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οἴμοι τάλας: A Modern[ist] Translation of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*

by Jake Sawyer

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A NOTE FROM THE TRANSLATOR

In translating any Classical text, one must acknowledge just how far removed the author is from the translator. Standing between the two figures are differences of culture, structures of authority, and most obviously, language. Despite being heralded by some as the birthplace of Western Civilization, ancient Athens often seems strange to our modern eyes. Many translations and adaptations of Classics works seek to familiarize, often truly for the audience's benefit, but this mode crucially ignores the foreignness of the Ancient World. In this translation of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, I have chosen to embrace the Greekness of this play, however awkward it may be in places. I do this not for the sake of realism or scholarly accuracy, but to reinterpret and give the play a new meaning for modern audiences. Whereas Aristophanes' Comedies were hilarious to an audience who understood the multitude of specific social and political references, today these same jokes fly right over our head without pages of historical explanations and in depth knowledge of the period. By keeping these jokes obscure, I hope to show the alienation that we can face when dealing with the culture of a people vastly different from ourselves, in this instance, the ancient Athenians.

This translation provides a space where the meaning of the text can be transformed further by modern ideas and theater conventions. In addition to the ancient treatments of theater, I have been inspired by many works, both opera and plays, of the early 20th century. The avant-garde and Theater of the Absurd

shocked audiences by deviating from known customs, and still have a strong effect on our modern sensibilities. In the same way, I hope the inherent foreignness of the language and customs depicted in the *Acharnians* will cause the audience a similar discomfort and instigate an interrogation of held values. These two methods are intended to work in harmony in order to better elucidate the difficult relationship between contemporary and Classical receptions of the play. Even though there may be a great deal of disconnect, many facets of Aristophanes' clever writing and Athens' political climate will undoubtedly shine through to present understanding.

With these guiding principles in mind, I have designed this translation and accompanying resources for the stage, and especially for small or independent theaters. The audience for such a production is likely niche, and thus I would like to support venues with fewer resources or more limitations. To reinforce the importance of the performance aspects of the play, I have included stage directions and acting notes in the main body of the text. At the end of the text, I have provided scene commentary and general ideas for staging. These are merely suggestions, as I expect any who would undertake such a project would bring their own creativity to the table.

The text follows the Greek text edited and with commentary by S. Douglas Olson (2002). Olson's edition has been of great help, and has cut down on many of the frustrations of translating Greek Comedy. I have also consulted Alan H. Sommerstein's wonderful translation of the play (1980) for small points of

clarification. Sommerstein's dedication to rendering the many puns of the play is quite admirable. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the great impact that Richmond Lattimore has had on my career as a Classicist and a translator. Lattimore's work served as my gateway to the world of ancient Greece, and for that, I am grateful.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: in order of appearance

DIKAIOPOLIS

KLEON

A HERALD

AMPHITHEOS

SCYTHIAN BOWMEN, silent

AMBASSADOR, to Persia

PSEUDARTABAS, the “Persian” envoy

TWO “EUNUCHS”

THEOROS, the ambassador to Thrace

BAND OF “THRAKES”

CHOROS, of elderly Acharnians

DAUGHTER, of Dikaiopolis

WIFE, of Dikaiopolis

XANTHIUS, Dikaiopolis’ silent slave

SLAVE OF EURIPIDES

EURIPIDES, the tragic playwright

LAMAKHOS, a general and official of Athens

MEGARIKOS, a poor Megarian

TWO DAUGHTERS, of Megarikos, dressed like pigs

FIG DENOUNCER, a sycophant

BOIOTOS, a Boeotian trader

ISMENIKHE, the trader’s slave

TWO PIPERS, following the trader

NIKARKHOS, a market official

SLAVE OF LAMAKHOS

DERKETES, a bridegroom

SLAVE OF THE BRIDEGROOM

A BRIDESMAID

SLAVE OF THE PRIEST OF DIONUSOS

TWO ATTENDENTS OF LAMAKHOS, silent slaves

TWO ATTENDANTS OF DIKAIOPOLIS, silent

ACT 1, SCENE 1

Overture plays.

Curtain rises.

Dikaiopolis is on stage, alone.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I'm gnawing on this heart here, see. Well, *my* heart that is.
So little makes me happy. Barely anything, really. Maybe

Dikaiopolis counts on fingers, incorrectly, yet confidently.

...four things.

And the pains I suffer, like every grain of sand in the world in my eye.
Let's see, what's even worth getting happy about?
I know that I liked it when I saw that fraud,
Kleōn,

5

Dikaiopolis points to a specific person in the audience.

get punched in the gut and throw up all that silver.
I was beaming then, and I adore the Knights
for that walloping. Finally someone honors Hellas!
But I suffer other things fit for the tragedies.
Like when I nearly fell asleep, expecting Aiskhulos,
but instead hearing, "Bring in the chorus, Theognis."
You could naturally see how this would upset me.

10

Dikaiopolis pauses uncomfortably long, looking expectantly.

Anyways, another case of happiness: right after Moskhos' cow song,
Deksitheos came on stage, ready to play a Boiōtian gem.
But this year, my body tumbled and my vision warped
when Khairis stuck his head out to sing that shrill nonsense.
But today! Never since I bathed myself
have my eyes been so stung by wood ash
as right now, early on the day of the Ekklēsia,

15

and the Pnuks is completely empty! 20
 They're all blabbering in the Agora, back and forth,
 avoiding the red-painted ropes.
 The Prutaneis are not even here yet!
 They all come late, and yet you know how it works,
 how they scramble over one another for the best seat, 25
 with the crowds flooding in. Peace! Peace!
 They will not deign to talk about peace! Oh City, my city!
 But *I* have always been the first to sit,
 making my way to the Ekklēsia, me and only me!
 I sigh, I yawn, I fiddle, I fart around, I faff about, 30
 I'm lost, I draw in the sand, I pluck hairs, I do my taxes,
 then I dream about my farm, desiring peace above all else,
 abhorring city life, and longing for my countryside,
 where I never hear "Buy charcoal" or "Buy vinegar"
 or "Buy olive oil." Never another "buy" in my life. 35
 All on its own, the land was producing everything we need, no "buy" in
 sight.
 So now, simply put, I have come, ready to scream
 over the rhētores and pound anybody into the ground,
 if they will discuss anything except for peace.
 Oh! But now the Prutaneis are finally here, late I might add. 40
 Is it not like I said? I told you!
 Every one of them is scrambling for the best seat.

A Herald enters.

HERALD:

Come on. Get up here, to the front.
 Hurry up, or you'll never reach the purified ground.

Amphitheos enters, imitating a bird, speaking to Dikaiopolis.

AMPHITHEOS:

Hey mister, did you say something yet?

Herald sighs, loudly.

HERALD:

Who wishes to speak?

45

AMPHITHEOS:

Ooh! Me! Me! Me!

HERALD:

Who is it?

AMPHITHEOS:

ME! Amphitheos!

Herald starts laughing dryly.

HERALD: (*rhetorically*)

And let me guess, you're a god?

AMPHITHEOS: (*without taking any breaths*)

Yes! I am no boy! For Amphitheos came from Dēmētēr
and Triptolemos, and then Keleos came from him, and then
Keleos married Phainaretē, my grandma, and then
Lukinos came from her, and then I came from him.

50

So I'm immortal. Duh. (*sticks out tongue*) My gods counted on me,
and just me, to make treaties with the Lakedaemonioi.
But even though I'm immortal, boys, I'm hungry,
'cuz the Prutaneis aren't giving me food!

HERALD:

Guards!

Scythian Bowmen enter, dragging Amphitheos away.

AMPHITHEOS:

Triptolemos and Keleos up there! Are you even watching me?

55

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oi! Prutaneis! Yeah you! You're wronging this assembly
by removing this kid who just wanted us

to make treaties and hang up our shields.

HERALD:

Sit down and shut up.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

By Apollō, I will not!

Not unless you start motioning for peace on my behalf.

60

Fanfare, on an oboe, if possible.

HERALD: *(completely ignoring Dikaiopolis)*

The ambassadors from the King!

Dikaiopolis moves to the side of the stage, clearly facing and making eye contact with the audience throughout the remainder of the scene.

DIKAIOPOLIS: *(visibly angry, mockingly)*

Oh, the King! My mind is overloaded by the ambassadors
with their peacocks and quacking!

Dikaiopolis pauses.

Um, well, quackery at least!

HERALD:

SHUT UP!

Ambassador enters.

DIKAIOPOLIS: *(laughing)*

Babaiaks! Bloody Ekbatana, what a gaudy costume!

AMBASSADOR:

You sent us to the Great King,
carrying a wage of two drakhmas per day
during the arkhonship of Euthumenos.

65

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oi moi! So many drakhmas!

AMBASSADOR: (*faking it*)

And we certainly were exhausted, roaming
through the Kaüstrian plains, camping
upon our carriages, lying down in luxury,
but nearly dying!

70

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*sarcastically*)

Right. And I was nothing but safe
alongside the ramparts, lying down in my garbage pile.

AMBASSADOR:

As guests, we were forced to drink
from shining glass cups and golden goblets,
heavenly, unmixed wine.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

City of Krana!
Do you hear the mockery and lies of our ambassadors?

75

AMBASSADOR:

The Barbaroi believe that only those
who eat and drink the most are true men.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oh, and for us, cock suckers and ass fuckers are the truest.

AMBASSADOR: (*desperately trying to remember the story*)

In the fourth year we finally came to the palace.
But the King went somewhere out of the way, taking an army,
and he was shitting for eight months atop the golden mountains.

80

DIKAIOPOLIS:

But how long did it take him to close his ass?
For a full moon?

AMBASSADOR:

Then he went home.

Afterwards, he began to welcome us. He often served us
an entire oxen in a pan.

85

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Who ever saw

an oxen baked in a pan? What a bunch of quacks.

AMBASSADOR:

And by Zeus, once he served a bird three times as large
as Kleōnumos to us. And its name was Phenaks.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*telling a joke*)

Certainly you were cheating them while you held two drakhmas!

90

AMBASSADOR:

And now we have come, bringing

*Ambassador pauses, looks at arm as if something is written there. Speech
lingers on "Pseudartabas."*

Pseudartabas, the Eye of the King.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

May a raven dive at you and

knock out your eye, ambassador.

HERALD:

The Eye of the King!

Pseudartabas enters, imitating a boat. Two eunuchs follow.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Lord Hēraklēs!

By the gods, man, why do you loom at me like a warship?

Are you looking for a ship-shed, doubling around the cape?

I suppose you have an oar pad around your eye then.

95

AMBASSADOR:

Come now, tell us why the King sent you.
Speak to the Athēnaioi, Pseudartabas.

PSEUDARTABAS: (*slowly, without confidence*)

iartamaneksarksanapissonasatra.

100

Ambassador pointedly glares at Pseudartabas.

AMBASSDOR: (*mock confused*)

Do you understand what he said?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

By Apollō, I certainly don't.

AMBASSADOR:

Um, he says that the King will give us gold.

Ambassador is practically pleading with Pseudartabas.

Now say "gold" louder and more clearly.

PSEUDARTABAS: (*disobediently*)

Ou lēpsi khroso, khaunoprōkt'Ioanau.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oimoi, kakodaimōn! That was clear.

AMBASSADOR: (*trying to play it off, looking around*)

Ha, what is that man even saying?

105

Dikaiopolis moves away from the audience, and begins to address the Ambassador. Dikaiopolis looks ready to fight.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What's he saying? He says "the Iaones are wide-assed,"
if they expect gold from the Barbaroi.

AMBASSADOR: (*dismissively*)

No, he says that there are heaps of gold.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What kind of heaps? You're still a giant quacker.

Now go away, and I alone will examine him.

110

Ambassador exits, trying not to be seen.

Dikaiopolis walks over to Pseudartabas.

Come now, tell me clearly with my fist as a witness,

lest I dye you Sardianikos purple.

Will the Great King send us gold?

Pseudartabas and eunuchs nod negatively.

Are we otherwise being deceived by our ambassadors?

Pseudartabas and eunuchs nod affirmatively.

Look! These men just nodded like a Hellēnikos would!

115

They are not as they seem, but are from this very land!

And concerning those two eunuchs,

I know that one, Kleisthenēs, of Siburtios' ilk.

What a psoriatic, shaved ass.

Hey, monkey, having a beard like *this*,

120

Dikaiopolis tears off the eunuch's fake beard.

why did you come to us dressed as a eunuch?

And what about this one? It couldn't be? Stratōn?

Dikaiopolis pulls off a second fake beard.

HERALD: (*resigned*)

Shut up, and sit down. The Boulē calls the Eye of the King

to the Prutaneion.

Pseudartabas and Eunuchs exit. Dikaiopolis slinks to the side of the stage again.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*quietly, resigned*)

Isn't this enough to feel strangled? 125

Why am I still here?

The door is never open for me, but only open to entertain them.

Dikaiopolis pauses, seemingly dejected. Amphitheos starts sneaking onto stage. After seeing Amphitheos, a new fire burns in Dikaiopolis.

But now I will do something dangerous and important.

Would you come to me please, Amphitheos?

AMPHITHEOS:

It's me!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Take these eight drakhmas from me 130

and make a treaty with the Lakedaimonioi for just me
and my children and wife.

The rest of you, keep sending ambassadors and doing nothing.

HERALD:

Let Theōros, who returns from King Sitalkēs, come forward.

Theoros enters, sauntering towards the center of the stage.

THEOROS: (*elegantly*)

Here I am.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Yet another quack, this one here, proclaimed by our herald. 135

THEOROS:

We would not have been in Thrakē for such a long time if--

DIKAIOPOLIS:

By Zeus, you “would not,” if you weren’t earning so much.

THEOROS:

...if the gods had not covered the whole of Thrakē in snow
and frozen over the rivers.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*delivering the burn of the century*)

Ah yes, but I thought that was because

Theognis wrote his frigid masterpiece here.

140

THEOROS:

I was drinking with Sitalkēs for this long time.

He certainly was fond of us Athēnaioi, marvelously so,

he was a true admirer of you all, like when

he would write on his walls “The Athēnaioi are really cute.”

And his son, whom we had made an Athēnaios for our benefit,

145

Suggestively.

he loved to eat sausages from the Apatouria.

He constantly begged his father to help his new homeland.

And then Sitalkēs swore to help, making libation, and commanding
such a great army that the Athēnaioi would say

“What a mass of locusts approaching!”

150

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Let me die, if I am persuaded by any of these words

which you speak, except the locusts I suppose.

THEOROS:

And now this very man sent the most ferocious tribe
of the Thrakes to us.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

This at least, we can test.

THEOROS:

Thrakes, come here, the ones Theōros brought.

155

Scrappy group of “Thrakes” enter.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*surprised, but also amused*)
What is this vile thing?

THEOROS:
An army of Odomantoi.

DIKAIOPOLIS:
What sort of Odomantoi are those? What is that?
Who of the Odomantoi have their dicks cut like that?

THEOROS:
If someone gives them a wage of two drakhmas,
they will out thrust and overrun all of Boiōtia. 160

DIKAIOPOLIS:
Two drakhmas! For these erect and uncircumcised fuckos?
Any determined and hard, upper-rower would moan at that, the true
saviors of the city.

One of the “Thrakes” wanders over to Dikaiopolis, snatching a basket of garlic.

Oimoi talas! I’m ruined!
The Odomantoi are plundering my garlic!
Give me back my garlic!

THEOROS:
You there, knave, 165
do not even think of approaching them now that they are juiced up on
garlic!

DIKAIOPOLIS:
Are you allowing me, Prutaneis, to suffer
in my own country, and, at that, under these Barbaroi?
I will not let you hold an Ekklēsia
about the wage for the Thrakes. I am telling you 170

that there is an omen and a raindrop has fallen on me.

HERALD:

Well then, let the Thrakes leave, and let them return in two days,
for the Prutaneis are dissolving the Assembly.

Herald, Theoros, and the "Thrakes" exit. Dikaiopolis exits in the opposite direction.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Dikaiopolis is walking home from the Assembly. Amphitheos can be seen, sneaking onto stage and carrying three wineskins, approaching Dikaiopolis.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oimoi talas! I lost so much garlic.
But there's Amphitheos, back from Lakedaimonios. 175
Rejoice, Amphitheos.

AMPHITHEOS: (*out of breath, panicked*)

Not yet! Not until I stop running!
'Cuz they're after me! Running! Fleeing! Akharneis!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What is it?

AMPHITHEOS:

I hurried to bring the treaty here to you,
but some elders tracked me,
Akharneis, sturdy old men, holm-oaken, 180
stubborn veterans of Marathon, maple!
Then they all shouted "Hey, you bloody fool,
are you carrying a treaty, in light of our ravaged vintage?"
And then they filled their cloaks with stones.
And then I started running. And they chased! Shouting! 185

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Well, then let them shout! Did you bring the treaty?

AMPHITHEOS:

Yes! Yes! Yes! Here are three tastes.
This is the five year, take a taste.

Dikaiopolis takes a sip of wine.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*disgusted*)

Aiboi!

AMPHITHEOS:

What is it?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

It does not please me.
It smells like pitch and the preparation of ships.

190

AMPHITHEOS: (*excited*)

Okay! Okay! Taste the ten year.

Dikaiopolis cautiously smells the second wineskin and tosses it aside.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

This one smells acidic, like the ambassadors
who go to the cities while their fellow men waste away.

AMPHITHEOS:

But this next one is a thirty year,
a treaty of both land and sea.

Dikaiopolis, after some hesitation, takes a sip of the final wine.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Dionusia!
This one smells like ambrosia and nectar,
not desperation for three days war rations,
but rather it smells like “go wherever you want.”
I take this, make peace, and I will drink!

195

Dikaiopolis pours some wine on the ground.

Good riddance to the Akharneis! 200
 Being freed from war and its horrors,
 I will celebrate the Rural Dionusia in my fields.

AMPHITHEOS:

And I will be running from the Akharneis.

Dikaiopolis exits, going into their house. Amphitheos flees the scene. Choros of Acharnians enters from the direction Amphitheos entered, in hot pursuit.

CHOROS:

Everyone come here, give chase, and ask
 any travelers about the man. For it is worthwhile for the entire city 205
 to grab him. But inform me
 if anyone knows where on earth he turned, the man carrying the treaties.

He has fled! Gone! Vanished!
 Oimoi talas, my many years!
 If I were in my youth at least, 210
 back when I, while carrying
 an entire load of charcoal,
 darting spryly,
 could keep pace with Phaullos,
 then alas, this messenger with the treaties 215
 chased by the younger me,
 would not flee
 and prance away so lightly.

But now, since my shins are already stiff
 and legs are heavy like the old son of Lakratēs, 220
 he escapes! He must be pursued! Or else he might
 brazenly laugh in our faces, fleeing from the feeble Akharneis.

But Father Zeus and the Gods!
 Someone made peace with our enemies,

for his benefit alone, 225
 when, for our foes,
 war should have furthered its rancour,
 avenging me and my fields!
 I will not let go of this fight
 until a reed is stuck and twisted into them! 230

The Choros starts chanting the next line (231) continuously, like cosmic rumblings. One person continues the rant.

A stake! Sharp! Painful! To the hilt!
 So that they never again
 trample my grapevines!
 We must seek this man and look in Ballēnē
 and chase him from land to land until he is found. 235
 I could never sate myself enough with stoning that man.

Dikaiopolis peeks out from the house briefly.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*shouting*)
 Be still! Be still!

CHOROS:
 Be silent.

Choros stops chanting. Choros starts whispering amongst itself.

Do you hear, men, that ritual formula?
 He is the one who we seek! Everyone, over there,
 out of the way! For this man is coming out, it seems, to offer sacrifice. 240

Dikaiopolis enters stage from the house.

DIKAIOPOLIS:
 Be still! Be still!

A procession, including Dikaiopolis' daughter, Dikaiopolis' wife, and Xanthias enters from the house.

Please, basket carrier, move a little forward.
 Xanthias, stand the phallus upright.
 Lay down the basket, daughter, so we may start.

DAUGHTER:

Mother, give it here, give me the ladle 245
 so I may pour the soup on this flatcake.

Daughter pours a liquid over a small flatcake held by Dikaiopolis.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*drunkenly*)

Behold! This bodes well. Master Dionusos,
 because I gladly send you this procession
 and offer sacrifices on behalf of my household,
 allow me to fortunately celebrate the Rural Dionusia, 250
 free from military service. And may you allow
 the thirty year peace to proceed well for me.

Dikaiopolis' speech pattern returns to normal.

Come, daughter, start carrying the basket gracefully.
 Be beautiful, yet model your savory, bitter face. How blessed
 is the one who will marry you and foster your weasel-children, 255
 farting when you two should be fucking: right before dawn.
 Take a step! And be exceedingly vigilant among the crowd,
 lest someone snatch away your dowry while you aren't looking.
 Xanthias, make sure the phallus is held upright
 while you are behind the basket carrier. 260
 I will follow you and sing the song of the phallus.
 And you, wife, watch me from the roof. Start!

*Daughter starts marching in place, Xanthias and Dikaiopolis follow suit.
 Dikaiopolis starts singing, rather poorly and slurring his speech.*

♪ Phallus, Friend of Bakkhos.
 My fellow-reveller, night cruiser.
 Seducer of women and lover of boys. 265

On the sixth year, I finally greeted
 you, you who gladly went among the people,
 making libations for me.
 From troubles and battles
 and Lamakhos too, you freed me. 270
 It is far sweeter Phallus, Phallus,
 to catch a timely wood carrier stealing.
 Like the Thracian slave girl of Strumodōros from the rocky briar,
 grabbing her and wrestling her to the ground,
 to lift up and press her like a grape. 275
 Phallus! Phallus!
 If you drink with us, tomorrow, after the rager,
 we will slurp from a porridge bowl to celebrate peace.
 The shield will be hung in the embers. ♪

CHOROS: (*talking directly to the audience*)
 There he is! There! 280
 Stone him! Stone him! Stone him! Stone him!
 Burn this profane man! Burn! Burn! Burn!
 Hit him! Hit him!

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*jolted awake*)
 Hēraclēs! What is this? You will break my cooking pot!

CHOROS:
 No, no. We will shatter you instead. And your profane head. 285

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*mischievously*)
 On what charge, my dearest Akharneis elders?

CHOROS:
 You aren't serious are you?
 You are truly shameless and disgusting,
 a traitor to our country,
 you are the only one of us 290
 who wants to make peace.
 And then you are able to look me in the eye?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

But don't you know the circumstances of why I made peace? Listen here--

CHOROS:

Listen to you? You must die.

We will bury you in rocks. 295

DIKAIOPOLIS:

No one move, not until you listen. Contain yourselves, fellows.

CHOROS:

I will not contain myself!

Do not speak a single word to me.

I am seething with more hatred for you

than ever yet for that Kleōn, 300

The entire Choros turns to the Kleon in the audience.

whom I personally will flay

into shoe leather for the Knights.

I will not listen to your speeches, no matter how short,

not from the one who made peace with the Lakōnes! I will seek vengeance!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Fellows, keep the Lakōnes away from your feet. 305

Listen to my treaties to see if I made them well.

CHOROS:

How could you say you did well, if once you made peace

with *them*, it was sealed by no sacrifice, no handshake, and no oath?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I know that the Lakōnes, whom we deride too harshly,

are not the cause of all our present problems. 310

CHOROS:

Not all of them, you desperate rogue? You venture to say such things

so blatantly in our presence? You really think I will spare you?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Not all of them? Not all of them! Speaking here and now,
I would declare that in some cases, they are the ones who have been
wronged!

CHOROS:

This remark is absolutely dreadful and disturbs the heart 315
if you are venturing to speak to us about the enemy!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

If you don't believe me, then I will appeal to the masses;
I'm willing to speak holding my head over the chopping block.

CHOROS:

Tell me. Why should we spare you from the stones, dēmōtēs,
and not tear apart your sinewy threads and weave you into a bloody robe?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oh, how some black ember deep in you has sparked again! 321
Will you not listen? Will you really not, sons of Akharnēas?

CHOROS:

Of course we won't listen!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I will suffer horrors!

CHOROS:

I'll be damned if I listen to you.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

No! No! Calm down Akharneis!

CHOROS:

Know now that you will have died because of this.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*fiercly*)

I will bite you!

325

In return, I will kill the dearest of your friends.

I will hold them hostage and then execute them personally.

Choros looks around in a panic, as if looking for their lost children.

CHOROS:

Tell me. What are you threatening to do, dēmōtēs,
to us Akharneis? He couldn't have one of our children,
shut in his house? Why is he so brazen?

330

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Stone me if you want. For I will murder him!

Xanthius brings Dikaiopolis a basket of charcoal.

I will find out quickly who of you cares at all for this charcoal.

CHOROS:

We're doomed! That basket is my brother!
Please don't do what you threaten. No, no, no!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I will do it, shout as much as you want! I won't listen.

335

CHOROS: (*pleading*)

Will you kill him, even when we are of the same age and lifestyle?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Well, you didn't listen to me speaking just a moment ago.

CHOROS: (*bargaining*)

But speak now, if you want, about that Lakedaimonios
and how he is your friend.

I will never betray my dear little basket.

340

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Now! In front of me! On the ground! First, pour out the stones!

CHOROS:

Here they are, on the ground, for you. And you put down your sword in
turn.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*skeptically*)

Certainly, that's not all of the stones lurking in your cloaks.

Entire Choros dances wildly, yet eerily synchronized.

CHOROS:

All has been shaken to the ground. Did you not see the earthquake?
No more of your excuses, but instead put down your weapon. 345
All the stones have fallen from our dervish.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

By all means, I knew you were going to stop shouting
after your Parnatian charcoal nearly died
due to your wicked absurdity, dēmotai.
Out of fear this basket nearly squirted 350
a long stream of charcoal dust, like a cuttlefish.
It is a terrible thing, what you did, to cultivate the
sour wrath of men with your throwing and shouting,
and most of all your hesitation to listen to me fairly.
I am willing speak with my head over the chopping block 355
about all the Lakedaimonioi, with as many words as I say now.
And furthermore, I love and cherish my life.

CHOROS:

Why don't you speak then?
Bring out the chopping block to your door!
And whatever else that you have, 360
you cruel bastard, however extravagant.
I have a great desire
to see what happens.
This is how I will set the date of your trial.
Try to speak after you place this chopping block here. 365

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Fine! Watch me! Here's the block!

Xanthius brings Dikaiopolis a chopping block. Dikaiopolis sets it on stage.

But I am a man of such small and feeble words.
Believe me, by Zeus, I will not hide behind a shield,
but I will speak about the Lakedaimonioi, as I am determined to.

Dikaiopolis talks to the audience, quieter.

However, I fear many things. For I know that those
who live the ways of the rural folk are bloodthirsty: 370
they rejoice if some quack praises them
and their city, whether justly or not.
Then they are sold off and betrayed in secret.
I know the souls of old men and that 375
they are intent upon biting anyone else with their votes.
I know that I personally suffered under
the hand of Kleōn during last year's comedy.

Dikaiopolis leaves stage to directly address Kleon.

Having brought me to trial in the Bouletērion,
Kleōn constantly slandered me and forced kisses of lies upon me. 380
He flooded me with the force of the Kukloboros, so much so
that I nearly drowned, mired in his muck and filth.

Dikaiopolis goes back on stage and turns back to the Choros.

Now then, before I speak, allow me to first
dress myself as wretchedly as possible.

CHOROS:

Why do you twist about and act so slippery 385
and cause so many delays?
For all I care, take

from Hierōnumos,
 that shaggy and dark haired man,
 the helmet of Haidēs. 390
 Reveal your tricks of Sisuphos,
 so there are no more excuses.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

It is time to seize my stout soul.
 It is time to walk to Euripidēs' house.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Dikaiopolis arrives at the house of Euripides, the tragedian. At the door stands the Slave of Euripides, guarding the home. Members of the Choros lurk at the fringes of the stage, spying on Dikaiopolis.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Pais! Pais!

SLAVE OF EURIPIDES:

Who is it?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Is Euripidēs inside? 395

SLAVE OF EURIPIDES:

Not inside, yet inside, he is, if you have the proper ontology.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

How is he inside and not inside?

SLAVE OF EURIPIDES:

Exactly, old one.

On the one hand, the mind outside itself forages for fragments of poetry,
 thus not inside, but on the other hand, inside, his body, feet up,
 creates a tragedy.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Thrice enchanted Euripides, 400
 it seems that your slave has replied wisely.
 Call him now.

SLAVE OF EURIPIDES:

Alas, that is not possible.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Nonetheless, it must happen.
 I could die, after all. I *will* cut down that door.

Shouting to the inside of the house.

Euripidēs, my little Euripidēs,
 I pray that you answer the door, if you really ever were mortal. 405
 I, Dikaiopolis of Kholledēs, call you.

EURIPIDES: (*off-stage*)

I am busy, no.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Then wheel yourself out.

EURIPIDES:

It is not possible.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Do it anyways.

EURIPIDES:

Fine, I will come out. But I have no time to come down from here.

Slave of Euripides wheels out Euripides sitting on a couch, who is lounging in a highly impractical and silly position.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (fawning)

Euripidēs!

EURIPIDES:

What is this shrieking?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Why do you put yourself this way 410
when you could sit normally? It's no wonder you make your characters
crippled.

Why do you dress characters from tragedy in rags,
such pitiable clothing? It's no wonder you make them beggars.
But I beseech you, before your knees, Euripidēs,
give me some rags from that previous drama of yours. Um... 415

Dikaiopolis pauses, trying to remember.

Anyways, I soon must give a long winded speech to the choros.
A speech, if given unpersuasively, brings death.

EURIPIDES:

What shreds in particular? You couldn't mean those ones...

Euripides points to a giant mound of rags

in which Oineus, that ancient ill-starred man, competed for first prize?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

It wasn't Oineus, but someone more miserable. 420

EURIPIDES:

How about the rags of blind Phoiniks?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Not Phoiniks, no.
But another more wretched than him.

EURIPIDES:

What sort of mangled cloth does this man ask for?
Do you speak of the rags of wretched Philoktētēs?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

No, no. Someone much, much more miserable than him. 425

EURIPIDES:

Well then, do you want the filthy tatters
that lame Bellerophontēs wore, over here?

Euripides again points to the mound of rags.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Not Bellerophontēs either. The man I'm thinking of
was not only a cripple and a beggar, but a gabber and a powerful speaker.

EURIPIDES:

I know the man, Muson Tēlephos!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

YES! Tēlephos! 430
Give me his! I beg you, his shreds of cloth.

EURIPIDES:

Dear slave, give him the rags of Tēlephos.
They lie above the rags of Thuesteios
and in between those of Inō. Here, take them.

The Slave of Euripides crawls over the pile of rags and takes some, handing them to Dikaiopolis.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Zeus, who sees all things transparent and visible, everywhere, 435
dress me as wretchedly as possible.

Euripides, since I have been given this,
give me also those things that follow the rags,
the hat about his Muson head.

For I must appear to be a beggar today. 440

I must be what *I* am, but not what I appear to be.

The audience will know me for who I am,

but in turn the chorus will stand there like foolers,
and thus I will screw their little phrases.

EURIPIDES:

I will hand it over. You contrive lean tricks in your dense liver. 445

Euripides tosses Dikaiopolis the hat Euripides is wearing.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Eudaimoniēs! I am now knowledgeable in the ways of Tēlephos.
Very well. How I am filled with little phrases already.
But... I still need the beggarly cane.

EURIPIDES:

Fine. Take it and leave my stone doorposts.

Euripides hands Dikaiopolis the staff Euripides has been holding.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

O my heart! You see how I am pushed away from his many rooms, 450
still needing implements and props, but now you must be
sticky, begging, and most of all persistent. Euripidēs,
give me the little basket that is burning as a lamp.

EURIPIDES:

But why, you talas, do you have need of this weave?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I don't *need* anything, yet I want to take it anyways. 455

EURIPIDES:

You really are an annoying pest. Leave my home.

Euripides tosses Dikaiopolis a lampshade.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Feu! Eudaimoniēs! Just like your mother--

EURIPIDES: (*interrupting*)

Now leave me!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Please, grant me only one more thing,
a little cup with the rim broken off.

EURIPIDES:

Take it and be cursed! Now go be irksome somewhere else.

460

Euripides hands Dikaiopolis the cup Euripides was drinking from.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*aside*)

By Zeus, you don't yet know how your plays cause ills.
But sweetest Euripides, please grant me only one more thing,
there, the little pot stuffed with a little sponge.

Euripides hands Dikaiopolis a pot.

EURIPIDES:

Man, you will rob me of my art, my tragedy.
Please, take it and leave.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I am on my way out.

465

Dikaiopolis pauses.

Wait. What am I doing. I need one last thing. If I don't get it,
I'm dead! Listen, sweetest Euripides,
I will take this one thing, leave, and never come back.
Grant me the scraps of dry parsley to put in my basket.

EURIPIDES: (*melodramatically*)

You slay me. See how my drama vanishes before me.

470

Euripides hands Dikaiopolis a pouch.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And never again. And I'm leaving. For, in fact, I am too irksome: I did not expect monarchs to abhor me such.

Dikaiopolis goes to take a step towards the door, then swiftly turns around.

Oimoi kakodaimon! I am damned. I forgot
the one thing upon which all of my schemes lie.
Oh my little Euripidēs, my sweetest and dearest, 475
I would die most horribly, unless I should beg for
yet one more thing. Only one! Only one!
Please grant me the chervil which you bought from your mother.

EURIPIDES: *(speaking to the house slave)*

This man insults and humiliates me. Bar shut the joinings of the house!

DIKAIOPOLIS: *(mock dramatic)*

O heart, without the chervil, I must shamble away. 480
Do you know how grave the contest is in which you will compete,
preparing to speak about the Lakedaimonioi men?
Now, go forth, heart. The finish line waits for us.
Do you yet stand still? Haven't you enough of reveling in Euripidēs?
Well done! Come now, wretched heart. 485
Go back there, and then put your head up there,
after you give the speech that seems good to you.
Be bold. Go forth, move along. I marvel at you, heart.

Dikaiopolis exits.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

Choros stands on stage. Dikaiopolis enters, running. Dikaiopolis is haphazardly dressed in all the props from the previous scene. Dikaiopolis approaches the chopping block, placing their head on it.

CHOROS:

What are you doing? What will you say?
Now you are truly shameless, 490

an iron and stubborn man
 who offers his throat to the city,
 preparing to spark controversy.
 This man does not hesitate.
 Come on now, after you
 hoist yourself up, speak!

495

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*to the audience*)

Please, do not be hostile to me, spectating men,
 I am just a beggar. Nonetheless I am prepared to speak to the Athenaioi
 about our city, composing my speech in a comedy.
 Like tragedy, comedy also knows what is just.
 I will speak of what is frightening, yet what is righteous.
 Now at least, Kleōn will not slander me
 in the company of foreigners, as I criticize the city,
 for we are alone in this contest during Lēnaia.
 In fact, there are no foreigners here today.

500

505

Dikaiopolis pauses and looks at the audience.

Neither tribute nor allies have come from the cities.
 We ourselves are now the husked grains,
 and thus I say that the immigrants are the bran of the surrounding towns.
 Truly, I too hate the Lakedaimonioi very much!
 May the god on the shores of Tanairos, in an act of vengeance,
 cause an earthquake and bring down their homes upon all their heads,
 for I too have grape vines that are slashed.
 Furthermore, since those present at my argument are friends,
 why *do* we blame the Lakonoi for these transgressions?
 For some of us

510

Dikaiopolis rushes towards Kleon, speaking frantically.

--I do not mean the city,
 remember that, I do not say this about the city--

515

Dikaiopolis rushes back to the chopping block.

but some half-humans, rascally like forged coins,
 valueless, falsely struck, and shoddy foreign imitations,
 denounce the figs and little cloaks of the Megareis.
 If by chance he should see a cucumber, or a little rabbit, 520
 or a piglet, or even a clove of garlic or a grain of rock salt,
 then these Megarika goods would be put up for auction, without appeal.
 So far, the grievances are small and locally contained,
 but those same men going to Megara swindled away a prostitute,
 Simaitha, after the young men got drunk playing kottabos. 525
 And then, the Megareis, emboldened by garlic and this distress,
 in return stole two prostitutes of the house of Aspasia.
 From there, the beginning of war bursted out like a storm,
 raging among all the Hellēnes because of three cocksuckers.
 Likewise, Olumpios, Periklēs' son, angered by this, 530
 started hurling lightning and thunder, mixing Hellas into a gruel.
 He established laws written like drinking skolia saying
 that there is no need for the Megareis on land, nor in the Agora,
 nor on the sea, nor may they wait near the shores of the mainland.
 And then the Megareis, starving and stranded on foot, 535
 asked the Lakedaimonioi to reverse
 the decree caused by these cocksuckers.
 But we were not willing to address their many inquiries:
 immediately after, there was a clash of shields.
 You might say "no need," but then please say what *was necessary*. 540
 Look here, if one of the Lakedaimonioi, sailing here by ship,
 had appeared and sold a little puppy belonging to the Seriphioi,
 would you have sat around in your homes? No chance!
 No, you would have immediately launched
 three hundred ships! The whole city would be full of 545
 the uproar of soldiers, shouting around the trierarchs,
 flowing wages, the gilded statues of Pallas,
 wailing from the stoa, the measuring of grains and rations,
 wine skins, tholepins, the purchasing of jars,
 garlic, olives, and onions in mesh bags, 550
 garlands, sardines, flute girls, black eyes.
 And again at the dockyards, flattened oar spars,
 tree nails resounding, oar thongs attached to tholepins,
 flutes, boatswains yelling, whistling, the music of a grand voyage.

You know that this is what you would have done. 555

Dikaiopolis breaks character and addresses the Choros.

Isn't this what Tēlephos would have done? In sum, we're acting senselessly.

The Choros splits into two groups, Alpha and Beta, divided along opinion. Alpha remains unconvinced while Beta has been swayed by Dikaiopolis' speech.

CHOROS ALPHA:

Really? You deserve to be crushed and bloodied.
You dare to speak to us as a beggar,
and you criticize some people who are merely fig denouncers?

CHOROS BETA:

By Poseidōn, everything he says is correct 560
and he has not lied to a single one of us.

CHOROS ALPHA:

Even if he is right, is what he said necessary?
No one should celebrate after saying this.

One of the members of Choros Alpha starts to approach Dikaiopolis.

CHOROS BETA:

You there. Don't you dare. If you hit
that man, you will swiftly be tackled. 565

CHOROS ALPHA:

Iō, Lamakhos who glares lightning bolts,
help us, oh terrible crested one, grace us with your presence!
Iō, Lamakhos, dear friend and tribesman.
Or else someone who is a commander or general,
or a man who fought on the walls. Let one of them help us 570
to accomplish this, as I am about to be tackled and flipped.

Lamakhos enters, looking as if they just woke up. They are holding a shield wearily.

LAMAKHOS: (*slowly, yawning*)

Where is the call for a warrior coming from now?

Where is help needed? Where must I burst into the uproar?

Who awakens the gorgon from the shield cover?

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*sarcastically*)

Oh! Lamakhos the hero of crests and ambush parties!

575

CHOROS ALPHA:

Lamakhos, this man has, for a long time,

launched all sorts of abuse at our city.

LAMAKHOS:

You there, you dare to speak as a beggar?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Lamakhos the hero, please have forgiveness for me.

I speak as a beggar who merely chatters idle words.

LAMAKHOS:

Then what did you say to them? Won't you say?

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*feigning sickness*)

Um, I don't remember.

I am dizzy from my fear of weapons.

But, I implore you, please take away that gorgon.

580

LAMAKHOS:

Oh, sure.

Lamakhos turns away the shield.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Now please put it facing down for me.

Lamakhos sets down the shield.

LAMAKHOS:

There you go.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Now how about you hand me a feather from your helmet.

LAMAKHOS:

Here's a feather for you.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Now hold my head
so that I can vomit: I am nauseated by your plumes.

585

LAMAKHOS:

C'mon, what are you doing? Are you about to hurl because of a feather?
It's just a feather...

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Tell me, are you really
some sort of bird? A boisterous and braggadocious bird?

LAMAKHOS: (*drawing a sword*)

Oimoi! You're going to have to die now.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*suggestively*)

Ah, no need, Lamakhos.
It is not a matter of violence. But if you are so strong,
why don't you "circumcise" me? You are well-endowed after all.

590

Dikaiopolis winks.

LAMAKHOS: (*taken aback*)

Why are you speaking to a general as a beggar?

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*incredulously*)

Me? A beggar?

LAMAKHOS:

Then what are you?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What am I? A decent citizen, not some public official, 595
but of the warlike sort, the foot-soldier type.
But you are also of the warlike sort, a paid official, though.

LAMAKHOS:

They did elect me--

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*interrupting*)

Yeah, three cuckoos did.

Because I was sick of them, I made peace.

I saw the grey heads in the battle-ranks 600
and the young men who are deserting at any opportunity.

Meanwhile, I see others from Thrakē earn a daily wage of three drakhmas:

Teisamenophainippos and Panourgripparxidas for instance,

companions to Chares, and those among the Chaöoi,

Perētothedōros and Diomeialazonas, 605

and then those in Kamarinē and Gela and Katagela.

LAMAKHOS:

They were elected too.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

But why

is someone always responsible for your wages, somehow, some way,
yet none of *you* get paid?

Dikaiopolis gestures to the Choros.

Tell me, Mariladēs, is it true?

Have you already been an ambassador, as old as you are? 610

He nods no! Yet he is reasonable and a hard worker.

What about you, Drakullos? Euphoridēs? Prinidēs?

Do any of you know about Ekbatana or the Chaöoi?

See, they say no! But Koisuras and Lamakhos get the job,
 the two who were desperate for loans just the other day, 615
 so much so that they were pouring out their washing water in the evening,
 because all their friends were advising “stay away at all costs.”

The two Choroï whisper and then rejoin each other.

LAMAKHOS:

Oh Dēmokratia, are these complaints even bearable?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Of course not! Not if Lamakhos continues to earn a salary.

LAMAKHOS:

Well then, as for the Peloponnesioi and all their ilk, 620
 I will fight them everywhere and stir up trouble
 with everything I’ve got and in open combat.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And I, on the other hand, will announce to the Peloponnesioi
 and all their allies, the Megareis and the Boiōtioi,
 to buy and sell from me, and not from Lamakhos. 625

Dikaiopolis and Lamakhos exit.

CHOROS:

This man prevails with his words and flips the minds of the people
 on the subject of his treaties. Now let us shed our clothes and let loose the
 anapests.

From the time when our poet first commandeered comedies,
 he has not stepped forward to speak to the audience, as brilliant as he is.
 Rather, slandered by his enemies among the Athenaiοi, the impulsive
 decision makers that they are, 630
 as one who ridicules our city and mocks the people,
 he now begs for the grace to offer a defence to the rightfully wavering
 Athenaiοi.

The poet says that he is responsible for many things that are good for you:
 stopping you from being overly deceived by foreign words,

delighting in flattery, or being uncritical buffoons. 635

Before, those ambassadors from the cities who were deceiving you
need only call you “violet crowned.” And when one of them would say this,
immediately after hearing “the crowned” you were sitting on the edge of
your butts in anticipation.

And if one of them, while flattering you, should call city Athēna splendid,
through the word “splendid” he found everything, grasping the privilege of
sardines. 640

In making his comedies, the poet is responsible for many things good for
you:

he has shown the people in the cities how to practice democracy.

Now when they bring back tribute from their cities for you,

they have truly come hoping to see the very best poet

who flings himself into danger by speaking the truth among the Athēnaioi.

Thus the reputation of the poet’s boldness has traveled ever farther, 646

like when even the king of the Lakedaimonioi, testing his ambassadors,

asked them first which of the two cities held the more powerful navy,

and then which of the two cities the poet lambasted.

The king often said that his ambassadors became much better, 650

and he would easily conquer the city with the poet as his advisor.

For this, the Lakedaimonioi offer you peace

and demand Aigina’s return. They do not want to take

the island itself, but only to take this poet away from you.

You must never let go of your poet, as he reveals the truth through satire.

He promises that he is teaching you many good things so that you may be

happy. 656

He does not flatter, offer you wages, or deceive you.

Nor is he desperate or a sprinkler of praise. He simply is teaching the best

way.

Therefore, let Kleōn contrive his plans

and let him plot against me all he wants. 660

For justice is well on my side

and will be my ally. Never will I be caught

around the city being the sort of man

who is vile and lecherous.

Come forth, Mousa Akharnia, carrying the 665
intense force of burning fire.

Then, from oaken charcoal,
 the spark will always leap up,
 incited by a fan of a favorable wind.
 Whenever there are small fish lying ready to be fried, 670
 and some people are mixing up a rich pickled fish sauce,
 and others are kneading barley cakes,
 this is when a bustle comes,
 intense and rustic,
 so take up a tune for my dēmōtēs, Mousa. 675

We, the old men of many years, blame the city.
 We are not worthy of this treatment: we won countless naval battles.
 We deserve to be cherished by you in our old age, but instead we suffer
 horrors.
 Some of you cast old men into litigation
 set up by young men, and you allow us to be mocked by the rhētores. 680
 We are not all here, but are dull and depreciated from wear,
 having the Securer Poseidōn as our only staff.
 Mumbling in our old age, we approach the stand,
 not seeing even the shadow of justice.
 And the young man pitted against one of us, hurrying to be our accuser,
 swiftly strikes him with terse and canned phrases, coming to blows. 686
 Then dragging him along, he starts the interrogation, setting the trap-stick
 with his words,
 mangling, troubling, and throwing a man as old as Tithōnos into
 confusion.
 And because he is so old, he stammers and then leaves as a debtor.
 He weeps so hard he hiccups and tells his friends: 690
 “There is no need to buy me a coffin, I am leaving this world as a debtor.”

How does this sound? You kill an old man,
 a man of many years, near the water clock;
 truly he works hard and
 wipes away hot, 695
 manly sweat, truly a lot at that:
 a goodly man at Marathōn as far as the city is concerned.
 When we were at Marathōn, we were prosecuted,
 and now under vile men,

we are prosecuted even further, 700
and then we are convicted!

What is your rebuttal to these arguments, Marpsias?
How is it okay to kill a stooping man as old as Thoukudidēs,
entangled in the wasteland of the Skuthoi,
after his accuser, Kēphisodēmos, was a babbling fool? 705
I pitied him and cried tears having seen
this old man confounded by an archer,
the man who, by Dēmētēr, was like Thoukudidēs in his prime:
he nearly held Akhaia itself after all!
To begin with, he could out throw Euathlos in wrestling by the tens, 710
then shrieking, he could out shout the guards by the three thousands,
and then he could even out shoot the kinsmen of Euathlos' father.
But since you do not allow old men any rest, vote!
Vote that, for any present indictments,
the accuser of the old is equally old and toothless, 715
and the young can have the wide-assed babbler, the son of Kleinios.
Any who flee in the future need to be driven out and punished
equally: the old by the old, the young by the young.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Dikaiopolis enters a large open area, carrying goods for sale. After setting them down, Dikaiopolis draws a square in chalk for the boundaries of the stall.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

The borders of my agora are the following.
Here one may trade with any Peloponnesioi, 720
both Megareis and Boiōtioi are allowed.
In it any may sell to me, but not to Lamakhos.
I am appointing the official of the agora
by lot. It will be this triple braided whip from Lepron.
Let no fig denouncer enter here 725
and no other who is a man of Phasianos.
I will go find the slab on which I made the treaty,
so I may display it for all in my agora to see its rules.

Megarikos enters with their two daughters dressed as pigs. Throughout the scene, the Megarian speaks only Greek.

MEGARIKOS: (*talking to daughters, furtively*)

Agora'n Athenais, khaire, Megareusin phila.
 Epothoun tu nai ton philon haper matera.
 All', ō ponēra korichi'athliou patros,
 ambate pottan maddan, ai kh'heurēte pa.
 Akouete dē, potechet'emin tan gastera.
 Potera peprasthai khrēddet'ē peinan kakōs?

730

DAUGHTERS:

Peprasthai! Peprasthai!

735

MEGARIKOS: (*scheming*)

Egōnga kautos phami. Tis d'houtōs anous
 hos hume ka priaito phaneran zamian?
 All'esti gar moi Megarika tis makhana;
 khoirous gar hume skeuasas phasō pherein.
 Perithesthe tasde tas hoplas tōn choirōn.
 Hopōs de dokseit'eimen eks agathas huos;
 hōs nai ton Herman aiper hikseit'oikadis
 aprata, peiraseisthe tas limou kakōs.
 All'amphithesthe kai tadi ta rhunkhia,
 Kēpeiten eis ton sakkon hōd'eisbainete.
 Hōpōs de grulikseite kai koïksete
 khēseite phōnan khoiriōn mustērikōn.
 Egōn de karuksō Dikaiopolin hopa.

740

745

Megarikos yells.

Dikaiopoli, ē lēs priasthai khoira?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What? A Megarikos?

MEGARIKOS:

Agorasountes hikomes.

750

DIKAIOPOLIS:

How are you doing in Megara?

MEGARIKOS:

Diapeinames aei potto pur.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

But, by Zeus, it *is* pleasant by the fire if there is a piper beside it.
How are the other Megarioi doing, in general?

MEGARIKOS: (*making small talk*)

Hoia dē.

Hoka men egōn tēnōthen eneporeuoman,
tōndres probouloi taut'epresson ta poli,
hopōs takhista kai kakist'apoloimetha.

755

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Then you will soon be free from your problems.

MEGARIKOS:

Sa man?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What else is going on at Megara? How much does bread sell for?

MEGARIKOS:

Par'hame polutimatos aper toi theoi.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Are you carrying salt then?

MEGARIKOS:

Oukh humes autan arkhete?

760

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What about garlic?

MEGARIKOS: (*annoyed*)

Poia skorod'? Humes tōn aei,
hokk'eisbalēte, tōs arouraioi mues
passaki tas aglithas eksorussete.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Well, what are you carrying?

MEGARIKOS:

Khoirous egōnga mustikas.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

That sounds great. Let's see it then.

MEGARIKOS:

Alla man kalai.
Anteinon, ai lēs. Hōs pakheia kai kala.

765

Megarikos reveals the two pig-daughters.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What is that?

MEGARIKOS:

Khoiros nai Dia.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What are you saying? What country is that piglet from?

MEGARIKOS:

Megarika.
Ē ou khoiros esth'had'?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

It doesn't look like that to me.

MEGARIKOS: (*slightly offended*)

Ou deina? Thasthe. Toude tas apistias.

770

Ou phati tande khoiron eimen. Alla man,
ai lēs, peridou moi peri thumitidan halōn,
ai mē'stin houtos khoiros Hellanōn nomō.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

This is from a human!

MEGARIKA:

Nai ton Dioklea
ema ga. Tu de nin eimen ek tinos dokeis?
Ē lēs akousai phthengomenas?

775

DIKAIOPOLIS:

By the gods,
I will!

MEGARIKOS:

Phōnei dē tu takheōs, khoirion.

Threatening the daughters.

Ou khrēstha? Sigēs, ō kakist'apoloumena?
Palin tu apoisō nai ton Herman oikadis.

FIRST DAUGHTER: (*oinking*)

Koï, koï.

MEGARIKOS:

Hauta'sti khoiros?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Now it appears to be a piglet.
Well, after raising her, she will be, well, um, a pig.

780

MEGARIKOS:

Pent'etōn,
saph'isthi, pottan mater'ikasthēsetai.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

But this one here is not ready for sacrifice.

MEGARIKOS:

Sa man?

Pa d'oukhi thusimos esti?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

She has no tail.

785

MEGARIKOS:

Nea gar estin. Alla delphakoumena

Eksei megalan te kai pakheian kēruthran.

All' ai traphein lēs, hade toi khoiros kala.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

This one's just like the other.

MEGARIKOS:

Homomatria gar esti kēk tōutou patros.

All'an pakhunthē kan anakhnoanthē trikhi,

kallistos estai khoiros Aphrodita thuein.

790

DIKAIOPOLIS:

But a pig is not sacrificed to Aphrodita.

MEGARIKOS: (*reassuring*)

Ou khoiros Aphrodita? Mona ga daimonōn.

Kai ginetai ga tande tan khoirōn to krēs

adiston an ton odelon ampeparmenon.

795

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Can they already eat without their mother?

MEGARIKOS:

Nai ton Poteida, kai k'anis ga tou patros.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What do they eat the most?

MEGARIKOS:

Panth'a ka didōs.

Autos d'erōtē.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Little pig, little pig.

SECOND DAUGHTER: (*oinking*)

Koï, koï.

800

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Would you eat roasted chickpeas?

SECOND DAUGHTER: (*oinking sadly*)

Koï, koï, koï.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Hmm. How about dried figs?

SECOND DAUGHTER: (*oinking excitedly*)

Koï, koï.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*to Megarikos*)

What about you? Would you eat figs yourself?

MEGARIKOS:

Koï, koï.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

How sharply you shrieked at the word figs!

Someone bring some figs from inside

for the little pigs.

805

Xanthias enters stage with a basket of figs, tossing them haphazardly, some reaching the audience.

Look at them munch! Babai!
 What a clashing of the waves! Much honored Hēraklēs!
 What country are these little beasts from? It appears they're from
 Tragasaia!

Dikaiopolis laughs at their own joke.

MEGARIKOS: (*to the audience*)

All'oukhi pasas katetragon tas iskhidas.
 Egōn gar autan tande mian aneiloman.

810

DIKAIOPOLIS:

By Zeus, those two are lovely creatures for feeding.
 How much may I buy your little pigs for? Tell me.

MEGARIKOS:

To men hateron touto skorodōn tropalidos,
 to d'hateron, ai lēs, khoinikos monas halōn.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I will buy them from you. Wait for me.

Dikaiopolis leaves to get some money.

MEGARIKOS:

Tauta dē.
 Herma'mpolaie, tan gunaika tan eman
 houtō m'apodosthai tan t'emautou matera.

815

Fig Denouncer (a sycophant) enters.

FIG DENOUNCER:

Man, where are you from?

MEGARIKOS:

Khoirodōlas Megarikos.

FIG DENOUNCER:

Well then, I will denounce you and your pigs
as enemies of the State.

MEGARIKOS: (*worried*)

Touto tēn'hikei palin 820
hothenper harkha tōn kakōn hamin g'ephu.

FIG DENOUNCER: (*while shaking Megarikos*)

You'll regret it if you act like a Megarikos. Will you not let go of that
sackcloth?

MEGARIKOS: (*panicking*)

Dikaiopoli, Dikaiopoli, phantaddomai!

Dikaiopolis re-enters.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

By whom? Who is the one denouncing you? I set the rules,
so I ban fig denouncers: not in my agora! 825
What gave you the idea to denounce without a lampwick?

FIG DENOUNCER:

Am I not revealing our enemies?

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*holding a whip*)

You'll regret it,
if you don't run away and go denounce elsewhere!

Fig Denouncer scrambles off stage.

MEGARIKOS:

Hoion to kakon en tais Athanais tout eni!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Stay strong, Megarikos. But on the matter of the compensation for the
pigs, 830
now take it, the garlic and salt,

and fare well, very, very well.

MEGARIKOS:

All'hamin oukepikhōrion.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

In that case, may nosiness apply to my head.

MEGARIKOS: (*speaking to daughters, saying goodbye forever*)

Ō khoiridia, peirēsthe kanis tou patros
paiein eph'hali tan maddan, ai ka ris didō.

835

Megarikos exits. Dikaiopolis wanders off with the two pigs.

CHOROS:

At least one of them is fortunate. Did you not hear how
he achieved his wish? For his scheme bears fruit
while he sits in his agora. If anyone like Ktēsias
enters the agora,
or some other denouncer,
then he'll regret sitting down there!

840

Someone else will not damage you as a scalper,
Prepis will not stain you with his wide-assed nature,
and you will not be jostled by Kleōnumos. But holding a fresh cloak,
you can roam around freely,
without Huperbolos staining you
with his lawsuits upon first glance.

845

Upon meeting in the agora, Kratinos will not walk directly towards you.
His hair has always been cut like an adulterer's: by a knife,
just like the notorious Artemōn, hastily slipshod in his poetry,
smelling awful,
like the armpits
of his father, Tragasaïos.

850

Even better, Pausōn, that depraved greenhorn will not ridicule you,
nor Lusistratos lurking in the agora, the disgrace of the Kholargeoi,

855

ornamented sea-purple by his bad deeds,
 always shivering and hungry
 for all thirty days
 in each month.

Boiotos enters, speaking Greek. The Boiotian is accompanied by pipers, playing loud drones, and Ismenikhe carrying goods.

BOIOTOS: (*speaking to entourage*)

Ittō Hēraklēs ekamon ga tan tulan kakōs. 860
 Katathou tu tan glakhōn'atremas, Ismēnia.
 Humes d', hosoi Theibathen aulētai para,
 tois ostinois phuseite ton prōkton kunos.

Dikaiopolis comes back.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Stop it! Off to the ravens with you! Leave my threshold, you wasps!
 From where do these god-forsaken bees 865
 swoop onto my doorstep, these bumbling children of Khairis?

Pipers stop playing.

BOIOTOS: (*complaining, to Dikaiopolis*)

Nei ton Iolaon epekharittō g', ō ksene.
 Theibathe gar phusantes eksopisthe mou
 tantheia tas glakhōnos apekiksan khamai.
 All'ai ti boulei, priaso tōn iō pherō, 870
 tōn ortalikhōn tōn ē tetrapterullidōn.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Rejoice! A Boiōtos, an eater of barley bread.
 What are you carrying?

BOIOTOS: (*listing things*)

Hos'estin agatha Boiōtois haplōs.
 Origanon glakhō psiathōs thruallidas
 nassas koloioīs attagas phalaridas 875

trokhilōs kolumbōs.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*bored*)

You have come
to my agora like a bird on a winter wind.

BOIOTOS: (*listing more things*)

Kai man pherō khanas lagōs alōpekas
skalopas ekhinōs aielourōs piktidas
iktidas enudrias enkhelias Kōpaidas.

880

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*excited*)

Oh! You who carry the most delightful slice anyone could ask for!
Please, let me greet your eel friends, if you carry any.

BOIOTOS: (*holding out an eel*)

Presbeira pentēkonta Kōpadōn koran,
ekbathi tōde kēpikharittai ta ksenō.

884

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*addressing the eel*)

Oh dearest friend who has been missing from my life for such a long time!
You finally have come, the object of desire for comic actors everywhere,
dear to Morukhos. Slave, bring my
coal pan and fan out here to me.
Behold, children, the finest eel
who has come back after six long and hard years of yearning.
Say hello to her, children. I will provide us with
charcoal on behalf of this dear guest.
Bring her forth! Death itself would not
separate me from you when you are served with beet.

890

BOIOTOS:

Emoi de tima tasde pa genēsetai?

895

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I suppose this eel will suffice as the tax of the agora.
But tell me if you offer anything else for sale.

BOIOTOS:

Iōga tauta panta.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Look at that! Have you said how much?

Do you want merchandise from here or there?

BOIOTOS:

Ho ti g'est'Athanasin, Boiōtoisinde mē.

900

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Alright, take the sardines I buy from Phalērika
or pottery.

BOIOTOS: (*not interested*)

Afuas ē keramon? All'ent'ekei.

All'ho to par'hamin mē'sti, tade d'au polu.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Ah, I know! Take this denouncer from me,
who is packed like nested pottery.

BOIOTOS: (*intrigued*)

Nei tō siō

laboimi mentan kerdos agagōn kai polu,

haper pithakon alitrias pollas pleōn.

905

Nikarkhos enters.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And from this corner, Nikarkhos, ready to show all your flaws.

BOIOTOS:

Mikkos ga makos houtos.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And entirely evil.

NIKARKHOS: (*yelling like a professional wrestler, never quiet*)
Grrrrr. Arrrrrrgh. Whose merchandise is this?

BOIOTOS:

Tōd'ema
Theibathen, ittō Deus.

910

NIKARKHOS:

Then I declare
that these goods are ENEMIES!

BOIOTOS:

Ti de kakon pathōn
ornapetioisi polemon ēra kai makhan?

NIKARKHOS:

I declare that YOU are an enemy with them!

BOIOTOS:

Ti adikeimenos?

NIKARKHOS:

I will tell you for the audience's sake!
You carry lampwicks here from the enemy.

915

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Since when do you target people on account of lampwicks?

NIKARKHOS:

This lampwick could burn down an entire shipshed.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*skeptically*)

A lampwick burning a shipshed?

NIKARKHOS:

YES!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

How so?

NIKARKHOS: (*like a conspiracy theorist*)

Putting it on a cockroach, a Boiōtios, 920
 if fastened correctly, could send it into the shipshed
 through the drain, while great Boreas keeps watch.
 If he really should want the fire to take hold of the ships once and for all,
 all would be illuminated by flame straightaway.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Vile man! You're doomed.

Dikaiopolis hits Nikarkhos with the whip.

Really? Engulfed in fire by a cockroach and a lampwick? 925

NIKARKHOS: (*to the audience*)

Help me! Be my witness!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Shut him up.

Xanthias runs over to Nikarkhos and grabs him.

Give me some garbage so I can give him away after I pack him
 like some jar, so he's not broken when he's carried away.

CHOROS:

Pack up his purchase, my friend, and do it well for our guest,
 just like that, so
 he doesn't break the merchandise 930
 on the way home.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Fine, of course. He is already
 complaining, a crackling pot in a kiln,
 above all, a sound the gods despise.

CHOROS:

What use is there for him then?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

He will be a versatile vessel: 935
 a mixing bowl of malice, a mortar of mistrials,
 a lantern looking upon ledgers,
 and a drinking bowl
 who stirs up strife.

CHOROS:

How could someone persuade such a vessel 940
 to be useful at home
 when he is always screaming?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

He is sturdy, fellow, so much so
 that he will never break,
 at least if he is hung upside down from his feet. 945

Dikaiopolis strikes Nikarkhos to demonstrate.

CHOROS:

Good job.

BOIOTOS: (*pleased*)

Mellō ga toi theriddein.

CHOROS:

Go, dear guest, reap your harvest and toss him out.
 Take him wherever you want!
 For any problem, 950
 a denouncer of figs!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I barely secured this ruinous man.
 Now take your pottery, Boiōtos.

BOIOTOS:

Hupokupte tan tulan iōn, Ismēnikhe.

Boiotos leaves with Nikarkhos. Ismenikhe and pipers exit alongside.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oh, how you carry home someone you ought to beware. 955
 Whatever happens won't be good for him, but it needed to be done.
 If you profit from this, leading the merchandise off, that is,
 your good fortunate will be due to a fig denouncer.

Slave of Lamakhos enters.

SLAVE OF LAMAKHOS:

Dikaiopolis!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What? Why are you calling me?

SLAVE OF LAMAKHOS:

Lamakhos has ordered you to pay one drakhma 960
 for the Khoes festival, to cover your share of thrushes for him,
 and he has called for three drakhmas for an eel from Kōpais.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What sort of fool is this Lamakhos to request an eel from me?

SLAVE OF LAMAKHOS:

The sort who is frightening! A shieldbearer who brandishes 965
 a gorgon, and struts with a helm covered in three crests.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

By Zeus, never! Not even if he gave me his shield.
 Let him shake his crests at me for salted fish.
 And if he makes a ruckus, then I'll call the officials.

Dikaiopolis cracks the whip.

After I gather up all this merchandise,
I will leave, accompanied by the wings of thrushes and blackbirds. 970

*Xanthias and Dikaiopolis gather up the goods and carry them offstage, exiting.
Slave of Lamakhos exits.*

CHOROS:

Do you see, all you citizens, how exceedingly wise this man is
in his sensibility, as after making peace,
he now has imported goods which he sells to all kinds of people?
Some goods are useful in your house,
and others are perfect for devouring straight from the fire. 975
All good things are carried to him on their own.

I will never welcome Polemon into my house willingly,
and he will never sing the Harmodios to me
while we lay on the same couch: that man has a heroic nature.
But Polemon, who has everything good, leads others, 980
through mob-like revelling, to everything bad: turning over, pouring out,
fighting, and above all else, calling out repeatedly:
“Drink with us and relax, take our cup of friendship!”
Then he starts to attack our vine poles, savagely with fire,
and he violently gushes out the wine from our grapes. 985

*Dikaiopolis enters with birds, preparing them for a feast. The Choros focuses
attention on Dikaiopolis.*

But *his* meal is rich in feathers as he thinks of his great deeds.
He lets feathers fall from his doorstep as evidence of his lifestyle.
Oh you who were brought up with beautiful Kupris
and the beloved Charisai, Diallagē,
how you have escaped my notice, having such a beautiful face. 990
If only Erōs would somehow bring you and me together,
just as it was written: having a crown of flowers.
You might assume that I am a soft old man,
but I think I could still do three things if I took you.
First I could plough a great row of vines, 995

then beside it I could plant green shoots of a fig sapling,
 and finally, though I am old, I could plant the branch of a grape vine
 around the spot of the olive trees, all in a circle,
 so that you and I could be anointed with its oil on the new moon.

Herald enters.

HERALD:

Listen up. In accordance with our fatherland's customs, 1000
 drink your wine at the trumpet's call. Whoever is the
 very first to down it all will win a wine skin of Ktēsiphōn.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Children, women, did you not hear this?
 Wow! Aren't you listening to the herald?
 Start boiling! Roasting! Flipping! Take off 1005
 the hares, quickly! Put on your wreathes!
 Bring your spits, so I can cook the thrushes!

CHOROS:

I envy his foresight,
 but more so I envy his feast.
 What a man we have here. 1010

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What will you think
 after you see the roasted thrushes?

CHOROS:

I think you speak well on this matter.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Stir up the fire!

CHOROS:

Do you hear how great of a chef he is, 1015
 elegant and a gourmand,
 but only serving himself.

Derketes enters.

DERKETES:

Oïmoi talas!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Hēraklēs! What is this?

DERKETES:

A man cursed by the stars.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Turn yourself away then!

DERKETES:

Dear man, because the treaties are only for you,
measure out a little peace for me, even if for only five years.

1020

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*sighing*):

So, what's your problem?

DERKETES:

I am ruined! Undone! I lost two oxen.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Where?

DERKETES:

The Boiōtioi took them from Phulē.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Ah, thrice cursed man! Are you clothed in white then?

DERKETES:

Truly, by Zeus! They always supported me
through all shitty things.

1025

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Why should I care?

DERKETES:

I have been ruined, bleary-eyed, crying for my oxen.
If you care at all for Derketēs of Phulē,
then please anoint my eyes with your peace salve! Quickly!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oh, you vile man. I don't serve the public.

1030

DERKETES:

Come on, I'm begging you, if I somehow recover my oxen--

DIKAIOPOLIS:

No. Now go cry to the ones surrounding Pittalos.

DERKETES: (*stammering*)

But, but you, just one drop of peace for me,
drip it into this reed here.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

No, no, not even a dribble. Complain somewhere far away.

1035

DERKETES:

Oimoi! Kakodaimōn! My little land-tilling oxen!

Derketes exits.

CHOROS:

This man has discovered some sweetness
in his treaties, and it seems that
he will share it with no one.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

You, pour the honey on the sausage.
You, broil the cuttlefish.

1040

CHOROS:

Do you hear him shouting orders?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Roast the eels!

CHOROS:

You are slaying me with hunger,
and you are irritating your neighbors
as you let loose these shouts.

1045

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Roast them! Make them beautifully crispy and golden brown.

Slave of the Bridegroom enters.

SLAVE OF THE BRIDEGROOM:

Dikaiopolis!

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*indignantly*)

What? What is it?

SLAVE OF THE BRIDEGROOM:

A bridegroom sent you this food
from the wedding reception.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*earnestly*)

What a wonderful thing, whoever it was.

1050

SLAVE OF THE BRIDEGROOM:

He simply asks you to pour out a little for this food,
so that he isn't drafted and can fuck at home instead.
Just one drop of peace into this perfume vase.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*outraged*)

Get rid of it! Rid of the food! Do not give it to me!
Not even for a thousand drakhmas!

1055

Slave of the Bridegroom exits. Bridesmaid enters.

And who are you?

BRIDESMAID:

A bridesmaid,
I need to say something to you alone, directly from the bride.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Come here.

Bridesmaid approaches Dikaiopolis and starts whispering.

What are you saying? Oh, how amusing. Gods above.
The request of the bride, she who needs to talk to me so badly,
is that she wants his dick to stay at home. 1060
Bring the treaties here so I may give a bit, only to her,
because she is a woman and thus does not deserve war.

Xanthias brings out a wineskin and hands it to Dikaiopolis.

Hold out your box over here, woman.
Do you know how this works? Show it to the bride
whenever soldiers try to enlist her fiancé. 1065
By night let her anoint the dick of the groom with this.
Take away the treaty. Bring me the wine vessel
so I may pour it into the proper receptacles.

Dikaiopolis pours a bit of wine into a box for the Bridesmaid. Bridesmaid exits.

CHOROS:

There is some sort of man over there, scrunching his eyebrows,
surging forward like he is carrying some terrible message. 1070

HERALD: *(like a sports announcer)*

Iō! Toils and battles and... LAMAKHOS!

Lamakhos enters, wearing pajamas, accompanied by a slave.

LAMAKHOS:

What echoes all around my brass-plated domicile?

HERALD:

The generals bid you to travel today.

Quickly, take your pugilists and your plumes.

Then go guard the entrance of our land while it is snowing. 1075

Someone announced that during the Khoes and Khutros

Boiōtioi robbers and bandits intend to invade us.

LAMAKHOS:

Iō! The generals are more numerous than courageous.

Isn't it unfair that I am not allowed to celebrate?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Iō? A most fighty, warlike, Lamakhosy campaign it is. 1080

LAMAKHOS: (*feeling insulted*)

Oimoi kakodaimōn! Are you really mocking me?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Do you wish to fight like you have four wings, Gēruonēs?

LAMAKHOS:

Aiai!

What a terrible sort of message the herald announced for me!

Slave of the Priest of Dionusos enters.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Aiai? What about this one, who runs to me with a message?

SLAVE OF THE PRIEST OF DIONUSOS:

Dikaiopolis!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

What now?

SLAVE OF THE PRIEST OF DIONUSOS:

Go to dinner swiftly, 1085

and bring your basket and your wine.

The priest of Dionusos is calling for you!

Now make haste! You are halting our venerable guest from feasting.

Everything else has been prepared:

couches, tables, pillows, sheets, 1090

garlands, perfume, snacks, and alongside it, prostitutes.

Cheese bread, unleavened bread, sesame bread, wafer bread,

beautiful dancers, the most dear to Harmodios.

Now hurry up, as fast as you can!

Slave of the Priest of Dionusos exits.

LAMAKHOS: (*cursing*)

Kakodaimōn egō!

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*to Lamakhos*)

Truly you are! Well, you did choose the great Gorgon as your patron. 1095

Close up, and someone, start packing up the food.

LAMAKHOS:

Pais, pais, bring out the rations pack to me.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Pais, pais, bring out the food basket to me.

LAMAKHOS:

Bring me the thyme salt, pais! And the onions!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And to me, the fish slices! I am disgusted by onions. 1100

LAMAKHOS:

Bring here the rotten and embalmed fish wrapped in fig leaves, pais.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And to me, a delightful pastry wrapped in fig leaves. It will be cooked at the feast.

LAMAKHOS:

Bring here the two feathers from my helmet.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Bring me the ring doves and the thrushes.

LAMAKHOS:

The feather of the ostrich is nice and white.

1105

DIKAIOPOLIS:

The meat of the dove is nice and brown.

Dikaiopolis and Lamakhos make eye contact.

LAMAKHOS:

You there, stop laughing at my provisions.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

You there, would you mind not looking at my thrushes?

LAMAKHOS:

Bring out the case for my three crests.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And give me my basin of hare pudding.

1110

LAMAKHOS:

Oh but why? Why did the moths devour my crests?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Oh but why? Why do I have to devour hare's blood soup for dinner?

LAMAKHOS: (*to Dikaiopolis*)

You there, would you mind not addressing me?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I'm not! I am simply wrangling my old slaves.

Speaking to his slave, aside.

Do you want to make a wager and entrust its decision to Lamakhos? 1115
Which is a tastier dish: a grasshopper or a thrush?

LAMAKHOS:

I think you're mocking me.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Lamakhos chooses the grasshopper then, by far!

LAMAKHOS

Pais, pais, fetch my spear for me, bring it here.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Pais, pais, fetch the sausage from the fire, bring it here.

LAMAKHOS:

Bring my spear so I can draw it from its sheath. 1120
Here, hold it out, pais.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And you, pais, hold out this spit.

LAMAKHOS:

Bring my tripods, pais, for my shield.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Bring the pan loaves and supports for my stomach.

LAMAKHOS:

Bring the circle of the Gorgonic shield out here!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Give me the circle of unleavened bread, spread with cheese. 1125

LAMAKHOS:

Isn't this mockery excessive for human beings?

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Isn't this unleavened bread sweet for human beings?

LAMAKHOS:

You, pais, start pouring olive oil. I see the reflection
of a man in the bronze who is about to be tried for cowardice.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

You, start pouring honey. I see the clear reflection 1130
of a man telling Lamakhos, son of Gorgasos, to fuck off.

LAMAKHOS:

Bring it here, pais, my warrior's cuirass.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Bring it here, pais, the wine is a cuirass for me.

LAMAKHOS:

I will equip myself with this, against my enemies.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I will equip myself in drunkenness with this, alongside my drinking
buddies. 1135

LAMAKHOS:

The bedding, pais, fasten it to my shield.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

The dinner, pais, fasten it to my picnic basket.

LAMAKHOS:

Well then, I will pick up and carry the rations pack myself!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Well then, I will pick up and leave with my robe.

LAMAKHOS:

Pick up my shield and go, pais, go on! 1140
It's snowing! Babaiaks! These matters are frigid!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Pick up my dinner. These matters are oozing with drink.

Dikaiopolis and Lamakhos exit.

CHOROS:

Go you two! And truly fare well, off to your armies.
How different are the paths each of you travel.
For the crowned one, there is drinking, 1145
and for you there is freezing and standing watch.
For the first, spending the night
with a young woman at her prime,
while a certain section is rubbed.

Curse Antimakhon, the son of Psakas, 1150
the author and poet of songs!
Simply put, may Zeus
completely destroy him.

He sent me away dinnerless
when he was the khoregos at Lēnaia! 1155
May I see him pining for squid,
fried and sizzling, straight from the sea,
lying right on the table.

May the squid be beached
when he is about to take it, 1160
may a dog snatch it and flee.

This is but one curse for him,
now may there be a another, by night!
Shivering from a fever at home,

returning from a horse ride, 1165
 at that time, may someone smash his head,
 someone who looks like Orestēs the madman.
 And intending to pick up a stone,
 may he in the darkness take in his hand
 a pile of shit, recently shat. 1170
 Finally, holding it, may he
 volley the geode, and may
 it hit Kratinos instead, missing the mark.

Slave of Lamakhos enters.

SLAVE OF LAMAKHOS:

Slaves who reside in the house of Lamakhos,
 Water! Water! Heat it in a cauldron! 1175
 Get the bandages and salve ready!
 Get unwashed wool as a wrap for the ankle!
 This man has been wounded by a vine pole, leaping over a ditch
 and his ankle was thrown backwards, dislocating it.
 Then he smashed his head, falling onto a boulder, 1180
 and the Gorgon awoke and fled from his shield.
 Then a feather of the braggart fell greatly
 onto the rocks, and he let loose a terrible lament:
 “Twinkling and illustrious eyes, now is the last time I will see with you.
 I leave behind my light and joy. I live no longer.” 1185
 Saying this and falling into the irrigation canal,
 he began to stand up and assemble the deserters,
 driving off the robbers and pressing them with his spear.
 Look! It’s him! Go, open the door!

Lamakhos enters, dressed in Dikaiopolis’ beggar clothes. Two slaves rush to Lamakhos to start healing the wounds.

LAMAKHOS:

Attatai! Attatai! 1190
 These pains are hateful and frost-rimed.
 I am wretched! I am ruined by the spear
 of my enemy, utterly smitten.

But what would
truly be lamentable 1195
is if Dikaiopolis should see me wounded
and laugh at my misfortune.

Dikaiopolis enters, accompanied by two attractive people, dressed as pigs.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*mockingly*)
Attatai! Attatai!
The titties! How firm, like Kudōnian fruit.
You two, kiss me opulently! Oh you're gold, more! 1200
Kiss me spreading your tongues all around. Make it indecent!

Dikaiopolis pauses for a few seconds. All action stops on stage.

For I have been the first to guzzle the wine.

LAMAKHOS:
Oh wretched circumstances of my ill fortune!

Lamakhos pauses. Dikaiopolis seems to be about to say something. 1205

Iō! Iō! My aching wounds!

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*laughing*)
Iēu! Iēu! Hello my noble little Lamakhos!

LAMAKHOS:
I seethe hate. I breath tragedy.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*playfully, to companions*)
Oh! Why are you kissing me? Why are you nibbling?

LAMAKHOS: (*ignoring Dikaiopolis*)
I am a wretched person who met a grave encounter. 1210

DIKAIOPOLIS:
Who now was trying to negotiate donations for the Khoes?

LAMAKHOS:

Iō! Paian! Paian!

DIKAIOPOLIS:

But today is not the Paiōnia!

LAMAKHOS: (*pained*)

Take hold of me, take hold of my legs. Papai!
Support me, friends.

1215

DIKAIOPOLIS:

You two, around the middle of my dick.
Support it, friends.

LAMAKHOS:

My head is dizzy from being hit with a rock
and I have vertigo.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

I wish to lie down. I'm hard
and I want to fuck.

1220

LAMAKHOS:

Carry me out the doors, to the house of Pittalos
with the healing hands.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Carry me to the judges of the contest. Where's the king?
Give me back my wineskin.

1225

LAMAKHOS:

Some lance has stuck through my bones, painfully.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

Look at this empty wineskin! Triumphant hurrahs!

CHOROS:

Truly, hurrah if you are calling *us*, old man, to triumph.

DIKAIOPOLIS:

And even better, pouring in unmixed wine, I drank it all in one go.

CHOROS:

Celebrations are nigh, generous one. Go forth and take your wineskin.1230

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*to audience*)

Follow me now! Sing “Tēnella Kallinikos!”

Dikaiopolis shouts “Tenella Kallinikos” until the audience joins in.

CHOROS:

We will follow, for your sake. Tēnella Kallinikos!

Tēnella Kallinikos!

We sing to you and your victory.

Curtain draws. Fin.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT AND METHODOLOGY

This section focuses on a small slice of scholarship and art that influenced the writing, translation, and production advice of this edition of Aristophanes *Acharnians*. A more complete bibliography will follow the discussion. The methodology largely focuses on translation theory, aesthetics, and practical lessons from twentieth century sources.

The first problem of translating lies in the original audience of Greek comedy. *Acharnians* was first performed at the Lenaia festival, where it won first prize. Comedies, much like Tragedies, were performed in civic festivals which celebrated the *polis*. These festivals included rituals, competitions ranging from athletics to poetry, and most importantly, public performances. *Acharnians* was originally performed not to sell tickets, but to honor the city and the gods: a radically different experience than our modern theater. As Michel Foucault argues, fifth and fourth century Greek interiorities were based more on relations to other people than to the self.¹ Whether or not we believe Foucault's grandiose assertions about subjectivity, his perspective alludes to a collectivist sentiment present in the reception of Greek Theater. Reconciling this with the modern paradigm of theater as 'art in the marketplace' has been a difficult task.

Furthermore, the general milieu of the audience of Athenian drama remains entirely different from any contemporary audience. Athenian audiences

¹ Strozier, Robert, *Foucault, Subjectivity, and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 148-150.

valued different modes of performance and were closer to the common source materials of Greek myths and intertextual references. Martin Revermann argues that due to their continuous exposure to the “remarkable formal conservatism” of Greek drama and the likely possibility for citizens to participate in the chorus, Athenian audiences of the time period held notable competencies in their interpretive faculties.² Contemporary audiences do not possess the same competencies surrounding Greek drama because they have not participated as directly in the culture. However, audiences today, perhaps more than ever, still have assumptions and knowledge of theater as a whole. My approach seeks address this gap in competencies by causing audiences to reflect on these cultural differences.

In order to come to terms with these disconnects, I have envisioned my translation as a transformative endeavor. As Walter Benjamin writes on the role of translation: “...a translation issues from the original--not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life.”³ *Acharnians* no longer has the same effect to a modern audience, so I have chosen to give it a new life as an absurdist and alienating comedy.

² Revermann, Martin. “The Competence of Theatre Audiences in Fifth- and Fourth-Century Athens” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 126 (2006): 104-105.

³ Benjamin, Walter, “The Task of the Translator” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 71.

The other larger issue of translation concerns the genre and style of Aristophanes' work. *Acharnians* consists entirely of poetry, employing a variety of complex and changing meters. Despite this, the play brutalizes Athenian society with biting satire. These are not two things one normally combines in English literature, and most attempts to do so feel antiquated or artificial. I have chosen instead to write dialogue in prose to retain the punchiness of the content. The other great stylistic problem lies in the wealth of colloquial speech and exclamations. Rather than find equivalent English idioms, in many cases I have left these phrases untranslated. Ezra Pound describes this process when discussing his issues in translating Italian poetry: "What obfuscated me was not the Italian but the crust of dead English, the sediment present in my own available vocabulary..."⁴ Pound in much of his poetry and translation focused on the sound of language rather than absolute meaning. Here, Pound points to the fact that the Greek can be more powerful if left untranslated. I have chosen to leave in Greek cursing by retaining phrases like βαβαιάξ and οἶμοι τάλας.

Hopefully the descriptions of these challenges in translation have hinted at the distance between the two cultures present. Rather than struggle with the disconnect, I have chosen to embrace it. These phenomena can be further enhanced by modern innovations in theater that seek to critique the dominant culture and alienate the audience from conventional norms. Alfred Jarry explains the intention behind his play *Ubu Roi*:

⁴ Pound, Ezra, "Guido's Relations," In *Theories of Translation*, ed. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 85.

Since Art and the public's Understanding are so incompatible, we may well have been mistaken in making a direct attack on the public in *Ubu Roi*; they resented it because they understood only too well, whatever they may say. Ibsen's attack on them went almost unnoticed. It is because the public are a mass--inert, obtuse, and passive--that they need to be shaken up from time to time so that we can tell them from their bear-like grunts where they are--and also where they stand.⁵

Jarry's play lashes out by mercilessly lampooning the bourgeoisie's complacency when witnessing abuses of power and behavior motivated by greed. In many ways, Aristophanes critiques similar facets of his society, even though modern class systems do not map onto the satire of the play. For example, Aristophanes derides Athenians ambassadors for doing no work and draining the city's treasury by revealing their acts of impersonating foreign powers in the play. By reframing this same struggle in modern terms, the stage can better represent the core of Aristophanes' political message.

One final innovation addresses gaps in time that contemporary adaptation faces; modern plays, through stylized acting and set design, often seek to create a dreamlike sense of timelessness. Jean Genet, in the directions to his play *Deathwatch*, remarks

The entire play unfolds as a dream. The set and the costumes (striped homespun) should be in violent colors. Use whites and very hard blacks, clashing with each other. The movements of the actors should be either heavy or extremely and incomprehensibly rapid, like flashes of lightning. If they can, the actors should deaden the timbre of their voices.⁶

⁵ Jarry, Alfred, "Questions of the Theatre," in *Ubu Roi*, trans. Barbara Wright, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1961), 175.

⁶ Genet, Jean, *Deathwatch*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 7.

Genet's use of brutal contrasts and bizarre movement divorce the setting from time and space, creating confusion and detachment. Similarly, Igor Stravinsky's opera-oratorio, *Oedipus Rex*, calls for a static presentation of the Oedipus myth. Actors should remain stoic and unexpressive in order not to detract from the development in the music or project unnecessary sentimentality.⁷ Breaking from the mold of expressive, emotion-driven theater will ideally cause audiences to scrutinize the metatheatrical details and greater implications brought about by the play.

Although there are many conflicts of ancient and modern, authenticity and abstraction, and funny and disarming, the most important frame of reference is to acknowledge that these categories do not resolve into a neat synthesis. Each component part of the performance and presentation stands on its own. Although the audience will face the question of alienation, so too will they be able to engage with universal aspects, or even unexpected personal interpretations. The beauty lies in these different modes of engagement, or lack thereof, and the process to puzzle out how they fit into the play.

⁷ Walsh, Stephen, *Stravinsky: Oedipus Rex*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15-16.

COMMENTARY

This section consists of a collection of commentaries designed for the staging and adaptation of each section of the play. Treat these as ideas for further consideration and expansion, not hard and fast rules. The headings break up the play by scene, although this is a slightly arbitrary distinction as Old Comedy did not have scenes as we know them. Before delving into the detailed sections, I will supply a series of general thoughts for the larger issues of the play.

Although the translation engages with many facets of authenticity to the source material, never be beholden to a “faithful reconstruction” of Greek drama. If the truest staging of this play were to be performed, there would only be three speaking actors for the entire cast, and all of them would be men, regardless of the characters. Try not to do this. Cast women and non-binary individuals, regardless of the implied gender of the characters. I have tried to use neutral pronouns in the stage directions in order not to influence casting. However, in the confines of the text, I have generally translated Greek words that have an explicit gender connotation, e.g. *ἀνὴρ*, faithfully. Feel free to change or keep these if desired. Likewise with descriptions of anatomy.

Costuming and set design are matters of which I have only general knowledge; therefore, I will provide only brief remarks. Most importantly, avoid any strict temporal or spatial reference. Aim for an abstracted, dreamlike feeling. I suggest costuming focused primarily on color contrast, as further discussed

below, and keeping the costumes simple. Personally, I adore the simple, yet incredibly versatile, black and white contrast of the set design and cinematography of German Expressionist film. One solution is simply to make togas or chitons of contrasting colors. These can easily be folded from sheets if nothing else. Similarly, the sets for different scenes can be simple; the only structures needed are a stage for Dikaiopolis to speak from and a few houses. These are best abstracted with strange geometries and color contrasts.

Though I encourage shying away from realism when it impedes the production, one element worthy of serious consideration is the use of theatrical masks. Masks in Greek drama were often exaggerated distillations of a character that helped to identify them, especially when the same actor played multiple roles. To this day, masks remain a powerful, and often unnerving, symbol of transition and transformation into a new character. Contemporary audiences will certainly have a harder time identifying with characters wearing masks, as this tradition is near antithetical to the emotional connections to characters many people now seek in performance. Although this idea could easily be disarmed by making the masks humorous, I instead recommend aiming for the monstrous and machine-like. Another approach would be to make the masks lack likeness to a face at all by emphasizing geometric or textural elements.

The final point of comment concerns metatheater. At many points in the play, the text seems to reach out to the audience or reveal the inner machinations of comedy and its role in society. I have chosen to make these references even

more explicit through stage directions. I encourage you to give the audience strange ways to interact with the action on stage. If in a small venue, have the actors speak directly to audience members where appropriate, singling out specific people to interact with. Let your imagination run wild beyond this. Give the audience paper-mache rocks before the play starts and see what they do when the chorus tells them to stone Dikaiopolis. This allows the audience some illusion of response to Dikaiopolis' questionable actions and the elements that a modern audience would find reprehensible or disturbing. In the other direction, cook some of the food that Dikaiopolis describes on stage and give it to members of the audience.

OVERTURE

Like in the opera tradition, the overture should serve as a sort of miniature for the rest of the work. Your goal here is to simultaneously evoke familiarity and alienation. The overture should be a clear start to the play that draws the audience's attention, not just something that plays in the background before the show. For this reason, feel free to add visual elements, especially if live music is not an option. For music, I particularly like Charles Ives' *Three Quarter-Tone Pieces* (1924) no. 3, as the piece is written for piano, an instrument the audience no doubt understand, but uses a system of harmony with which a Western audience is unlikely to be familiar. Wyschnegradsky also wrote quarter tone pieces that are worth listening to for reference. These, of course, will be tricky to play live due to the necessary tunings, but a recording works just as well.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

The scene opens with a monologue from Dikaiopolis deriding the Athenian institution of the Assembly, or in the Greek, the ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*). This opening speech provides an ideal first look into one of the most important pillars of this adaptation: the foreignization of Greek principles and names. The audience should feel overwhelmed with the amount of unexplained references and the distortion of familiar names. For instance, the familiar tragic playwright, Aeschylus, has been transliterated more closely to the Greek to yield Aiskhulos.

The following action shows the process of the Assembly, wherein any citizen can speak. The main point of this scene, for Aristophanes at least, is to show the corruption of the Assembly, especially when it gives out money to people who are profiteering from prolonging the Peloponnesian War. In the interpretation, I have taken an assumption that is supported by the text, but not explicitly stated: the ambassadors are not doing their jobs, and instead have convinced other Greeks to disguise themselves as envoys from foreign countries. This means that the First Ambassador and Theoros are largely making up these stories, or at least embellishing them by drawing on stereotypes, and that Pseudartabas and the Thrakes are really Greeks. Cast and costume accordingly: feel free to make their attempt look like a science fair poster with the glue still drying.

Despite the prevalence of Greek political systems explored here, the scene should still have modern resonance. This scene mirrors the view held by some that the government is run by a coterie of incompetent buffoons that seek to use the bureaucracy to benefit themselves rather than the people. Remember this perspective for acting.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

The opening joke relies on the Greek word σπονδή, which simultaneously means “libation,” a drink offering, and “treaty.” Be sure to make this connection between the action and the words.

The entrance of the chorus, or the *παρόδος* (*parados*) is one of the most structurally important moments in Greek drama. To reflect the chorus’ threatening language, the chorus should emerge as a mob of people that overwhelms Dikaiopolis on stage. Get as many people as you can, even if they don’t have speaking lines. Through costuming and choreography give the appearance that the chorus is synchronized in an almost cultish, hive mind manner. I would suggest the most violent and sharp white you can find for costuming. Strive for contrast with Dikaiopolis above all else.

No matter what, never represent the chorus as one person. Some productions attempt this method, but the unity of a single person clearly misses the voices of dissent within the chorus and its eventual split after Dikaiopolis’ speech. Aristophanes builds tension through his use of violent threats and language all so that the joke of Dikaiopolis holding the Acharnians’ charcoal

hostage pays off. Use aggressive stage positioning and the chorus' overwhelming nature to intimidate the audience and then disarm all the tension with the joke.

The action after the entrance of the chorus consists of Dikaiopolis performing a ritual in honor of Dionysus. Whenever Dikaiopolis is praying, I have chosen to mark the speech as drunken or slurring words. Most important is to recognize an altered state of consciousness, especially given the content of the words, whether that is transcendent religious communing or simple drunkenness (why not both!). On the topic of Dikaiopolis' song, I think of it as something ad libbed on the spot, similar to if you have musical friends who sometimes sing their thoughts instead of speaking them. No accompaniment required.

Additionally, as a modern author, I recognize the resonance that Dikaiopolis' prayer to Phallus has with Freud's concept of the id; Dikaiopolis' language delves into primal desires of sex and drinking without limitation. I read this as a sure sign of the intervention of Dionysus. Remember that even though Dikaiopolis is speaking about carnal desires, it is done so inside of a ritual context. This adds another moral ambiguity to the chorus' demands to stone Dikaiopolis.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Normally the chorus would remain on stage throughout the entirety of the play past their entry, but because of the set up required for the stage, I have chosen a scene transition. Thus, Scene 3 takes place at the house of the famous playwright, Euripides. Aristophanes and Euripides were contemporaries, and

Euripides often appears in his other plays, either as a target of mockery, or just as an odd obsession. The greeting of Dikaiopolis by Euripides' slave plays on a common trope of the slave acting like their master. For this reason, have the two of them speak in a similar manner: like lawyers and rhetoricians. The staging of Euripides' house should be stuffed full of props, as it is also a storehouse for all the materials for producing tragedies. Cram the stage full of as many as you can find, even if they seem irrelevant. Make sure to include a mound of rags. For reference here's the list of props that Euripides needs for the scene: a hat, a staff, a lampshade, a broken cup, a small pot, and a pouch. Feel free to mediate these exchanges through the slave.

The main thrust of the humor in this scene is that all of Euripides' plays have the same plot and the same wretched characters, so much so that Dikaiopolis cannot differentiate them from one another. The other important source of humor lies in the numerous parodies of tragic speech. Dikaiopolis directly addresses his heart and uses language that evokes the plays of Euripides rather than the colloquial register seen previously. I encourage the performer to ham up these sections, as Dikaiopolis is clearly mocking the tradition. This should be one of the parts of the play that resonates with the audience, as they should be able to detect the shift in register and delivery.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

Scene 4 is a showcase of a variety of registers and intertextual references to other genres of Greek literature and speech. Although the fine points might be

lost to the audience, the translation emphasizes the legal language and some of the dramatic speech inherited from tragedy. Remember that Dikaiopolis is acting as the tragic hero Telephos, creating yet another metatheatrical dynamic.

Dikaiopolis' speech acts as foreshadowing to later scenes, especially when mentioning the Megarians. This speech also contains one of my favorite cases of irony generated from this endeavor: in line 505 Dikaiopolis remarks that there are no foreigners present in the audience. In moments like this, draw attention to the audience's position as foreign spectators: using spot lights, by halting the action, etc. Culturally, this is a reference to the two festivals where comedies were performed: the Dionysia was open to all, but the Lenaia, where *Acharnians* was performed, was limited only to Athenians.

This scene contains the entrance of Lamakhos who swiftly becomes Dikaiopolis' rival and serves to show the fate of regular citizens during wartime. Lamakhos acts as an opposite double to Dikaiopolis, so keep the same sharp color contrast between the two (Lamakhos wearing sharp white, Dikaiopolis wearing earthy-colors, etc.) Lamakhos always seems unprepared in any scene they are in so I have chosen to interpret this by making them constantly sleepy. Lamakhos will need a shield embellished with a gorgon and a sword within reach. Lamakhos should be physically intimidating if possible, as Aristophanes uses language and images that invoke the heroes of old.

The final piece of the scene is a choral section. In the Greek, these passages are written in a different meter and genre (lyric), have uses of elevated and poetic

vocabulary, and generally have little direct connection with the plot. Don't stress over the staging of it too much; let the audience take it as they will. For instance, this choral interlude focuses on the role of comedy in Athenian society and a humorous criticism of a perceived injustice for old men in the Athenian law courts. Both topics are tangentially related to the plot, but provide insight into some of the metatheatrics of the play and a window into ancient Athenian life. The line breaks correspond roughly to the structure of the choral passage; this will help to split these up as monologues for different members of the chorus if desired.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Traditionally, the action in Greek drama is continuous. To honor this, and because no scene transitions are necessary, I have chosen to make the final act consist of a single scene. If you want an intermission, this is a good spot for it. I suggest using this scene transition to change the costuming of the chorus to reflect their changed opinion of Dikaiopolis. Whereas before the chorus was wearing sharp white, change their costuming to match the earthy-colored Dikaiopolis. The first section consists of a Megarian entering Dikaiopolis' newly established market. The Megarians were a Greek people with a dialect distinct from Attic Greek, but their language would be mostly clear to the original audience. I have stepped away from the original effect in taking this difference to an extreme by having the Megarian say all their lines in the original ancient

Greek. Even though this will be difficult from an acting perspective, try to escape from only performing the sound of the language and reach for expressing emotion confidently. There is no need to strive to be perfectly accurate, as more than likely, the audience won't have any clue. I have provided a multitude of stage directions for conveying the emotions of the dialogue in order to assist in this venture.

To help the staging, I will also provide a brief plot summary of the Megarian's plan, as it is the more complicated of the two sections spoken in Greek. The Megarian, driven to desperation and starvation because of the Peloponnesian War, decides to attempt to disguise his daughters as pigs to sell to an unwitting buyer. He does this not necessarily out of cruelty, but because he knows that they will at least be fed if someone buys them. He brings them to Dikaiopolis, because no one else will buy the goods (it was illegal to buy goods from an enemy or enemy cities). Dikaiopolis sees through the ruse but goes along with it. The Megarian tries to convince Dikaiopolis to buy the pigs with more and more ridiculous reasons. Dikaiopolis agrees, but the Megarian is pestered by a public official. Dikaiopolis drives off the sycophant and the Megarian leaves. What's actually going on in the undercurrents and double meanings of the play is that the daughter's are, more or less, being sold into sexual slavery. This is why the attendants of Dikaiopolis, whom Dikaiopolis asks for sexual favors, have to be dressed as pigs. This will hopefully make a connection in the audience's mind and cause them to radically reinterpret this scene by the end of the play. What seems

like an innocent scene without context will transform into a disgusting display, by a modern conception, of one of the types of comedy in Greek drama.

This scene should come late enough in the play so that the audience has come to expect a certain amount of ambiguity and confusion. Nonetheless, this scene will still be a large jump for them to make. Engaged members of the audience should largely be able to puzzle out the situation; thus, it is vital to support the words with proper acting and staging. Treat the following scene with the Boeotian in a similar manner, but try to differentiate their Greek somehow. Perhaps have one stick closer to the Greek pronunciation and the other have a regional accent or normalization of the accent. Either way, the Boeotian scene should be simpler to stage and easier to follow as Dikaiopolis responds more directly to much of the dialogue.

The final section deserving of commentary, and possibly my favorite, lies in Dikaiopolis and Lamakhos' verbal sparring, starting around line 1095. The Greek is written in the style of *στιχομυθία* (*stichomythia*), or sharp, short lines exchanged rapidly between two characters. This technique involves the repetition and parody of previous lines which seek to build intensity and speed. For this reason, I recommend performing this section incredibly fast and set to syncopated or otherwise rhythmically complex music that can set the pace for the action. I particularly like the electronic music artist Squarepusher and the math rock group Hella. Both artists create instrumental music that captures the intended pacing of the scene and both will likely challenge the audience, as they

are experimental and inaccessible to a popular market. Like the scene with Euripides, the text and action of the scene call for a variety of props, often related to cooking and clothing. One option is to have a variety of abstract or symbolic objects flung around the stage. An equally viable strategy is to have the slaves constantly running on and off stage, or in and out of houses, causing a bustle, but making no real progress for their masters' commands. The focus should rest on the verbal sparring of Lamakhos and Dikaiopolis rather than a meticulous recreation of the commands.

Aside from the pacing of the verbal battle, the elements of parallelism and reversal are critical to the staging. Linguistic parallelism is clearly shown in the lines of the two main characters; syntactic structures are kept similar between Dikaiopolis and Lamakhos, but the content and tone of their situations are opposites. Dikaiopolis talks of the rich luxury of a lifestyle after peace, while Lamakhos dreads the harsh lifestyle of war and the frontier to which he must travel. The action here is a microcosm of one of the greater themes of the play: a reversal of positions. Dikaiopolis started as a victim of the war, having their farm and vineyards destroyed by the Spartans, but ends up as a wealthy trader after peace affords this possibility. Lamakhos enters the play with a comfortable job, like the ambassadors, that pays an easy wage for doing nothing in return. Here at the end, Lamakhos is a target of ridicule as they are described in a parody of a hero's death, lying face down in an irrigation ditch. Support these themes by

staging the two's actions as synchronized as possible. Give each a half of the stage as their designated area. Coordinate the movements of the slaves.

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