

ily cere-
cahier

the birds
aristophanes

ily cere- cahier 47b

Aristophanes' The Birds

**Translated with
Introduction and Notes**

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for the ablution,
and invite the blessed gods—
just one of them, 900
if you all want to have enough meat;
for the sacrifice you've got there is nothing
but a goatee and horns.

EPISODE

(Poet, Peisetaerus, Oracle Collector, Meton, Inspector, Decree Seller)

Poet
"Cloudcuckooland
the Blest now celebrate, 905
O Muse, in your hymns of song!"

Peisetaerus
Now where did he come from? Please identify yourself.

Poet
"I am he that launches a song of honey-tongued verses,
the Muses' eager vassal,"
to quote Homer. 910

Peisetaerus
Don't tell me you're a slave, wearing hair that long?

Poet
"No, we master singers all
are the Muses' eager vassals,"
to quote Homer.

Peisetaerus
Then no wonder you've got a meager jacket, too! 915
Now why the hell did you come up here, poet?

Poet
I've written songs for your Cloudcuckooland,
yes, lots of beautiful dithyrambs,^o and songs
for maidens, and songs à la Simonides.^o

Peisetaerus
Just when did you start to write these songs? From when? 920

Poet
I've been celebrating this city for a long, long time.

918 Choral performances honoring Dionysus; at the Athenian Dionysia there was a tribally sponsored contest for choruses of boys and of old men.

919 Simonides of Ceos (c. 566-468), reputedly the first poet to compose for a fee, had an ancient reputation for avarice.

Peisetaerus

But I've just begun its tenth-day sacrifice,
and just named it, like a baby, moments ago!

Poet

"Nay, the Muses' voice is a swift one,
like the twinkle of horses' hooves. 925

But you, father, founder of Aetna,
namesake of holy rites,
grant me whatever you wish
by your nod
graciously to grant." 930

Peisetaerus

This pest is going to cause us lots of trouble
unless we give him something, and thus give him the slip.
You there, you've got a shirt on and a vest;
take them off and give them to our artful poet.
Here, take this vest; you seem to me quite frigid. 935

Poet

"With no reluctance does my dear
Muse accept this gift;
but learn you in your heart
a Pindaric saying—" 940

Peisetaerus

The fellow just won't take his leave of us! 940

Poet

"Yea among Scythian nomads does wander
apart from his people
the one who possesses no shuttle-actuated raiment;
and inglorious does go a jerkin without a jacket.
Pray understand what I mean." 945

Peisetaerus

I understand that you want to snag that jacket.
Take it off; we've got to help the poet out.
Now take this here, and off you go.

Poet

I'm off;
when I get home I'll write this for your city:
"Celebrate, Muse on golden throne, the shivering, freezing land; 950

930 Adapting a poem by Pindar (fragment 105a) for the Syracusan ruler Hieron, who founded Aetna in 476/5.

939 Pindar fragment 105b.

to the snowblown
many-pathed plains have I come."
Hurrah!

Peisetaerus

But surely you've escaped from the freezing cold,
now that you've snagged that little jacket there!
Good god, that was a hassle I never expected,
that he should have heard about our city so soon.
Boy, make another circuit with that holy water.
Auspicious speech, please.

955

Oracle Collector^o

Don't start on that goat!

Peisetaerus

What? Who are you?

Oracle Collector

Why, an oracle collector.

Peisetaerus

Then to hell with you.

960

Oracle Collector

Good heavens, you mustn't make light of religious matters!
There is an oracle of Bacis^o referring explicitly
to Clouduckooland.

Peisetaerus

Then how comes it that
you didn't divulge this oracle before I founded
this city?

Oracle Collector

Religious scruple held me back.

965

Peisetaerus

Well, nothing beats listening to the actual verses.

Oracle Collector

"Nay when wolves and grey crows shall together have their abode
in the place twixt Corinth and Sicyon—"^o

Peisetaerus

Look here, what have I got to do with any Corinthians?^o

957 A person with a collection of purportedly venerable oracles, which for a fee he could use to interpret current, or predict future, events.

962 A legendary prophet whose oracles, many of which concerned international relations, were collected and discussed during the Peloponnesian War.

968 Riddling, because these territories were contiguous.

969 Athens and Corinth had long been bitter enemies.

Oracle Collector

By that enigma Bacis meant the sky. 970
 "first sacrifice to Pandora^o a ram with snowy fleece,
 and whosoever arrives first as expounder of my words,
 to him give a spotless cloak and fresh sandals—"

Peisetaerus

Are sandals really in there?

Oracle Collector

Here's the book.

"and give him the chalice, and fill up his hands with innards—" 975

Peisetaerus

Is giving innards in there too?

Oracle Collector

Here's the book.

"and if, inspired youth, you carry out the orders I give you,
 you shall become an eagle midst the clouds; but if you give not,
 you shall be not a turtledove, not a rock thrush, not a woodpecker."

Peisetaerus

Is all that really in there?

Oracle Collector

Here's the book. 980

Peisetaerus

Well now, your oracle doesn't at all match *this* one,
 which I personally wrote down from Apollo:
 "Yea when a charlatan type who arrives uninvited
 vexes the sacrificers and desires a share of the innards,
 then must you smite him in the place twixt the ribs—" 985

Oracle Collector

I think you must be kidding.

Peisetaerus

Here's the book.

"and spare not even an eagle midst the clouds,
 not if he be Lampon nor yet the great Diopeithes."^o

Oracle Collector

Is all that really in there?

971 Not the allegorical girl with the jar of evils in Hesiod's *Works* 42-105, but the earth goddess whose name means "giver of all gifts," some of which the Oracle Collector now hopes to receive.

987 Both were famous oracular experts, and the latter a prosecutor of atheists and intellectuals.

Peisetaerus

Here's the book!

Now get the hell out of here!

Oracle Collector

Oh mercy me!

990

Peisetaerus

Go on, scat! Oracle monger somewhere else!

Meton^o

I have come here to you—

Peisetaerus

Here's another nuisance.

You've come here to do what? What form does your plan take?

What idea, what buskin, is afoot?

Meton

I want to do a survey of the air
for you, and parcel it into acres.

995

Peisetaerus

For heaven's sake,

who on earth are you?

Meton

Who am I? Why, Meton,
renowned in Greece, and in Colonus too.^o

Peisetaerus

And pray tell what's all this you've got?

Meton

Air rulers.

Because for starters, the sky in its entirety
is like a casserole cover. Accordingly,
I'll position this ruler, which is curved, along the top,
inserting a compass—you follow?

1000

Peisetaerus

No, I don't.

Meton

—and lay a straight ruler alongside, take a measure,
so you'll get a circle squared, with a marketplace
in the center, with streets running straight into it there

1005

992 The famous geometer and astronomer. His unmanly caricature in this scene may be connected with the rumor that he had resorted to arson just before the expedition to Sicily in order to evade service.

997 A district of downtown Athens where Meton had set up a sundial.

and meeting at the very center, as from a star,
itself being round, straight rays will beam on out
in every direction.

Peisetaerus

The man's a Thales.^o

Meton—

Meton

What is it?

Peisetaerus

You know I'm fond of you,
so do take my advice and hit the road.

1010

Meton

What's the problem?

Peisetaerus

As in Sparta they're expelling
all foreigners, and punches have started to fly
pretty thick and fast all over.

Meton

It's civil war?

Peisetaerus

God no, not that!

Meton

What then?

Peisetaerus

There's a unanimous
decision to beat up all the charlatans.

1015

Meton

Then I *will* be going.

Peisetaerus

That's smart; but you might not
get away in time: those punches are close at hand!

Meton

Heaven help me!

Peisetaerus

Didn't I try to warn you?
Go somewhere else, and then survey yourself!

1020

1007 The early sixth century founder of the Milesian school of natural science and philosophy, who had become a byword for genius.

Inspector^o

Where can I find consuls?

Peisetaerus

Who's this Sardanapallus?^o

Inspector

I'm an Inspector, duly allotted to come here
and visit Cloudcuckooland.

Peisetaerus

Inspector, eh?

On whose authority?

Inspector

Some petty bill

of Teleas's.^o

Peisetaerus

Then what say you just take
your pay and leave, without any fuss?

1025

Inspector

God yes,

I will. I should be back home at the Assembly anyway;
there's some business I've been handling for Pharnaces.^o

Peisetaerus

Take your pay and leave; I've got it right here—in my fist!

Inspector

Hey, what was that?

Peisetaerus

An assembly about Pharnaces.

1030

Inspector

Witnesses! Inspector under attack!

Peisetaerus

Shoo, away with you, and your ballot boxes too!

Amazing—they're already sending inspectors to our city,
before we've even held our founding sacrifice!

Decree Seller

"And if a Cloudcuckoolander offends against an Athenian—" 1035

1020 Exemplifying the travelling inspectors sent by Assembly decree to enforce Athenian policies in the cities of the empire.

1021 According to the Greeks, the wealthy and degenerate last king of Assyria before the loss of that empire to the Medes and Babylonians in the late seventh century.

1024 See 168 n.

1027 A Persian satrap.

Peisetaerus

What sort of nuisance is this now, that book there?

Decree Seller

A decree seller, that's me, and I've travelled here
to sell you some brand new laws.

Peisetaerus

What sort of laws?

Decree Seller

"The Cloudcuckoolanders are to use the selfsame measures,
weights, and decrees as the Olophyxians."^o 1040

Peisetaerus

And *you'll* soon be getting the same as the Black-and-Bluesians!

Decree Seller

Hey, what's the matter with you?

Peisetaerus

Away with your laws!

In a moment I'll be showing you some hurtful laws! 1045

Inspector

I summon Peisetaerus to appear
in the month of Munychion on a charge of assault!

Peisetaerus

Oh, is that right? What are *you* still doing here?

Decree Seller

"And should anyone expel the officials and refuse them entry under
the terms of the decree—" 1050

Peisetaerus

Oh heaven help me, are *you* still hereabouts too?

Inspector

I'll ruin you! I'll write you up for a ten thousand drachma—

Peisetaerus

And I'll smash both of your ballot boxes!

Decree Seller

Recall those evenings you crapped on the inscribed decree?

Peisetaerus

Pew! Somebody grab him! Why don't you stick around? 1055

Let's get away from here as fast as we can,
inside, where we can sacrifice the goat to the gods.

1041 Parodying the language of the Coinage Decree (date uncertain), and substituting "decrees" for "coinage." Olophyxos was a small Athenian ally on the Athos peninsula, chosen for the sake of the following pun.

SECOND PARABASIS^o

(Chorus, Chorus Leader)

Chorus (strophe)

To me, the omniscient
 and omnipotent, shall all mortals
 now sacrifice with pious prayers. 1060
 For I keep watch over all the earth,
 and keep safe the blooming crops
 by slaying the brood of all species
 of critters, who with omnivorous jaws
 devour all that in soil sprouts from the pod 1065
 and the fruit of the trees where they perch;
 and I slay those who spoil fragrant gardens
 with defilements most offensive;
 and upon creepers and biters every one
 from the force of my wing 1070
 comes murderous destruction.

Chorus Leader

On this very day,^o you know, we hear it again proclaimed
 that whoever of you shall kill Diagoras the Melian^o
 shall get a talent; likewise whoever kills any long-dead tyrant.^o
 So now we want to make our own announcement right here: 1075
 whoever of you kills Philocrates the Sparrovian^o
 shall get a talent, and four for bringing him in alive,
 because he strings finches together and sells them for seven an obol;
 and furthermore that he blows up thrushes for degrading display;
 and crams the nostrils of blackbirds with their own feathers; 1080
 and also captures pigeons, and keeps them all caged up,
 and forces them to play decoy, tethered to a net.
 Well, that's the announcement we wanted to make. And whoever
 keeps birds
 caged up in the yard, we order you to let them go; 1085
 if you disobey, you'll be captured by the birds,
 and it will be your turn to play decoy on *our* turf.

1057 See 676 n.

1072 Presumably (but not demonstrably) the first day of the Dionysia festival.

1073 Dubbed "Diagoras of Quibbleton" and associated with Socrates, he was outlawed by Assembly decree for writings (now lost) critical of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

1074 Though the last Athenian tyrant had been expelled in 510, and there had been no real threat of a return to tyranny since the Persian Wars, the recent scandals surrounding Alcibiades had reawakened popular fears of antidemocratic plots.

1076 See 14 n.

Chorus (antistrophe)

Happy the race of feathered
birds, who in the winter
need wear no woolen cloaks; 1090
nor in summer's stifling heat
do the long rays roast us.
For I dwell among the flora
in the lap of flowery meadows,
when the sun-crazy cicada with voice divine 1095
in the noonday heat intones his shrill song;
and I winter in hollow caverns,
frolicking with mountain nymphs;
and in spring we graze on myrtle berries,
maidenly in their white florets, 1100
and the fruits of the Graces' garden.

Chorus Leader

We'd like to say a word to the judges about winning the prize,
namely all the benefits we'll bestow on them all if they vote for us,
so they'll get far better gifts than the ones that Paris got.^o
So let's begin with the thing that every judge craves most: 1105
those owls from Laureum;^o they'll never run out on you;
no, they'll move right into your house, and in your wallets
they'll build their nests and fledge a brood of small change.
On top of that, you'll live in houses that look like temples,
because we'll roof your houses over with eagle gables. 1110
And if you draw a nice little post, then want to do
some pilfering, we'll equip you with a sharp crowbar.
And if you go out for dinner, we'll send you off with a gizzard.
But vote against us, you'd better make some copper lids
to wear, like statues, for any who doesn't have a lid, 1115
whenever you're wearing a white suit, that's just when you'll pay
the piper, getting crapped on by all of the birds en masse.

EPISODE

(Peisetaerus, First Messenger, Chorus Leader, Second Messenger, Chorus)

Peisetaerus

Our sacrifice, dear birds, has been auspicious.
But how strange that no messenger is here from the wall,
to brief us on how things are going there. 1120

1104 Priam's son Alexander, better known as Paris, serving as the judge of a divine beauty contest, got the world's most attractive woman, Helen, as a bribe from Aphrodite for picking her over Hera (who offered power) and Athena (who offered wisdom).

1106 Coins made from silver mined at Laureum and bearing Athena's owl as an emblem.

Wait, here comes a runner, panting like an Olympian.

First Messenger

Whe whe where's, whe whe whe where's, whe whe whe where's,
whe whe where's Peisetaerus, the ruler?

Peisetaerus

Over here.

First Messenger

Your wall is all built up.

Peisetaerus

That's very good news!

First Messenger

A very fine and very impressive achievement; 1125
it's so wide on top, Proxenides of Braggarton°
and Theogenes could hitch two chariots up
to horses the size of the wooden one at Troy
and pass each other head-on!

Peisetaerus

Heracles!

First Messenger

And as for its height—and I measured it myself— 1130
it's a hundred fathoms.

Peisetaerus

Poseidon, that is high!

Who can have built it up as tall as that?

First Messenger

Birds and birds alone, with no Egyptian
brickbearer in sight, no mason, no carpenter,
but all with their own hands, an amazing sight to see. 1135
From Libya there came some thirty thousand,
cranes, who'd swallowed stones for the foundations,
and these the corncrakes blocked up with their bills,
while another ten thousand storks were making bricks,
and the curlews with their fellow river birds 1140
brought water from below up to the sky.

Peisetaerus

And who brought clay for them?

First Messenger

Hérons, in hods.

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and the curlews with their fellow river birds
brought water from below up to the sky.

1135

1140

Peisetaerus

And who brought clay for them?

First Messenger

Hérons, in hods.

1126 Elsewhere called a braggart and a weakling.

Peisetaerus

And how'd they got the clay into the hods?

First Messenger

Ah that; my friend, was sheerest genius:
the geese dug into it with their feet like shovels, 1145
and scooped it right into the herons' hods.

Peisetaerus

I guess nothing's impossible if you put your feet to it!

First Messenger

And by god there were the ducks, all wearing belts,
to lay the bricks; and up to join them flew 1150
the swallows with the trowel at their rear, like kiddies,^o
and carrying the plaster in their mouths.

Peisetaerus

Then why should anyone continue to hire workmen?
Let's see, what else? Who did the woodwork for
the wall?

First Messenger

The carpenter birds, a very skilled lot,
were woodpeckers, who pecked out the gates with their beaks;
the din 1155
of their pecking was just like being in a shipyard!
And now those gateways, each and every one,
are gated and bolted and surrounded by guards,
patrolled by bell ringers; and everywhere 1160
the sentries are in place, and signal fires
on the towers. As for me, I'm off to have
a bath; you can finish off the rest yourself.

Chorus Leader

Hey there, what's the matter? Are you really amazed
that the wall's been walled up all so very quickly? 1165

Peisetaerus

My heavens above, I certainly am; and rightly.
To tell the truth, it sounds like a mighty tall tale!
But look, here's a guard coming on the run to report
on events over there, wearing a war-dance look.

Second Messenger

S.O.S! S.O.S! S.O.S! 1170

Peisetaerus

What's all this fuss?

Second Messenger

We're having terrible problems!

Just moments ago a god, one of Zeus' gods,
has flown through the gates and into our airspace,
dodging our daytime sentries, the jackdaws.

Peisetaerus

O dire deed, o deed defiantly done!

1175

Which god?

Second Messenger

We don't know that; but he had wings,
we know that much.

Peisetaerus

Then shouldn't you have sent
a patrol in hot pursuit at once?

Second Messenger

We have:

thirty thousand mounted archer hawks,
and every bird that has hooked talons too,
kestrel, buzzard, vulture, great owl, eagle,
and all the sky's awl with the whirring of wings
as that intruding god is hunted down.
And he's not far off; no, he's already somewhere
nearby.

1180

Peisetaerus

Then shouldn't we be taking up
some slings and arrows? All support personnel
fall in! Shoot and sling! Somebody give me a sling!

1185

Chorus (strophe)

War's broken out,
war beyond words,
between me and the gods!
Now everyone stand guard
on the cloud-girt air,
scion of Erebus,
in case some god
sneaks past you here unseen.

1190

1195

Chorus Leader

And everyone be alert on every side;
the sound of an airborne god's whirring
wings is already audible nearby.

EPISODE

(*Iris, Peisetaerus, Chorus*)

Peisetaerus

You there! Where where where are you flying? Be still!
Stay right where you are! Halt! Stop that moving!
Who are you? Where from? You better start explaining!

1200

Iris°

From the gods themselves I hail, the Olympian gods.

Peisetaerus

And what's your name? Paralus or Salaminia?°

Iris

I'm Iris the Speedy.

Peisetaerus

Well, are you boat or bitch?

Iris

What *is* this?

Peisetaerus

One of you cockerels, fly up there
and grab her!

1205

Iris

Grab me? What the hell is that
supposed to mean?

Peisetaerus

You're going to be awfully sorry!

Iris

Well, this is quite extraordinary.

Peisetaerus

By what gate
did you pass through the wall, you dirty slut?

Iris

I have absolutely no idea what gate.

1210

1200 Goddess of the rainbow and messenger of Zeus in epic and tragedy, but often rudely treated in satyr drama.

1201 See 146 n.

Peisetaerus

Just listen to Miss Innocent up there!
Did you accost our Duty Daws?

Iris

Beg pardon?

Peisetaerus

Did our Storks punch your ticket?

Iris

How dare you!

Peisetaerus

You didn't accept a pass?

Iris

You're sane, I trust?

Peisetaerus

And no Top Cock was around to enter your passage?

1215

Iris

Listen, mister, nobody's entered me at all!

Peisetaerus

And so you just fly in this stealthy way
through a city that's not yours, and through the void?

Iris

But where else are the gods supposed to fly?

Peisetaerus

By Zeus I've no idea, but not through here.

1220

In fact, you're breaking the law right now. Do you realize
that if you got what's coming to you, you would deserve
more than all other Irises to be caught and executed?

Iris

But I'm deathless!

Peisetaerus

You'd be put to death anyway.

Look here, it would be terrible, the way I see it,

1225

if we're to be the rulers but you gods

intend to misbehave and ignore the fact

that it's now *your* turn to obey your superiors.

So tell me now where you're navigating those wings?

Iris

I'll have you know I'm flying from the Father
to mankind with this message: sacrifice

1230

to the Olympian gods; slay sheep on the altars, fill
the streets with their aromas.

Peisetaerus

Meaning what?

What gods?

Iris

I mean us gods, the gods in heaven.

Peisetaerus

So you're gods, eh?

Iris

Who else do you think's a god?

1235

Peisetaerus

The birds are gods to humans now, and to them
must humans sacrifice, not, by Zeus, to Zeus!

Iris

Ah fool! Ah fool! Provoke not the terrible
spleen of the gods, lest Justice wielding the Spade
of Zeus eradicate utterly all your race;
lest fiery fumes inflame your body and the embrace
of your palace with thunderbolts Licymnian!^o

1240

Peisetaerus

Hey listen, stop your spluttering! Whoa there!
Say, do you think it's a Lydian or a Phrygian
you're trying to give the willies with that kind of talk?
Do you realize that if Zeus annoys me further,
I shall inflame his manse and the halls of Amphion
with flame-throwing eagles,^o and furthermore I shall send
up into the sky against him porphyryion
birds dressed up in leopard-skin uniforms,^o
more than six hundred strong? Indeed there was a time
when a single Porphyryion caused him plenty of trouble!
And as for you, if you annoy me I'll deal
with the housemaid first: I'll spread her legs and screw her,
with Iris herself in that role; she'll be amazed
how an old hulk like me can stay aloft for three ramblings!

1245

1250

1255

1242 According to Schol. "a character in Euripides' *Licymnius* was thunderstruck," but no further details are known.

1248 Adapted, according to Schol., from Aeschylus' *Niobe*; cf. also Sophocles *Antigone* 2 and 1155.

1250 553 n.; some painters thus depicted the Giants.

Iris

Blast you, mister, you and your foul language!

Peisetaerus

Buzz off now, and make it quick! Shoo, shoo! Away!

Iris

I swear my father will put a stop to your insolence!

Peisetaerus

Good grief, why don't you fly away somewhere else, 1260
and give some younger man the hots for you.

Chorus (antistrophe)

We have barred the gods
sprung from Zeus
from any further
passage through my city; 1265
no more shall any mortal
on a single killing floor
send savory smoke to the gods by this route.

EPISODE

(Peisetaerus, First Herald, Xanthias, Manes)

Peisetaerus

It's terribly worrisome, the herald who went
to mankind, if he never comes back again. 1270

First Herald

Hail Peisetaerus, Hail the Blest One, Hail the Most Wise,
Hail the Most Illustrious, Hail the Most Wise, Hail the Most Slick,
Hail the Triple Blest, Hail the—just give me my cue!

Peisetaerus

What's your message?

First Herald

With this crown of gold all the people recognize
and reward you for your wisdom. Here's the crown. 1275

Peisetaerus

I accept. But why do they honor me this way?

First Herald

O founder of the most glorious aethereal city,
don't you realize how greatly you're esteemed among mankind,
and how many you can count as lovers of this land?
Why, before you built this city all men were crazy 1280
for the Spartans: all of them let their hair grow long,

went hungry, never bathed, acted like Socrates,
 and brandished batons. But now they've about-faced
 and gone bird-crazy, and they're having a wonderful time
 imitating birds in everything they do. 1285
 For starters, at the crack of dawn they all
 fly the coop together, like us, to root for writs;
 and then they flock to the archives at city hall
 and there they sharpen the bills—they hope to pass.
 Why, they're so blatantly bird-crazy that many 1290
 even had bird names appended to their own.
 There was one lame barkeep by the name of Partridge;^o
 and then Menippus had the name of Swallow;^o
 and then Opuntius was the One-Eyed Raven;^o
 Philocles the Lark;^o Theogenes the Sheldrake;^o 1295
 Lycurgus the Ibis;^o Chaerephon the Bat;^o
 Syracosius the Jay;^o and Meidias
 was called The Quail, and you know he did look
 like a quail who'd been knocked on the head by a hard tapper.^o
 And from sheer ornithophilia they're all singing 1300
 songs that have a swallow in the lyrics,
 or that have a duck, or a goose, or maybe a pigeon,
 or wings, or even a bit of feather attached.
 So much for down below. But I'll tell you one thing:
 more than ten thousand of them will be travelling up here, 1305
 all desiring wings and a raptor's way of life.
 So somewhere you'll have to find wings for the new arrivals.

Peisetaerus

Then we certainly have no time to stand around.
 You go as quick as you can and fill the hampers
 and all the baskets to the brim with wings, 1310
 and have Manes bring the wings out here to me;
 I'll stay and greet the visitors as they arrive.

1292 766-68 n.

1293 Unidentifiable.

1294 See 153-4 n.

1295 See 281-2 n.

1295 Unidentifiable.

1296 Son of Lycomedes and grandfather of the homonymous fourth-century statesman; the nickname implies some connection with Egypt.

1296 The associate of Socrates, often satirized as sallow, thin, and reclusive.

1297 A politician ridiculed for his "barking" oratory and for legislating against comic poets.

1299 Meidias was a public official and avid bird-fighter; in the game of quail-tapping the bird's handler bet the tapper that his bird would stay in the ring.

DUET

*(Chorus, Peisetaerus, Manes)***Chorus (strophe)**

Soon some human will be calling
this city very well-manned.

Peisetaerus

Just so our luck holds. 1315

Chorus

Passion for my city grips the world.

Peisetaerus

Faster with those wings, I say!

Chorus

For is anything missing here
that's good for a settler to have?
We've Wisdom, Desire, immortal Graces, 1320
and the happy countenance
of kindhearted Tranquillity.

Peisetaerus

That's pretty lazy service!
Speed it up there!

Chorus (antistrophe)

Quickly, a basket of wings over here; 1325
tell him again to hurry.

Peisetaerus

I will, by hitting him like this!

Chorus

Yes, he's a slowpoke, slow as an ass.

Peisetaerus

A good-for-nothing Manes!

Chorus

But first you must arrange 1330
these wings in proper order:
musical wings here, prophetic there,
and maritime, and then be sure you shrewdly
size up the man when you wing him.

Peisetaerus

By the kestrels I swear you're really for it now; 1335
just look how useless, look how slow you are!

EPISODE

(Father Beater, Peisetaerus, Cinesias, Informer)

Father Beater

O to become a high-flying eagle
and soar beyond the barren pale
over the waves of the gray sea!^o

Peisetaerus

That messenger's message looks to be accurate, 1340
for here comes someone singing about eagles.

Father Beater

Hi ho!
There's nothing's quite as much fun as flying! Yes,
I'm bird-crazy, I'm on the wing, I want
to live with you, I yearn for your bird laws. 1345

Peisetaerus

What laws do you mean? The birds have many laws.

Father Beater

All of them! Especially the one where the birds consider
it fine to peck and throttle one's own father!

Peisetaerus

We do in fact consider a bird very manly
who's beaten up his father while still a chick. 1350

Father Beater

That's exactly why I yearn to immigrate here,
to throttle my father and grab for all he has.

Peisetaerus

But we birds have a law, an ancient one
that's written on the Tablets of the Storks:^o
"When the father stork has provided for all his storklings 1355
and got them fully fledged, the chicks must then
in their own turn do the providing for their father."

Father Beater

A fat lot of good it's done me coming here,
if I'll even have to *feed* my father now!

Peisetaerus

You won't. Because you came here well disposed, 1360
my lad, I'll fit you with wings like an orphan bird.

1339 From Sophocles' lost play *Oenomaus* (fragment 476).

1354 Recalling the tablets in the Athenian agora on which were inscribed the laws of Draco and Solon; one of these concerned mistreatment of parents.

And young man, I'll give you some pretty good advice,
 the sort of thing I was taught as a boy myself:
 don't beat your father. Instead, take hold of this wing,
 and take hold of this spur in your other hand, 1365
 and consider this crest your cockscomb. Now off you go:
 stand guard! Go on campaign! Work for a living!
 Let your father live his life! Since you want to fight,
 fly off to the Thracian front and start fighting there!

Father Beater

By Dionysus, that sounds like good advice, 1370
 and I'll follow it.

Peisetaerus

That's certainly showing sense.

Cinesias^o

See, I soar up to Olympus on weightless wings,
 I soar now on this path of song,
 and now on that—

Peisetaerus

This here's going to take a whole *load* of wings! 1375

Cinesias

with fearless mind and body in quest of a new path.

Peisetaerus

Warm greetings to the twiggy Cinesias!
 Why whirl your bandy foot hither in a pirouette?

Cinesias

I wish
 to become a bird, 1380
 a clear-voiced nightingale.

Peisetaerus

Stop vocalizing, and tell me what you're saying.

Cinesias

I want to get wings from you, then flying up
 on high I want to snatch from the clouds preludes
 fresh, air-propelled, and swept by scudding snow. 1385

Peisetaerus

You're saying you can snatch preludes from the clouds?

Cinesias

Why, doesn't our whole art depend on them?

1372 A tall, thin composer of dithyrambs in the avant-garde style noted for astrophic
 "preludes," musical complexity, elaborate language, and high emotionalism.

In dithyrambs the dazzling bits are very
airy and dusky and darkly flashing, wing
propelled. Just listen, and you'll soon understand. 1390

Peisetaerus

I'd just as soon not.

Cinesias

You absolutely must!

Here, let me run through the whole air for you:

Ah visions of wingéd, sky-coursing
long-necked birds—

Peisetaerus

Whoa!

Cinesias

oh to shoot up with a leap 1395
and run with the breaths of the winds—

Peisetaerus

So help me god, I'll put a stop to *your* breaths!

Cinesias

first travelling a southerly course,
then swinging my body northwards,
cleaving a harborless furrow of sky— 1400
That's a very witty trick, old man, and tricky!

Peisetaerus

But I thought that you *enjoy* being wing-propelled!

Cinesias

Is this how you treat me, the director of cyclic choruses,
whose services the tribes always compete for?°

Peisetaerus

Then would you like to stay here with us and serve as director 1405
for Leotrophides,° with a chorus of flying birds,
of the Corncrake Tribe?°

Cinesias

It's clear you're mocking me.

But I'll have you know I don't intend to stop,
till I get my wings and scamper through the air!

Informer

Who are these birds, these have-nots 1410

1404 For dithyrambic contests each of the ten Athenian tribes produced its own choruses.

1406 Ridiculed elsewhere as being very thin, like Cinesias.

1406 Punning on the Athenian tribe-name Cecropis.

with dappled wings?

O long-winged iridescent swallow!^o

Peisetaerus

This is no small nuisance that's reared its ugly head.

Here comes another one our way, warbling along.

Informer

I repeat: O long-winged iridescent!

1415

Peisetaerus

I think he's singing that song about his cloak;

it's likely to need more than a few swallows!^o

Informer

Who is it that issues wings to newcomers?

Peisetaerus

That's me. But you must tell me what you need.

Informer

It's wings I want, wings! Do not ask me twice.^o

1420

Peisetaerus

You don't intend to fly straight to Pellene, do you?^o

Informer

God no; I'm a subpoena server working the islands,
and an informer—

Peisetaerus

What a glorious profession!

Informer

and a lawsuit snoop. So I want to get me some wings
and buzz around the islands serving subpoenas.

1425

Peisetaerus

Subpoena-ing them is more efficient with wingpower?

Informer

God no, it's so the bandits don't hassle me,
and so I can make the return trip with the cranes,
once I've filled up on lots of lawsuits for ballast.

Peisetaerus

So that's your line of work, is it? An ablebodied
young man like yourself informing on foreigners for a living?

1430

1412 Adapted from Alcaeus fragment 345.

1417 Alluding to the proverb "one swallow does not a springtime make."

1420 From Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* (fragment 140), substituting "wings" for "weapons."

1421 A Peloponnesian city where warm cloaks were awarded as prizes in chariot races;
currently on hostile terms with Athens.

Informer

What else? You see, I don't know how to dig ditches.

Peisetaerus

But surely there are other respectable lines
of work, where a man your size could make an honest
living, instead of cobbling up lawsuits.

1435

Informer

Listen, mister, don't lecture me, just wing me.

Peisetaerus

I'm doing that now, by words alone.

Informer

Just how
can you wing a man with words alone?

Peisetaerus

Why, words
set everyone aflutter.

Informer

Everyone?

Peisetaerus

Surely
you've heard boys' fathers talk in the barber shops,
and how they're always saying something like this,
"It's terrible how Dieitrephe's talks to my boy
and sets him all aflutter for horse racing!"
Another says his boy's mind's all aflutter
for tragedy, and that it's flown the coop.

1440

1445

Informer

So they actually get wings from words?

Peisetaerus

That's right:
By words is the mind uplifted and a person
transported. That's just how I want to set you
aflutter too: with worthwhile words to convert you
to legitimate work.

Informer

But that's not what I want.

1450

Peisetaerus

What *will* you do, then?

Informer

I'll not disgrace my family!

Informing's been our livelihood since the time
of my grandfather. Just rig me with the light,
fast wings of a hawk or kestrel, so I can subpoena
the foreigners, then get a judgment here,
then fly back there again.

1455

Peisetaerus

I get it now:
you mean the foreigner's case will be lost by default
before he gets here.

Informer

That's exactly right.

Peisetaerus

And then while he's sailing here, you're flying back there
to snatch his property.

Informer

That's the whole story.
It means whizzing around just like a top.

1460

Peisetaerus

A top—
I know what you mean. And by god I've actually got
some wings here that'll do just perfectly; they're from Corcyra.^o

Informer

Good grief, that's a whip you've got!

Peisetaerus

No, a pair of wings;
they'll make you whizz around like a top today!

1465

Informer

Good grief!

Peisetaerus

Why don't you flutter away from here?
Why don't you clear off now, you goddamned pest?
You'll soon get a bitter dose of sleazy shysterism!
Come on, let's gather up these wings and go.

CHORAL INTERLUDE

(strophe)

Many wondrous novelties
have we overflown, and
many amazements have we seen.

1470

There's a tree, quite exotic,
 that grows beyond Wimpdom,
 and it's called Cleonymus,^o 1475
 good for nothing, but otherwise
 voluminous and yellow.
 Each and every springtime
 it sprouts denunciations,
 while in wintertime, by contrast, 1480
 its shields drop off like leaves.

(antistrophe)

Then there's a far-off country,
 at the very edge of darkness
 in the lampless steppes,
 where people meet the heroes 1485
 for lunch and conversation,
 except in the evening:
 that's when it's no longer
 safe to meet them.
 For if any mortal happened 1490
 to run into the hero Orestes,^o
 he'd get stripped and paralyzed
 all down his righthand side.

EPISODE

(*Prometheus, Peisetaerus*)

Prometheus

Oh what a fix! Zeus mustn't see me here!
 Where's Peisetaerus?

Peisetaerus^o

Yipes, what could *this* be? 1495
 What's all this mufflement?

Prometheus

Do you see any gods
 back there behind me?

Peisetaerus

Can't see nary a one.
 But who are *you*?

Prometheus

Then what's the time of day?

1475 See 289 n.

1491 See 712 n.

1495 Evidently Peisetaerus has come out to empty a bedpan, cf. line 1552.

Peisetaerus

The time? Well, it's little after midday.
But who are *you*?

Prometheus

Is it quitting time, or later?

1500

Peisetaerus

I'm getting damned sick of this!

Prometheus

And what's Zeus doing?

Is he clearing the clouds away, or gathering them?

Peisetaerus

Go straight to hell!

Prometheus

In that case, I'll get unmuffled.

Peisetaerus

Prometheus, old friend!°

Prometheus

Shh, shh! Don't shout!

Peisetaerus

Why, what's up?

Prometheus

Shh, be quiet, don't mention my name

1505

You'll be the death of me, if Zeus sees me here.

Look, I'm going to tell you all that's going on
up there, so take this parasol and hold it
over me, so the gods above won't see me.

Peisetaerus

Aha!

1510

That was good thinking, positively Promethean.°

Quick, get under here, and speak without reserve.

Prometheus

Then listen to this.

Peisetaerus

Go on, I'm listening.

1502 Prometheus was worshipped at Athens as a fire-god and patron of craftsmen; in mythology he took the side of humankind against tyrannical Olympian rule, most notably in stealing fire from the gods and giving it to mortals, for which Zeus punished him: see Hesiod, *Theogony* 521-616 and Aeschylus' (?) *Prometheus Bound*.

1511 Prometheus' name means "forethought."

Prometheus

Zeus is finished!

Peisetaerus

And just when did this occur?

Prometheus

From the very moment you colonized the air. 1515

Now not a single human sacrifices
to the gods any more, and since that moment
not a whiff of thighbones has wafted up to us;
no, without burnt offerings we're as good as fasting
at the Thesmophoria.^o And the barbarian gods 1520
are so hungry that they're shrieking like Illyrians
and threatening to march down against Zeus^o
unless he gets the trading posts reopened
so they can import their proper ration of innards.

Peisetaerus

So there are some other gods, barbarians, 1525
up-country from you?

Prometheus

Why shouldn't we have barbarians?

That's where Execestides gets his ancestral god!^o

Peisetaerus

And about the name of these barbarian gods,
what might it be?

Prometheus

Their name? Triballians.^o

Peisetaerus

I get it;
that must be where "balls to you" comes from. 1530

Prometheus

It's very likely. But I'll tell you one thing for sure:
expect ambassadors about a settlement,
from Zeus and the Triballians up-country.
But don't you ratify a treaty unless
Zeus gives his sceptre back to the birds again 1535
and gives you Princess to be your wedded wife.

1520 An autumn fertility festival celebrated by women alone; on the penultimate day the women fasted.

1522 Like an indigenous populace against colonists on the coast.

1527 See 11 n.

1529 A Thracian tribe allied with Athens and noted for their savagery.

Peisetaerus

Who is this Princess?

Prometheus

A very beautiful maiden,
 who has custody of Zeus' thunderbolt
 and everything else as well: good counsel, law
 and order, common decency, shipyards, 1540
 mudslinging, paymasters, and three-obol fees.°

Peisetaerus

You mean she looks after everything for him?

Prometheus

That's right: win her from him and you'll have it all.
 That's why I came here, to let you in on this.
 I've always been a friend to humanity. 1545

Peisetaerus

Yes, if it weren't for you we wouldn't have barbeques.

Prometheus

And I hate all the gods, as well you know.

Peisetaerus

By Zeus, you always were an enemy of the gods,
 an absolute Timon.°

Prometheus

I'd better be getting back;
 give me my parasol; so even if Zeus does see me 1550
 from up there, he'll think I'm attending a basket-bearer.°

Peisetaerus

You may as well carry her stool too; here it is.

CHORAL INTERLUDE

Chorus° (strophe)

Far away by the Shadefoots
 lies a swamp, where all unwashed
 Socrates conjures spirits. 1555
 Pisander° paid a visit there,

1541 The daily pay of a juror, a central civil office exercised by many Athenians on a volunteer basis.

1548 The proverbial Athenian misanthrope.

1551 A maiden chosen for this honor in a religious procession might be accompanied by assistants bearing a parasol and a stool.

1553 This song recalls Odysseus' visit to the underworld as described in *Odyssey* 11 and dramatised in Aeschylus' lost play, *Spirit Conjurers* (*Psychagogoi*).

1556 A general and democratic politician, later turned oligarch; ridiculed elsewhere for cowardice.

asking to see the spirit
that deserted him in life.
For sacrifice he brought a baby
camel and cut its throat,
like Odysseus, then backed off;
and up from below arose to him,
drawn by the camel's gore,
Chaerephon the bat.

1560

EPISODE

(Poseidon, Heracles, Peisetaerus, Triballian)

Poseidon°

This municipality now present to our view
is Cloudcuckooland, the goal of our embassy.
Here, what are you doing, draping your cloak like that,^o
from right to left? Please reverse it, this way, to the right.
Oh, you sorry bungler! Are you built like Laespodias?^o
Ah democracy, what will you bring us to in the end,
if the gods can elect *this* person ambassador?
Hold still! To hell with you! You're by far the most
barbaric god I've ever laid eyes upon.
Well now, Heracles, what should we do?

1565

1570

Heracles°

You've heard
my opinion: I want to choke this guy to death,
whoever he may be, that's blockaded the gods.

1575

Poseidon

Listen, colleague, our charge is to discuss a settlement.

Heracles

All the more reason to strangle him, if you ask me.

Peisetaerus

The cheese grater, someone? Pass the silphium.
And someone get the cheese. Poke up these coals.

1580

Poseidon

Our greetings to you, sir; we're a committee
of three gods.

1564 Brother of Zeus, and thus uncle to Heracles, son of Zeus and the mortal Alcmena.

1567 To the Triballian; Greeks considered the Triballians (now W. Bulgaria) to be barbarians representing the antithesis of civilization.

1569 A politician, probably elected general shortly before *Birds*, who tried to hide misshapen calves by draping his cloak very low.

1574 A legendary he-man, worshipped as a hero and god, with a voracious appetite for food, drink and sex.

Peisetaerus

Wait, I'm grating silphium.

Heracles

And what sort of meat is that?°

Peisetaerus

Some birds who've been
convicted of attempted rebellion against
the bird democracy.°

Heracles

So that's why you're grating
silphium on them first? 1585

Peisetaerus

Oh, hello, Heracles.
What's up?

Poseidon

We have come as plenipotentiaries
from the gods, in order to discuss an end to the war.

Peisetaerus

We don't have any oil in this bottle.

Heracles

And bird meat should be glistening with it. 1590

Poseidon

For we gods are gaining nothing by the war;
while for *your* part, friendly relations with the gods
would win you ample rainwater for your puddles
and halcyon days to enjoy all year around.
On all these issues we're authorized to negotiate. 1595

Peisetaerus

But it was never *our* side that began hostilities
against you, and we're ready to make peace now,
as long as *you're* ready, even at this late hour,
to do what's right. And what's right amounts to this:
the sceptre Zeus gives back to us, the birds. 1600
If we can reach an agreement on these terms,
I'll be glad to invite the embassy to lunch.

Heracles

That's good enough for me; I'm voting aye.

1583 Heracles traditionally had an insatiable appetite.

1584 For contemporary Athenian fears about right-wing conspiracies see Thucydides 6.60.

Poseidon

You what, you damned fool? You idiotic greedy guts!
 You'd rob your father of his rule, would you?

1605

Peisetaerus

How can you say that? Won't you gods in fact
 have greater power if birds are sovereign down there?
 At present, mortals can hide beneath the clouds,
 and with bowed heads swear false oaths in your names;
 but if you have an alliance with the birds,
 whenever anyone swears "by the Raven and by Zeus,"
 the Raven will happen by and dive-bomb that perjurer
 before he knows it, and peck out his eye like a shot.

1610

Poseidon

By Poseidon, that's a very good point you make.

Heracles

I quite agree.

Peisetaerus

And what do you say?

Triballian God

Yeah Bubba.

1615

Heracles

See? He's in favor too.

Peisetaerus

Now listen to this,
 something else that we'll do for your benefit.
 If a human vows an offering to a god
 then tries to squirm out of it with a sophism like
 "the gods are patient,"^o and out of avarice
 reneges, we'll make him pay up.

1620

Poseidon

How, pray tell?

Peisetaerus

When this guy happens to be counting up
 his pennies, or sitting in a nice warm bath,
 a kite will swoop down behind his back and filch
 a two-sheep penalty, and deliver it to the god.

1625

Heracles

I'm voting aye again, to give them back
 the sceptre.

1620 The full proverb was "the gods are patient, but keep their promises."

Poseidon

Then ask the Triballian as well.

Heracles

Hey Triballian, how would you like some real pain?

Triballian God

No

hittum hide wit bat.

Heracles

He says I'm right.

Poseidon

Well, if that's how *you* both vote, I'll go along. 1630

Heracles

You there: we've voted yes on the sceptre issue.

Peisetaerus

Oh, there's another matter that I just now remember:
the lady Hera I concede to Zeus,
but the maiden Princess must be given to me
as my wife.

Poseidon

It's not a *settlement* you're hot for! 1635

Let's go back home.

Peisetaerus

That's of little concern to me.

Cook, please be sure you make the sauce nice and sweet.

Heracles

Man alive, Poseidon, what's your rush, anyway?
Over a single woman we're out to fight a war?

Poseidon

Well, what can we do?

Heracles

What else? We simply settle. 1640

Poseidon

You chump! Don't you see you've been getting duped all along?
What's more, you're harming yourself. See, if Zeus surrenders
his rule to these birds, you'll be left a pauper when
he dies, because you now stand to get the whole
estate that he leaves behind him at his death.^o 1645

¹⁶⁴⁵ Since the Olympian gods were considered immortal, the following scenario would sound absurd; but at the same time, these gods are now to be replaced.

Peisetaerus

Good grief, how he's trying to give you the runaround!

Come aside here, I want to have a word with you.

Your uncle's out to cheat you, my poor fellow.

Of your father's estate you don't get a single penny;
that's the law.^o You see, you're a bastard, illegitimate.

1650

Heracles

A bastard? Me? How's that?

Peisetaerus

That's you exactly,
your mother being an alien. Why else do you think
that Athena, as a daughter, could be called The Heiress,
if she had any legitimate brothers?

Heracles

But couldn't my father still leave me his property
as a bastard's portion?

1655

Peisetaerus

The law won't let him do that.
Poseidon here, who's getting your hopes up now,
will be the first to dispute your claim to your father's
property, declaring himself to be the legitimate brother.

I'll even quote you the relevant law of Solon:^o

1660

H "A bastard shall not qualify as next of kin,
if there are legitimate children; if there are no
H legitimate children, the next of kin shall share
the property."

1666

Heracles

You mean I have no share whatever in
my father's property?

Peisetaerus

None at all. And tell me,
has your father inducted you into his phratry yet?^o

Heracles

Not me he hasn't, and that's always made me wonder.

1670

1650 Throughout this passage, Athenian laws, which granted citizenship only to the children of two Athenian parents, are assumed to apply to the gods; Heracles's mother was a mortal, Alcmene, and already married to Amphytrion.

1660 Solon's codification (early 6th century), to which Athenians tended to attribute all their laws.

1669 A religious guild whose members traced descent from a common ancestor; membership was a standard proof of citizenship, and the induction of young men as new members included lavish feasting.

Peisetaerus

So why gape at the sky with an assaultive glare,
when you could side with us? I'll appoint you ruler,
and promise to supply you with birds' milk.

Heracles

Your claim to the girl sounds fair to me, as ever;
And so I'm all for handing her over to you.

1675

Peisetaerus

And what about you? What do you say?

Poseidon

I vote against.

Peisetaerus

It's all up to the Triballian. What do *you* say?

Triballian God

Lovely ya tall missy Princessy
I hand over birdie.

Heracles

He says to hand her over.

Poseidon

No, by Zeus, he's not saying to hand her over;
if anything, he's just twittering like the swallows.

1680

Heracles

All right, he's saying hand her over to the swallows.

Poseidon

Very well, then, you two negotiate the terms
of a settlement; if that's your decision, I'll keep quiet.

Heracles

We've decided to agree to all of your proposals.
Now come with us to heaven yourself, and there
you'll get your Princess and everything else as well.

1685

Peisetaerus

Then these birds have been cut up just in time
for my wedding!

Heracles

And if you like, I'll stay behind here
meanwhile, and roast the meat; you go on ahead.

1690

Poseidon

You? Roasting meat? An orgy of gobbling, you mean.
Better come with us.

Heracles

I would have liked that job!

Peisetaerus

Now someone run and fetch me a wedding jacket!

CHORAL INTERLUDE

Over in the land of Extortia, near
the Water Cache,^o dwells the wicked
race of Thrive-by-Tongues,
who do their harvesting and sowing
and vintaging by tongue,
and also their culling.
They're a race of barbarians,
Gorgias and Philippuses.^o
It's from these philippic
Thrive-by-Tongues
that all over Attica
the tongue is specially excised.^o

1695

1700

1705

Second Herald

You achievers of all success, defying description,
you triple-blessed winged race of birds:
welcome your ruler to his prosperous palace!
Yea he draws near, more dazzling to behold
than any meteor flaring on golden beams,
more even than the flare of the sun's far-beaming
splendor of rays, as he comes escorting a lady
of beauty surpassing description, and brandishing
the thunderbolt, winged missile of Zeus.
A fragrance unnamable ascends to the welkin's very
depths, a spectacle fair, and breezes puff
asunder the wreaths of smoke from the fuming incense.
And here he is himself! Now let the divine Muse
open her holy lips in auspicious song!

1710

1715

Chorus

Get back! Divide!
Form up! Make room!
Fly by the man blest with blest luck!
My oh my, her youth, her beauty!
What a blessing for this city

1720

1695 Of fountain houses and also of the device used to time speeches in Athenian lawcourts.

1701 Gorgias, a Sicilian, taught rhetoric at Athens, and Philippus (a common name) was either his son or (more likely) a disciple.

1705 Le., in sacrifices.

is the marriage you have made!

1725

Chorus Leader

Great, great is the luck that embraces
the race of birds
thanks to this man; now with wedding
and bridal songs please welcome
Himself and His Princess!

1730

Chorus (strophe)

Once were Olympian Hera
and the mighty lord of the lofty
throne of the gods
united by the Fates
with such a wedding song.
Hymen Hymenaeus!^o
Hymen Hymenaeus!

1735

(antistrophe)

And blooming Eros
of the golden wings guided
the straining reins
as best man at the wedding
of Zeus and thriving Hera.
Hymen Hymenaeus!
Hymen Hymenaeus!

1740

Peisetaerus

I'm pleased by your chants, and pleased by your songs,
and bowled over by your words.

1740

Chorus Leader

Come then, celebrate too
his earth-shaking thunders
and the fiery lightnings of Zeus
and the awesome fulgent thunderbolt.

1745

Chorus

Great golden glare of lightning!
Zeus' immortal firebearing
shaft! Thunders rumbling heavily
in the ground and also bringing rain!
With you this man now shakes the earth,
new master of Zeus' estate
and of Princess, attendant of Zeus' throne.
Hymen Hymenaeus!

1750

1736 The traditional wedding cry.

Chorus Leader

Follow now the wedding party, 1755
all you winged tribes
of fellow songsters, to Zeus' yard
and to the bridal bower.

Peisetaerus

Hold out your hand, my happy one,
and holding to my wings 1760
join me for a dance; I'll
lift you up and swing you!

Chorus

Hip hip hooray! Hail Paeon!
Hail your success, you
highest of divinities! 1765

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notes:

ily cere- cahiers is a collection of texts (fragments). it is a branch of the collective *it is part of an ensemble*. these texts function as starting points for dialogues within our practice. we also love to share them with guests and visitors of our projects.

the first copy of *ily cere- cahier 47* was printed in september 2026

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