</sup> To the last, the ideal new Athens is carefully segregated socially.

It is from the master's point of view, therefore, that the social structure of Wealth's new world is a marked improvement over the old. *Plutus* thus reinforces the strong distinction in Athenian society between slave and free, while simultaneously illustrating some of the anxieties that relationship seems to have provoked. Chremylus has been made rich beyond his wildest dreams, and that without any wrongdoing (cf. ἡμῖν...οὐδὲν ἥδικηκόσιν 804–5). Perhaps more importantly, the aggressive, rebellious Cario has been put firmly in his place, and can be expected to stay there. All is at last right with the world.

<sup>22</sup> The Young Man cannot participate because of the obvious complications this would create with the Old Woman (cf. 1088–91). For a more cynical view of the final procession, cf. Barkhuizen (above, note 3) 17–22.

<sup>23</sup> It may well be that these slaves only bring the torches out the house and then return there, since it is specifically said that the Priest will lead the procession (1195).