

Edith Hall

In Praise of Cario, the Nonpareil Comic Slave of Aristophanes' *Wealth*

Despite its popularity throughout the Renaissance and Early Modern periods,¹ Aristophanes' *Wealth* is rarely staged today. But a 2016 production by Once More Theatre in Philadelphia received glowing reviews. The character whose name dominated them was the 'outspoken and wayward' Cario,² played by 'the brilliantly expressive Carlos A. Forbes', who revealed the ancient slave's 'lively intelligence'.³ The impact that Cario made in this performance has encouraged me to reassess his presentation in Aristophanes' comedy.⁴



Fig. 3: James Guckin as Chremylus and Carlos Forbes as Cario in *Plutus*, directed by Peggy Mecham for Once More Theatre, Philadelphia 2016. Photograph by Alexis Mayer.

In 1825, a translator of *Wealth* discussed Cario in these terms:⁵

1 Hall 2007, 67–8.

2 Miller 2016.

3 Silva 2016.

4 For further readings on Cario see Fernández 2000; Tordoff 2012; Barrenechea 2018, 55, 82–91.

5 Carrington 1825, vii.

... an impudent arch composition of mischief and playfulness, maliciousness and good humour, a kind of character that has always been a favourite on the stage from his own time to that of the renowned valet Leporello, though without the refinements which the example of modern polish and the improved state of civilisation have stamped upon the roguish attendant of the young Spanish debauchee. Independent of which, the characteristic vein that prevails in both these waiting gentlemen is the same.

This late Georgian classicist, Edmund Carrington, understood the importance of Cario's role in Aristophanes' *Wealth* as few have done subsequently. The comparison with Leporello in the Mozart/Da Ponte *Don Giovanni* (1787) is astute: one musicologist, noting that it is only at the time of the French revolution that the 'clever servant' role in theatre and opera began to rival that of the aristocratic principals, points out the similarities between Xanthias in *Frogs* and Leporello.⁶ Yet Cario, whose role (unlike that of Xanthias) retains its prominence until 39 lines before the play ends, shares the characteristics identified in Leporello by the musicologist, but to a greater degree; he acts on his own initiative, is the star soloist in more than one scene, as 'a healthily discontented servant' who is nevertheless 'forced to side with his master in moments of danger'; he is 'hard-boiled', with 'a very worldly and cynical outlook'.⁷

The sensitivity to the 'impudent, arch' Cario displayed by Carrington, a member of a famous Tory family embedded in the British imperial administration in both the Caribbean and India, might be expected. This classicist, during calls for parliamentary reform in the 1820s, recommended William Mitford's *History of Greece* (1784–1810) as background reading.⁸ Mitford was regarded as an ultra-conservative even by his contemporaries. He identified the Athenian democracy with the dangerous reforms suggested by contemporary reformers.⁹

Carrington objects to several 'uppity' aspects of Cario's characterisation in a tone reminiscent of the 'Old Oligarch's' statement that in democratic Athens not only are the 'wanton' slaves indistinguishable from the free, but slaves do not stand aside for others in the street and may not be struck arbitrarily ([Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.10). Carrington apologises for having retained (if ameliorated) the reference to Cario's passing wind in the Asclepieion (see below; Carrington found he could not omit it because of 'the length of the context connected with it').¹⁰ He censures

⁶ Loft 1946, 376.

⁷ Loft 1946, 383–4.

⁸ Carrington 1825, ix.

⁹ Turner 1981, 209; Hall 2007, 76–7; see also the chapter by Peter Swallow in this volume.

¹⁰ Carrington 1825, 62.

Cario's 'malicious indifference' to Hermes' pleas to be allowed a household post.¹¹ He omits a phrase of Cario's because it is 'a highly disrespectful and indelicate observation'.¹²

For all its class snobbery, however, Carrington's response to Cario, like the recent Philadelphia performance, suggests that Cario, the cheekiest and most dominant slave in all ancient Greek comedy, deserves a reappraisal. Despite the acknowledgement of scholars ever since Victor Ehrenberg that he stands out alongside only Xanthias in *Frogs* as a slave in classical Greek drama,¹³ Cario has yet to find an appreciative scholarly champion.

Not registering the instrumentality of Cario has a long pedigree. This is partly because many studies of Aristophanes overlook *Wealth* or keep discussion of it to a minimum.¹⁴ Editions of *Wealth*, at least since the mid-19th century, have apologised for its perceived inferiority: it is 'the shortest and slightest of Aristophanes' comedies, is devoid of political satire, and even contains traces (such as are not found elsewhere in the poet) of slovenly writing', opined Arthur Sidgwick in 1872.¹⁵ But the neglect of Cario even within distinct studies of *Wealth* extends back to the authors of the four ancient hypotheses to the play. Three of them never mention him, including the ten-line hypothesis in iambics ascribed to Aristophanes of Byzantium.¹⁶ Only the first seems aware of Cario, but does not use his proper name: after a description of the action which concludes with the consecration of the cult of Plutus, and the statement 'such is the argument of the piece', the writer adds, 'the servant (θεράπων) delivers the prologue, complaining that his master was unashamed to follow an old blind man'.¹⁷

11 Carrington 1825, 99.

12 Carrington 1825, 108.

13 Ehrenberg 1974, 171.

14 E.g. Harriot 1986; *Wealth* does not even appear in the index of passages cited. The same goes for Sells 2019. An interesting exception is Church 1893, which ignores the (then still scandalous) *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae* altogether, but which paraphrases *Wealth* (pp. 218–35) in a way that foregrounds Cario's wit and agency.

15 Sidgwick 1872, 'Preface' (no page).

16 Chantry 2009, 202–3.

17 Chantry 2009, 200–1.

Despite the recent interest in the representation of slaves in ancient Greek literature,¹⁸ Cario's importance as dominant subaltern has not been fully appreciated, either. His name is an ethnonym,¹⁹ which appears on one mid-fourth-century comedy-related vase by the Paestan painter Asteas.²⁰ Athenians did regular trade with places in Caria, and subjected Carians to the standard anti-barbarian rhetorical abuse that they also directed towards Thracians, Scythians, Lydians, Egyptians and Phoenicians.²¹ We learn rather more about Cario than about any other Aristophanic slave: he lost his freedom, apparently, because he had not paid some a small debt (147–8). As David points out, this means he cannot have been enslaved at Athens.²² Cario's presentation may also provide unique information about the 'missing link' in genealogy of slave characters between Old Comedy and the 'dominating and resourceful slaves' of New Comedy, such as Getas in Menander's *Dyskolos*,²³ although no slave even in (surviving) New Comedy remotely rivals Cario's laughter-generating instrumentality. In her summary of the 'Main trends of Middle Comedy', Papachrysostomou notes the emergence of stock character types such as the *hetaira* and the parasite, while saying nothing about slave roles.²⁴ Yet Olson persuasively argues, on the evidence of the fragments, that the 'outspoken and occasionally disrespectful' slaves represented in Aristophanes by Xanthias and Cario, 'gradually become stock "Middle Comic" characters'.²⁵

Most scholars still ignore not only Cario's instrumentality in the action of the plot, name, background and contribution to the history of slavery in ancient literature, but also his dramatic and theatrical function. Zumbrunnen for example barely mentions him in a long, seven-page analysis of *Wealth*.²⁶ However, almost as an afterthought, in the final section of his chapter on both *Ecclesiazusae* and *Wealth*, Zumbrunnen suddenly writes, 'As the central role of Chremylus's slave Cario suggests, other markers of social status matter less in *Wealth* than the

18 E.g. Serghidou 2010; Alston/Hall/Proffitt 2011; Wrenhaven 2012; Akrigg/Tordoff 2013.

19 Tordoff 2013, 24–5.

20 Taranto 121613, illustrated in Trendall 1967, plate Vc. See Boshier 2013, 201–2.

21 Ehrenberg 1974, 118, 152; Long 1986.

22 David 1984, 16.

23 Dover 1972, 207.

24 Papachrysostomou 2008, 18–23.

25 Olson 2007, 131. He cites as examples Epicr. fr. 5, Antiphan. fr. 75, Amphis fr. 6, Alex. fr. 25, Ephipp. fr. 15. The canonical study of the 'Middle Comic' slave is Nesselrath 1990, 283–96. See also Akrigg 2013, 211–14.

26 Summed up at Zumbrunnen 2012, 117.

shared fact of suffering under the misrule of Zeus'; his footnote refers to Dover's *Aristophanic Comedy*.²⁷

It was indeed Dover who first insisted at some length on the centrality of Cario's role: there is an 'almost even balance' between him and Chremylus in the last third of the play, when they alternate as the individuals receiving the new arrivals at the household, 'but up to that point Karion's has been the heavier role'.²⁸ Dover was most interested in whether the upgraded slave role in *Wealth* reflected real-world socio-economic shifts in early fourth-century Athens, speculating that, as comedy grew more decorous, 'earthy' elements such as violence, vulgarity, and sexuality were transferred to slave characters since the audience still enjoyed them but they were increasingly felt inappropriate to citizen characters.²⁹ Yet, despite noting that Cario may foreshadow Getas' setting up of the final scene of *Dyskolos* (the knockabout and musical sequence after the resolution of the main plot issues), even Dover does not attend to Cario's role as chief instigator of laughter almost throughout the piece.³⁰

Sommerstein certainly acknowledges this role (Cario supplies 'much of such comic power as the play ever shows';³¹ his part 'demands a livelier and more versatile comedian' than that of Chremylus; Cario's actor may have been the protagonist).³² He notes that Cario speaks about a quarter of the total lines, as does Chremylus, but that Cario is on stage more than twice as long as anyone else, including Chremylus, and is far more important than Chremylus' citizen associate, Blesidemus.³³ Sommerstein has also written an important article on the collaboration between Aristophanic citizens and their slaves in terms of effecting ambitious solutions to problems.³⁴ However, even Sommerstein does not analyse systematically the way Cario controls the comic register and monopolises the punchlines.

Others who have discussed Cario in depth remain few. They tend to assume a censorious tone reminiscent of the Georgian conservatives – not a comic writer's viewpoint – although the criticism of Cario is now moral rather than political. Olson's influential article, 'Cario and the New World of Aristophanes' *Plutus*', for example, has no good word to say about Cario. He is 'a thief', 'openly

²⁷ Zumbrunnen 2012; Dover 1972, 204–8.

²⁸ Dover 1972, 205.

²⁹ Dover 1972, 207.

³⁰ Dover 1972, 207.

³¹ Sommerstein 2001, 24.

³² Sommerstein 2001, 27.

³³ Sommerstein 2001, 27, 160.

³⁴ Sommerstein 2009, 137–54.

resentful of his subordinate position as a slave’, ‘the first to resort to violence and abuse’ with Plutus; ‘presented as a glutton throughout the play’, ‘remains a βωμολόχος in the Asclepieion, and persists there in his devoted service to his own appetites’.³⁵ Olson believes that there is ‘a decisive moment of crisis’ when Cario emerges from the house, his eyes irritated by smoke from Chremylus’ animal sacrifices (716–25). He ‘has thus suffered the same fate as the good-for-nothing demagogue Neocleides’, while ‘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’.³⁶ Yet Olson goes on to undermine exactly this argument – that Cario undergoes a moral transformation – when he decides that he ‘remains in some ways a “typically slavish” character to the very end. He is still concerned above all else with food’ and ‘still endorses absolute selfishness’.³⁷

Olson’s reading assumes the spectator at the Dionysia was assessing the characters in comedies primarily from a moral perspective, rather than a comic one. If we read the role of Cario in verbal detail from the perspective of a spectator wishing to be made to laugh, a comic dramaturge, a sketch-writer, a comic actor, a solo stand-up comedian, a performance studies specialist, or a discourse analyst, he emerges as by far the most significant – because by far the funniest – character in the play. Moral worth and consistency are neither here nor there. A few scholars, notably Jon Hesk and Nick Lowe, have urged us to retune our critical antennae when interpreting ancient comedy to reinstate the primacy of laughter generation.³⁸ While some lines may be funny in ways to which we are no longer sensitive, and others may have been made amusing by any actor’s delivery, an analysis of a script’s obvious laughter-bids remains possible. Of the bids discernible in *Wealth* – jokes, puns, punchlines in sequences of dialogue, and physical stunts – Cario is given the overwhelming majority; the play as a comedy would in live performance undoubtedly stand or fall alone on his actor’s ability to cash out all these one-liners, gags and routines.

Cario opens the play (and the parodos, and the messenger scene); the celebrated early fourth-century tragic actor Theodorus insisted that even canonical

³⁵ Olson 1989, 194–6.

³⁶ Olson 1989, 197.

³⁷ Olson 1989, 198.

³⁸ Hesk 2000b and 2007b; Lowe 2007; Hall 2019; see also the essays in the first half of Swallow/Hall 2020.

plays be rewritten so that his character delivered the prologue, because audiences adopted the prologist's point of view (Arist. *Pol.* 1336b27–31).³⁹ In full-blown paratragic style, Cario begins with a gnomic complaint (1–7):⁴⁰

O Zeus and the gods, how hard it is to be the slave of a deranged master! Even if the slave gives excellent advice, if his owner does not follow it, the slave is compelled to share his hardships. Fortune doesn't allow him control over his own body – that right belongs to the one who purchased him.

The possibility that a slave might be more intellectually competent than his master is the first proposal made to the spectators of the play, which invites them, programmatically, to pay close attention to the interactions between Cario and Chremylus and decide for themselves. This is perhaps the first great comic 'double act' in western literature; despite the definitive status gap, the two men often act in partnership to create humour in cooperation or mild antagonism, neither conforming fully to the role of straight man or funny man, although Cario *usually* gets the first and last laughs in their extended interchanges. This is interesting because Xanthias in *Frogs*, on the other hand, conforms more to the 'straight man' model in dialogue with the funny Dionysus.⁴¹ I suspect that Cario was also represented as tall and physically powerful; he is confident about his ability to overpower uncooperative interlocutors throughout (e.g. Plutus and the In-former), and his confidence is revealed by the stage action to be justified.

After doubting the efficacy of Apollo's oracle at Delphi in high tragic style, Cario deflates his own rhetoric by introducing the comic theme of slave-beating, reminding the audience yet again of the plight of slaves in terms of their masters' right to punish them corporally: he will not stop asking why Chremylus is following the blind old man (21–7),

CAR. ... since you can't hit me when I'm wearing a suppliant wreath.

CHR. You think? But I'll tear off the wreath if you harass me,
and it will hurt all the more.

CAR. Rubbish. I won't stop
until you tell me who on earth this man is.
I'm only asking out of consideration for your welfare.

CHR. OK, I won't hide it. I regard you as
the most loyal and felonious of my slaves.

³⁹ Hall 2006, 50–1.

⁴⁰ This and all the other translations are my own.

⁴¹ Hesk 2000b.

In this first brief interchange we learn a great deal about the two men's relationship. Cario speaks with boldness and lack of inhibition to his master. His master trusts him and respects his cleverness, which takes the form of an aptitude for crime. The two seem reciprocally to acknowledge that their best interests coincide and that their mutual welfare is best served by cooperation.

In the next sequence, where they both address Plutus, it first looks as though Cario will play 'hard cop' to Chremylus' 'soft cop'. But as soon as Plutus responds aggressively to Chremylus, Chremylus realises that violence is indeed required to make the old man cooperate. The joke here is that Cario, cynically, saw what was needed to be done from the outset, whereas Chremylus, for all his high-mindedness about addressing the old man with civility, readily opts for the violent alternative when he feels personally threatened (56–71). Knowingness and cynicism are shown to be far more expedient than naïve civility.

Knowingness is a helpful concept when it comes to understanding the relationship between actor and audience in many dramas. Knowingness is a stance which characterises individuals engaged in trying to control other people's behaviour, whether to good or evil purpose, through positioning themselves as in possession of significant knowledge. The notion of dramatic 'knowingness' in the cultural-historical sphere is lucidly described by Peter Bailey in his brilliant analysis of the ideological workings of Victorian music-hall:⁴²

The bourgeois man and wife [...] were learning to savour the collusive but contained mischief of the performer's address, in whose exchanges they too could register the competencies of knowing-ness. By the turn of the century, music-halls' knowingness was fast becoming a second language for all classes, as music-hall itself became an agreeable national alter ego, a manageable low other.

In the nineteenth century, those who used the term 'knowingness' or its cognates in a tone of disparagement were invariably asserting a position of superiority in class, taste, and actual education: James Hardy Vaux can in 1812 speak of a thief who 'affects a knowingness in his air and conversation'.⁴³ But, in the music-hall, all classes could unite in adopting the knowing but manageable collective 'alter ego', despite (or perhaps on account of) this persona's declassé identity. As I have argued elsewhere, in such heroes as Dicaeopolis, Philocleon and Trygaeus the ancient Athenians had similarly identified collective, citizen, pragmatic, realist, cynical 'low others' who were, however, extremely shrewd and knowledgeable;⁴⁴

⁴² Bailey 1994, 167.

⁴³ Vaux 1964, s.v. *knowingness*.

⁴⁴ Hall 2013, 283.

the difference in *Wealth* is that the dominant character fulfilling this function is not the citizen Chremylus, but Cario his slave.

In the ensuing triangular discussion, Chremylus' questions extract information from Plutus, but it is Cario's interjections which extract the humour from the situation. Chremylus elicits the information that if Plutus could see, he would only visit virtuous people; Chremylus begs Plutus to believe that he is a good man, but Cario absurdly butts in, 'By Zeus there is no other man more virtuous than I am!' (105). The next obviously funny line is Cario's comment of the god, 'this man is a real misery-guts' (118: ἄνθρωπος οὗτός ἐστιν ἄθλιος φύσει), which follows several lines of more serious dialogue in which Plutus has said that he would prefer to remain blind.

Olson believes that Cario then 'interrupts Chremylus' catalogue of decent human occupations such as shoe-making, bronze-working and carpentry (162–4) in order to bring up disreputable activities such as mugging and burglary' (165). This is true enough, and Cario's bathos is intended to raise a laugh. But Olson does not see that Chremylus and Cario are here operating as a double act, sharing the laughs between them at Plutus' expense; moreover, Chremylus has hardly eschewed 'disreputable' talk. He has already cited Corinthian prostitutes (149–52) and subsequently cites people who make money by informing on adulterers (168).

Master and slave egg each other on, with the slave slightly more responsible for the laughter-inducing bathetic triggers; the twenty-two line sequence that follow is arguably the best example of skilled writing for a comedy duo in all Aristophanes (170–92); the rapid *antilabē* into which it breaks down requires intense cooperation and precise comic timing. The two men exchange solemn claims that it is wealth that enriches the Persian King and allows the Athenian assembly to fulfil civic obligations, until Cario moves the content down one rung of the comic ladder by introducing a personal jibe at a politician, Pamphilus, to which Chremylus responds in kind (174–5). This encourages Cario to move down several more rungs at a leap, with a reference to another politician farting; a couple of lines later, Chremylus follows suit with a sexualised jibe about the plutocrat Philonides and his courtesan (177–9).

But Chremylus suddenly comes to his senses, and realises that they are between them drifting away from the serious task of persuading Plutus in favour of silly jokes; when Cario opens a new line portentously with 'The tower of Timotheus', Chremylus breaks in with the first *antilabē* in the sequence, hoping the said tower will fall on top of the slave (180), for once appropriating the punchline. In the ensuing sequence Chremylus succeeds in maintaining a dignified level of

references to high-flown things, such as love and honour, which wealth can confer, while Cario caps every single one with a bathetic reference to an everyday food item (188–92):

CHR. And [you, Plutus] are responsible for many other benefits,
so nobody ever gets too much of you. They get a surfeit of everything else,
of love ...

CAR. Bread.

CHR. Music.

CAR. Sweetmeats.

CHR. Honours.

CAR. Cakes.

CHR. Battles.

CAR. Figs.

CHR. Ambition.

CAR. Gruel.

CHR. Military advancement.

CAR. Lentil soup.

Much of the humour in this scene is therefore created out of the tension between the slave and master, who are simultaneously cooperating with one another in their attempts to win Plutus round, and also competing for control of the rhetorical register, Chremylus trying to elevate it and Cario to vitiate it.

Cario is then sent off to the fields to summon Chremylus' fellow peasant-farmers (223–6) and returns leading them. Some emphasis is given to the speed of his running by both Chremylus and the elderly chorus (222, 257–60); perhaps we see here early signs of the convention of the running slave that Konstan thinks in Menander was confined to much richer households than Chremylus', and marked a wider status gap between master and slave.⁴⁵ Be that as it may, the 36 lines of dialogue (253–89) between the returning Cario and the chorus reveal his (in this play, unique) ability to undercut tragically infused mock-solemnity by introducing savage bathos and contrast in his lexical registers (261–9):

CAR. Have I not been long explaining? It is you who do not hear.
My master says that you will all find release from your bleak,
disagreeable lives and live delightful ones instead.

CHO. How will he succeed in what he says?

CAR. O poor wretches, he has returned here with an old man –
filthy hunchbacked pitiful shrivelled balding toothless.
By heaven, he may even be circumcised.

⁴⁵ Konstan 2013.

CHO. What you say is worth its weight in gold! Tell me again;
no doubt you mean that he is bringing back a pile of money.

This interchange is typical of the way in which Cario takes the comic initiative. He apocalyptically announces that the farmers are about to have their miserable lives transformed, and yet, when they ask how, he describes the least likely individual in the world to be able to help them; the incongruity is stressed by the asyndetic adjectives (filthy hunchbacked pitiful shrivelled balding toothless) and the final suggestion that the monstrosity may even be circumcised – that is, a barbarian. But still this elderly chorus is so slow on the uptake that they hail Cario's words as golden, no doubt eliciting an additional laugh from the audience who are already giggling at Cario's devastating critique of the old man's appearance. Cario then changes down a gear again, colluding with the audience in puncturing the chorus' obtuse joy: actually, what he is bringing is not a pile of money but 'a pile of old age's decrepitudes' (270). Finally, the chorusmen realise he is somehow mocking them, and threaten him physically, first with their walking-sticks and then with the stocks and fetters to which Cario, as a slave, could be subjected (271–6). Cario's answer is brutal: they are so old they are near death. The implication is that he is so much physically stronger than they are that their threats are ludicrous.

Cario has kept the chorus waiting for the truth of the situation for thirty lines, constituting several minutes' dramatic action, and squeezed, at a minimum, three laughs out of the altercation. He is in charge intellectually, physically, and comically. When he finally explains that the old man is Plutus, he is given one more joke to deliver – that they will all be as rich as Midas, provided that they acquire asses' ears (287). This may relate to the identity of sheep and goats which the chorusmen are about to assume – perhaps they put on furry animal ears or used their hands to suggest animal ears sticking out of their heads. Either way, the joke introduces one of the most fascinating choruses in ancient comedy, a *parodos* song-and-dance number all the better for being frustratingly but hilariously delayed by Cario's thirty-line prevarication. Here, Chremylus' household slave virtually turns into a dramatic author, stage director and star singing actor all at once, building a rapport with both chorus and audience unparalleled by any other character in the piece.

Ancient and modern scholars alike have been fascinated by the work that is parodied in the first half of the *parodos*, Philoxenus' *Cyclops*. They have noted its relationship with *Odyssey* parodies in comedies and in satyr plays, from Epicharmus onwards. They have wondered about the degree to which it prefigured the lovelorn Cyclops of Theocritus' *Idylls* 6 and 11. They have remarked on the frequency of references to it, from Aristotle's *Poetics* onwards (1448a16; see 815–24

PMG). One or two have noticed that it is both discussed as a lyric composition (e.g. Ael. *VH* 12.44) and called a *drama* (schol. Ven. on *Plut.* 290ff. = *PMG* 819); one scholiast speaks of the Cyclops as an ‘actor’ introduced on the ‘stage’ (schol. Junt. on *Plut.* 296ff. = *PMG* 820) and others of Philoxenus as a tragedian⁴⁶ – rather surprisingly, given that his dithyrambic *Cyclops* almost certainly contained comic elements even before being parodied.⁴⁷ But we know so little about ancient lyricomimetic performances, which included at least some dithyrambs, that distinctions between nomenclatures become unhelpful. What such discussions prevent us from appreciating is the extraordinary opportunity the *Cyclops* parody offered the Cario-actor in performance terms.

Cario needed to impersonate a citharode who was himself impersonating Polyphemus the Cyclops, in an episode where he drove his flocks out to pasture; Cario is singing to his lyre and strumming it vigorously as the probably onomatopoeic word *θηρεττανελό* implies (290; *PMG* 819). Philoxenus had clearly built on the line in the *Odyssey* where Polyphemus whistles while he shepherds his flock (9.315). But simultaneously with strumming and singing, Cario is leading an animal dance in some hilarious manner, ‘lurching from side to side with both his legs’ (291–2). He tells his flock of youngsters to bleat repeatedly – the phrase *ἐπαναβοῶντες | βληχώμενοι* (292–3)⁴⁸ offering any comic actor who delivers it an opportunity to make ridiculous noises and gestures himself – while adjuring the chorusmen to smell bad and extrude their penises (294–5), perhaps even self-fellate.⁴⁹ In the second strophic pair Cario says that the chorusmen are now pigs, and impersonates another opponent of Odysseus associated with animals, Circe, as well as the pigs’ mother. But the Circe persona is itself a vehicle for another set of jokes about the rich man Philonides and his Corinthian courtesan, previously mentioned by Chremylus (179). Whatever the targets of the satire, and even though we do not know whether there was a poetic model underlying it, the ‘Circe’ lyric interchange allows the Cario-actor to lead the chorus in scatological and sexual clowning both verbal and physical. Transvestite buffoonery and pretending to be animals are two of the surest-fire tactics for eliciting laughter in the comic dramatist’s handbook. The comedy-rich feigned identities of both Cyclops and Circe are Cario’s idea; some critics read more serious undertones into Aristophanes’ choice of two supernatural beings in the *Odyssey* whom Odysseus

⁴⁶ Sutton 1983, 38–43.

⁴⁷ Hordern 1999, 450. Farmer 2017, 215.

⁴⁸ Here I follow Hall-Geldart, Coulon and Henderson. Wilson prints Bergk’s *βληχώμενων*.

⁴⁹ Sommerstein 2001, 157.

bests,⁵⁰ but such earnestness misses the point of this flamboyant, hilarious parodos altogether.

The next scene dominated by Cario is the equivalent of the tragic messenger scene, where he brings news of what has come to pass at the Asclepieion to Chremylus' wife. In the fusion of elevated idiom and earthy image which he deploys so deftly, he hails the chorusmen in high tragic style: the first three words, 'O [you] who greatly at the festival of Theseus', suggest that he will be honouring them by a reference to pious participation in patriotic festivals for Theseus, the foundation hero of the Athenian democracy. But he does not. What they did at these festivals was dip morsels of bread in the gruel provided free for the poor (627–8). The indignity of this anti-climax does not prevent Cario from reverting vertiginously in the next line to the most high-flown rhetoric: 'How fortunate you are, how blessed your good fortune, you and all who share your virtuous ways'. He tells the chorus the good news that Plutus has recovered his sight, launching the chorus into enthusiastic cries of celebration (637: 'Your words make me joyful! Your words make me shout!'). His caustic response 'It seems being joyful is the thing to do, regardless of whether it is voluntary' perhaps implies that the chorus are shouting at a great volume, or physically trying to make him participate in their celebration (638).

With the emergence of Chremylus' wife from her house, impatient to hear the news like a tragic queen appearing to hear of her husband's deeds away from home, Cario's grip on the control of the comic agenda becomes even firmer. At her expense he extracts at least three more laughs before he begins the Asclepieion narrative proper. He achieves this by the tactic of delaying (of which he has shown himself a master in the interchange with the chorus before the sung parodos); the delay is instigated by the introduction of a distracting suggestion or turn of phrase (641–51):

- WIFE What is all this shouting? Is there good news?
That's what I've been desperately waiting for so long inside!
- CAR. Quick! quick, get some wine, mistress so you can have a drink too!
You really love it! I bring you all benefits collectively.
- WIFE Where are they?
- CAR. In my words, as you'll see shortly.
- WIFE Hurry up and get on with saying what you have to say!
- CAR. Listen, then; I am going to tell you everything from the feet to the head.
- WIFE Please don't throw anything at *my* head!

⁵⁰ Especially Olson 1989.

First, Cario bids for a laugh by requesting wine before he can speak, revealing the opportunism of the slave who is rarely in a position to make such a demand; he caps this with the comment (perhaps a knowing aside to the audience) that his mistress enjoys a drink, female proclivity to alcohol being a standing joke in Old Comedy. In both his next responses he simply plays for time, instead of putting her out of her misery; his strange phrase involving the ‘things’ he has to tell in the direction of the ‘head’ forces *her* into delaying the delivery of the actual news for one more interchange. Like the delaying tactics of the interchange before the parodos, this sequence is there simply for Cario to hold the stage, as Master of the Revels, controlling the speed at which the action and plot evolve and interspersing a series of laughs along the way.

Cario’s long-awaited account of the overnight events at the Asclepieion is a sustained exercise in incongruity. The tragic style of the opening two utterances (653–7, 659–63, note especially the periphrastic ‘flame of Hephaestus’ for ‘fire’) and of much of the remainder is undercut by subject-matter (pilfering food, farting, impersonating a sanctuary snake) and above all by Cario’s personal perspective: cynical, knowing, irreverent, self-interested. Once Plutus had been ritually prepared for sleep, Cario with the others made a bed for himself out of leaves. Without avoiding an opportunity for establishing a joke that will run throughout this ‘messenger scene’, with a jibe at the politician Neocleides (665–6), his main narrative centres on a pot of porridge which an elderly female patient had brought with her for sustenance. Emboldened by the example of a priest whom he witnesses stealing food from the sacred table and altars, Cario decided to take the pot of porridge for himself. The old woman stretched out a hand to stop him, so the quick-thinking slave pretended to be the sacred snake, hissed and bit her (688–90). She then farted in terror, emitting a noxious smell, soon to be followed by the arrival of the god Asclepius and Cario’s ‘enormous fart’ (which he specifies was extremely amusing) after devouring the porridge makes him flatulent (693–9).

The important point in the narrative – the epiphany of the healing god – is therefore sandwiched between the account of the two farts which filled the air of the temple. The emphasis and timing, Karen Rosenbecker argues, imply that Cario’s fart is the pivotal moment in his account of the incubation when Plutus is cured. Although the two female divinities attending Asclepius, Iaso and Panacea, are embarrassed, ‘Cario’s fart is the direct precursor to the healing of Wealth and may even be the substance that sets the cure in motion. In describing his breach [*sic*] of decorum, Cario muses that Asclepius seems to accept this odiferous votive offering. The aroma did not bother the god in the least because, as a physician, he is used to tasting stool [...] Asclepius’ “consumption” of Cario’s flatus does

what all the previous sacrifices could not: it unblocks the ritual process and prompts a god to act in a way that benefits the good folk of Athens'.⁵¹

Rhetorically speaking, Cario's report also requires the vivid delivery of a description of Asclepius' treatment of Neocleides' eyes with a stinging ointment; Neocleides responded thus (722–5):

CAR. He screamed and bawled, sprang up and tried to escape. But the god laughed and said, 'Stay seated there with your ointment on. That way I'll keep you from perjuring yourself in meetings of the Assembly.'

This requires vocal dexterity, not only to suggest Neocleides' howling, but actually to speak the words of the god (another jibe at Neocleides aimed at producing a laugh) in *oratio recta*.

After a further joke about the stereotypical feminine bibulousness Cario assumes in Chremylus' wife, towards the end of the dialogue he returns to the high-flown diction of the opening lines (750–9) when describing the joy of the righteous poor who are joining the entourage of the newly sighted Plutus. This prompts Cario, once again, to act as director of the chorus (760–3); one and all they are to dance and leap and sing, since hunger is a thing of the past. Nobody will be saying to them when they go home, 'there isn't any barley in the bag'.

While Chremylus delivers just one speech of six lines on his return with Plutus (782–7), Cario yet again sustains the role of chief audience informant, in 21 lines describing the new domestic utopia which the sighted resident Plutus has ushered in (802–22). The tone is joyous, but the humour derives, as so often with Cario, from the fusion of grandiloquence, echoing a tragedy (Sophocles' *Inachus*)⁵² with increasingly bathetic subject-matter. The first visual images are of the type conventional in description of utopian households – overflowing food and wine containers, and plates turned into precious metals. But the list suddenly takes a bathetic comic downturn with the news that the slaves no longer need to wipe their bottoms with stones; now they use garlic leaves (817).

The play's problem – poverty – solved, the action now enters its final phase, with the customary series of individuals arriving to attempt to cash in on the solution's benefits or to subvert them. Cario, once again, is the master of comic ceremonies, receiving first the Just Man and the Informer. In the interchange with the Just Man Cario is given all the laughs, his humour stemming from his cynical attitude: *of course* the man was financially ruined by his over-generosity to 'friends' in need; *naturally* they did not return the favour when he inevitably fell

51 Rosenbecker 2015, 90–1.

52 Bowie 1993, 282–3; Farmer 2017, 224–5.

into penury himself (830–9). Cario then has the two jokes about the man’s worn-out cloak and shoes, asking whether he had been initiated into the mysteries in such a beggarly cloak (845), and sarcastically saying that this clothing is a truly ‘delightful’ gift for the god (849).

The Informer threatens Cario with torture by the wheel to extract a confession of his crimes, but Cario’s response, that it would be the Informer screaming with pain if he tried to do that (876), implies stage rough-housing, or at least Cario pointing out his own superior size. Cario humorously insults the Informer twice more in quick succession (891–2, 895), building up the comic momentum. When the rapid-fire altercation between the Just Man and the Informer stalls, because the latter will not hand over his cloak, Cario intervenes, and applies (as often) violence, stripping the Informer, replacing his fine cloak with the Just Man’s ragged one; he nails the Just Man’s shoes to the Informer’s head, probably driving a nail through the forehead of his mask, no doubt to enthusiastic cheers from the audience (926–58); Cario extracts the last laugh from the scene by scathingly commenting, when the Just Man suggests that the Informer try to get warm at the bath-house, as ragged men must, that the bath-house attendant would simply grab him by the testicles and evict him (955–6). Cario’s management of the entire altercation ends in him, on behalf of the Just Man, winning game, set and match, morally, physically, verbally and in terms of appropriating every single opportunity for laughter.

In Cario’s last scene – his taming and domestication of Hermes – all the characteristics he has previously deployed are united in a bravura comic trouncing of a superior being. The scene starts with a laugh, through some comic misunderstanding between slave and god, or physical clowning, when Hermes knocks on the door (1097–1101). At first it seems as though Hermes seizes the comic initiative: he adopts tactics like Cario’s and nearly steals his thunder when he instructs him to call out all the household members, listing them in order of diminishing status, insultingly but also amusingly putting Cario way behind the other slaves, between the dog and the pig (1103–6). But Cario regains the initiative when he tells Hermes that, quite simply, the gods did not look after humans well enough to continue receiving sacrifices (1116). And he assumes the upper hand by responding to Hermes’ statement that he does not care personally about the other gods, but is motivated solely by self-interest, with the single word *σωφρονεῖς* (1119), ‘you are wise’. Cario had, briefly, seemed to be taking the moral high ground, but here breaks that temporary illusion by a swift return to his usual pragmatic, knowing, and cynical self.

In the subsequent verbal rally, Cario asserts comic supremacy with a series of tart responses to Hermes' complaints about his hunger. In the penultimate interchanges Cario uses untranslatable aural puns to create a crescendo of laughs that climax in the punchline (1128–33) where he offers Hermes the opposite of fine wine to slake his thirst (probably the contents of a chamber-pot):⁵³

- EP. οἴμοι δὲ κωλῆς, ἦν ἐγὼ κατήσθιον.
 KA. ἀσκωλίαζ' ἐνταῦθα πρὸς τὴν αἰθρίαν.
 EP. σπλάγχνων τε θερμῶν ὧν ἐγὼ κατήσθιον.
 KA. ὀδύνη σε περὶ τὰ σπλάγχν' ἔοικέ τι στρέφειν.
 EP. οἴμοι δὲ κύλικος ἴσον ἴσῳ κεκραμένης.
 KA. ταύτην ἐπιπιῶν ἀποτρέχων οὐκ ἂν φθάνοις.

- HER. Woe for the thigh-roast I used to devour!
 CAR. Exercise your own thighs hopping on wineskins at outdoor festivals!
 HER. Woe for the steaming innards I consumed!
 CAR. Your own innards seem to be having a funny turn.
 HER. Woe for the wine I drank, mixed half-in-half with water!
 CAR. Drink *this* then and get lost!

Cario exploits the position of superiority he has gained by playing the 'moral indignation' card, pretending outrage at the very ideas of theft and desertion, while taking the opportunity to remind Hermes of the punishments he personally had suffered, as a slave, for stealing food (1334–50). He revels in Hermes' position as petitioner, capping with a punning negative response the first four of the household roles the god proposes for himself, inspired by some of his cult titles. There is no need for a Hermes *Strophaios*, 'turner', because there is no need for the behaviour implied by metaphorical twisting and turning any more. There is no call for a Hermes *Empolaios*, nor Hermes *Dolios*, because the new wealth has rendered commerce and trickery obsolete. Since Plutus can see, nor is there any requirement for a guide, Hermes *Hēgemonios* (1153–62).

The fifth role proposed is finally accepted, that of Hermes *Enagōnios*, Hermes god of competitions. Hermes proposes that nothing could be more appropriate for wealth than the conduct of competitions in music and athletics (1163: ποιεῖν ἀγῶνας μουσικούς καὶ γυμνικούς). But before the seam of humour opened up by the plurality of Hermes' titles is exhausted, Cario rams home his verbal supremacy by concluding the scene, and his own spoken part in the play, with two obvious bids for laughter. He takes a swipe at jurors who try to register for service under different names to maximise their chances of being selected (1166–7). And

53 Rosenbecker 2015, 96.

in his final joke he enlists Hermes as his own slave, giving him the unlovely task of washing animal entrails, and pointedly dismissing him with a new cult title: Hermes *Diakonos*, Hermes the Menial (1168–70).

In installing Hermes *Enagōnios*, Cario comes close to alluding to the competitive context in which his own play was being performed, the dramatic competitions at the Athenian festival of Dionysus. Hermes *Enagōnios* is more typically associated with athletics competitions and those in music held at the Panathenaea, for example between rhapsodes. But on one hydria by the Pan Painter, dated to the decade between the Persian invasions, Hermes is portrayed in a Dionysiac context suggestive of the selection or celebration of male dancers in a Dionysiac chorus.⁵⁴ Cario, who has of course used extensive paratragedy and starred in his own Dionysiac-dithyrambic performance-within-the-performance much earlier in the play, here welcomes Hermes, god of competition, into his own household, a gesture which might be read self-reflexively as the comic playwright's bid to remind the audience that the play needed to be assessed competitively against the other comedies at the festival.⁵⁵ Much earlier, Cario had delivered a line which seems even more theatrically self-conscious. After the *coup de théâtre* he pulled off in the parodos (a riot of animal noises, ludicrous dancing, scatology, transvestism, sexual obscenity, by-name attack on a contemporary and parody of Philoxenus), he orders the chorusmen to alter the tone of their performance (316–17):

ἀλλ' εἶά νυν τῶν σκωμμάτων ἀπαλλαγέντες ἦδη
ὕμεις ἐπ' ἄλλ' εἶδος τρέπεσθ' ...

Come on now, stop these jests and adopt another form.

Whether εἶδος here means 'identity' (i.e. pigs or peasants), 'strategy of action', or 'poetic style', the context requires that it offers a stark contrast with jesting behaviour – Cario, like a theatre director, orders the chorusmen to adopt a form or line of behaviour that is more serious. After stage-managing and starring in the parodic parodos, Cario is directing the level and type of comedy which the ensu-

⁵⁴ Green 1995a, especially 81–4, with plate 1. The choral significance of the hydria, now in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (B 201; St. 1538), was first appreciated by Schmidt 1967, 78–9.

⁵⁵ See Farmer 2017, 213 on the references within *Wealth* to all generic elements of the festival programme.

ing scene will offer. Let there be serious discussion; but, meanwhile, he personally shows his cynical and self-interested character by declaring that he is off to find something to eat, unbeknownst to his master (318–21).

The Cario-actor needs to leave the stage because he must change costume and mask and transform himself into Penia, who looks like an Erinys from a tragedy (423). In the debate with Chremylus, Penia is responsible for delivering an economic analysis, which, as Angus Bowie argues, needs to be taken seriously, and which creates a link through the image of the Cyclops with Cario's parodos; it explains why hard labour, and therefore slavery, remain unavoidable.⁵⁶ The same actor who uses mirth to undermine the logic of slavery by showing his cleverness and psychological leadership ironically also plays the role of a tragic goddess who articulates, with precision logic, the necessity of slavery.

Wealth is often discussed in conjunction with Plato's *Symposium*, in which Poverty makes her other great appearance in classical Greek literature. Socrates relates how Diotima told him that Eros had been conceived when his mother, Poverty, laid with Resource, *Poros*, after the feast held by the gods to celebrate the birth of Aphrodite (203b–e). At the end of the *Symposium*, when only the tragedian Agathon and Aristophanes remain awake to drink with Socrates, Aristodemus recalls (223d) that he 'was pressing them to agree that the same man could have the knowledge needed to compose both comedy and tragedy – that the skilled tragedian could be a comedian as well'. In the roles of Cario and Penia, Aristophanes' actor in his *Wealth* of 388 BCE handled substantial sequences of paratragedy, and a serious rhetorical *agōn*; but he must also have pulled off triumphantly what I hope I have shown here, by detailed analysis of Cario's control of the laughter in his serial scenes, was one of the most varied and challenging comic roles in surviving ancient drama.

King's College London
edith.hall@kcl.ac.uk

⁵⁶ Bowie 1993, 284–9. See also McGlew 1997.

