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Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals

Edited by Francesca Bortoletti, Giovanna Di Martino,
and Eugenio Refini

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Giovanna Di Martino*

Practice Research, Performance Pedagogy, and Early Modern Aristophanes: Building (on) the Script(s)[1]

Abstract

The present article provides an overview of the dramaturgical research underlying a two-stage workshop directed by Marco Martinelli (Albe and Ravenna Teatro) on a selection of early modern translations of Aristophanes' *Plutus*, which took place in Parma (10-13 October 2022) and London (20-23 February 2023) and which combined practice research with performance pedagogy. I will first introduce the aims, methodologies and research clusters in which this workshop is rooted; I will then chart the reception of *Plutus* in the early modern period and analyse how the linguistic, cultural, and political aspects of each translation chosen for the workshop informed the writing of our final script. The translations selected for the workshop and explored in this article are: Eufrosino Bonini's *Comedia di Iustitia* (1513), Thomas Randolph's *Πλουτοφθαλμία Πλουτογαμία. A Pleasant Comedy Entituled Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (1651); and H.H.B's *The World's Idol, Plutus a Comedy* (1659). Also included in the article is an appendix which offers the director's perspective on the workshop: how he envisioned the scenes and constructed the chorus, as well as an appendix containing the final script.

KEYWORDS: dramaturgy; theatre translation; practice research; performance pedagogy; Aristophanes' reception; early modern translation; classical reception

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1. Introduction: Practice Research, Performance Pedagogy and Dramaturgy

This article provides an overview of the dramaturgical research underlying a two-stage workshop entitled *Performing Early Modern Aristophanes*, which took place in Parma (10-13 October, 2022) and London (20-23 February, 2023) within the framework of the conference *Memory and Performance: Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals* (Bortoletti, Di Martino, Refini 2024). It entailed working on three translations of Aristophanes' *Plutus*, spanning the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Italy, England and (most likely) Ireland (see further below), and involved participants from numerous state-funded schools in Parma and London, as well as from University College London and the University of Parma.

The workshop was also inscribed within a larger research project on *Translating Ancient Drama* and based at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (Oxford): integral to this project is a collaborative practice-based methodology that uses performance for the analysis of early modern and contemporary translations, as well as the production of new translations (APGRD 2024).[2] It is based on the understanding that any translation of a dramatic text has an inherent dramaturgy, specifically the creative (re)arrangement of the dramatic meanings and structures found in the source text(s).[3] Indeed, in addition to the linguistic and cultural negotiations normally characteristic of any translation process, theatre translation also invariably entails a nuanced mediation between the

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[2] In Theatre Studies, previous work on theatre translation with a practice-based mode of enquiry includes Margherita Laera's project *Translating Theatre* (2016-19), in which Laera and her team explored 'foreignisation' and 'otherness' as translation strategies for the modern stage in order to address the marginalisation of playwrights writing non-English plays in the post-Brexit British theatre (Laera 2016-2019). In Classics, while the theorization of the performance of Greek tragedy has recently benefitted from successful collaborations between Theatre and Classics scholars (Hall and Harrop 2010; Dunbar and Harrop 2018), little has been done on the translation of Greek tragedy that combines academic research with performance practice (Wiles 2007; Harrop and Wiles 2008; Rodosthenous 2017; Macintosh and Di Martino 2021; Di Martino and Baudou 2023).

[3] For recent scholarship on the interplay between translation and dramaturgy, see, amongst others, Versényi 2014; Trencsényi and Cochrane 2014; Trencsényi 2015, 51-66; Barnette 2018; Brodie 2020, 584; Di Martino and Baudou 2023.

theatrical conventions of the source material and those of the new context.[4] Translation must then consider elements related to both the source's and target's performance culture, which can either be explicitly addressed or subtly influence the final product.

In line with recent developments in translation and adaptation studies, conceiving translation in this way usefully shifts the focus from a hierarchical relationship between the source and the target texts towards intertextual analyses that recognise the role of audiences, readerships and bodies in the meaning-making process (Barnette 2018, 9-18). It also blurs the lines between translation and adaptation as they both involve creating target texts that reinterpret and reassemble existing dramatic meanings and structures.[5] As such, works that are 'faithful' to the source should be treated in the same manner as those that are more 'free' with respect to the source so long as some form of translation and reassembling of the meanings and dramatic structure of the source takes place; this rationale accounts for the inclusion here of target texts which, as will be seen, share varying degrees of relationship with the source. This expanded understanding of translation is especially needed when analysing early modern engagements with ancient dramatic texts, where translation practices were as varied and heterogeneous as the theories behind them (Di Martino and Dudouyt 2023, 6), and where the source often served as a springboard for new literary works aimed at establishing a (proto)national canon (ibid.).

Employing performance practice as research thus presented itself as the preferred method for the exploration of the dramaturgical elements embedded within the chosen translations for the 2022-2023 workshops. But the use of performance as research was also combined with performance pedagogy, a theoretical and practical tool that has been central to theatre studies (and Shakespearean studies in particular) since the first decades of the twentieth century and which has seen an increase in interest since the performative turn in the 1960s (Gilbert 1973 1984, 601; Riggio 1991, 1; Haughey 2012, 60). Recently, it has gained momentum within the discipline of Classics as well, particularly in the teaching of Greek drama (Mitchell-Boyask 2023; Meineck 2023; Plastow and Bullen 2024). The participation of students from secondary schools and universities, rather than professional actors, must be viewed within this framework: the intention was to have

[4] Discussions about how to incorporate this third linguistic code in translation have multiplied since the 70s of the last century; for a recollection of the main developments in the field of theatre translation theory and practice, see, amongst others, Bigliazzi, Kofler and Ambrosi 2013, and Brodie 2020, 84.

[5] On the interdependence of, and/or (im)possibility of distinguishing between, translation and adaptation in the theatrical process, see Link 1980; Bassnett 1985; Windle 2011; Krebs 2014; Laera 2014, and Di Martino and Dudouyt 2023.

students be active participants in the reinterpretation and preservation of early modern textual and non-textual material that was the focus of the conference, i.e. in the "knowledge-production" that constitutes the core of practice research and performance pedagogy (Nelson 2013, 3-4).

The combination of both methodologies was further enhanced and supported by the choice of Marco Martinelli as the director. The workshop was deeply ingrained within Martinelli's own methodology, known as the 'non-school', which eloquently points at a non-prescriptive way of engaging with texts that may well be the object of study in the classroom, but which need to be deconstructed and eviscerated on the stage in order to *come to life* ("messa in vita": Martinelli in Appendix 3). His approach to creating (and understanding) theatre is through the Chorus, i.e. the idea as well as physical translation of an 'I' that becomes a 'we'. His way of working with young adults is through exercises that will increasingly build this 'we', i.e. the Chorus, that is made entirely of amateurs. His methodology perfectly suited the choice of playwright, Aristophanes (one of Martinelli's preferred texts in his non-school projects), and specifically the play *Plutus*, which has come to us largely devoid of its choral songs,[6] yet whose Chorus remains notably present in several early modern reimaginings (see further below). There is no doubt that Martinelli's engagement with the ancient Greek Chorus as a practice is a part of modern theatre's long fascination with and integration of Greek *choreia* into their own performance practices, from both an aesthetic (the co-presence of 'song' and 'dance') and pedagogical viewpoint (i.e. its intrinsic link with 'education', to put it with Plato).[7] Indeed, there has been a growth in contemporary engagements with the Chorus, particularly in British productions of Greek drama post-pandemic (Baudou and Di Martino 2025; Weston 2024, 84).[8]

[6] Sommerstein 2001, 23 lists six places where there may be evidence for the presence of a choral song which failed to materialise in the copies that circulated in antiquity; as has recently been argued, the absence of choral songs from the play, however, is not due to a change in performance practices in 4th century BCE that would make choral songs increasingly unrelated to the plot or to their debated authorship (Sommerstein 2001, 23; Csapo 2010, 14).

[7] See *Leg.* 654a-b: ᾗ δὴ κινεῖν τε ἡμᾶς καὶ χορηγεῖν ἡμῶν τούτους, ᾠδαῖς τε καὶ ὀρχήσεσιν ἀλλήλοις συνείροντας, χορούς τε ὠνομακέναι παρὰ τὸ τῆς χαρᾶς ἔμφυτον ὄνομα . . . οὐκοῦν ὁ μὲν ἀπαίδευτος ἀχόρευτος ἡμῖν ἔσται ("by which [pleasure] [the gods] make us move and lead our choruses, connecting us with one another by means of songs and dances, naming the chorus from the name of joy [which is] intrinsic [to the chorus] . . . should it be assumed, then, that someone with no training in the chorus is uneducated whereas someone who has enough practice in a chorus is educated?"). On Plato's definition of *choreia*, see Peponi 2013, 22.

[8] On modern engagements with the ancient Greek Chorus in the theatrical realm, see, amongst others, Bierl 2004, 157-83; Billings, Budelmann, and Macintosh 2013; Laera

As Martinelli himself explains in his notes (Appendix 3), work on the text(s) came second to brainstorming with the students about the challenges posed by the play (i.e. 'What is wealth?'; 'What is poverty?'; 'How do they relate to us?', etc.) and what possible (aesthetic) 'translations' these questions may have into our own world (for example, choosing contemporary or traditional songs that well exemplify the feelings of the Chorus when they interact with Plutus; see Martinelli in Appendix 3). This allowed us to find a link between us and the text that functioned as the overall framework for both the practice research side of the project (i.e. analysing the dramaturgical meanings and structures of these early modern translations through embodiment and re-enactment via our own bodies and readings) and its use of performance pedagogy (i.e. inviting students to participate in said analysis through their own specific 'situatedness').

In both Parma and London, I acted as an ongoing translator between Martinelli's vision as a director and the translations themselves, as well as between the participants (half Italian, half English) and Martinelli.[9] I would suggest which translation was most appropriate for the scene we would be grappling with, i.e. which lines most clearly conveyed the message, or provoked instant laughter, or which dramaturgical choices worked best (see point 3, the dialogue between Poverty and Chorus as an example): these suggestions were then discussed with Martinelli and the participants themselves, who would react to and implement them with their own inputs, ideas and improvisations.

After each day's workshop, I transcribed, in order, on a running Google document that Martinelli and I shared, the choices we had made, both in terms of performance and word choice. The following day, we would build on that and add to it by the end of that day. Indeed, the final text was a mosaic of different 'fragments'. While the translations themselves provided the overall structure (see point 2) and the words of Aristophanes' play (see point 3), some lines were the result of improvisation by the students when they were asked to come up with modern equivalents to convey the same meanings of the play and its translations or to respond to their challenges (see Martinelli in Appendix 3); finally, some 'fragments' came from Martinelli's own 'creative palette', such as the insertion of the opening dialogue from Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* or the presence of an ottava from Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* (see point 2 and Martinelli in Appendix 3).

In this contribution, I present the research that I conducted prior to the workshop concerning the translations used (which had been shared

2013, especially 62-4; Baudou 2020; Baudou and Di Martino 2025.

[9] For more on the role of the dramaturg as 'translator' and mediator between texts, contexts, playwrights and audiences, see Romanska 2017, 10-13.

and discussed with Martinelli before the workshop) and how it informed the writing process of our final script. First, I will discuss the translations and performances of *Plutus* in the early modern period, and then I will explore how these translations, i.e. their linguistic, political, cultural, as well as dramaturgical choices, contributed to the construction of our mosaic. Appendix 3 includes Martinelli's account of the workshop from the perspective of a director: how he envisioned the play's scenes and built the Chorus. Our final script is included in Appendix 4.

2. Early Modern *Plutus*(es)

The choice of working on Aristophanes' *Plutus* responded to multiple needs. If Aristophanes was one of the main authors already in the creative repertoire of our director, the reception history of this play perfectly suited the context of the conference of which this two-stage workshop was a part. Indeed, *Plutus* was amongst the most translated and performed ancient Greek dramatic texts in the early modern period. It had a place of prominence in the textual transmission of the Aristophanic corpus as part of the Byzantine triad (*Plutus, Clouds*, and *Frogs*) and counted ca. 170 copies between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries (see full list in Muttini 2023a: 25-34). Aristophanes in general was widely used as a teaching tool to learn Greek (Bastin-Hammou 2017, 44), but his *Plutus* was also appreciated because of its philosophical and moralising subject: the contest between Penia (Poverty), Chremylus and Blepsidemus, two poor old friends seeking a better life, and the Chorus was particularly compelling (Miola 2014, 493-5; Morosi 2022, 202; see further below).

In Appendix 1, which (tentatively) reports all translations of the play being made between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, one can identify some of the most prominent literary figures of the period, including, amongst others, the scholars Leonardo Bruni and Pietro da Montagnana in Italy; the so-called prince of poets, Pierre de Ronsard, and the poet and member of the Pléiad Jean Antoine de Baïf, in France; as well as the humanist and translator Pedro Simón Abril, in Spain.[10] If one compares extant data on the number of translations and performances of *Plutus* produced and mounted, respectively, in sixteenth-century Europe alone with those of Euripides' *Hecuba*, arguably the most successful Greek tragedy at the time (Pollard 2012, 1064; Appendices 2-4 in Pollard 2017), *Plutus* falls short under the vernacular translations category (four[11] *vs* nine), but triumphs

[10] I was not able to find this translation though it is cited in Giannopoulou 2007, 312.

[11] Only two of these four were printed (see Appendix 1).

in the Latin department (twelve[12] *vs* seven), and, more importantly, in the number of productions mounted (eight *vs* five), admittedly amongst the best indicators of dissemination and appreciation of a dramatic text, particularly in the performative culture of this period (Bortoletti and Refini 2024, 10).

Performances of *Plutus* were either in Latin translation or in ancient Greek,[13] which, together with the high number of Latin translations produced between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries (twenty in total, published and unpublished), may be symptomatic of the pedagogical role that *Plutus* must have played in many of the learning hubs where it was produced. A further testament to its pedagogical appeal is the selection, inclusion, and wide circulation of a part of the prologue (1-44) in a grammar 'classic' of the first decades of the sixteenth century, i.e. Nicolas Clénard's *Institutiones ac meditationes in graecam linguam* (the lines featured in Petrus Antesignanus's *Praxis seu usus praeceptorum grammatices*, which was added to Clénard's *Insitutiones* in 1554 and reprinted with it many times after that), a textbook that extends its overarching influence well beyond this single century (and France) (Bastin-Hammou 2020, 84-6).[14] The prologue seems to be a preferred locus for many translators, too, including Leonardo Bruni, Pietro da Montagnana, Eufrosino Bonini (on whom, see further below) and Pierre de Ronsard (Bastin-Hammou 2020, 86). It may also have been performed by students as a form of performance pedagogy that was becoming increasingly common in colleges and universities across Europe, a practice that was also being ratified in university and college statutes and that served multiple purposes, including learning Latin and Greek (Norland 2009, 44; Jackson and Crawforth 2019, 345; Bortoletti and Refini in this issue).[15]

Along with the prologue, the already-mentioned debate between Penia, Chremylus, Blepsidemus and the Chorus, i.e. the *agon* (487-618), attracted the interest of many scholars (Miola 2014, 492-3); it functioned as a creative springboard for Rinuccio da Castiglione's adaptation, composed around 1415 and titled *Fabula Penia*, and heavily featured in Bonini's own version of *Plutus* (see below). These two scenes in the comedy, the prologue and the agon, were the passages that we too chose for our workshop: our guide in this sense was Bonini's adaptation, which, as will be seen, provided the dramaturgical structure for our final script.

[12] I have counted only the printed editions of these translations (see Appendix 1).

[13] The only exception may be Hans Sachs's adaptation of *Plutus* in five acts which he mounted in Nuremberg in 1531 (Giannopoulou 2007, 312) (Appendix 2).

[14] See also Giovanni Tortelli in his *De Ortographia* under the heading "prologue" where he cites the prologue of *Plutus* as an example (Radif 2014, 400-1).

[15] See for example the Jesuits' *Ratio Studiorum* (1599) at paragraphs 375-94 in Pavur 2005, 160 and 234-5. See also Grendler 2019, 17.

2. Building a Dramaturgy: Bonini's *Comedia di Iustitia*

A Professor of Greek Grammar in the Studio Fiorentino since 1502 (Stefani 1986, 14), Bonini (probably) presented his adaptation of Aristophanes' *Plutus* under the title *Comedia di Iustitia* ("Comedy of Justice") at the Florence Carnival in 1513, a carnival which, according to Nicholas Scott Baker, was quite unusually crafted to celebrate and reinforce the hierarchies that this festive occasion symbolically subverted (Baker 2011, 492).[16] Indeed, Bonini's *Comedia* had been commissioned by the Duke of Urbino, Lorenzo di Piero, the Duke of Nemours, Giuliano di Lorenzo, and Giovanni de' Medici (a.k.a. Pope Leo X from 1513 to 1521), to contribute to celebrating the Medici's successful homecoming. (The Medici family had been banned from Florence in 1494 and eventually made a return in 1512).

If the "Dialogo" ("Dialogue") preceding the adaptation clearly situates it in 1513 and largely writes it into Giovanni de' Medici's programme of "cultural *renovatio*" (Stefani 1986, 9),[17] the text itself exudes allegorical meaning that identifies the return of 'Justice' with that of the Medici. Indeed, Politimo (read: Plutus, the God of Wealth, in the source script) is healed by a council of enlightened physicians ("medici"; read: Asclepius, in the source script) who variously converse in the vernacular and Latin to find a cure for Politimo's blindness. When Pirro (read: Carion, in the source script) recounts the story of Politimo's healing to his master Atimo's wife, Licoride (read: Wife, in the source script), reference to the Medici (this time with a capital "m" in the adaptation itself) is made explicit:

> . . . politimo [sic] nostro, subito
> che e' medici e noi già libero e guarito
> scorse e cognobbe, come ricordevole
> del benefitio del loro ricevuto, comandò che
> e' Medici fussino copiosissimamente remune-
> rati . . .
> e' viti al tutto sono oggi sbanditi

[16] The text of this adaptation was published for the first time in 1986 by Luigina Stefani; quotations herein included refer to the manuscript Magl. 7.1211, our only source for this text.

[17] "Gli è già passato un anno / che nel monte Elicona / non rimase persona / il fonte è traboccato / ognuno è diventato oggi poeta / prima si stava cheta / tutta questa brigata, / anz'era ammutolata, / or ce n'è una schiera / tale che mattina e sera / si reciton comedie, / dialogi, tragedie, farse e feste" (A year has passed already / Since not one soul remained / Upon the mount Helicon / The spring has overflowed / Everyone has now become a poet / Before, this brigade / kept quiet, / or rather, it was kept quiet, / now such a cohort gathers / morning and evening / performing comedies, / dialogues, tragedies, farces and celebrations; Bonini 1513 2*r*-*v*).

> Iustitia ha exauditi
> e' suo fedeli e vuol remunerarci.
> (Bonini 1513, 30*v*)

> [. . . Our [P]olitimo, as soon as he / saw and recognised, now healed and free, / the physicians and us, mindful of / the gift received from them, ordered that / the Medici be remunera- / ted . . . / and vices are now banned altogether / Justice has satisfied / her subjects and wants to remunerate us.][18]

Beyond the evident celebratory tones that traverse Bonini's adaptation, the text is a remarkable piece of theatre, linguistically and dramaturgically, one that rather uniquely (for Aristophanes and for the period) may further contribute to uncovering Aristophanic influences on the development of, and links with, early modern theatre, its languages and rules (Radif 2014, 398; Beta 2023).

Bonini reimagines the prologue, the agon and the healing scene (roughly adapting *Pl.* 1-801), employing the same 'rules' that governed adaptations of Greek tragedy and Roman comedy in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, that is, by applying the (Aristotelian) principle of imitation as a mechanism for creating a new literary work (Arbizzoni 2013; Di Martino 2023, 138-43; Bonazzi in this issue). The source text is mapped onto new tracks that follow the rules of coeval imitations of Roman comedy: Bonini's play is divided into five acts (thus using the 'Roman' structure [Hor. *Ars* 189-90] as opposed to the Greek division into episodes: Di Martino 2023, 147) and, as has been observed (Stefani 1986, 8), it also employs (with a few exceptions) ottava rima (a stanza of eight eleven-syllable lines with the rhyme scheme *abababcc*). Not only was this the meter into which most rewritings and/or translations of Plautine or Terentian comedy had been written since the last decades of the fifteenth century, in Ferrara especially (Guastella 2018, 41); this was also the meter that, as Guido Abrizzoni has argued, "the vernacular tradition had consecrated to the comic style" (1994, 278).

But, unlike all other adaptations of Roman comedy from this period, Bonini's play (precisely because his model is not Roman at all) has a Chorus. Bonini maintains its dramaturgical function throughout the comedy and moulds it so that the Chorus may reflect the reality of farmers labouring in the Florentine *contado* ("countryside"): the somewhat contrarian character of the Chorus in the source text is replaced with a group of god-fearing, simple and uneducated peasants ("zappatori"), who retain some of the

[18] Henceforth, all translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

most prominent functions of the Greek Chorus, i.e. singing[19] and speaking directly to the audience (i.e. the "parabasis").[20]

Retracing the dramaturgy of the source text, Bonini inserts an alternative song in place of that sung by Carion and the Chorus, who enact the stories of Cyclops and Odysseus and of Odysseus and Circe in a parody of Philoxenes' *Cyclops* (290-321; the only instance of the Chorus singing in *Plutus* that has survived). The presence of a song is kept in the dramaturgical structure of the play but ingrained in the time of the translation and replete with contemporary references. Having heard the happy news from Pirro/Carion about Politimo/Plutus being in the hands of their very master Atimo/Chremylus, the Chorus joyfully burst into:

> Coro Poiché di lavorar proprio non si ragiona,
> i' vo' che noi cantiano una canzona.
> Sa' ne tu ghuna a mente su Fortuna?
> (125)

> [Chorus Since work is out of the question / I want us to sing a song. / Do you know one about Fortune?]

> Κορυφαιος ὡς ἥδομαι. καὶ τέρπομαι καὶ βούλομαι χορεῦσα.
> ὑφ ἡδονῆς, εἴπερ λέγεις ὄντως σὺ ταῦτ ἀληθῆ.
> (Manuzio 1498, 47)

> [Chorus Leader How pleased I am! And delighted and I want to dance. / Out of joy, if what you are saying is really true.]

Loosely based on the Greek (which functions more as a cue for literary re-creation), the Chorus initiate with Pirro a discussion on the possible songs that they could sing together to express their gratitude for the good news they have just heard. In what looks like a perfect exemplum of a feature that has been argued to be characteristic of the ancient Greek Chorus due to its "festival context", i.e. its "self-referentiality" (their talking about what they

[19] The song is planted precisely at the same point where the source text has the parodos.

[20] At the very end of the play, the Chorus explicitly break the fourth wall within a subtle game that blurs the boundaries between the "iusti" of the play and the "iusti" ("just") in the audience: they (Atimo & Politimo but also the Medici who have healed the god) who have given "il core e l'alma" ("their heart and soul") and "tien suo patria in calma" ("held their country in peace") should be the focus of the audience's attention as representatives of the "vivo fonte" ("living source") of Justice itself. The story purposefully becomes an ambivalent "speccio" ("mirror") that merges the onstage with the offstage, reality with fiction. *Plaudite et valete* ("clap and be well") is their final sendoff.

are doing) (Bierl 2009: 31), this early modern Chorus brainstorm different incipits of well-known sacred music pieces belonging to the popular tradition, including, for example, "J'am pris amours" by Antoine Busnois ("J'am pris?"; Bonini 1513, 12*r*), or the "Magnificat" ("Una magnifica?"; ibid.); but Pirro does not seem to be acquainted with any of these and suggests "il Beati" (the "Beatitude": the text is from Matthew 5:3 in the *Vulgata*; 12*v*-13*r*), which the Chorus deem as one of the most widely known sacred songs of their time; they then set out to sing it in unison.

In our final script, we retained the above-quoted passage, upon which we grafted another piece of music, an ottava from Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* (1.16.1-8; Appendix 4), which, in both Parma and London, the director had used in the rehearsal room to build the Chorus (as he is accustomed to: Martinelli 2023, 8-9). Indeed, our warmup would mainly consist of us mirroring the director using the ottava to prepare our voices and bodies, experimenting with a range of rhythms and accompanying words with movements, from small to big and vice versa (Martinelli 2023: 8). This ottava also perfectly fit into our dramaturgy of the scene as found in Bonini's own version of it: not only was it (serendipitously) about "Fortuna"; just like Bonini's "Beati", the song belongs to the popular tradition, and more specifically to the "Maggio Epico" or "Drammatico" ("Epic May" or "Dramatic May"), an "ancient practice" of popular theatre rooted in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, where people would (and still do) dress up in costumes and gather to perform verse narrative from the chivalric romance tradition, including Boiardo's *Orlando* (Benatti 2024).

Beyond the use of direct quotations which was fairly limited, and for practical reasons,[21] Bonini's text was fundamental in more than one way for the construction of our own final script; not only did it provide us with a clear dramaturgical structure that moved seamlessly from the prologue to the first song (i.e. *parodos*), and from the agon to the healing scene (which, for want of time, we could only hint at in our own script); it was also deeply in tune with the ways in which the director wanted us to 'feel' the text, as a creative space for rewriting ourselves into it.

3. Building (on) the Script(s): Randolph-F.J.'s *Hey for Honesty* and H.H.B.'s *The World's Idol*

The bulk of the text of our final script came from two seventeenth-century English translations of the play, which, rather curiously, were published only

[21] Half of the participants were not Italian natives and would have had difficulty memorising even small chunks of this text.

eight years apart but came after a dry spell in publications of Aristophanes in England: Thomas Randolph's *Πλουτοφθαλμία Πλουτογαμία. A Pleasant Comedy Entituled Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (composed around the 1620s but published posthumously, and after a whole makeover, by a certain F.J. in 1651: Morosi 2022, 202); and *The World's Idol, Plutus a Comedy*, translated by H.H.B.[22] Indeed, as Miola has noted (2014, 480), apart from an edition of the Greek text of *Knights* in 1593, Aristophanes did not receive much attention on English soil in this period: as far as we know, *Plutus* was performed in ancient Greek in Cambridge in 1536 and 1588 (Appendix 2), but had to wait a full century to appear in print in the English language (Appendix 1).

Both translations are published within the period known as the Puritan *interregnum*, that is, from the deposition and execution of Charles I to the restoration of monarchy with Charles II in 1660: from 1642, London theatres were closed and (supposed) immoral entertainment banned. Aristophanic endeavours could only appear under the banner of strictly scholarly activities, as is the case of H.H.B.'s translation, or be clandestine altogether, as is the case of Randolph-F.J.'s script (or at least of its afterlife on and off the stage until the reopening of theatres).

In the fictional dialogue added to Randolph-F.J.'s play as part of "The Introduction", the Translator explicitly advises Aristophanes to mind his language in contemporary London: the "schools of Latin and Greek have a long vacation", he warns the ancient playwright, and anything other than strictly English has been outlawed (Randolph-F.J. 1875, 380);[23] Cleon's ghost also makes an appearance: his bragging about past and present glories is meant to mirror and caricature John Pym, the Parliamentary leader between 1640 and 1643. Secret readings and private performances of plays did indeed occur; there exists a record of Randolph-F.J.'s play being performed only a year after its publication at Wadham college in Oxford by a group of exiled Royalists, possibly belonging to the Royal Society of London.[24] But the play

[22] On the possible identities of H.H.B., see Wyles 2007, 94-95, where she argues that a most probable candidate may be the Catholic playwright Henry Burnell, a pivotal figure in the Kilkenny Catholic confederacy, which was established soon after the Irish rebellion in 1641.

[23] "The Introduction" is absent from the 1651 edition but included in the 1875 collection of Randolph's works by William Carew Hazlitt: "But fie upon thee for an ass! Dost thou come to speak Hebrew-Greek at London? Why, three-quarters of the city are Roundheads, man, that of all the languages of Babylon think it a heresy to understand any but their native English. The schools of Latin and Greek have a long vacation: if thou wilt please um, thou must needs speak English; and I'll give thee t'other pottle for thy pains, too".

[24] In the addenda to James Elmes's *Memoirs of the life and works of Sir Christopher Wren* (1823, xii), the architect notes that in an "old quarto play", which he later reveals

had (probably) been performed even before its publication (in its pre-F.J. form) either in Cambridge, at Trinity College, while Randolph was there (1624-1629),[25] or in London, probably at the Salisbury Court Playhouse, whose opening production may have been Randolph's *The Muse's Looking Glass*, another blunt ridiculing of the Puritans' ignorance about, and stance against, plays and theatre (Bentley 1948, 778).

Hey for Honesty is imbued with political satire, particularly after F.J.'s additions, who inserts open references to the various factions at play during the English Civil War (1642-1651) and the Puritan *interregnum* (1652-1660), both of which occurred after Randolph's death. The Chorus are politically aligned with the Levellers (a political movement active during the Civil War and advocating for popular sovereignty and equal rights for all). In the agon with Poverty, they are surprised that she does not seem to know that "we are all Levellers, there's no Nobility now" (Randolph-F.J. 1651, 17). Poverty gathers a band of Royalists to fight against Chremylus, Carion, and the Chorus, and their decision to restore Plutus' sight. The Pope himself (Pope Innocent X) makes an appearance at the end of the comedy in a humorous scene, desperate because "indulgencies are grown cheap and at no price" (1651, 44). Hermes is a god who fought alongside the king against the Roundheads (the Parliamentarians); whereas Plutus is the son of "Pinch-back True-penny" (1651, 3), a usurer from a part of London, Islington, and Mrs. Silverside, an Alderman, that is, a member of the administrative body of the Corporation of London. Plutus is essentially a wealthy heir raised in the rich mines of Wales, unaware of, and (literally) blind to, his own powers.

The World's Idol falls under the other category: it is a publication that seems to be a scholarly endeavour in all aspects. Its true intentions, however, unfold in the "Short Discourse" that follows the comedy. The many remarkable points of this discourse have been amply analysed by Rosie Wyles in her "Aristophanes in 1659" (2007, 97-103); here, I will outline those that find a *translation* in H.H.B.'s understanding of Aristophanes' text and into our final script. Amongst Aristophanes' "ancient fables", the author suggests, *Plutus* provides a most clear example of the "*World* as it stood with *Plutus*

to be a copy of Randolph's *Hey for Honesty*, there appears a gloss dated 1801 and penned by the editor of Shakespeare's works, Isaac Reed, that reads: "This is the play in which Sir Christopher Wren, our great architect, performed the character of Neanias before the Elector Palatine, Dr. Seth Ward, and many others, probably in 1652". For more on this, see Toback 1971, 87-8.

[25] This would make it an interesting example of a play being written and produced at one university (Cambridge) and performed at another (Oxford), reinforcing recent academic emphasis on performance cross-overs and communication across learning hubs, particularly within the same country (see Jackson and Crawforth 2019, amongst others).

his *eyes open*, and as it now stands with his *eyes out*" (H.H.B. 1659, 34, *italics* in the original): Plutus is an Adam-like figure, emblematising "*Innocency*" while his "*blindness*" resembles "our *fault*" (1659, 33; *italics* in the original). If "Tyranny and blood-shedding over other creatures and persecution and slavery" represent the beginning of human fall, their very reality brought about the "unhappy thing" that we call "propriety" (i.e. "property") (36): far from keeping poverty at bay, the idea of property further corroborates human nature's inherent dissatisfaction with "equal parts in any division" and encourages people's "desire to encroach" (ibid.). Together with "tillage" (the "unnatural and forced use of the earth": 38), property symbolises our growing distance from the simplicity and innocence of Plutus' original (Adamic) nature into a predominantly predatory and colonial gaze onto each other, usually justified on the basis of a claimed cultural superiority and civilising mission or under the false pretence of religion.

This rather *humanised* interpretation of Plutus (in contrast to recent scholarship arguing for a "numinous understanding of Wealth"; Barrenechea 2018, 19) in conjunction with the insistence on *humanly* terrible acts (such as imperialist and military feats, as well as obsessions with self-aggrandizement, whether on land or through religion) implied that the answer lay in the human, i.e. in humanity accepting responsibility for the past and future. During the workshop (in both Parma and London), we had discussions about the translations and the translators' stances regarding wealth, poverty and human actions, and H.H.B.'s approach stood out as the most compelling and resonant. Their emphasis on personal responsibility on a human level also partly informed the insertion of a scene in the play whereby the Chorus moved towards the audience and told them individually what they would do if they had money, that is, what they would do in order to alter their own as well as other people's circumstances (Appendix 4).

But the crude description of the human actions underlying the repeated concepts of tillage and property in the "Short Discourse" were also rather timely topics that mapped onto some of the most important events occurring in this period of unrest and may have been familiar to H.H.B., if they are indeed to be identified with the Irish playwright Henry Burnell (see fn. 21). The very reason for the Irish rebellion in 1641 was land-related: it was a response to the ongoing confiscation and occupation of Irish Catholic-owned land by English and Scottish settlers; the rebellion culminated in the Act for the Settlement of Ireland in 1652, which prohibited the practice of Catholicism in Ireland and gave most of the land owned by Catholics to English and Scottish settlers. But the colonial gaze criticised by H.H.B. went well beyond the encroaching desire of the English crown over Irish land and included the alarmingly ruthless "conquest of the *Moors* [and their expulsion] and *Indians*" (1659, 44) by the Habsburg empire which, as has been argued,

served as a model for England's own expansionist feats (Wyles 2007, 103). Though such military actions were brought to pass in the name of religion, their true reason lay in fact in mere "self-interest" and "want" (H.H.B. 1659, 45). The discourse unveils a deeply disillusioned vision of modern society as a place of brutal force and prevarication. The only way in which one can hope for a better world is if humanity as a whole returns to its natural state, away from artifice, ambition and competition and back into the innocence and simplicity of life; in other words, if humanity (just like Plutus) regains its sight. The *World's* biggest *Idol* (in stark opposition to Francis Bacon's coeval conceiving and categorising of the "Idols of the Mind") may be that of thinking that we can (*colonially*) grasp reality at all.[26]

The two standpoints in the translations emerge quite clearly from the first few lines of the prologue which I report here with the Greek text of Aemilius Portus' 1607 edition. This collection was a turning point in the reception history of Aristophanes' editions, not least because it was the first to contain all eleven comedies with a Latin translation for each play (Bastin-Hammou 2024, 395).[27] It indeed may be a book that Randolph-F.J. and H.H.B. might have had access to and modelled their translation on:[28]

> Carion O Bonny Jove, and the rest of the boon gods that dwel in the Tipling-house of Olympus! There be mettals & hard things in the world, but nothing so hard as to be bound Prentise in Bedlam, and have a Fool to ones Master: my very Livery is faced with his Worships foolery. Our condition is miserable; for if our Masters but dine at the Ordinary of mischief, the poore Serving-man is sure to be fed with the scraps of misfortune: We must share of our Masters misery, we are but Tenants, they will not let us be Freeholders to the petty Lordships of our own corpusculous Fortune; damnable Fortune! how fatally hast thou sold the tenure of us, to him that will pay us our wages! (Randolph-F.J. 1651, 1)

[26] As Wyles argues (2007, 95-6), the title may also hint at the iconoclastic war thrivin in Northern Europe in the Reformed Church (and in England especially: in 1643, troops of soldiers and citizens were stirred up by an order of parliament to remove all monuments of idolatry and superstition from religious places).

[27] Aemiulius Portus (son of the famous Cretan scholar Franciscus Portus, who famously commented Aeschylus' plays, amongst other things, in sixteenth-century Italy) put the edition together while he was professor of Greek in Geneva. The collection combines in one volume all eleven comedies with their most recent Latin translation as well as ancient and modern scholia (some published for the first time, as is the case, for example, of Florent Chrestien's Latin commentary of *Lysistrata* and *Wasps* or Edouard Biset de Charlais's Greek commentaries to all eleven comedies). For more on this edition, see Bastin-Hammou 2020.

[28] There is some evidence that may concur to H.H.B. (at least) using Frischlin's translation as model (in addition to both Randolph's and H.H.B.'s adoption of Frischlin's division into acts and scenes). See further below on H.H.B.

CARION O Jupiter! what a hard age is this to be a Servant in,
Especially to a foolish Master; if a servant shall
Give never so good Counsel, his word will not
Be taken, his Master thinks himself wiser, and so
His Family is bound to suffer with him; for 'tis the mischief
We are not Masters of our own bodies,
But they that buy us.
(H.H.B. 1659, 1)

ΚΑΡΙΩΝ Ὡς ἀργαλέον πρᾶγμ' ἐστίν, ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ Θεοί,
Δοῦλον γενέσθαι παραφρονοῦντος δεσπότου.
ἢν γὰρ τὰ βέλτισθ' ὁ θεράπων λέξας τύχῃ,
δόξῃ δὲ μὴ δρᾶν ταῦτα τῷ κεκτημένῳ·
μετέχειν ἀνάγκη τὸν θεράποντα τῶν κακῶν.
τοῦ σώματος γὰρ οὐκ ἐᾷ τὸν κύριον
κρατεῖν ὁ δαίμων, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐωνημένον
(Portus 1607, 1-2)

[CARION What a hard thing it is, oh Zeus and the gods, / To be the slave of a master who's insane. / For if the servant happens to suggest the best course of action, / But [his] owner decides not to do that, / It is adamant for the servant to share in the evils. / For the deity won't allow him to be master / Of his own body, but it is of him who bought it.]

Randolph-F.J.'s translation is very evidently a witty amplification of the Greek: it carefully recontextualises each one of Carion's references to the ancient world into his own contemporary world. The gods dwell in a pub ("Tipling-house") at Olympus; the master-slave relationship is first understood through the lens of an "apprentice in Bedlam" and then through the vocabulary of house-renting and -buying ("Tenants", "Freeholders", "Lordships", "tenure"). Bedlam was the colloquial name for the Bethlem Royal Hospital in London, famous for its inhumane treatment of the mentally ill: in addition to indicating a rather degrading situation, being "bound" there as an intern would also suggest that the master was being highly irrational, even mad (παραφρονοῦντος). Here, Fortune (ὁ δαίμων) appears to be the primary cause of the miserable condition of the "Serving-man".

H.H.B.'s sense of the text is rather different: one can clearly detect the feelings of powerlessness and disillusion that fuel his vision of society in the "Short Discourse" too: the punchy wit of Randolph-F.J.'s (and the source's) script is altogether absent. Carion opens with a generally bleak comment on the present times ("what a hard age" rather than a more circumstantial "what hard thing" [Ὡς . . . πρᾶγμ']), which does not attribute any responsibility to "fortune" or any other source of divine power (ὁ δαίμων). Furthermore,

the single destiny of one servant (τὸν θεράποντα) becomes that of a whole community ("his Family"). While it is possible that "Family" may be an incorrect translation of *famulum* ("slave") from Nicodemus Frischlin's Latin (which faces the Greek text in Portus' edition, 1607, 1),[29] it also further substantiates H.H.B.'s pessimistic view of people as predatory and prevaricating; after all, responsibility for the "mischief" lies not in fortune's mishaps but in "they that bought us", i.e. other humans.

Both translations blended well together in our own script: from Randolph-F.J.'s script we derived some of the most effective punchlines; from H.H.B. we took the directness of expression and simplicity of the language. An example of this intermingling comes a few lines further down from Carion's words, when Chremylus explains the reasons behind going to the oracle of Apollo. Here, I report the passage in its blended form as it appeared in our final script and in the two translations:

> Chremylus 1 You know, I've lived religiously, with both Gods and Men. Yet I have always lived poor and miserable.
> Chorus, together Poor and miserable, like us.
> Chremylus 2 and yet – they that rob the very churches, the rhetoricians, delinquents . . .
> *Chorus react vehemently and angrily.*
> Chremylus 1 Those demure cheaters, with some corrupted law-gowns…
> Chremylus 2 With Roundheaded citizens and cuckholds, these, I say, grew rich the while.
> Chorus, together Grew rich the while.
> (Appendix 4)

> Chremylus Well, thus it is: in the days of my folly, I was a just, precise, and honest man . . .
> Well, being honest, I was by natural consequence very poor.
> . . .
> But others, such as your demure cheaters . . .
> With some corrupted Law-gowns . . .
> With Round-headed citizens and cuckolds.
> These, I say, grew rich the while.
> (Randolph-F.J. 1651, 2)

> Chremylus . . . I have lived religiously with both Gods and Men, and yet alwayes have lived poor and miserable.
> . . .

[29] *Ibi necesse famulum fieri malorum participem cum hero suo* (There, it is necessary for the servant to share in the evils with his master).

> And yet – they that rob the very churches, the rhetoricians, sychophants,
> every rascal grows rich.
> (H.H.B. 1659, 1-2)

> Κρ. ἐγὼ θεοσεβὴς καὶ δίκαιος ὢν ἀνὴρ
> κακῶς ἔπραττον καὶ πένης ἦν·
> . . .
> ἕτεροι δ ἐπλούτουν ἱερόσυλοι ῥήτορες
> Καὶ συκοφάνται καὶ πονηροί.
> (Portus 1607, 5)

> [CHREMYLUS Though I am a god-fearing and just man / I fared badly and was poor; / Yet others, temple-robbers, rhetoricians, / Sycophants and rascals, they have become rich.]

H.H.B.'s translation offered the first two lines. "Religiously" is made to incorporate both the "god-fearing" (θεοσεβὴς) and humanly "just" (δίκαιος) qualities of Chremylus in the Greek; the two spheres (religious and human) hinted at in the source text are translated with "Gods and Men". That "religiously" along with a reference to H.H.B.'s contemporary world in the translation of ἱερόσυλοι ("temple-robber") with the explicit mention of "churches" worked particularly well for us: in addition to connoting the play as clearly set in the early modern era (where [the Christian] religion – or living according to it – was by and large the moral compass by which one should measure the degree of integrity and honesty of a person), it also described our own setting as we were performing under a shiny antique chandelier in a neo-classical church in central London.

From Randolph-F.J. we integrated the amplified and timely rendering of the other three categories of wealthy rascals mentioned by Chremylus (ῥήτορες: "rhetoricians"; συκοφάνται: "informers"; and πονηροί: "rogues"). If "demure cheaters" and "corrupted law-gowns" referred to the perceived hypocrisy connected with the legal and civic institutions of his time, "round-headed citizens" indicated the political faction in the Civil War from F.J.'s time. "Cuckolds" instead alluded to the complexities of marital fidelity and male honour in seventeenth-century society. H.H.B's "Poor and miserable" and Randolph-F.J.'s final punch, "grew rich the while", were the key direct phrases that we had our Chorus (present on the stage from the beginning; Martinelli in this issue) repeat loudly.

But in addition to plucking out specific lines from the translations to adapt to our script, we also retained a number of dramaturgical choices that H.H.B. made in terms of the relationship between Carion and the Chorus, as well as the relationship between the Chorus and Chremylus. In *The World's Idol*, there emerges a sense of real friendship and communality shared between

the Chorus and Carion that transpires from the very beginnings of their interactions and which may be influenced by the translation and commentary with which Portus had equipped the 1607 edition. The translation featuring in Portus' collection was the most recent version of the play produced by the already-mentioned Frischlin and published in Frankfurt in 1586 for the first time (but already reprinted at that point); the commentary, on the other hand, was by an otherwise little-known literary figure in sixteenth-century France, Charles Girard, professor of Greek at the Université de Bourges from 1543:

> Carion You, all friends and neighbours, poor and laborious, that have lived with us upon Onions and hard fare, now make hast and make use of the present occasion whilest it is offered.
> (H.H.B. 1659, 8)

> Carion O Qui multas cum hero cepas edistis unà amici
> Viri, et populares, et laborum studiosi, venite,
> Ite, properate, currite: neque enim ullus est morandi
> Locus; sed ipsa se offert occasio rei gerenda:
> Quam ut arripiatis protinus, vi tota anniti oportet.
> (Frischlin in Portus 1607, 27)

> [Carion O you who have shared many feasts in company with my master, friends and companions, and eager for work, come, go, hurry, run: for there is no time to waste; the opportunity for action presents itself before you: which in order for you to seize immediately, you must exert all your strength.]

> φίλοι: recte hoc, quandoquidem ἰσότης ut aiunt, φιλότητα ἀπεργάζεται: i.e. aequalitas amicitiae est author. Aequales aut a Carione notantur, qui ut Chremylus, exiliter et iuste vivere maluerunt, quam opipare et iniuste.(Charles Girard, qtd in Portus 1607, 27)

> [friends: rightly so, for equality, as they say, fosters friendship: i.e. equality is the foundation of friendship. Equals are indeed explained by Carion as those who like Chremylus preferred to live simply and justly rather than sumptuously and unjustly.]

> Καριων ὦ πολλὰ δὴ τῷ δεσπότῃ ταυτὸν θύμον φαγόντες
> ἄνδρες φίλοι, καὶ δημόται καὶ τοῦ πονεῖν ἐρασταί·
> ἴτ', ἐγκονεῖτε, σπεύδεθ', ὡς ὁ καιρὸς οὐχὶ μέλλειν,
> ἀλλ' ἔστ' ἐπ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀκμῆς, ᾗ δεῖ παρόντας ἀμύνειν.
> (Portus 1607, 27)

> [Carion Oh friends, who have eaten thyme together with my master many a time, and neighbours and lovers of hard work; come, move, hurry up, for the opportunity does not wait, rather it is at its very peak, which you must be present for to help.]

In addition to showing its debts to the Latin translation (*cepas*: "onions"; *occasio*: "occasion"; *ipsa se offert*: "while it is being offered"), H.H.B.'s translation offers further insights into their utopian idea of a "best" possible world. The address succinctly summarises the more elaborate phrasing of line 254 of the Greek in two subsequent and effective pairs of adjectives. H.H.B. emphasises the "poor" (an addition) condition and "hard fare" (another addition) already attached to both Chremylus and Carion; the adjectives also interestingly omit ἐρασταί, i.e. they are "laborious" but not necessarily "lovers" of hard work. The Chorus' condition of poverty emerges again in their response to Carion: "we are men toyled with labour and oppressed With Age", they utter, highlighting their persistent need to "labour" in their old age (H.H.B. 1659, 8).[30] They are also introduced as "friends" and "neighbours" of Carion and Chremylus both (as opposed to being his master's only, τῷ δεσπότῃ), and on a par with them. Girard's commentary further substantiates this sense of communality: "equality fosters friendship", he comments, quoting an old saying (ἰσότης φιλότητα ἀπεργάζετα),[31] and explains that the Chorus and Chremylus are friends *because* they are "equals" (*aequales*), in that they both chose a just (*iuste*) and simple (*exiliter*) way of life. This sense of equity resurfaces in the agon scene, which we constructed in our own script, employing (for the most part) H.H.B.'s translation. Rather powerfully, instead of Chremylus, the translator has the Chorus sustain the debate with Poverty, a choice we too retained in our dramaturgy of this scene.[32]

Following the Latin translation, H.H.B. has all the characters exit the stage and enter again to start the agon. As soon as they come on stage, the Chorus introduce what they are about to do as a rigorous test of the reasons of their party against Poverty's:

> [*Ex. om.*]
> *Enter* CHORUS, CRAMULUS, BLAPSIDAMUS, POVERTY.
> CHORUS Let us now fall to the matter in hand, and decide the controversy by true reason, laying all jests and scurrility aside.
> (H.H.B. 1659, 14)

[30] The Latin translation may again function as a model for the English here: *viris labore / fessis, et natu grandioribus* (men tired from the hard work and from age; Frischlin in Portus 1607, 27); see Greek, ἀσθενεῖς γέροντας ἄνδρας (weak old men; ibid.).

[31] Interestingly, that same old saying is used by Plato to argue the opposite about the relationship between slaves and masters (*Lg.* 757a).

[32] It does not seem that such choice was informed by the Latin translation and its abbreviation of "Chorus" into "CH.", since this did not affect the English translation in every other place where this ambiguity is present. In his introduction to the scene, Biset too makes it clear that the Chorus is an observer of "Poverty" and "the old men fighting with opposing arguments" (τῆς Πενίας, δὲ τῶν γερόντων ἀντιλογίαις ἐριζόντων; Portus 1607, 51).

Chorus Igitur nunc seria proferte, et veris rationibus illi
Obstistite, quo vincatis: neque quicquam admiscete iocosum.

[Chorus Therefore, now produce serious arguments, and oppose her with true reasonings in order to win: and do not add any joke.]

Χο. Ἀλλ' ἤδη χρῆν τι λέγειν ὑμᾶς σοφὸν, ᾧ νικήσετε τηνδὶ,
ἐν τοῖσι λόγοις ἀντιλέγοντες· μαλακὸν δ' ἐνδώσετε μηδέν.
(Portus 1607, 51)

[Chorus But you must say something clever now, in order to defeat her, counter-arguing with words; and don't allow any softness.]

The Chorus' tone differs slightly from that found in the Greek and retraces the Latin: rather than advising Chremylus "not to allow any softness" (μαλακὸν δ' ἐνδώσετε μηδέν), they take it into their own hands to settle the matter in all seriousness (*seria*; *neque quicquam admiscete iocosum*) and with the use of reason (*veris rationibus*).

Indeed, this may be partly a reflection of the seventeenth-century culture of rhetoric and nurturing rhetorical skills in the school curriculum (particularly in England), and was certainly informed by Girard's comment (in addition to the Latin translation), which explains that "to clarify whether Penia is in the right, the Chorus advises the men to leave behind foolishness and try to refute Penia with reasoned arguments" (*ne an Penia rectius sentiat, Chorus viris suadet ut nugis relictis conentur rationibus Peniam refuter*; Portus 1607, 51). But the seriousness with which H.H.B. colours the agon also comes from H.H.B.'s conviction that this *is* a matter of life and death, and that the situation described by both the Chorus and Poverty can easily map onto their own, as announced in the "Short Discourse".

Some of the core ideas contained in the latter resurface prominently in a number of linguistic choices made throughout the translation of the debate. Right after their introductory words on the rigor and seriousness of the debate they are about to stage, for example, the Chorus open their argument by returning to that concept of "equity" already hinted at before. Rather than simply "prosperity" or "success" as the Greek would suggest (τοὺς χρηστοὺς; *Pl.* 490), "equity" is presented as an ideal that "honest men ought to be happiest". For, they continue, it is plain "insanity" that the world they live in currently awards the "wicked", while the "honest men are ready to starve" and thus live in (and with) (P)poverty (1659, 14). If "equity" could also be read as a direct translation of the Latin *aequum*, that "ready to starve" is a variation that can only be found in H.H.B. The phrase stands in place of the Greek πεινῶσιν (πεινάω: "I hung after, starve"; *Pl.* 504) which Frischlin renders as *fame pressi* ("oppressed by hunger"; Portus

1607, 53). Here, H.H.B. connotes the "starving" not as a consequence of being poor but as a *choice* of life, the same choice that makes Chremylus and the Chorus equal in status and on which their friendship rests, as we have seen; a choice that qualifies them as honest men.

Even more eloquent is Poverty's response, which also featured in our final script:

> POVERTY . . . if that you desire Should come to pass, what good would it be to you? For if Plutus should see again, he would distribute equally to all men. (H.H.B. 1659, 14-15)

> ΠΕ. εἰ τοῦτο γένοιθ', ὃ ποθεῖθ' ὑμεῖς, οὔ φημ' ἂν λυσιτελεῖν σφῷν.
> Εἰ γὰρ ὁ Πλοῦτος βλέψειε πάλιν, διανείμείε τ' ἴσον ἑαυτόν.
>
> [POVERTY If this which you desire were to happen, I would not say that it benefitted you. / For if Plutus were to see again, he would distribute himself on an equal basis.]

Plutus would distribute "equally" (Frischlin translates with *ex aequo distribuat* (["[he] may distribute equally"]; Portus 1607, 53), H.H.B.'s Poverty confirms, if he were to see clearly – which we retained as such in our own final script. And if it was not plain enough that we should be reading this "equally" along the same lines of the "equity" that regulates that "innocency" and "simplicity" of life wished on humanity in the "Short Discourse", H.H.B. adds a gloss on the left margin of this passages, and annotates:

> Διανείμείε ισον [sic], of διανέμω (I distribute), relating to the first life of Mankind in common, poverty maintains the life of propriety against it. (1659, 15)

That "first life of Mankind" was marked with "truth and simplicity" (where H.H.B. 1659, 42), where "want" did not determine all of our actions nor inscribe all relationships within a clear hierarchy of power; it was a state where "propriety" did not have a place and where the Plutus-Adam-like-figure had a full and clear *vision*.

Indeed, H.H.B.'s translation of the agon left a profound mark on our script. The replacement of Chremylus with the Chorus was a choice that inevitably strengthened the dramaturgical voice and power of this character on the stage. But the translator's insistence on concepts like "equity" and his longing for a simpler world, free of prevarication, slavery, and the identification of oneself with material goods, also struck a profoundly familiar note for us as we, too, worked on this play in a rather bleak moment in the history of the UK (though the social and economic challenges that followed the pandemic, in fact overshadowed far beyond the UK itself). The workshop had been

moved from university grounds to a local church in central London because a few weeks before the UCU (University and College Union) had announced unprecedented strike action across all UK universities to demand a pay raise in order to cope with rising living costs and eliminate the widespread culture of insecure employment. The strike was only one in a series across the country and among several professions, including NHS staff and employees of the rail and bus systems (ONS 2023), that had persevered for over a year on UK soil, following perceived and real economic difficulties in the post-Brexit and post-pandemic era.

Thus, when Poverty delivered her final line: "all good comes from [her]" (H.H.B. 1659, 17; *Pl.* 593-4), the Chorus' immediate reaction to seize and remove her from the stage well translated our own desires (via H.H.B.'s emphatic condemnation of "property" and "tillage") to abolish *in*equality once and for all. Together with Aristophanes', Bonini's and Randolph-F.J.'s, H.H.B.'s dramaturgy had been integrated into our own understanding and re-imagination of the play, inevitably imbued with our 'situatedness' and cultural backgrounds, and resulting into a full new script.

Appendix 1
Translations of *Plutus* (1415-1695)

ca.1415: Rinuccio da Castiglione, *Fabula Penia*
ca.1439: Leonardo Bruni, Latin translation of lines 1-239
ca. 1440-1444: Pietro da Montagnana, Latin translation of lines 1-287 and 403-61
ca. 1458: Alessandro da Otranto, Latin translation with comments
ca. 1480s: Lodovico da Poppi, Latin translation
1501: Franciscus Passius, Latin translation (printed)
ca. 1501-1513: Willibald Pirckheimer, Latin translation
1512: Beatus Bild, Latin translation
1513: Eufrosino Bonini, *Comedia di Iustitia,* vernacular Italian translation
1522: Anonymous (Leipzig), Latin translation
1531: Thomas Geschaff (i.e. Venatorius), Latin translation (printed)
1533: Adrianus Chilius, Latin translation (printed)
1538 Andreas Divus, Latin translation (printed)
1545: Fratelli Rositini, vernacular Italian translation (printed)
1547: Miguel Cabedio de Vasconcellos, Latin translation (printed)
1549: Charles Girard, Latin translation with commentary (printed)
1549: Pierre de Ronsard, vernacular French translation of lines 1-239
1556: Coriolano Martirano, Latin translation (printed)
1556: Lambertus Hortensius, Latin translation (printed)
ca. 1560: Jean-Antoine de Baif, vernacular French translation (lost)
ca. 1567: Lorenzo Giacomini, Latin translation
1577: Pedro Simón Abril, vernacular Spanish translation (printed and lost)
1586: Nicodemus Frischlin, Latin translation (printed)
1594: Anonymous (Naples), Latin translation (printed)
1596: Anonymous (Leiden), Latin translation (printed)
1651: Thomas Randolph-F.J., vernacular English translation (printed)
1659: H.H.B., vernacular English translation (printed)
1684: Anne le Fèvre, vernacular French translation (printed)
1695: John Leng, Latin translation (printed)

Sources: Giannopoulou 2007, 312-16; Appendices 2 and 3 in Pollard 2017; Bastin-Hammou 2019, 2020, 2023; Beta 2023; Muttini 2023a and 2023b; APGRD; Translatoscope

Appendix 2
Performances of *Plutus (1513-1588)*

1513, Florence: *Comedia di Iustitia* by Eufrosino Bonini at the Florence Carnival
1517, 1521, Zwickau: in both Latin and ancient Greek, performed by students and directed by George Agricola
1531, Zurich: in ancient Greek; the choral odes were put to music by Ulrich Zwingli
1531, Nuremberg: adapted in five acts in German and directed by Hans Sachs
1531, Nuremberg: in Thomas Geschaff's Latin translation
1536, Cambridge, St John's College: in ancient Greek, student actors
1549, Paris Collège de Coqueret (?): in ancient Greek, student actors
1588, Cambridge: in ancient Greek, student actors

Sources: Giannopoulou 2007, 312-16; Appendix 3 in Pollard 2017; APGRD

Appendix 3
Building the Chorus: Notes from the Director
Marco Martinelli*

As a director, I have always enjoyed working on the comedies of Aristophanes, whom I consider a 'totem ancestor'. Reading his plays, I feel part of his 'family' of playwrights. His ability to weave together important themes (like war, political corruption, etc.) with satire and the most outrageous comedy, without forgetting the fantastical and dreamlike aspects of existence, seems still very potent to me, if only it can be reawakened by the right means. Think of his *Birds*, for example, a work in which Aristophanes evokes our most intimate desires, the dream of having wings, the utopia of escaping from the cages of everyday life, but also provides a pitiless x-ray of our craving for power.

Aristophanes' stories, however, cannot be merely 'staged'; one must immerse such scripts into life, rewrite them, 'seed them' as it were onto the terrain of today. This *mise en vie* (to adopt a variant on the French term *mise en scène*) is the secret of an authentic theatre, that is: a theatre that is alive (Martinelli 2024). I understand this *mise en vie* as the possibility of restoring theatre's (Nietzschean) 'Dionysian' potential. Dionysus, a name "we have borrowed from [the Greeks]" (Nietzsche 1872, 23), is the god without whom theatre does not exist (or at least my conception of it): the god of the Chorus, of "I am we", of movement and ecstasy, enraptured dance and contemplation; the god who destroys prejudice and barriers between class and sex, who forces us to meet one another in an embrace (Martinelli 2023, 1). Dionysus is the god who dies and resurrects: Dionysus the unexpected, the unpredictable, the god of both tragedy and comedy, of the death we are doomed to and the laughter in the face of that doom.

* Marco Martinelli is a playwright and director, and with Ermanna Montanari co-founder of Teatro delle Albe. He has received numerous awards, including seven Premio Ubu as a director, playwright, and educator; the Hystrio Prize; the Golden Laurel at the Mess Festival; and the Prize for Career Achievement at the Festival Journées Théâtrales de Carthage in Tunis. His plays have been published and staged in Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Slovakia, Chile, Brazil, and the United States. His play *Farsi Luogo* was published in France (Alternatives théâtrales), Romania (ed. Brumar), and Germany (Alexander Verlag Berlin). His book *Aristofane a Scampia. Come far amare i classici agli adolescenti con la non-scuola*, was published by Ponte alle Grazie in 2016, and by Actes Sud in French in 2020 under the title *Aristophane dans les banlieues*. It won the 2021 Critics Union Award for "Best Book on Theater." Martinelli has also directed several films, including *Aung San Suu Kyi's Life Under Arrest* (2017), *The Sky over Kibera* (2019), *Er* (2020), and *Fedeli d'Amore* (2021). Together with Ermanna Montanari, he is the artistic director of the Teatro Olimpico's 77th and 78th "Ciclo di Spettacoli Classici".

Dionysus loves music, the tambourines that make our heart leap, the flutes that jolt our brain electrically. Dionysus is the stranger. Dionysus is the cat who leaps onto the table and scatters the papers of all that is already-thought, already-planned.

Let me try to explain better what I mean by *mise en vie*: as a director, I must never limit myself to assigning roles, distributing speeches. I have to reinvent the ancient dramaturgy so that the Chorus of people I work with (at any point of their lives, and whatever their language) can reimagine it with me and improvise lines, gestures, and situations drawn from their everyday experience in a new stage space. The roles remain, obviously, as do the tasks of the director, set designer, costume designer, etc., but within a circle in which each face is everyone's face. Every face moves us, even in its stillness and silence; each speaks through its lines of age, its wounds, the tilt of its head, and the light flickering in its eyes. And my task is to observe each of those faces with the same attention with which I translate the words of the ancient text. I am a medium, nothing more.

What a wonder humanity is that portion of humanity I find before me, surrounding me! My duty is to extract 'theatrical' poetry from that 'vital' poetry, out of that bottomless well! How can all this be obtained? There are no recipes. The task is never to follow fast fashion. One must never give up, no matter how rough the road. One must look into each person's face, learn every face's name, even if there are two hundred of them. It is a matter of audaciously, judiciously, weaving the turbulence of the present into the ancient text.

Without digging deep, without grasping in the dark, without immersing oneself in those profound caverns (a director is nothing but a speleologist!); without working on the basis of this awareness, one runs the risk, as often happens, of collapsing into a useless, dusty, harmful 'museum'. The ancients demand of us to be respectful of them in spirit, not in the letter. Better, they do not merely 'demand of us': they invoke respect, cry out for it from the past in which they are entombed. Every single page must be tested: do those dramatic situations still speak to us? That handful of women who challenge men's corruption and incapacity to govern; do they still speak to us? Certainly they do. "So much gnaws at my heart!": so begins *The Acharnians*, Aristophanes' first comedy (the earliest extant), written when still a teenager (*Acharn.* 1). And how it resonates within each of us, that cry that speaks from 'our' heart, that verse which could have come from Charles Baudelaire or Walt Whitman. Because the world is still upside down, as iniquitous and violent and corrupt as it was millennia ago, and it must be set right again. Starting from those still-urgent questions, we begin to create, to unleash the imagination, to put bodies and voices into play; bodies and voices which, in a world of computers and AI, continue to be miraculous 'technologies', the

most powerful and least utilized of all. Everyone together at work, creatives and participants alike, in the joy of creation.

Using these principles and this method, I worked in Parma and London at the invitation of Francesca Bortoletti and Giovanna Di Martino. In agreement with them, Aristophanes' *Plutus* was chosen as the triggering text for a group of about thirty young and very young people. The Parma group was not exactly the same as the London group; some components were the same but most were not (see Appendix 4); in Parma, obviously, they were mostly Italian, in London mostly English. In both cities the principal languages used were Italian and English, but not exclusively.

One of the principles of the *mise en vie* is to utilize all the linguistic richness of the participants, starting from their mother tongues: thus in both Parma and London, our *Plutus* echoes with expressions in Polish, Portuguese, and so on (see Appendix 3). The play with languages was conceived so as to get through to the spectators, predominantly Italian in Parma and English in London. Indeed, as many before me, I posit the audience at the very centre of the theatrical event; that is, thinking of theatre as a dialogue with the other: performance requires the "co-presence" of both the "doers" and "onlookers", to employ Fisher-Lichte's terminology (2010, 29).

In agreement with dramaturg Giovanna Di Martino, we employed a selection of Renaissance-era English translations she offered up that functioned as springboard for creating anew: slowly, they were weaved in together with the participants' own input and additions as well as mine. The powerful and explosive provocation posited by *Plutus* was directed at all participants as we explored possible answers together, as a Chorus. As a sort of introduction to *Plutus* itself, its themes and main ideas, I inserted the very first lines from Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*:

> Poet Good day, sir.
> Painter I am glad you're well.
> Poet I have not seen you long. How goes the world?
> Painter It wears, sir, as it grows.
> (1.1.1-5)

It seemed to me that this exchange between the Poet and the Painter perfectly introduced the issues posed by Aristophanes in the *Plutus*: "how goes the world", inquires the poet. In other words: "How is the economy faring?"; "What is the state of society?"; and "How are the macrostructures that confine, condition, and poison our lives progressing?". The question implies that the life of every single individual is in fact inseparable from that of our own collective existence; indeed, it reflects a complex and layered web of interconnected relationships.

An honest farmer opens the play with the sad realization that, though always honest in his manners, he has "always lived poor and miserable": what should he teach his own son, then, he asks Carion, his servant; should he "change his manners" and "learn to be as cunning a knave as he can"? (Appendix 4). When, after visiting the oracle, the farmer discovers that the cause of the unfair distribution of wealth in the world derives from the fact that the god of gold is blind, he sets as his objective to heal the god, Plutus, and thus to redistribute wealth "equally" (on the importance of this word in one of the early modern translations chosen for this workshop, see Di Martino above). This is the utopian idea of the last work of Aristophanes that has come down to us.

I began the workshop in Parma with music. I asked the participants to suggest to the group songs that had to do with money. Lots of titles came up, of which I chose three that seemed particularly suited to our purpose: *Money* by ABBA, *Il Gatto e la volpe* ("The Fox and the Cat") by Edoardo Bennato, and *Non me lo posso permettere* ("I can't afford it") by Caparezza. *Money* was our opening song, in both Parma and London: it started off slowly and gently but gradually turned into an angry choral cry that set the tone for the whole demonstration-performance (Fig. 1). *Il Gatto e la Volpe*, a piece that closely retraces the story of the fox and the cat in Collodi's *Pinocchio*, introduced us into the play proper. The Chorus had just gathered together after running frantically in all directions and shouting furiously about all their debts and unpaid bills, and they were now closing in on Plutus, who was on his knees, centrestage. *Il Gatto e la Volpe* was intended to give body and voice to Chremylus' complaint right after, with a hint of irony: the song is openly satirical, and this was helpful to enhance the 'comic' tone of the scene.

In London, we brainstormed again to find a possible substitute that would be immediately understood by our audience and yet function on multiple levels, just as Bennato's piece: we ended up deciding for a children's song, *Oranges and Lemons*. This is a traditional nursery rhyme that is usually accompanied by a game where the players run through a human arch in pairs (facing each other) but with a twist: at the final line, "Here comes a chopper to chop off your head", those forming the arch drop their arms and attempt to catch those running through. The choice of song mapped onto Bennato's piece quite well: it maintained its playful tones while also ending on a quite brutal note ("chop off your head") that could again function as cue for Chremylus' discontent and anger (Fig. 2).

Non me lo posso permettere is another highly ironic song: Caparezza auctions a range of everyday items (such as a loaf of bread) that have become unaffordable for simple honest workers. The piece functioned as the Chorus' response to Plutus' voicing his fear that Zeus would find out Chremylus' healing plan and "turn [him] into a pretty pickle" (Appendix 4). The Chorus'

words had (again) a double entendre: if they gave voice to Plutus' fright by explicitly positing that this was a luxury he could not afford ("non me lo posso permettere"); they also rather cunningly implied that *they* (rather than him) could not afford him not affording it. Again, the London audience posed the challenge of finding an equivalent for this song, which eventually was replaced with another children's song, *Ring O' Roses*. In this widely popular nursery rhyme, children form a circle around one person in the middle and stoop at the final line, "we all fall down", lest they become the "rosie" in the middle. But in popular culture, the song is associated with the Great Plague that swept England in 1665, with the implication that those who "fell" at the end of the song had in fact died (from the disease) and were therefore no longer part of the circle (Figs 3, 4). In our rendition of it, the Chorus started off playfully as a children's circle around Plutus, only to darken the tones of the song as they repeated it four times before stooping at the final line. Caparezza's piece was tainted with darker nuances, but it maintained its playfulness at the same time. Weaving those songs into a series of stage actions that roughly followed the plotline of Plutus' prologue, we constructed an entire 'Chorus line'.

The characters Chremylus and Carion were performed not by individual actors but by two groups, two Choruses speaking directly to the spectators. The only two figures performed by solo actors were Plutus and Poverty, the two pillars of the two main scenes that we constructed in both workshops: the prologue and the agon scene.

From the beginning, Plutus was the symbolic centre of all the actions and desires of the Chorus surrounding him. He represents an ambiguous centre and becomes the object of contradictory actions on the part of the Chorus. As long as his identity remains unknown and he is thought to be a ragged derelict, he is mistreated and harassed. When he is discovered to be a god, however, the Chorus prays to him and venerates him. Plutus is at the centre of a circle that is the archaic locus of ancient sacrifice: at first the scapegoat, the victim to be devoured, he suddenly becomes divine. This primeval ambiguity remains typical of contemporary life: one need only think of human sacrifice as it takes place in the media today, an athlete or politician idolized and then cast in the mud. This dynamic of adore-and-attack functions powerfully on stage, grafting into the Chorus a terrifying capriciousness that erupts naturally, so to speak, in moments when we succeed in translating Aristophanes' score into our own choral language.

Parma and London functioned well as two sequential phases of the same work of art: in Parma we enacted the revelation of Plutus and the unfolding action of Chremylus and Carion, who convince the god to be cured. In London, we took this first part and added the explosion onto the stage of Poverty. In both cities we dedicated particular attention to the choice of where to

perform the spectacle: not a theatre but a place with a somewhat ancient aura - an old monastery (in Parma) and a neo-classical church (in London) - evocative of the political-religious situation conceived by Aristophanes, whose radical theatre brings the high into conflict with the low, economics with the holy, the plain with the mysterious, obscene vulgarity with lyrical transport. Everything that concerns us as humanity.

Appendix 4
Final Script

Director: Marco Martinelli
Dramaturg: Giovanna Di Martino
Workshop Organisers: Francesca Bortoletti, Giovanna Di Martino

Participants in Parma (10-13 October 2022): Pietro Bertoni, Chiara Botti, Anna Calzolari, Eleonora Capitano, Zoë Carvalho Morris, Laura Cupellaro, Lucia Davoli, Camilla Di Felice, Margherita Galeotti, Lucia Giusiano, Joshua Hobson, Benedetto Loris Pizzo, Luna Malavaso, Santiago Medioli, Carlo Mirra, Marta Mitello, Aurora Monachesi, Sara Odierno, Victoria Rasbridge Anna Rizzo, Giulio Robuschi, Lucy Ruddiman, Marta Szatkowaska, Shreeyukata Thapa, Maria Tonna, Luca Zerbi.

Participants in London (20-23 February 2023): Rosanna Beacock, Franklin Barron, Zoë Carvalho Morris, Janina Corbet, Laura Cupellaro, Giovanna Di Martino, Flora Grime, Indie Halstead, Josh Hobson, Emily Kerr, Sophie Kerr, Benedetto Loris Pizzo, Luna Malvaso, Aurora Monachesi, Zoë Perry Smith, Anna Rizzo, Lucy Ruddiman, Marta Szatkowska, Agnes Wilhelmsen.

Secondary Schools Involved: Liceo Aristico Toschi, Liceo Classico Romagnosi, St Olave's, the Jewish Community Secondary School, Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School, and La Sainte Union, Camden

Universities Involved: University of Parma, University College London

Places of the Demonstration Performance: 13 October 2022: Abbazia di Valserena (CSAC - University of Parma Communication Archive); 23 February 2023: St George's Church Bloomsbury, Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2SA

Supported by: Widening International Didactics and Education Programme (w.i.d.e; 2022, Parma), the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, the Leventis Foundation, the Classical Association, the Institute of Classical Studies, the Gilbert Trust Fund, and the Institute of Advanced Studies (UCL)

Project Identification Number 22797/001 approved by UCL's Ethics Research Committee; Project Title: Theatre Practice and Ancient Greek Drama in Translation. PI: Giovanna Di Martino; Co-Investigators: Francesca Bortoletti (Parma) and Marco Martinelli (Teatro delle Albe).

The Chorus *slowly remove their hands from their eyes and begin running frantically around the stage, shouting. Meanwhile,* Plutus *detaches from the group and slowly walks away, attempting to escape the* Chorus. *The* Chorus *halt and three* Chorus Members, *one after the other, detach from the group and make an announcement which is repeated by the whole* Chorus *three times.*

Chorus Member *(three times in crescendo)* De grão em grão a galinha enche o papo.[33]

Chorus Member *(three times in crescendo)* On se lasse de tout, sauf de l'argent.[34]

Chorus Member (three times in crescendo): Pieniądz rządzi światem![35]

At this point, Plutus *walks centre stage, assuming a kneeling position.*

Plutus *repeats the following three times, gradually decreasing from a normal voice to a whisper*: Money, money, money. The common whore of humankind.[36]

The Chorus *regroup and slowly walk towards centre stage, where* Plutus *is kneeling, his face covered with his hands. One* Chorus Member *begins singing the refrain of "Oranges and Lemons", and after a few lines, the rest of the* Chorus *join in. They repeat the refrain three times, gradually increasing their volume from a whisper to a loud shout.*

Text of the Song

Oranges and lemons
Say the bells of St. Clement's
You owe me five farthings
Say the bells of St. Martin's
When will you pay me?
Say the bells of Old Bailey
When I grow rich
Say the bells of Shoreditch
And when will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney
I do not know
Say the great bells of Bow
Here comes a candle

[33] English translation: "Grain by grain, the hen fills its stomach".
[34] English translation: "One gets tired of everything, except money".
[35] English translation: "Money rules the world".
[36] Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, 4.347.

To light you to bed
And here comes a chopper
To chop off your head.

Individual CHORUS MEMBERS *detach from the main group and move to the right, forming* CHORUS 1*, i.e. a Chorus of Chremyluses. Meanwhile,* CHORUS 2 *regroup on the left.*

CHORUS 1, CHORUS MEMBER You know, I've lived religiously, with both Gods and Men. Yet I have always lived poor and miserable.
CHORUS 2 (*together*) Poor and miserable, like us.
CHORUS 1, CHORUS MEMBER and yet – they that rob the very churches, the rhetoricians, delinquents . . .
CHORUS 2 (*react vehemently and angrily*).
CHORUS 1, CHORUS MEMBER Those demure cheaters, with some corrupted law-gowns…
CHORUS 1, CHORUS MEMBER With Roundheaded citizens and cuckholds, these, I say, grew rich the while.
CHORUS 2 (*together*) Grew rich the while.
CHORUS 1, CHORUS MEMBER*:* Allora sono andata a consultare l'oracolo - sì, l'oracolo.
CHORUS 1, CHORUS MEMBER*:* I went to consult the Oracle about my son, to see whether it were not best for him to change his manners, shake off his honour, learn to be as cunning a knave as he can!
CHORUS 2 (*together*, *angrily*) Cunning, Knavery, Deceit!
CHORUS 1, CHORUS MEMBER*:* L'oracolo mi ha detto di seguire la prima persona che incontravo fuori dal tempio.
CHORUS 1, CHORUS MEMBER*:* He bid me, whomsoever I first met, him I should follow.
CHORUS 2, CHORUS MEMBER Hey, hey - you. What did you say? Who did you meet?
CHORUS 2 (*in agreement*) Yeah, yeah - who did you meet?
CHORUS MEMBER This poor, blind man.

CHORUS 1 AND 2 *move closer to* PLUTUS*, surrounding him, and merge into one Chorus again.*

CHORUS MEMBER Tell us, who are you?
CHORUS (*together*) Who are you?
PLUTUS Fuck off.
CHORUS MEMBER No, no, no, glie l'abbiamo chiesto male… Hey, you, more gently, please.

Chorus Member Please, please, please, sweetheart - would you tell us who you are?
Plutus Vaffanculo.
Chorus Member, *looking confused*: What…?
Chorus Member It means fuck off.

The Chorus *react angrily.*
Two Chorus Members *approach* Plutus *at different intervals, appearing to lunge at him. The rest of the* Chorus *quickly intervenes, holding them back to prevent them from getting any closer.*

Plutus OK, OK, OK. I'll tell you… My name is Plutus, the God of wealth.
Chorus Member Questo sarebbe il dio della ricchezza? È il dio dell'oro?
Chorus Member Plutus…? With that miserable face? And dirty clothes?
Plutus I am.

The Chorus *react with a variety of emotions, shouting in a mix of enthusiasm, anger, and confusion, creating a chaotic atmosphere around* Plutus*, and finally burst into:* But he's blind!

Chorus Member How come you are so miserable, so nasty?
The Chorus *repeat the question in agreement, their voices echoing together to emphasise their shared support and solidarity.*
Plutus Jupiter, envying the good of miserable mortals, robbed me of my sight, that I might not know knaves from the honest, but to them might go.

The Chorus *react in different ways at the news.*

Chorus Member AHH! Hai capito?
Chorus Member Ho capito.
Chorus Member Avete capito?
Chorus Member Hanno capito.
Chorus Member Cioè Zeus, invidioso di noi uomini…
Chorus Member E donne.
Chorus Member Ha reso lui… cieco!
Chorus Member But, if you had your eyesight back, would you flee from the wicked?

The Chorus *echo the question.*

Plutus I, I protest I would.

CHORUS MEMBERS *nod in approval, expressing their agreement with enthusiastic gestures.*

CHORUS MEMBER And would you only go to honest and ingenious sorts?
PLUTUS Only to them, for I have not seen but one of them this many a day.

CHORUS MEMBERS *nod in approval.*

PLUTUS Shhhhhh, If Jupiter did but know of this project, he would powder me into a pretty pickle.
CHORUS MEMBER What…? Can it be worse than this?
PLUTUS no, no, no, please…! I fear him enormously.
CHORUS MEMBER Is it possible? You're the greatest of all cowards!

CHORUS MEMBERS *form a circle around* PLUTUS*, beginning to sing "Ring o' Roses". They start by whispering the words, gradually increasing their volume until they are singing loudly together. The* CHORUS *conclude their song, raising their hands like claws, poised as if ready to pounce on* PLUTUS.

Text of the Song
Ring-a-ring o' roses,
A pocket full of posies.
A-tishoo! A-tishoo!
We all fall down!

Each CHORUS MEMBER *moves toward an audience member, engaging in conversation and sharing what they would do if they had a little money.*
Meanwhile Plutus walks backwards and tries to get away.
A CHORUS MEMBER*, shouting at the rest of the Chorus*: Guys, guys: he's getting away!
The CHORUS *run to* PLUTUS *and bring him back centre stage to reassure him.*

CHORUS MEMBER It has been decided. You'll see as well as a lynx. Apollo assured me of this.
CHORUS MEMBER We'll take you to the temple of Asclepius, the god of medicine - he will cure your blindness.

As the CHORUS *begin to walk toward the back of the room, singing the opening lines of an ottava from Boiardo, "Tutte le cose sotto della luna / L'alta*

ricchezza e i regni della terra",[37] *a* Child *bursts onto the stage, running excitedly. Demanding everyone's attention, the* Child *pauses to deliver a heartfelt speech:*

Child Stop! Stop!

The Chorus *turn to the child.*

Child I have a message from the Gods. What are you thinking? You must trust me. I have lived for a thousand upon thousands of years on the peak – the very peak – of Mount Olympus. I know humans and gods very well. Answer me if you're able: do you guys really want to bring justice back to this earth? You are crazy, crazy, crazy, I say! Out of your minds! You make me laugh. Jupiter will send down lightning and turn you all to dust!

The Chorus *look at each other and nod in agreement.*
A Chorus Member*, addressing the audience:* But he's only a child!
The Chorus*, agreeing vehemently, lift the child and carry him off stage.*
The Chorus *then reconvene at the centre of the room, surrounding* Plutus *once again.*

Chorus Member Now, after this little incident - we'll bring you to the temple of Asclepius.

The Chorus *walk toward the back of the room, singing "Tutte le cose sotto della luna / L'alta ricchezza e i regni della terra". Suddenly, they hear a woman shouting from the front of the room, interrupting their song.*

Poverty (*standing on a chair*) Wait
Chorus (*together*) Not again. Who are you?
Poverty I am Poverty.
The Chorus *react with a variety of emotions, shouting in a mix of anger and confusion:* What?? Oh that's great.
Poverty You know me well enough, sure?
The Chorus (*together*) Yes, we do!
Poverty I have frequented many of your houses a good many years, and waited diligently upon you.
The Chorus *react:* Is she mocking us?

[37] The full text of this ottava is included at the end of the script accompanied by an English translation.

POVERTY I will demonstrate that I am the cause of all good to you – and that you are out of the way if you would make the just man rich. Sit down.

The CHORUS *begin to improvise various reactions, some expressing confusion, others laughter, while a few look concerned. They all sit down.*

POVERTY If this revolting god, Plutus, should see again, he would distribute equally to all men.
CHORUS That is indeed the point!
POVERTY And then – I pray you – who would care to study Arts or Trades? What arts or sciences would remain?

The CHORUS *look at one another, muttering in confusion as they process what Poverty is saying.*

POVERTY Who would do the dirty little jobs?
The CHORUS *point at the audience and shout*: They would!
POVERTY No, no, for they would have gold too.

The CHORUS *improvise a mix of reactions: some nod, some shake their heads, some just look confused.*

POVERTY You would have to mend your shoes yourself, and plow, and sow and reap or else you must not eat!
CHORUS MEMBERS *share a serious look with one another.*
POVERTY From me you enjoy all this and all else you have need of, I am the imperious Mistress of all Artists.
CHORUS MEMBERS *display a mix of incredulity and conviction in their expressions, some appearing sceptical while others seem to agree with* POVERTY*'s words.*
POVERTY With me men are active, and slender-bodied, without me they become… blah
Some CHORUS MEMBERS *laugh, some nod.*
POVERTY Observe the politicians.
CHORUS MEMBERS *look at the audience.*
POVERTY When they are poor, how equally and justly they carry themselves between the people and the citizens; when they are rich and wealthy, they become so corrupted and nasty.
CHORUS MEMBERS *nod in agreement.*
POVERTY All good comes of poverty.
CHORUS MEMBERS *look at one another, silent and scared.*
CHORUS MEMBER (*standing up*): Look, you don't convince me, if you do

convince me.
Gå til helvete.[38]
Chorus (*together*) gå til helveter.

Chorus Members *seize* Poverty, *forcefully pushing her down towards the ground, symbolically sending her back to the hell from which she emerged.*
The Chorus *return to* Plutus, *surrounding him once again with an air of determination.*

Chorus Member They say, third time's a charm? Now, maybe - maybe - we can finally bring Plutus to heal at the temple of Asclepius.
Chorus Members *joyfully approve their words and start clapping.*
Chorus Member Poiché di lavorar, qui, proprio non si ragiona, e poiché qui noi abbiamo catturato la fortuna… i vò che noi cantiamo una canzona… Ne sai tu una sulla fortuna?

As the Chorus begins to walk offstage, they start singing an ottava from Boiardo's Orlando Innamorato, *their voices echoing as they fade into the distance.*

Tutte le cose sotto della luna
L'alta ricchezza e i regni della terra
Son sottoposti a voglia di Fortuna
Lei la porta apre d'improvviso e serra!
E quando più par bianca divien bruna
ma più se mostra a caso della guerra
instabile, voltante e roinosa
e più fallace ch'alcuna altra cosa.[39]

[38] English translation: "Go to hell".

[39] Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato,* 1.16.1-8. English translation: "All things beneath the moon / Great wealth and the kingdoms of the earth / Are subject to Fortune's whims / She suddenly opens the door and slams it shut! / When she seems brightest, she darkens; / and in war she reveals herself as ever fickle, / unstable, mutable and ruinous / the most treacherous of all things."

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Fig. 1: The Chorus sing *Money* by ABBA.
Photograph by Alessandro Bartolomucci.

Fig. 2: The Chorus close in on Plutus as they sing *Oranges and Lemons*.
Photograph by Alessandro Bartolomucci.

Figs 3, 4: The Chorus sing the final line from *Ring O' Roses*, "They all fall down". Photographs by Alessandro Bartolomucci.

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