

ARISTOPHANES

PEACE

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Note that in the following translation, the line numbers without brackets refer to the English text and those within square brackets refer to the Greek text. In the former, a partial indented line is normally combined in the reckoning with the short line immediately before it. Stage directions and footnotes have been supplied by the translator.

In this translation, possessives of words ending in *-s* are usually indicated in the common way (that is, by adding *'s* (e.g. *Zeus* and *Zeus's*). This convention adds a syllable to the spoken word (the sound *-iz*). Sometimes, for metrical reasons, this English text indicates such possession in an alternate manner, with a simple apostrophe. This form of the possessive does not add an extra syllable to the spoken name (e.g., *Orestes* and *Orestes'* are both three-syllable words; whereas, *Orestes's* has four syllables).

The translator would like to acknowledge the valuable help of Alan H. Sommerstein's commentary on the play in his book *Peace* (Aris & Phillips, 1985)

BACKGROUND NOTE

Peace was first produced in Athens in 421 BC, where it won second prize in the Dionysia. Athens had been at war with Sparta for a number of years. However, peace negotiations had been going on, and it looked as if the two sides might just agree to end (or at least suspend) their hostilities.

PEACE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

FIRST SERVANT: a slave belonging to Trygaeus.
SECOND SERVANT: a slave belonging to Trygaeus.
DAUGHTERS: two daughters of Trygaeus.
TRYGAEUS: a middle-aged farmer.
HERMES: a god, divine son of Zeus.
WAR: a god.
UPROAR: a young servant to War.
CHORUS: farmers and servants from different city states.
HIEROCLES: a seller of oracles.
SICKLE MAKER.
JAR MAKER.
ARMS DEALER.
ARMOURER.
TRUMPET MAKER.
SPEAR MAKER.
BOY, a son of Lamachus.
BOY, a son of Cleonymus.
PEACE.
THEORIA: a young female attendant on Peace.
OPORA: a young female attendant on Peace.

[Across the back of the flat open space in front of the stage, the Orchestra, are four structures: the farm house belonging to Trygaeus, a stable beside or in front of it, a cave whose opening is blocked in with rocks, and the palace of Zeus. Two of Trygaeus's slaves are in front of the stable. One is on his knees before a shallow tub preparing balls of dung taken from a pile in the yard, and the other is carrying these balls of dung into the stable.]

FIRST SERVANT *[coming from the stable door]*
Come on, bring us a cake for the beetle.
Get a move on! Hurry up.

SECOND SERVANT *[on his knees kneading dung into cakes]*
There you go.
Give him that. May it kill the wretched beast!
I hope he never swallows anything
more delicious than this ball of shit.

[First Servant takes the cake, goes into the stable, and returns.]

FIRST SERVANT
Give him another one. And make this cake
out of pounded donkey dung.

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SECOND SERVANT

Back again?

Where's the one you took in there just now?
He can't have eaten it.

FIRST SERVANT

Eaten it? By Zeus,
he grabbed it, rolled it round between his feet, 10
and then swallowed it—the whole damn thing.
Hurry up and pound out more, lots of them—
and pack them tight.

[First Servant carries another cake into the stable and returns.]

SECOND SERVANT *[looking at the audience]*

You dung collectors out there,
in the name of the gods, give me a hand,
unless you want to see me choke. [10]

FIRST SERVANT

Hand me another cake—
from a boy prostitute. He says he needs
something made from shit that's been well pounded.

SECOND SERVANT *[tossing him a cake]*

There you go.

[First Servant returns to the stable. The Second Servant addresses the audience.]

Gentlemen, there's one thing
I think I'll never be found guilty of.
No one will claim that as I pound this muck 20
I help myself and eat the stuff.¹

FIRST SERVANT *[holding his nose]*

Good god!
Get me another, and then bring one more,
and then another. Keep packing more.

SECOND SERVANT

No, by Apollo, not me! I can't stand
this disgusting muck a moment longer!

¹Stealing food in the kitchen was a common complaint against slaves.

PEACE

FIRST SERVANT

Then I'll take the dung inside, tub and all.

[The First Servant picks up the tub full of dung and carries it into the stable.]

SECOND SERVANT

To hell with it, by god, and you as well.

[addressing the audience]

If any of you knows, please tell me now [20]
where I can get a nose without a nostril.
There's no work that is more miserable 30
than rolling this stuff up and serving it
to feed a beetle. Now, a pig or dog,
as soon as someone's had a shit, eats it
without a fuss. But this conceited brute,
like some lady, is so full of itself,
it won't eat unless I mash the stuff all day
then serve it rolled into a ball by hand.
But I'll take a look, see if it's done eating.
I'll open this door, but just a sliver, [30]
so it won't see me.

[He pushes the stable door slightly and looks inside.]

Go on—keep eating, 40
and don't ever stop, not until you burst
all by yourself in there. That damned creature—
look how it eats, mashing with its molars,
moving its head and arms around like that,
like a wrestler or those who twist the cords
to make thick ropes for cargo ships.

FIRST SERVANT *[returning from the stable]*

That brute—
smelly, foul and greedy! I've no idea
what god this stinking apparition comes from,
but I reckon it wasn't Aphrodite [40]
or the Graces.²

²Aphrodite was the goddess of sexual love, and the Graces the goddesses of grace and charm.

PEACE

SECOND SERVANT

Then who was it?

FIRST SERVANT

It's got to be 50
some monstrosity sent down here from Zeus,
lord of the thundercrap.

SECOND SERVANT

Well, some youngster
out there in the audience who thinks he's smart
by this point will be saying, "What's going on?
What does this beetle mean?" And an Ionian
sitting next to him is saying, "In my view,
it's a reference to Cleon, showing how
he's not ashamed to wolf down shit all day."³

FIRST SERVANT [*getting ready to urinate*]

I'm going in to give the beast a drink.

[*First Servant goes back into the stable.*]

SECOND SERVANT

Well then, I'll explain what's going on here 60 [50]
for children, youngsters, grown ups, and old men,
even for these self-important windbags.⁴
My master's got some new form of madness—
not your kind, but something really new.
All day long he gazes at the heavens
with his mouth open, like this, and cries out,
yelling up at god, "O Zeus," he says,
"What on earth are you doing? What's your plan?
Put that broom aside. Don't sweep Greece away!"
Wait! Hold on! Quiet. I think I hear his voice. 70

TRYGAEUS [*from inside the house*]

O Zeus, what will you do for our people?
You'll be devastating all our cities
without any sense of what you're doing.

³Cleon was a very influential politician in Athens who had died shortly before the production of the play. He is one of Aristophanes's favourite targets, even after his death.

⁴This would be a pointed reference to the important political officials sitting in a special section of the audience.

PEACE

SECOND SERVANT

That's it, the sickness I've been talking of.
There you hear a sample of his madness.
When this disturbance first came over him,
he'd keep saying to himself, "How can I
gain access to Zeus right now?" So he had
some slender ladders made for him, and then,
80 [70]
he'd try to climb them all the way to heaven,
until he'd tumble down and break his head.
Well then, damn him, he went out yesterday,
I don't know where, and brought back a beetle,
a monstrous thing from Etna. He's forced me
to be its groom, while he keeps stroking it,
as if it were a pony, and saying
"O my little Pegasus, my thoroughbred,
my flying steed, now you must carry me
directly up to Zeus." I'll have a look,
90
bend down here and see just what he's doing.

[The Second Servant stoops to look through a hole in the walls of the stable.]

O this is dreadful! Come here, neighbours! Here!
My master's rising up into the air, [80]
riding astride the beetle like a horse!

[Trygaeus appears on the giant dung beetle rising up into the air behind the stable.]

TRYGAEUS

Easy now, beetle, gently does it, easy.
Don't charge and make things much too rough for me,
trusting your strength, right at the start of things,
not until you sweat, and your beating wings
loosen up your joints and make your muscles free.
I beg you, don't breathe on me that filthy smell.
If you do that, you can stay here in your stall. 100

SECOND SERVANT *[calling up to Trygaeus]*

Master, my lord, how crazy you've become! [90]

TRYGAEUS

Be silent! Hold your tongue!

SECOND SERVANT

Why are you

PEACE

Flapping through the air so senselessly?

TRYGAEUS

I'm soaring off to help out all the Greeks,
a bold new venture, never done before.

SECOND SERVANT

Why are you flying? Why this mad sickness?

TRYGAEUS

You must speak fair words and never mutter
such trivial sounds. Instead cry out with joy.
Tell men to hold their tongues and to close in
their toilets and their sewers with fresh bricks
and to plug their arse holes firmly shut.

110 [100]

SECOND SERVANT

There's no way I'll stay quiet, not unless
you tell me where you plan to fly.

TRYGAEUS

Where else,
but up to Zeus in heaven?

SECOND SERVANT

What for?

TRYGAEUS

To ask him about each and every Greek—
what he's got in store for them.

SECOND SERVANT

And what if
he doesn't tell you?

TRYGAEUS

I'll take him to court
for treason, selling Greeks out to the Medes.⁵

SECOND SERVANT

No, by Dionysus, you'll never go,

⁵The term Medes refers to the Persians, who in Asia Minor were still keen on interfering in Greek political matters.

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not while I'm alive.

TRYGAEUS

There's no other way. 120

SECOND SERVANT [*shouting into the house*]

Help! Help! Help! Children, your father's leaving— [110]
he's secretly abandoning you all
to go to heaven.

[*Trygaeus's two young daughters come out of the house.*]

You poor wretched girls,
try pleading with your father. Beg him.

CHILD

Father, oh father, is this report true,
what those at home are saying about you—
you're leaving me here, going up to the sky,
to the birds and the ravens? You're trying to fly?⁶
O daddy, these stories—are all of them true?
If you love me, I need an answer from you. 130

TRYGAEUS

Yes, my girls, it's what you think. The truth is
I've had it with you—you keep begging me
for bread and calling me your daddikins, [120]
when there's not a drop of money in the house,
nothing at all. But when I'm successful,
when I get back again, you'll soon enjoy
a huge cake with my knuckles for a sauce.⁷

DAUGHTER

But how are you going to finish the trip?
You can't travel that road in a sailing ship.

TRYGAEUS

I won't be sailing on the sea in a ship. 140
I'll be flying up there on a horse with wings.

⁶In Greek “to the ravens” is a common expression for “Going to Hell,” or “Going to the dogs.”

⁷This obscure joke, Sommerstein explains, depends on the very similar words for *knuckle* or *punch* and for a *tasty delicacy*.

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DAUGHTER

Daddy, how did you plan to capture this thing,
harness it, and go to the gods on the wing?

TRYGAEUS

In those stories by Aesop, I found out
the beetle was the only beast with wings [130]
that could reach the place where gods reside.

DAUGHTER

Father, father, that's false. All folks deny
stories which say that stinking brutes fly
and can rise to the gods way on high.

TRYGAEUS

Once, long ago,
when it had a quarrel with an eagle, 150
it went up there and took out its revenge
by rolling from the nest the eagle's eggs.

DAUGHTER

Why not hitch Pegasus and his divine wings?
The gods would receive you as our tragic king.

TRYGAEUS

My dear girl, I'd have needed twice the food.
But now whatever meal I eat myself
will serve to feed this beetle, too.

DAUGHTER

But what if it falls in the depths out at sea? [140]
With wings like those ones, how will it flee?

TRYGAEUS [*lifting up his phallus or exposing his penis*]

For that I've got this rudder I can use. 160
And the beetle will be just like those boats
they make in Naxos.⁸

DAUGHTER

But then as you float,
what harbour will open to welcome that boat?

⁸The Greek word for beetle (*kantharos*) was also used to refer to a certain kind of boat (evidently associated with the island of Naxos).

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Doesn't Piraeus have a Beetle Harbour?⁹

DAUGHTER

Beware of collisions. You might fall down
from way up there and become a lame clown.
If so, for Euripides you'll be a story—
he'll turn you into a tragical glory.¹⁰

TRYGAEUS

I'll watch out for that. And now good bye!

[Trygaeus addresses the audience as he starts moving higher.]

And you for whom I'm doing all this work, 170 [150]
for the next three days you must not fart or crap.
If this creature smells that while in the air,
it'll toss me head first and come down to graze.
So come now, Pegasus, be off. Good luck.
Keep those bright ears of yours pricked up
and shake that golden bridle and your bit
until they rattle. What are you doing?
What are you up to? Why turn your nose
toward those stinking sewers? Let yourself
go bravely up above the earth, stretch out 180 [160]
those racing wings of yours and head straight for
the halls of Zeus. Keep your nose out of the shit,
away from the food you eat every day.
Hey, that man down there, what are you doing?
I mean that one crapping in Piraeus,
right by the whorehouse. You're destroying me,
doing me in. Can't you please bury the stuff,
pile lots of earth on top, and then plant thyme
and pour perfume on it? If I fell down
and something happened to me from up here 190
and killed me, the state of Chios would be fined [170]
five talents, all because of your ass hole.¹¹

⁹Piraeus, the great sea port near Athens, was, Sommerstein notes, officially called the Harbour of Cantharus (the Greek word for beetle), after a local hero.

¹⁰Aristophanes is fond of mocking the tragic dramatist Euripides for the way he liked to portray physically injured heroes.

¹¹The reference to Chios here is obscure. If an Athenian were killed in a state subject to Athens, there was a large fine of five talents. But Chios is a long way from Athens, so it's not clear how that law would apply.

PEACE

O my god, I'm scared. And I'm not joking,
not any more. You there working this machine,
take good care of me. Right now there's a wind
twisting its way around my belly button.
If you don't watch it, I'll be making stuff
to feed the beetle. But it seems to me
I'm getting near the gods. Yes, I can see
the home of Zeus.

*[By this point the beetle has descended and come to rest in front of the house of Zeus.
Trygaeus gets off the beetle and knocks on the door.]*

Who's in there, in Zeus's house? 200
Why won't you open up?

HERMES *[from inside]*

A human voice! [180]
Where did that come from?

[Hermes opens the door and sees Trygaeus and the dung beetle.]

Lord Hercules!
What's that disgusting thing?

TRYGAEUS

A horse beetle.

HERMES

You disgusting, reckless, shameless creature!
You scoundrel, you consummate rascal,
the worst rogue there is! How did you get here,
you most villainous of all the villains?
What's your name? Speak up, won't you?

TRYGAEUS

Super-scoundrel.

HERMES

In what country were you born?
Tell me.

TRYGAEUS

Super-scoundrel.

PEACE

HERMES

Who's your father?

210

TRYGAEUS

My father? Super-scoundrel.

HERMES

By this earth,
you'll die for sure if you don't give your name.

TRYGAEUS

I'm Trygaeus, and I'm from Athmonum,
a good vine-grower.¹² I don't slander people,
and I don't like disputes.

[190]

HERMES

Why have you come?

TRYGAEUS [*handing Hermes a steak*]

To offer you this meat.

HERMES [*grabbing the meat and in a very different tone*]

You poor fellow,
how did you get here?

TRYGAEUS

Well, sticky fingers,
you see how you no longer think of me
as the vilest of all rogues. Please be off now,
and summon Zeus for me.

HERMES

O dear, dear, dear!
You won't reach the gods. You're not even close.
They've gone away. They moved out yesterday.

220

TRYGAEUS

Where on earth did they go?

HERMES

They wouldn't go to earth!

¹²Athmonum was the name of a political district to the north of Athens.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Well, then, where?

HERMES

Oh, a long, long way away,
under the very dome of heaven itself.

TRYGAEUS

So why have you been left here by yourself? [200]

HERMES

I'm keeping an eye on the furniture,
what's left of it—some little pots and pans,
boards, some wine jugs.

TRYGAEUS

Why have the gods all left?

HERMES

They're angry at the Greeks—so they moved War 230
into the house where they were living,
giving him full power to treat you Greeks
any way he wishes. They moved their home
even higher up, as far as they could go,
so they wouldn't see you fighting any more
or hear any of your prayers.

TRYGAEUS

Tell me this—
why have they been treating us like that? [210]

HERMES

Because they tried to make peace many times,
but you prefer to fight. If the Spartans
had a small success, they'd say something like, 240
“By the twin gods, those Attic types will pay.”¹³
And if, with events turning out quite well
for those in Attica, the Spartans came
to talk of peace, you'd answer right away,
“By Athena, they're playing tricks with us.
No, by Zeus, there's no way we'll go along.

¹³The twin gods are Castor and Pollux (or Polydeuces), twin brothers of Helen and Clytaemnestra, and important Peloponnesian gods. Attica is the region of Greece around Athens. The Peloponnesian War pitted Sparta and its allies, mainly in the Peloponnese, against Athens and its allies.

PEACE

They'll come back, if we hang on to Pylos."¹⁴

TRYGAEUS

Yes, that's way folks in our country talk. [220]

HERMES

Well, that's why I don't think you'll ever see
Peace in your time again.

TRYGAEUS

Where's she gone, then? 250

HERMES

War has thrown her into a deep hole.

TRYGAEUS

What hole?

HERMES [*pointing to the walled up cave in the central part of the stage*]

That one, way down there. What's more,
you see how many rocks he's piled on top
to stop you hauling her back out again.

TRYGAEUS

Tell me, what's War planning to do to us?

HERMES

All I know is last evening he brought home
a gigantic mortar.

TRYGAEUS

He's got a mortar? [230]
What's he going to do with that?

HERMES

Well, he wants it
to pulverize the city states of Greece.
But I have to go. I think he's coming out— 260
he's making such a fuss in there.

¹⁴Pylos, in the south of the Peloponnese, was the site of a major set back for the Spartans (a few years before the production of *Peace*), when the Athenians took 300 Spartans prisoners and set up an occupying force. The prisoners were an important bargaining chip for the Athenians, since many came from the finest families in Sparta.

PEACE

[Hermes leaves. The noise inside the house gets louder.]

TRYGAEUS *[alarmed]*

Oh, oh!

I'm in a mess. Come on, I'd better find
some way to get away from him. I think
I hear the sounds of a warlike mortar.

[Trygaeus conceals himself. War enters, carrying a huge mortar and a basket of vegetables.]

WAR

O you human beings, you mortal men,
you human creatures who endure so much,
how your jaws are going to feel the pain!

TRYGAEUS *[from his hiding place]*

By lord Apollo, look at the mortar,
the size of it! This is a disaster—
that look he's got! Is this the enemy
we're running from—so terrible, so tough,
so hard on a man's legs?¹⁵

270 [240]

WAR *[taking some leeks and putting them in the mortar]*

O Prasiae!

thrice damned, five times damned, damned a thousandfold!
This very day you're going to be demolished.¹⁶

TRYGAEUS

This is no concern of ours, gentlemen,
since it's a problem for the Spartans.

WAR *[putting some garlic in the mortar]*

O Megara, Megara, how very soon
you be crushed to bits, turned into mincemeat.¹⁷

TRYGAEUS

Whoa, my goodness me, he's throwing in
some bitter tears for the Megarians,
big ones, too.

280

¹⁵A reference to the way War make men's knees tremble or, Sommerstein suggests, perhaps to an involuntary bowel movement brought on by fear.

¹⁶Prasiae was a small coastal town in the Peloponnese.

¹⁷Megara was an important city state to the west of Athens, close to the Isthmus of Corinth.

PEACE

WAR *[grating some cheese into the mortar]*
And Sicily, you're destroyed, as well. [250]

TRYGAEUS
Such a great state to be grated down
in such a miserable way.

WAR *[pouring honey over the food]*
All right,
lets pour over this some Attic honey.

TRYGAEUS
Hey, I'd advise you use a different honey.
That stuff costs four obols. So ease up
with that stuff from Attica.

WAR *[calling for his servant]*
Boy! Boy! Uproar!

[Uproar enters from the house.]

UPROAR
Why'd you call me?

WAR
I'll make you really yelp!
Standing there doing nothing. Here's a fist for you!

[War punches Uproar in the face.]

UPROAR
That hurts! O master, I'm in agony!
Your fist wasn't full of garlic, was it? 290

WAR
Why don't you run and fetch me a pestle?

UPROAR
We don't have one. It was only yesterday
when we moved in here. [260]

WAR
Then go get one
from the Athenians—and make it fast.

PEACE

UPROAR

By god, I'll do it. If I don't find one,
then I'll be beaten till I howl.

[Uproar runs off in a hurry.]

TRYGAEUS

Well now,
what are we poor wretched types to do?
You see there's great danger threatening us.
If he returns and brings along a pestle, 300
War will sit there using it to pulverize
all our city states. O Dionysus,
may he perish and not get back with it!

[Uproar comes running back empty handed.]

WAR

Here he is.

UPROAR

What's going on?

WAR

You didn't bring it?

UPROAR

The strange thing is this—those Athenians
have lost their pestle, that tanner who ground [270]
all Greece to powder.¹⁸

TRYGAEUS

By Athena,
that sovereign lady, he did well to die,
just when the city needed him to go,
before he dumped us all into that hash. 310

WAR

Then go get another one in Sparta
and be quick about it.

¹⁸The tanner referred to is Cleon, an important Athenian politician and a favourite target of Aristophanes. He is famous for stirring the people up in favour of war. Cleon died in 422 BC, shortly before the production of *Peace*.

PEACE

UPROAR

I'm off master.

[Uproar moves off quickly. War shouts after him.]

WAR

And get back here on the double.

TRYGAEUS *[to the audience]*

Well, men,
what's going to happen to us? At this point,
we're in deep trouble. So if one of you,
by chance, is an initiate of Samothrace,
this would be a splendid time for you to pray
the servant lad sprains both his feet.¹⁹

UPROAR *[running back on stage and striking an exaggerated pose]*

Alas!

[280]

O woe is me! And one more time Alas!

WAR

What is it? You mean this is the second time
you've come back here without a pestle?

320

UPROAR

Yes.

The Spartans have lost their pestle, too.

WAR

How'd that happen, you rogue?

UPROAR

Well, they lent it
to some other folks in Thracian country,
and it got lost.

TRYGAEUS

By those two sons of Zeus,
the Thracians did good work! Good luck to them!
You mortal men, keep up your courage!

¹⁹ The phrase 'initiate of Samothrace' refers to a member of a religious cult located in Samothrace, an island in the Aegean Sea. This cult, Sommerstein explains, was famous for the success of the prayers offered by those initiated into it.

PEACE

WAR

Pick up this stuff and take it back inside.
I'm going in to make myself a pestle.

[War leaves. Uproar collects the mortar and vegetables and follows after him. Trygaeus emerges from his hiding place.]

TRYGAEUS

All right, now it's time to sing that old song 330
Datis used to sing every day at noon [290]
when he'd yank his cock, "Ah, how that feels good!
O, that's so nice! I'm getting off on this!"²⁰
You men of Greece, now's an excellent time
to set aside our quarreling and fights
and drag up Peace, who's friendly to us all,
before some other pestle interferes.
So you farm labourers and merchants,
you carpenters, craftsmen, immigrants,
foreigners, and islanders, come here, 340
all common folk, as quickly as you can,
and bring some picks and ropes and levers.
Now's our chance to have a drink together, [300]
a swig from the Good Spirit's cup.²¹

[The Chorus enters. It consists of working people from many different Greek states.]

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Come on this way, all those of you who're keen
to rescue us right now. It's now or never!
All you Greeks, let's help each other out
by getting rid of all our warlike ranks
and the nasty deep red colour of blood.
The day that Lamachus detests is here.²² 350

[The Chorus Leader turns to address Trygaeus.]

So come on, tell us what we need to do.

²⁰Datis is probably a reference to the commander of the Persian expedition sent against Athens and defeated at the battle of Marathon in 490 BC.

²¹The reference to the Good Spirit's cup seems to mean that it's time we all enjoyed common good fellowship. Sommerstein notes that after a meal there was a tribute of neat red wine to the Good Spirit, after which the drinking began in earnest.

²²Lamachus was the name of an Athenian general who, in Aristophanes's eyes, was too eager for the fame and wealth he garnered in battle.

PEACE

Give us some direction. It seems to me
there's no way I'll be stopping work today
until we've used these levers and machines
to haul out here into the light of day
the greatest goddess of them all, the one
who more than any other loves the vine.

TRYGAEUS

You must keep quiet, just in case your joy
in what we're doing and these shouts of yours
get War, who's in there, fired up again.

360 [310]

CHORUS LEADER

But we're so pleased to hear your proclamation—
it's not like those which tell us to come out
with rations for three days.²³

TRYGAEUS

Be careful now
in case Cerberus howls and yelps down there,
the way he did when he was here on earth,
and makes it hard for us to save the goddess.²⁴

CHORUS LEADER

No one will take her back from us again,
if we can once lay hands on her.

CHORUS

Hip hip hurrah!

TRYGAEUS

You men, if you don't stop those cheers of yours
you'll be the death of me. War will charge out
and his two feet will stomp on everything.

370

CHORUS LEADER

Well, let him make trouble and shake things up!
Let him walk over everything! Today,
we're not going to stop our celebrations.

[320]

²³The orders for military expeditions required the people to bring food for three days with them.

²⁴Cerberus was the famous dog guarding Hades. This mention of his name seems to be a reference to Cleon, the aggressive Athenian politician in favour of war, who had recently died.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Why seek danger? Men, what's got into you?
Your dancing's going to wreck a splendid plan!

CHORUS LEADER

But I'm not the one who likes this dancing.
It's my legs—they keep hopping on their own
from sheer delight. I'm not moving them.

TRYGAEUS

But that's enough now. Come on, stop dancing.
Stop it!

380

CHORUS LEADER

All right. Look, I've stopped.

[The Chorus Leader keeps on capering around, his legs out of control.]

TRYGAEUS

You say so,
but you haven't stopped at all.

CHORUS LEADER

Well, let me
dance one more turn and then I'm done.

TRYGAEUS

Just one,
and then you'll have to stop—no more dancing.

CHORUS LEADER

If it helps you, we won't dance any more.

[330]

TRYGAEUS

But look, you still haven't stopped!

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, by Zeus,
I kick out my right leg like this—that's it!

TRYGAEUS

All right, I'll let you get away with that,
if you don't keep on trying to piss me off.

PEACE

CHORUS LEADER

Well, I must have my left leg dance as well. 390
I'm rid of my shield—that makes me so glad,
I fart and laugh, more than if I'd shed old age.

TRYGAEUS

Don't rejoice right now. You don't know for sure,
at least not yet. But when we've got the goddess,
then you can shout and laugh and celebrate.
At that point you can sail or stay at home [340]
or fuck or sleep, watch holy festivals,
play cottabos, or live like Sybarites,
and keep on yelling out "Hurrah! Hurrah!"²⁵

CHORUS LEADER

How I long to see that day at last! 400
I've endured a lot, even mattresses
allotted by the gods to Phormio.²⁶
You'll no longer find me as a juryman
bitter and bad tempered, nor, I think, [350]
harsh in my ways, as I was earlier.
Instead you'll see a soft, much younger man,
once I'm free from troubles. For long enough
we've killed each other, wearing ourselves out
on journeys to the Lycaeum and back
with sword and shield.²⁷ But what can we do 410
to bring you most delight? Come on, speak up.
It's happy circumstance that's chosen you [360]
as our supreme commander.

TRYGAEUS

Well, come on.
Let me see how we get these stones removed.

[Enter Hermes.]

HERMES

You reckless rogue, what are you going to do?

²⁵Cottabos was a favourite dinner game which involved throwing dregs of wine at a target. A Sybarite is one famous for devoting his life to pleasure.

²⁶Phormio was a successful Athenian general famous for his ability to endure hardships and for insisting his men did the same.

²⁷The Lycaeum was a place in Athens where soldiers practised military drills.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Nothing bad—we're just like Cillicon.²⁸

HERMES

You evil wretch, you're done for.

TRYGAEUS

Yes, I am,
if that's how my lot turns out—Hermes would know
how to do things with a lottery.²⁹

HERMES

You're doomed!
You're dead!

TRYGAEUS

On what day?

HERMES

Immediately. 420

TRYGAEUS

But I've not purchased any flour or cheese
for my forced march to death.³⁰

HERMES

No doubt about it,
you're already mincemeat.

TRYGAEUS

Then why is it
receiving such a major benefit [370]
has escaped my notice?

HERMES

Are you not aware
Zeus has issued a decree that anyone
who's caught digging that goddess up must die?

²⁸Cillicon betrayed his city Miletus to its enemies. When asked what he was doing, he said "Nothing bad."

²⁹The Athenians seem to have drawn lots for the order in which they executed condemned criminals. Hermes was the god of chance.

³⁰Trygaeus is treating his death like a military campaign and complaining that he's being called up too quickly, so that he hasn't had time to get his three days of rations.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

You mean it's absolutely necessary
I must perish on the spot?

HERMES

Yes. Now you know.

TRYGAEUS

Well then, lend me three drachmas right away, 430
so I can buy a sucking pig. Before I die,
I have to get myself initiated.³¹

HERMES

By Zeus, lord of thunder and lightning . . .

TRYGAEUS [*interrupting*]

Master, I'm imploring you—by the gods—
don't report us!

HERMES

I cannot keep silent.

TRYGAEUS

In the name of those meats I brought for you
from the goodness of my heart.

HERMES

My dear chap, [380]
I'll be destroyed by Zeus if I don't shout
and make a real commotion over this.

TRYGAEUS

No, don't shout. O my dear little Hermes, 440
I'm begging you!

[*Trygaeus turns to address the Chorus.*]

You men, tell me
what you're doing? You're standing there like statues.
You fools, don't hang around saying nothing,
if you do that, he'll start to yell.

³¹This phrase *myself initiated* refers to the ritual of being initiated into a mystery religious cult. The ceremony required a sucking pig. Those initiated were supposed to enjoy a happier afterlife.

PEACE

CHORUS [*chanting*]

Lord Hermes, please don't yell or squeal.
If you recall a tasty meal
of young pig as a gift from me,
don't make my words a trivial plea.

TRYGAEUS [*joining the chant*]

O lord and master, can't you hear
how they are trying to bend your ear?

450

CHORUS [*chanting*]

Do not reject the prayers we say
and let us dig up Peace today.
Of all the gods you love men best
and give them gifts, so bless our quest,
if you dislike Pisander's plume,
his spiteful pride, we will resume
our constant offerings to you,
my lord, with great processions, too.³²

[390]

TRYGAEUS

Come, I beg you, have pity for their cries.
They're honouring you more than they used to do.

[400]

460

HERMES

They're greater robbers than they used to be.³³

TRYGAEUS

What's more, I'll tell you of a terrible act,
a major plot against the gods, all of them.

HERMES

All right, tell me. You might win me over.

TRYGAEUS

For some time the Moon and that rascal Sun
have been hatching many plots against you,
to hand Greece over to barbarians.

HERMES

Why would they do that?

³²Pisander was an Athenian general of reactionary political inclinations.

³³Hermes was the god of thieves and a famous thief himself.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Because, by Zeus,
we sacrifice to you—barbarians [410]
make their offerings to them. That’s why, 470
as one might expect, they want all of us
to be totally destroyed, so they alone
will have the rituals all to themselves.

HERMES

So that’s why those two for some time now
have been stealing daylight on the sly
and taking bites out of each other’s disk,
those scoundrels!³⁴

TRYGAEUS

That’s right. So, dear Hermes,
put your heart into helping us find Peace,
and pull her out with us. We’ll celebrate
the great Panathenaea in your honour, 480
and festivals to all the other gods—
the Mysteries, Dipolia and Adonia [420]
will honour Hermes.³⁵ The other cities,
once free of misery, will sacrifice
to Hermes as their guardian everywhere.
You’ll get fine things, a huge variety.
To start things off, I’ll give you this gift,
a bowl for you to pour libations with.

[Trygaeus pulls a golden bowl from his pocket and gives it to Hermes.]

HERMES

My, my, how I’m always keen on presents
when they’re made of gold.

TRYGAEUS

Come on then men, 490
get to work in there. Take those picks of yours,
move in, and get those stones removed. Hurry!

³⁴The phrases about stealing daylight and biting each other’s disks are references to solar and lunar eclipses.

³⁵The Panathenaea was an Athenian festival dedicated to Athena. The Mysteries were a celebration of the cult of Demeter. The Dipolia was a festival honouring Zeus, and the Adonia celebrated Aphrodite and Adonis.

PEACE

CHORUS LEADER

We'll do it. But you, wisest of the gods,
take charge of us. You understand this task,
so tell us what we need to do. You'll find
we won't be slack in doing other work. [430]

TRYGAEUS

Come on, hurry up and hold the bowl out,
so we can offer prayers up to the gods
before beginning work.

HERMES

A libation!
A libation! Now speak the reverent words. 500
Speak well. As we pour out this libation,
let's pray an age begins this very day
when many fine things come for all the Greeks,
and anyone who works with his whole heart
to pull the ropes won't grip his shield again.³⁶

TRYGAEUS

By Zeus, may we spend our lives in peace, [440]
embracing mistresses and poking fires.

HERMES

And any man who'd rather be at war . . .

TRYGAEUS [*interrupting*]

O lord Dionysus, may he never stop
yanking arrows from his funny bone. 510

HERMES

If there's a man eager for army rank
who does not wish to drag you to the light,
O lady, in his battles . . .

TRYGAEUS [*interrupting again*]

May he go through
the same experience as Cleomenes.³⁷

³⁶The allocation of lines in this speech and in those which follow is much disputed. I have followed Sommerstein's suggestion (although not entirely) and left Hermes in charge of the libation prayers, with Trygaeus making the frequent interruptions, since this seems to be the most dramatically plausible arrangement.

³⁷Cleomenes was an Athenian who disgraced himself by dropping his shield and running away from battle.

PEACE

HERMES

And anyone who manufactures spears
or deals in shields and thus is keen for war
because of better trade . . .

TRYGAEUS [*interrupting*]

Let such a man
be seized by thieves and get no food to eat
but barley.

HERMES

If someone will not work with us
because he wants to be a general, [450]
or if a slave is ready to desert . . . 520

TRYGAEUS

May he be laid out on a wheel and whipped.

HERMES

May good things come to us! Now raise a shout!
Strike up a cry of joy!

TRYGAEUS

Leave out the strike.
Just shout out for joy.³⁸

HERMES

Oh, all right, then.
Hail! Hail! That's all I'll say! Hail to Hermes,
the Graces and the Seasons, to Aphrodite
and Desire! What about Ares?

CHORUS

No, no!

TRYGAEUS

And no cheers for Enyalios, right?³⁹

³⁸This comment arises from a pun in the Greek, since the word *cry out with joy* (*paean*) closely resembles the word *to strike*.

³⁹Ares is the god of warfare. Enyalios is an alternative name for Ares and also the name of a separate god of war.

PEACE

CHORUS

No!

[The Chorus wrap the rope around something in the cavern and start to pull, but, as they make the effort, they get hopelessly confused, pulling in different directions and falling over each other.]

TRYGAEUS

All right, everyone make a real effort
and pull these ropes to reel her in.

530

HERMES

Heave away!

CHORUS LEADER

Heave ho!

[460]

HERMES

Come on, pull!

CHORUS LEADER

Pull even harder!

HERMES

Heave . . . Come on, heave!

TRYGAEUS

The men won't pull together.

[Trygaeus turns to one group of men.]

Why not pull your weight? You're too proud to work.
O you Boeotians, you'll be crying soon.

HERMES

All right now, heave.

TRYGAEUS

Heave ho!

CHORUS LEADER *[to Hermes and Trygaeus]*

You two there,
come on and pull as well.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Aren't I pulling, too— [470]
holding the rope and hauling furiously,
working really hard?

CHORUS LEADER

Then how come this job
isn't moving forward?

TRYGAEUS [*to one of the workmen*]

Hey, Lamachus, 540
you're a problem sitting there, in the way.
My good man, we don't need your monster.⁴⁰

HERMES

Well, these Argives haven't been hauling long.
They laugh at other people's suffering,
collecting pay and rations from both sides.⁴¹

TRYGAEUS

But Spartans, my dear chap, are pulling rope
like real men.

CHORUS LEADER

But look—among that crowd
the only ones who're keen to help are those
who've been chained up in jail. The arms makers [480]
keep getting in their way.⁴²

TRYGAEUS

The Megarians 550
aren't making any effort.

HERMES

Well, they're pulling

⁴⁰Lamachus, an important Athenian general, had a shield with a Gorgon's head depicted on it (the face of Medusa, which in traditional mythology could turn men to stone).

⁴¹In the war both Athens and Sparta sought to win over the Argives as allies, but the Argives maintained a shrewd neutrality. Eventually they joined up with the Athenians. Sommerstein suggests that this line may be a reference to Argives working as paid crewmen on both Athenian and Spartan ships.

⁴²The phrase about the Spartans "in jail" is a reference to the many Spartan prisoners captured by the Athenians at Pylos. They were kept chained up in jail in Athens (the Greeks say "held to wood," referring to the chains attached to the beams in the prison). For them Peace will be much more welcome than for the arms makers.

PEACE

and showing all their teeth, like puppy dogs.

TRYGAEUS

Yes, by Zeus, because they're dying of hunger.⁴³
Hey, you men, we're not getting anywhere.
We must all work at this together.
So one more time.

HERMES

Heave!

TRYGAEUS

Heave away!

HERMES

Heave!

TRYGAEUS

By Zeus, pull!

CHORUS LEADER

We're shifting it a little. [490]

TRYGAEUS

This is dreadful—some are pulling one way,
others in another. You Argives there,
you're going to get a beating!

HERMES

Come on, heave! 560

TRYGAEUS

Pull!

CHORUS LEADER

There're people here with us who're traitors.

TRYGAEUS

But those of you who long for Peace keep pulling—
put your backs into it!

⁴³Athenian hostilities against Megara had brought starvation to many in the city.

PEACE

CHORUS LEADER

But some men here
are interfering, getting in the way.

HERMES

O you Megarians, get the hell away! [500]
The goddess hates you, for she remembers
you were the first to rub your garlic on her.⁴⁴
And you Athenians, I'm telling you
stop holding that position where you're pulling
at the moment—you're not doing anything 570
but fighting in the courts. If you really wish
to set the goddess free, then move on down,
shift yourselves towards the sea a little.⁴⁵

CHORUS LEADER

All right, men, let the farmers grab the rope
all by themselves, with no one else.

HERMES

Ah, you men, now things are going much better.

CHORUS LEADER

He says we're getting somewhere. Come on, then, [510]
every man must pull with all he's got!

TRYGAEUS

Hey, the farmers are getting the job done,
all by themselves.

CHORUS LEADER

Come on, all of you. 580
Come on!

HERMES

Now they're working all together!

CHORUS LEADER

Let's not relax—keep pulling even harder!

⁴⁴This phrase about garlic means, in effect, to get her angry. Sommerstein points out that fighting cocks were fed garlic to make them more pugnacious.

⁴⁵This is a reference to the military policy of Pericles, the major political leader in Athens at the start of the war, which urged Athenians to put all their faith in their fleet, rather than in organizing land expeditions against the Spartans.

PEACE

HERMES

Here it comes now!

[Something starts to emerge being pulled from inside the cavern.]

CHORUS LEADER

Now heave! Everyone, heave!
Heave! Heave! Heave! Heave! Heave! Heave!
Heave! Heave! Heave! Heave! Heave! Everyone, heave!

[The trolley emerges from the cavern. On it stands Peace with her two attendants Opora and Theoria in a tableau reminiscent of contestants in a beauty pageant.]

TRYGAEUS

O holy lady who provides us grapes, [520]
where can I find the words to speak to you,
the ten-thousand-gallon words to greet you?
I didn't bring them when I came from home.
And I welcome you as well, Opora, 590
and Theoria, too. What a gorgeous face
you've got there, Theoria, and sweet breath!
So fragrant to my heart! It's just lovely—
like perfume or freedom from conscription.

HERMES

You mean she smells just like a soldier's pack?

TRYGAEUS

The hateful pack of such a hateful person
makes me puke—it stinks of onion belches.
She smells of harvest times and festivals, [530]
the Dionysia, flute music, tragic plays,
songs of Sophocles, thrushes, poetic scraps 600
penned by Euripides . . .⁴⁶

HERMES *[interrupting]*

You're in trouble now,
spreading lies like that about her. She hates
that poet who uses trivial phrases
from the law courts.

⁴⁶The Dionysia was the major drama festival in Athens, a celebration in which *Peace* was produced.

PEACE

as soon as possible. But leave behind
your swords and spears and javelins. This place
has now been overrun with mellow Peace.
So all men should move out and back to work—
off to the fields, singing a song of joy!

CHORUS LEADER *[to Peace]*

Ah, this day our workers have so yearned for
and just men, too! I see you and rejoice. 630
After such a long, long time, how I wish
to greet my vines. How my heart desires
to hold in my embrace those same fig trees
I planted in the days when I was young.

TRYGAEUS

Now men, first of all let's offer prayers [560]
to the goddess who's brought us our freedom
from battle crests and Gorgons. After that,
let's head off home, back to our farms. But first,
let's buy a nice little piece of pickled fish
to eat while in the fields.

[The Chorus pick up their various tools and form a line, in preparation for leaving.]

HERMES

By Poseidon, 640
how fine their ranks look, compact and spirited,
just like a barley cake or a sumptuous feast.

TRYGAEUS

By Zeus, that's a splendid mattock he's got there,
all set to go, and those three-pronged garden forks
are glistening in the sun. They could clear out
the rows between our vines so beautifully!
Now I'm keen to get back home myself,
into the fields, working with my pitch fork,
turning clods of earth after all this time. [570]
You men, remember that old way of life 650
Peace used to give us in our earlier days,
those figs pressed into cakes or freshly picked,
the myrtles and sweet new wine, the violets
beside the spring, the olives we so longed for.
For the sake of these speak to the goddess now. [580]

PEACE

CHORUS

Welcome, dearest goddess, welcome!
How I rejoice now that you've come.
Overwhelmed with longing for you,
I kept hoping for a miracle,
to go back to my fields again. 660
O lady we've been yearning for,
you were the greatest benefit
to all of us who spend our lives
working the land, for you alone [590]
would help us out. In earlier days,
while you were in control, we had
so many sweet and lovely things
that cost us nothing. For farmers
you meant security and wheat.
Our vineyards and our young fig trees 670
and all the other plants we have
will smile with joy to welcome you. [600]

CHORUS LEADER

But how can she have stayed away from us
for all this time? Hermes, of all the gods
you're the friendliest to us, so tell me.

HERMES

O you wisest of all working farmers,
listen to my words, if you'd like to hear
how Peace first went astray. It all began
when that Phidias ran into trouble,
and Pericles, afraid he'd share his fate, 680
for he was frightened of your character
and your ferocious ways, fired up the town,
before he had to suffer anything
too drastic, throwing out a little spark,
the Megarian decree, and fanned it
into a conflict so intense, the smoke [610]
drew tears from all the Greeks, not only here,
but in Sparta, too.⁴⁸ Well, once that started,

⁴⁸Phidias was the most famous sculptor in Athens. He was accused of stealing materials (including gold) from a public commission for a statue of Athena and was banished. Pericles, the leading political figure in Athens, was a close associate of Phidias and one of those charged with overseeing the work. The Megarian decree prohibited any people of Megara from coming to Athens and shut down all trade with the place. This was an extreme hardship for the Megarians. The suggestion here is that the origin of the

PEACE

the first vineyards were compelled to crackle
and a pot, once hit, kicked out in anger 690
at another pot, and there was no one there
who could prevent it any more. And so,
Peace just disappeared.

TRYGAEUS

Well, by Apollo,
no one ever told me that's what happened.
I'd never heard how Peace could be hooked up
with Phidias.

CHORUS LEADER

I hadn't either,
not until just now. But if she's his kin,
that's why she's beautiful. So many things
are kept concealed from us!

HERMES

Well, after that,
the towns who were your subjects, once they saw 700
you were so enraged at one another [620]
and your fangs were out, hatched all sorts of plans
against you, because they feared the tribute,
and then used their gold to bribe the Spartans,
the most important of them, and those men,
being greedy and treacherous with strangers,
tossed Peace out in a disgraceful manner
and held out for war.⁴⁹ This gained them profit,
but brought the workers to catastrophe.
Warships repeatedly went out from here 710
to get revenge—they devoured the fig trees,
which belonged to men who bore no blame.

TRYGAEUS

No, that was justified—those men chopped down
one of my trees of dark grey figs, a bush
I'd planted and then nursed with my own hands.

Peloponnesian War was linked to this scandal. The Greek text does not mention Sparta by name, but uses the phrase “over there,” a clear reference to the Spartans.

⁴⁹Before the war Athens had developed an alliance among a number of city states, allegedly for defensive purposes. Athens insisted forcibly that these city states pay them tribute money, claiming that they would provide the naval forces for defending them all against the Spartans and their allies. Many of the tributary states were not happy with this arrangement.

PEACE

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, by Zeus, that was truly well deserved! [630]
Those men destroyed a storage chest of mine.
They smashed it with a stone. And that box held
six bushels full of corn!

HERMES

Then working men
came from their fields in droves and let themselves, 720
without their knowing it, be bought and sold,
just as the others were. Longing for figs,
they didn't even have grape pits to eat,
and so they looked toward the demagogues.
These men, who clearly knew how displaced folk
were weak and short of food, with their forked cries
drove Peace out, though she came back in person
many times, moved by affection for the land.
Then they began to squeeze the rich fat types
among their allies, on the trumped-up charge 730 [640]
that they were followers of Brasidas.
And then you lot would tear the man apart,
like puppy-dogs. The city was all pale
and cowering in fear. It would snap up
every scrap of slander with great pleasure,
whatever anyone tossed out. Strangers,
who saw the blows come raining down on them,
stuffed mouths of the informers shut with gold.
So they grew rich, while, without your knowledge,
Greece might have been destroyed. This work was done 740
by that man who dealt in leather.⁵⁰

TRYGAEUS

Stop, lord Hermes!
That's enough! Don't tell us any more.
Leave that man where he is, down in Hades.

⁵⁰At the start of the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans attacked Athenian territory by land. The Athenians, following the advice of Pericles, abandoned the countryside and brought the country people into the city. These refugees were in considerable distress, and some special welfare provisions were made for them. The "demagogues" are the public orators of the party urging war (notably Cleon). Brasidas was an important and (for a while) very successful Spartan general. His death shortly before the production of *Peace* was one of the reasons there seemed a real chance that the cities might end hostilities. The man who dealt in leather is the demagogue Cleon (who had also died shortly before the production of *Peace*, as Trygaeus's next speech indicates).

PEACE

He's no longer one of us. No, he's yours. [650]
He was a villain when he was alive,
a windbag who liked to slander people,
an agitator who stirred up trouble,
but when you mention all these things right now,
your slandering one of your own people.⁵¹

[Trygaeus moves to talk to Peace.]

But, reverend goddess, why are you so quiet? 750
Talk to me.

HERMES

She won't speak to this audience.
All the suffering she's had to undergo
has made her very angry at them.

TRYGAEUS

Then let her say a few words just to you. [660]

HERMES

My dearest lady, tell me what you think
about these people here. Come on now,
of all women you hate war the most.

*[Hermes put his ear close to Peace's mouth to listen to her whisper to him.]*⁵²

Speak up. I'm listening. That's what annoys you?
I understand.

[Hermes turns to address the audience.]

Listen, you people here.
This is what she blames you for. She says 760
after that fight in Pylos she came here,
of her own free will, bringing a basket
full of treaties to the city, but you lot

⁵¹Hermes was associated with Hades, since he accompanied the spirits of the dead to the underworld.

⁵²It's not clear whether or not Peace actually does whisper something to Hermes in this and later speeches or if he just pretends that she does. Since Peace never says another word in the play, the latter option seems dramatically more plausible, especially since Hermes seems to really like lecturing the audience on all the things they did wrong.

PEACE

turned her down three times in your assembly.⁵³

TRYGAEUS

We were wrong to do that. But forgive us—
back then our brains were crammed with leather.

HERMES

Listen now to something she's just asked me. [670]
Who was the man most hostile to her here,
and who was friendly, someone really keen
not to fight on?

TRYGAEUS

Well, Cleonymus 770
was her greatest friend by far.

HERMES

Cleonymus?
What sort of fellow was he in a fight?

TRYGAEUS

The very bravest spirit, except for this—
he was not the son of the man he claims
as his own father. When he'd march out
with the army, he wouldn't hesitate
to throw away his weapons.

[Hermes places his ear close to Peace's mouth again.]

HERMES

One more thing
she's just asked me: Who now governs you [680]
and rules the rocky Pynx?⁵⁴

TRYGAEUS

That position
is now occupied by Hyperbolus.⁵⁵ 780

⁵³At Pylos (in 425 BC) the Athenians won an unexpected victory and captured 300 Spartan citizen-soldiers, a very serious blow to the Spartans, whose population was relatively small. The Spartans made peace overtures in an attempt to get the prisoners released.

⁵⁴Pynx is the name of a hill where the Athenians held their assemblies.

⁵⁵Hyperbolus was a leading Athenian politician, a radical demagogue who inherited Cleon's role after the latter's death. He is a favourite target of Aristophanes's satire.

PEACE

[Peace turns her head away in disgust.]

What are you doing? Why turn your head aside?

HERMES

She's turning away from these people here
in anger that they'd choose to vote themselves
such a scoundrel as their leader.

TRYGAEUS

Ah well,
we won't be using him for very long.
At the moment people need a leader.
They feel naked, so, for the time being,
they've wrapped that man around them.

[Hermes again places his ear close to Peace's mouth.]

HERMES

She asks
how this choice will benefit the city.

TRYGAEUS

We'll become more shrewd politically.

790

HERMES

How will you do that?

TRYGAEUS

Because Hyperbolus
makes lamps. Before this, we decided things
by groping in the dark. But now our plans
are made by lamplight.

[690]

[Hermes again places his ear close to Peace's mouth.]

HERMES

My, my, the things
she's told me to find out from you!

TRYGAEUS

What things?

PEACE

HERMES

All sorts of stuff, especially ancient things
she left behind so long ago. And first,
she wants to know how Sophocles is doing.

TRYGAEUS

He's well, but something quite astonishing
has happened to him.

HERMES

And what is that?

800

TRYGAEUS

He's changed from Sophocles into Simonides.⁵⁶

HERMES

Into Simonides? How come?

TRYGAEUS

He's old,
and he's decrepit, but for a profit
he'd go out sailing on a wicker mat.⁵⁷

HERMES

Really? Is wise Cratinus still living?⁵⁸

[700]

TRYGAEUS

He died when the Spartans came marching in.

HERMES

What went wrong with him?

TRYGAEUS

What happened? He collapsed.
He couldn't bear to see jars full of wine
being broken. How many other troubles
have gone on in the city! So, lady,
we'll never ship you out again.

810

⁵⁶Simonides was a famous lyric poet, well known for his love of money. The line seems to suggest that Sophocles is trying to get money (or more money) from writing.

⁵⁷It is not clear what these lines mean exactly. Sophocles was about seventy-five years old (and lived for many years more), but there's no sense elsewhere that he was a greedy or rash man. Sommerstein offers the tentative suggestions that these lines may refer to a risky business venture.

⁵⁸Cratinus was a well known comic poet who died shortly after the Peloponnesian War started.

PEACE

HERMES

Come on then,
if that's so, you should take Opora here
as wife. Live with her in the countryside,
and make yourselves some grapes.

TRYGAEUS *[to Opora]*

My dearest love,
come over here and kiss me.

[Trygaeus and Opora embrace. Trygaeus turns to Hermes.]

Lord Hermes, [710]
do you think it would do me any harm
if, after such a long time with no sex,
I had some with Opora?

HERMES

Not at all,
not if you take pennyroyal later.⁵⁹
But take Theoria here and lead her off 820
to the council place, where she lived before.
Get a move on!

TRYGAEUS

O that blessed council,
it gets Theoria. You'll be slurping soup
in huge amounts over the next three days,
eating so much meat and boiled sausage!
And so, dear friend Hermes, a fond farewell!

HERMES

And farewell to you, too, human mortal.
May you live happy, and remember me.

[Trygaeus prepares to leave, but when he looks for his flying dung beetle, it's nowhere to be seen. He starts calling it.]

TRYGAEUS

Time to go home, beetle, let's fly off home. [720]

⁵⁹Pennyroyal was (and still is) a widely used herbal remedy for a number of things, including eating too much fruit. Oporia's name literally means "full fruit."

PEACE

HERMES

He's not in there.

TRYGAEUS

Then where's he gone?

830

HERMES

He's harnessed to the chariot of Zeus
and bears the lightning bolt.⁶⁰

TRYGAEUS

The poor thing!
Where will he find shit to eat in heaven?

HERMES

He'll feed on Ganymede's ambrosia.⁶¹

TRYGAEUS

All right, but how do I get down?

HERMES

It's easy.
Don't worry. Go this way past the goddess.

TRYGAEUS

This way, girls, just follow me, and quickly.
There's lots of people waiting there for you
with their erections ready.

CHORUS LEADER

Go on! Farewell!

[Trygaeus, Opora, Theoria and Hermes leave the stage.]

Meanwhile we should hand all this equipment
over to attendants—give it to them
to keep safely. There are many thieving types
who really like to hang around the stage
and look for things to steal.

840

[730]

⁶⁰Hermes's speech here, Sommerstein points out, is a quotation from a lost play by Euripides, which refers to the fabulous winged horse Pegasus.

⁶¹Ganymede was a royal prince of Troy who was so beautiful he was taken up to Olympus to carry Zeus's cup and be his sexual playmate.

PEACE

[The Chorus hands over its various farm implements to stage hands who come in to collect them.]

Guard these bravely,
and let's explain to these spectators here
the road our words will take, what's on our minds.

[The Chorus moves to address the audience directly.]

CHORUS

The judges here ought to thrash the comic poet
who steps onto the stage in front of these spectators
to praise himself in verse. But, daughter of Zeus,
if it's all right to pay due honour to the man 850
who is the finest and best known comic writer,
then our producer claims he merits your great praise.
First, he's was the only man who stopped his rivals
making constant fun of rags and fighting wars with lice, [740]
and the first to ridicule and banish from the stage
the Herculeses who were always making cakes
and going hungry. He also dismissed those slaves
who kept on running off, or deceiving someone,
or getting whipped. They were always led out crying,
so one of their fellow slaves could mock the bruises 860
and then ask: "O you poor miserable fellow,
what's happened to your skin? Surely a huge army
of lashes from a whip has fallen down on you
and laid waste your back?" Yes, our poet has removed
such feeble trash, such commonplace tomfoolery,
and created a great art for us, by building up
high-towered homes from lovely words and thoughts and jokes [750]
which are not trivial stuff. And he does not present
obscure private types or women in his dramas.
No, with the spirit of Hercules he attacks 870
the greatest targets, striding through the dreadful stink
of stripped-off leather hide and the grandiloquence
of those with hearts of mud.

CHORUS LEADER

Of all the bouts I fought
the very first was with the fanged-tooth one himself,
whose eyes shot out most dreadful rays, like a Bitch Star.
Round him circled a hundred moaning flatterers,
who'd spit-lick his head. He had a thundering torrent

PEACE

of a voice, and he smelled as nasty as a seal,
the unwashed balls of Lamia, and camels' arse holes.⁶²
When I saw this monstrosity, I did not fear, 880
but kept fighting constant wars with him, holding out
on your behalf and for the islanders. And so, [760]
it's only right that you remember me and show
your gratitude by paying me back. Before this point,
when I've had success, I didn't lose my mind and roam
around the wrestling schools trying to seduce young lads.
No, I took my theatre gear and went off on my way.
I didn't cause much pain and brought you great delight,
producing everything just how it ought to be.

CHORUS

And for this reason men and boys 890
should side with me. And we advise
bald men to join with us and strive
for victory, since if I win,
at tables and at festivals [770]
every man will say, "Here, take this
to that bald man, give this bald man
a sweet dessert, and don't hold back
from a man whose forehead matches
our noble poet's balding skull."⁶³
O Muse, drive wars away, and dance, 900
my friend, dance with us—celebrate
the weddings of the gods, the feasts
of mortal men, and festivals
of those who have been blessed, for these [780]
have from the start been your concern.
And if that Carcinus should come
begging you to join his children
in a dance, don't listen to him
or move to help them with their play.⁶⁴

⁶²This is a monstrous portrait of Cleon, one of Aristophanes's early targets. Sommerstein notes that the phrase "Bitch Star" comes from a female equivalent for "Dog Star" (a particularly bright part of the night sky), which happens also to be the name of a notorious prostitute. Lamia is a well known monster, but is normally female, in which case the "balls" on Lamia would be non-existent, another slur against Cleon. The switch to the first person suggests that either Aristophanes himself is stepping forward to speak or that someone in the chorus is impersonating him. Hence, I have assigned this first-person section to the Chorus Leader.

⁶³Aristophanes frequently makes fun of his own baldness.

⁶⁴Carcinus was an Athenian tragic dramatist and his sons were well known as actors and dancers. They were apparently quite small in stature.

PEACE

Think of them all as homebred quails, 910
dancing dwarves with long scraggy necks,
sliced-up lumps of dung, who put on [790]
mere artifice. Their father claimed
that once a play he was to stage,
a work no one had thought he'd write,
was choked one evening by a weasel.⁶⁵

Such are the long-haired Muses' songs
the clever poet ought to sing
before the public, when swallows [800]
sitting in the leaves in springtime 920
let forth their song, and choruses
of Morsimus are not allowed,
nor any from Melanthius,
whose most ear-piercing voice I heard
once screaming out—it was that day
he and his brother put on stage
the tragic chorus. What a pair!
Gorgon epicures and Harpies, [810]
ravenously devouring roaches,
foul rogues chasing down old women 930
and wiping out whole schools of fish.
What more, their armpits stink like goats!⁶⁶
O goddess Muse, please spit on them—
a huge, wide gob of phlegm—and then,
throughout the party, play with me.

[Trygaeus, now back home, enters with Opora and Theoria.]

TRYGAEUS

That was tough, going straight up to the gods.
My legs are really aching. You people [820]
were tiny from up there. When I peered down,
from heaven you looked like total scoundrels,
but from here you seem a great deal worse. 940

⁶⁵It's not clear what this reference to a weasel means. Perhaps it's based on a popular story about Carcinus, or perhaps the description is supposed to mean that his play was like a small and nasty rodent.

⁶⁶Morsimus and Melanthius were tragic poets and frequent targets of Aristophanes (especially for their bad poetry and eating habits); the Gorgons were monsters with large teeth and a reputation for gluttony, and the Harpies were winged monsters with a woman's face and a vulture's body. The roach mentioned is the fish (the Greek word also refers to another fish, the skate, but the English pun on roach also helps to bring out their disgusting greed).

PEACE

[The First Servant comes from Trygaeus's house.]

FIRST SERVANT

Master, you've come back?

TRYGAEUS

That's what I've been told.

FIRST SERVANT

What's happened to you?

TRYGAEUS

My legs are hurting—
the road I travelled on was long.

FIRST SERVANT

So tell me now . . .

TRYGAEUS

What?

FIRST SERVANT

Did you see any other human,
besides yourself, wandering through the air.

TRYGAEUS

No, except perhaps two or three spirits
of dithyrambic poets.

FIRST SERVANT

What were they doing? [830]

TRYGAEUS

Oh, fluttering about collecting preludes
as they drifted in the airy breezes.

FIRST SERVANT

So it isn't true when people tell us
once we're dead, we'll be stars up in the sky? 950

TRYGAEUS

No, that's really true.

FIRST SERVANT

Then who's that star there?

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

That's Ion of Chios, who once composed,
when he was here, a poem about the dawn.
As soon as he got there, they all called him
the Star of Dawn.

FIRST SERVANT

Who are those stars up there
that rush across and blaze out as they move?

TRYGAEUS

They are wealthy stars who, after dinner, [840]
are making their way home, holding lanterns
with lights inside. But come on, hurry up 960
and take this girl. Conduct her to the house.
Clean the bath tub, and heat some water up.
Prepare the wedding bed for me and her.
And when you've finished, come back here again.
Meanwhile, I'll give this young girl to the council.

FIRST SERVANT

Where'd you get these girls?

TRYGAEUS

Where else? In heaven.

FIRST SERVANT

I wouldn't give three obols for the gods
if they keep bawdy houses, just like us.

TRYGAEUS

No they don't, but there are some up there [850]
who do live off the trade.

FIRST SERVANT *[to Opora]*

Come on then, let's go. 970
Tell me, should I give her something to eat?

TRYGAEUS

No. She won't want to eat any bread or cake.
She always had the habit of licking up
ambrosia with the gods in heaven.

PEACE

FIRST SERVANT

Well, we'll just have to see if we can find
something else for her to lick down here.

[First Servant exits with Opora into Trygaeus's house.]

CHORUS

This old man, as far as we can see,
is now working things out happily.

TRYGAEUS

What will you think when very soon
you see me as a bright bridegroom? 980

CHORUS

An old man to envy I presume. [860]
Once more you'll have your youthful bloom
and lie there drenched in sweet perfume.

TRYGAEUS

I think you're right. And in a bit
when I'm in bed and hold her tit?

CHORUS

Happier than a top-spinning lad
who calls that Carcinus his dad.

TRYGAEUS

I deserve it. Is that not true?
I, one man, on a beetle flew
and saved the Greeks, who free from harm 990
now sleep and fuck on every farm.

[First Servant returns from the house.]

FIRST SERVANT

The girl has finished bathing, and her butt
looks splendid. There's a flat cake ready.
And the sesame balls are being rolled up.⁶⁷
Everything's prepared. All we need now [870]
is a hard, stiff cock.

⁶⁷These foods are traditional wedding dishes.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Then let's get going
and offer Theoria to the Council.

FIRST SERVANT

This girl here? Who is she?

TRYGAEUS

What do you mean?
This is Theoria.

FIRST SERVANT

What? The girl
we used to travel with to Brauron
and then get drunk and screw?⁶⁸ 1000

TRYGAEUS

The very same.
I had a hard time getting her away.

FIRST SERVANT

O master, look at the ass on her—
I'd wait four years for that!

TRYGAEUS *[to the audience]*

Now, let's see.
Is there an honest man among you lot?
Where is he? Who'll take charge of this girl here
and guard her for the Council?

[To the First Servant who has been fondling Theoria's backside.]

Hey you,
what are you doing? Drawing a chart?

FIRST SERVANT

Me? Oh, I'm reserving a camping spot
to house my prick at the Isthmian Games.⁶⁹ 1010 [880]

⁶⁸Brauron was a town outside of Athens where there was a large celebration in honour of Athena every four years, a festival well known for its debauchery.

⁶⁹The Isthmian Games were important and popular athletic competitions. Visitors set up tents on the site. The mention of the games allows Trygaeus in his next long speech to introduce all sorts of sexual innuendoes when he describes the games the councillors can now play.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS *[to the audience]*

Tell me the man who'll look after her.

[To Theoria]

Come here. I'm going to take you down there
and put you in the middle of them.

FIRST SERVANT

Look there—
someone's nodding his head!

TRYGAEUS

Who is it?

FIRST SERVANT

Who is it? It's Ariphrades urging you
to take her over to him.

TRYGAEUS

No, he'll jump her
and start slurping in her lap.

[To Theoria]

Come now,
to start with you can take that clothing off.

*[Theoria undresses and stands nude in front of the audience. Trygaeus takes her to up close to the spectators.]*⁷⁰

TRYGAEUS

You council members and public officers,
look on this Theoria and witness
the splendid things I bring and give to you.
You can quickly raise these two legs of hers
high in the air and roast your sacrifice.
Look at the oven she's got.

1020

[890]

⁷⁰In Aristophanes's production, Theoria would have been played by a male actor disguised as a female. Her "nude" body, Sommerstein points out, would be covered with something (a flesh-coloured body stocking, perhaps) painted to depict breasts and public hair. The ambiguous sexuality underlies a good deal of the ribald humour which follows.

PEACE

FIRST SERVANT [*peering at Theoria's public hair*]
Magnificent!
Smoky black down here because the Council
used to cook their meat in her before the war.

TRYGAEUS

And now she's yours. At first light tomorrow
you can arrange some really splendid games—
wrestling on the ground, mounting doggy style,
lying her on her side, or on her knees, 1030
bending over, or rubbing on the oil
and grappling in a youthful free-for-all,
gouging and striking with your fists and prick.
Next day you'll organize equestrian games, [900]
where riders straddle riders, chariots crash
on top of one another, and blow and pant
as they go at it. Then other riders
will be lying there with cocks all scraped
from falling out while moving round the turns.
So come on, you officials of the state, 1040
accept Theoria.

[*Theoria moves down to the first row of spectators.*]

Look how eagerly
that public officer's receiving her!

[*Addressing the public official Theoria is now standing beside.*]

That's a motion you'd never introduce
if you weren't going to get a big pay off.
No. I'd have found you reaching for a peace.⁷¹

CHORUS

A useful man brings the state bliss 1010
And that's the kind of man this is.

TRYGAEUS

When you go gather in your grape
you'll see I'm in much better shape.

⁷¹This obscure joke, Sommerstein suggests, seems to depend on a similarity in sound between the word for *hand* (which would make the listeners think the official was reaching for a bribe) and the word for *peace*.

PEACE

CHORUS

But now it's clear what you've become. 1050
You've saved mankind—that's everyone.

TRYGAEUS

Once you've chugged some new-made wine,
a goblet full, you'll say I'm fine.

CHORUS

And we will constantly attest
but for the gods you are the best.

TRYGAEUS

I'm Trygaeus from Athmonum.
and you owe me a tidy sum.
I've pushed away harsh misery. [920]
Now farm and working folk are free.
I've made Hyperbolus succumb. 1060

FIRST SERVANT

All right, what do we have to do next?

TRYGAEUS

What else but to install the goddess Peace
by offering up some earthen pots?

FIRST SERVANT

With pots?
Just like a grumpy little Hermes?⁷²

TRYGAEUS

What do you think we should offer her?
A fattened bull?

FIRST SERVANT

An ox? No not that.
We don't need to serve as ox-iliaries.

TRYGAEUS

Then what about a big fat porker?

⁷² The phrase grumpy little Hermes refers to the frequent custom of placing small statues of Hermes outside people's homes. The First Servant is apparently complaining that the statue of Peace deserves more than these small household items.

PEACE

FIRST SERVANT

No, no.

TRYGAEUS

Why not?

FIRST SERVANT

Because we might turn into swine,
just like Theagenes.⁷³

TRYGAEUS

Well what do you think?
What other animal?

1070

FIRST SERVANT

What about this,
a bummer lamb?

TRYGAEUS

A bummer?

FIRST SERVANT

Yes, by god.

TRYGAEUS

But that's a slang expression.⁷⁴

[930]

FIRST SERVANT

That's deliberate—
so when anyone in the assembly
says we must have war, those sitting there
can all cry out in fear, "But war's a bummer!"

TRYGAEUS

That's a fine idea!

FIRST SERVANT

And in other things

⁷³Theagenes was a citizen of Piraeus (the port of Athens), well known for his ugly appearance and disgusting habits.

⁷⁴In the Greek the animal proposed is a sheep, and the First Servant uses a word from the Ionic dialect. Trygaeus's response is "But that's an Ionian dialect word." The use of the word *bummer* (a slang expression for an orphan lamb) is an attempt to get something out of this exchange, especially in connection with the First Servant's next two speeches.

PEACE

we'll be like gentle lambs, being very kind
to one another and a whole lot milder
to our allies.

TRYGAEUS

All right, now get cracking. 1080
Find that lamb and bring it here. I'll prepare
an altar so we'll have a sacrifice.

[First Servant leaves.]

CHORUS

How everything the gods desire
and fortune turns into a favour
moves on to what we all intend. [940]
One by one, the good things come,
with luck all things work in the end.

TRYGAEUS *[pointing to a structure on the raised stage]*
That makes good sense. Here's our outside altar.

[Trygaeus goes into his house and reappears with a basket during the Chorus's next speech.]

CHORUS

Hurry while the stiff winds pause.
The gods have shifted them from war. 1090
The spirits clearly want a change
to something better than before.

TRYGAEUS *[returning from the house]*

Here's the basket with barley seed, ribbons,
and a knife. We've got fire as well. So now,
the only thing we're missing is the sheep.

CHORUS

You'd better get a move on then— [950]
if Chaeris sees you, he'll show up
although you've not invited him.
He'll have his flute with him, as well,
and tootle it for all he's worth. 1100
You'll have to offer him a gift.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Chaeris is the name of a musician notorious for his inept playing.

PEACE

[First Servant returns with a lamb. Trygaeus brings out some water in a basin.]

TRYGAEUS *[to the First Servant]*

Come on then, you can take the basket
and this water for our hands. Circle round
the altar quickly, moving to the right.

FIRST SERVANT *[following the instructions]*

Watch, then. Now I've made my way around it.
You can tell me something else.

TRYGAEUS

Hang on.

I'll pick up this piece of burning wood
and plunge it in the water.

[Trygaeus takes the stick out of the water and shakes drops of water on the altar and on the lamb. He then speaks directly to the lamb.]

Nod your head.

[960]

[The lamb does nothing.]

Hurry up!

[The lamb eventually nods its head. Trygaeus addresses the First Servant.]

Give me barley grains.

[The First Servant hands the basket to Trygaeus, who takes some barley grains out of it and sprinkles them on the altar and on the lamb.]

Now that basin—
wash your hands and then give it to me.

1110

[The First Servant and Trygaeus wash their hands in the water in the basin.]

Now throw some barley in the audience.

[The First Servant tosses some barley grains out over the spectators.]

FIRST SERVANT

There, that's done!

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

You've thrown them out already?

SERVANT

Yes, by Hermes. There're no spectators here
who didn't get some seed.

TRYGAEUS

But none of it
was taken by the women.⁷⁶

FIRST SERVANT

No. Their men
will fill them full of seed once evening comes.

TRYGAEUS

All right. Then let us pray.

[Trygaeus holds up the bowl of water and calls out to start the ritual.]

Who is present here?
Where might there be a crowd of righteous men?

FIRST SERVANT

Come on, give me the bowl. There's lots of them,
and they're all stout fellows.

[The First Servant takes the bowl and throws the water over the Chorus. The members of the Chorus back away trying to avoid getting wet.]

TRYGAEUS

You really think so?
These are righteous men?

1120 [970]

FIRST SERVANT

Yes, they are. We soaked them
with that ritual water, and they've come back.
They stood their ground.

TRYGAEUS

All right, then,

⁷⁶Sommerstein notes that this comment does not necessarily mean that women were not permitted to attend performances (although it might refer to that). There is evidence from other texts that some women were present at these productions.

PEACE

let's pray right away.

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, let us pray.

TRYGAEUS

O most holy goddess, sacred Peace,
queen who rules our choral dancing,
queen of wedding celebrations,
receive our offerings to you.

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, most honoured lady, receive it,
Yes, by Zeus, and don't act like wives
1130 who like to sleep around, those women [980]
who open up the door a crack, peep out,
and then, if anyone starts eyeing them,
pull back again—but if he goes away,
they start looking out once more.
Don't be like that with us again.

TRYGAEUS

No, by god, but like a noble woman
reveal yourself completely to us,
who love you and for thirteen years now
1140 have been longing for you. Dissolve our fights, [990]
our noisy quarrels, so we can call you
our Lysimache.⁷⁷ And bring to an end
our subtle suspicions, which lead us on
to babble nonsense to each other.
Bring us Greeks together once again,
a new start with the juice of friendship,
soothe our minds with a kinder tolerance,
and let fine goods fill up our market place—
huge garlics, early cucumbers, apples, [1000]
1150 pomegranates, and for our servants cloaks,
but tiny ones. May we see men bringing
geese, ducks, and pigeons from Boeotia,
larks, as well, and may baskets full of eels
arrive from lake Copais. Let all of us
go out to buy them in a common crowd

⁷⁷The name literally means “put an end to fighting.” It's not clear whether this name refers to anyone specifically.

PEACE

and jostle with Morychus and Teleas
and Glaucetes and many other gluttons.
Let Malanthius come to market last, [1010]
so they're sold out and he begins to wail
and then to sing a song from his *Medea*, 1160
"I am dying, done for, now I am bereft
the ladies lying hiding in the beets."⁷⁸
And may men find all that delightful.
Grant these our prayers, most honoured goddess.

FIRST SERVANT

Take the knife and, like a true master cook,
butcher the sheep.

TRYGAEUS

No. That's not right.

FIRST SERVANT

Why not?

TRYGAEUS

Peace surely gets no joy from slaughter.
Nor should one spill blood across her altar. [1020]
Go, take the beast inside and sacrifice it.
Then cut the thigh bones out and bring them here. 1170
That way we'll save the sheep for our producer.

[The First Servant takes the knife and leads the sheep back into the house.]

CHORUS

But here outside you'd better stop,
and quickly set the wood you chop,
and then all else you need on top.

TRYGAEUS *[arranging kindling for a small fire on the altar]*

Well, don't you think I'm setting up the wood
like a real diviner.

CHORUS

You are indeed.
Does anything a clever man should know

⁷⁸Melanthius was a tragic poet with a reputation for gluttony, and *Medea* was one of his plays. Beets were commonly served with eels.

PEACE

escape you? What is there that you don't know
which a man esteemed for his wise mind [1030]
and for his daring ought to know?

TRYGAEUS

There we are! 1180
The wood's alight. Stilbides will be upset.⁷⁹
I'll go fetch a table. I don't need the lad.

[Trygaeus goes inside the house.]

CHORUS

Who would not praise a man like that
who's put up with so much danger
and has saved our sacred city?
Surely you'll remain the envy
of people for all time to come.

*[Trygaeus and the First Servant return with a table and the things needed for the sacrifice,
including various parts of the sacrificial sheep.]*

FIRST SERVANT

All right, it's ready. You take the thigh bones
and set them out. I'll go for the entrails [1040]
and the offering of food.

[First Servant goes into the house.]

TRYGAEUS

I'll take care of it. 1190

[Trygaeus sets out the thigh bones on the altar, then calls after the First Servant.]

You need to be here!

[First Servant returns from the house carrying the entrails and some cakes as offerings.]

FIRST SERVANT

All right, here I am.
You don't think I'm wasting time, do you?

⁷⁹Stilbides was an important diviner in Athens who went along on the disastrous Sicilian expedition. The slur is that he needs war in order to prosper at his trade and thus won't be happy about a successful offering to Peace.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Now make sure these things are properly cooked.

[Trygaeus looks to the side and sees someone coming.]

Someone's coming here wearing a garland.
It's made of laurel. Who the hell is he?

FIRST SERVANT *[looking in the same direction]*

The man looks like a total charlatan.
He must be a diviner.

TRYGAEUS

No, by god.
It must be Hierocles from Oreus,
the one who peddles oracles.

FIRST SERVANT

All right.
What's he going to say?

TRYGAEUS

Well, it's clear enough
he's going to oppose the peace agreement.

1200

FIRST SERVANT

No, it's the smell of sacrificial meat
that's brought him here.

[1050]

TRYGAEUS

Then let's pretend
we don't see him.

FIRST SERVANT

That's all right with me.

[Hierocles enters.]

HIEROCLES

What's this sacrifice? To which one of the gods?

TRYGAEUS *[to the First Servant]*

Keep quiet while your cooking and don't touch
those parts of the rump.

PEACE

HIEROCLES

Aren't you going to say
who this sacrifice is for?

TRYGAEUS

Ah, that's good—
the tail is roasting well.

FIRST SERVANT

Yes, a good omen.
O dear friend, lady Peace!

HIEROCLES

Come on now, 1210
start the offerings and give me the first piece.

TRYGAEUS

It's better to do the roasting first.

HIEROCLES [*peering at the cooking meat*]

But these are cooked already.

TRYGAEUS

Whoever you are,
you're too much in the way.

[*To the First Servant*]

Slice them up.

FIRST SERVANT

Where's the table?

TRYGAEUS

Bring out the libations.

[*The First Servant goes into the house.*]

HIEROCLES

The tongue is cut all by itself. [1060]

TRYGAEUS

We know.
You know what you should do?

PEACE

HIEROCLES

Yes, if you tell me.

TRYGAEUS

Don't say a word to us. We're offering
a holy sacrifice to Peace.

HIEROCLES [*in the grand style*]

O you miserable foolish mortal men!

1220

TRYGAEUS [*interrupting*]

It's your head you're talking about!

HIEROCLES [*continuing as before*]

You who are so ignorant, you do not know
what gods think, you've come to an agreement,
you who are men, with fierce-eyed monkeys.

TRYGAEUS [*laughing*]

Ha, ha, ha!

HIEROCLES

Why are you laughing?

TRYGAEUS

I liked that—
fierce-eyed monkeys!

HIEROCLES [*continuing in the grand style*]

Like timid fools you place your trust in foxes,
who've got deceitful minds, treacherous hearts.

TRYGAEUS

You rascal, I wish your lungs were as hot
as what's cooking here.

HIEROCLES

If those holy nymphs
had not swindled Bacis and Bacis then
had not misled mankind, and if those nymphs
had not tricked Bacis one more time . . .⁸⁰

[1070]

1230

⁸⁰Bacis was a well-known diviner from Boeotia who allegedly got his inspiration from the nymphs.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS

Damn you!
May you be utterly wiped out if you
don't stop prattling on about that Bacis.

HIEROCLES [*continuing as before*]

For it has not yet been decreed by Fate
that bonds of Peace should e'er be loosed
until such time as first of all . . .

TRYGAEUS

This food here
be dusted with this salt.

HIEROCLES

The blessed gods
will not be pleased that warfare terminate,
until the wolf is wedded to the sheep.

1240

TRYGAEUS

Damn you, how could a wolf ever get married
to a sheep?

HIEROCLES

As long as the wood bug,
when it flies, emits the foulest smelling farts,
as long as the noisy polecat bitch still strives
to deliver her blind litter, that's how long
it is not right for peace to have been made.

TRYGAEUS

Then what should we have done? Not stop the war?
Or decide by lot which of the two groups
should howl the loudest, when there's a chance
for peace and we can then rule Greece together?

[1080]

1250

HIEROCLES

You will never make the crab walk straight.

TRYGAEUS

In future you will never eat again
at the Prytaneum or offer up

PEACE

poetic fictions after the event.⁸¹

HIEROCLES

You will never smooth the prickly hedgehog.

TRYGAEUS

You've been deceiving the Athenians—
will there ever come a day when you will stop?

HIEROCLES

What sort of oracle commanded you
to burn these thigh parts to the deities?

TRYGAEUS

Well, of course, it was the work of Homer, 1260 [1090]
that splendid oracle: "They pushed aside
the hateful cloud of war and then chose Peace,
installing her with beasts for sacrifice.
Once they'd cooked the thighs and tasted entrails,
they poured libations from a cup"—I led the way,
but no one gave a gleaming cup of wine
to the man who peddled oracles.

HIEROCLES

I'll have no part of that. It's not a utterance
delivered by the Sibyl.⁸²

TRYGAEUS

But, by god,

wise Homer does say something pertinent: 1270
"The man in love with dreadful civil war
has no community, no rights, no home."

HIEROCLES

Be on your guard lest somehow a raptor bird [1100]
seizes your wits, deceives you by a trick.

TRYGAEUS [*to the First Servant as he comes out of the house*]

You, watch out for that bird—this oracle
is threatening our meat. Make a libation

⁸¹The Prytaneum was an important sacred building in Athens where very distinguished people could eat at public expense.

⁸²The Sibyl is a prophetess in a shrine. Hierocles may be referring to the prophetess of Apollo at Delphi.

PEACE

and pass the entrails over here to me.

[The First Servant makes a libation and serves Trygaeus some of the meat.]

HIEROCLES

If it's all right with you, I'll help myself.

[Hierocles approaches the table with the offering on it.]

TRYGAEUS

Libation! Libation!

HIEROCLES

Pour out some for me.
Present me with a portion of the meat.

1280

TRYGAEUS

But that's not pleasing to the blessed gods.
Not before this happens—we pour a drink
and you get out of here. O lady Peace,
remain with us for all our lives.

HIEROCLES

Serve me the tongue.

TRYGAEUS

Why don't you get your tongue away from here.

HIEROCLES *[grabbing some of the wine]*

Libation!

TRYGAEUS *[hitting Hierocles]*

Take this with your libation—
and hurry up.

[1110]

HIEROCLES

Will no one offer me
the entrails?

TRYGAEUS

That's not possible for us.
We can't give you any, not until the wolf
gets married to the sheep.

PEACE

HIEROCLES

I'm begging you,
by your own knees . . .

TRYGAEUS [*imitating Hierocles's earlier style*]

A futile supplication. 1290
You'll never make the prickly hedgehog smooth.

[*To the audience*]

Come on, you spectators, come here and share
these entrails with us.

HIEROCLES

What's for me?

TRYGAEUS

You? You can eat your Sibyl.

HIEROCLES

No, by Earth
you two aren't going to eat that up alone.
I'll grab it from you. It's public property.

[*Hierocles tries to steal some meat, but Trygaeus stops him and starts hitting him.*]

TRYGAEUS

Hit him! Hit this Bacis!

[*The First Servant starts hitting Hierocles with a stick.*]

HIEROCLES

I call as witnesses . . .

TRYGAEUS

And so do I—that you're a greedy fraud! [1120]
Keep on hitting him with that stick of yours—
the impostor!

FIRST SERVANT [*giving Trygaeus the stick*]

You do it. I'll strip him 1300
of those skins he stole from us by lying.
Come on, soothsayer, let go of those skins!
Do you hear me!

PEACE

[Hierocles runs off in terror of a beating.]

What a fine crow he is
that's flown in from Oreus! Why not fly
quickly on your journey to Elymnum!⁸³

[Trygaeus and the First Servant go into the house.]

CHORUS

I'm full of joy, yes, full of joy,
free from helmets, free from cheese,
and free from onions, too.
I don't find battles any fun— [1130]
not like good parties with my friends 1310
and steady drinking round the fire,
blazing wood from well-dried logs
cut up in summer time,
cooking chick peas, roasting acorns,
giving our Thracian girl a kiss,
while the wife is in her bath.

CHORUS LEADER

Nothing's more pleasant, once the sowing done, [1140]
than for god to send soft rain drizzling down
and for a friend to say, "Since it's like this,
Comarchides, tell me what we should do." 1320
"Well, since the god is treating us so well,
I'd like to have a drink. So come on, wife,
warm up three measures of those chick peas,
mix in some wheat with them, and give us figs.
Get Sura to call Manes from the fields.
Today it's totally impossible
to prune the vines or shovel up the mud.
The ground is soaked right through. Get someone
to fetch the thrush for me and those two finches.
And there was fresh birth milk in the house 1330 [1150]
and four bits of hare, unless the weasel
got off with some of them last evening.
I don't know what was making all that noise
and rattling round in there. And so, my boy,
serve us up three of them and then take one

⁸³Oreus is Hierocles's home town, and Elymnum is an island off the coast of Euboea, close to Oreus.

PEACE

and give it to my father. And then ask
Aeschinades for some myrtle branches,
ones with berries, and since it's on the way
someone should invite Charinades.
So he can come and drink with us 1340
to god who's giving so much help
assisting with our crops.

As soon as the cicada sings
his own sweet song, I love to see [1160]
if those Lemnian vines of mine
are ripe already, their nature
makes them the very first to bloom
and to look at the swelling figs,
which, when they're ripe, I love to eat
and keep on eating while I say 1350
"I do love these seasons." And then
I crush some thyme and stir a drink.
Yes, I do get fat in summer time. [1170]

CHORUS LEADER

Much fatter than if I were looking at
some damned military officer
with three helmet plumes and a crimson cloak,
dazzling red, which he claims is real dye
from Sardis. But if he ever has to fight
in his red cloak, then he himself gets dyed
the real Cyzicene yellow. He's the first 1360
to run away, shaking those plumes of his
just like a brown and yellow horse-cock,
while I stand there like someone watching
a hunting net. And then when they get home,
they act in an intolerable way.⁸⁴
On the conscription list they scribble down [1180]
some of our names and scratch out others,
back and forth two or three times at random.
Tomorrow is set as the departure date,
and this man's purchased no provisions. 1370
He had no idea he was moving out.
Then he stops in front of Pandion's statue,
sees his name, and rushes off in distress,

⁸⁴The horse cock is an imaginary creature, a combination of a horse and cock with wings.

PEACE

with a bitter glare at his misfortune.⁸⁵
They do these things to us country people,
less so to city folk, these very ones
who before god and men threw away
their shields. And if the gods are willing,
I'll still call them to account for it.

CHORUS

They've injured me with many slights. 1380
Those men who act at home like lions
are foxes when it comes to fights. [1190]

[Trygaeus and the First Servant emerge from the house.]

TRYGAEUS *[handing the First Servant a plumed helmet]*

Oh, oh! What a crowd we've got coming here
for the wedding dinner. Come on, dust off
the tables with this thing. There's nothing else
it's good for any more. And then pile up
the cakes, the thrushes, plenty of the hare,
and rolls of bread.

[The First Servant goes into the house. Enter the Sickle Maker and a Potter. One is carrying sickles, another a basket of food.]

SICKLE MAKER

Where's Trygaeus? Where is he?

TRYGAEUS

I'm cooking thrushes.

SICKLE MAKER

O dearest Trygaeus,
you've done us so much good by making Peace! 1390
Before now no one would've paid an obol [1200]
for a sickle and now I'm selling them
for fifty drachmas. And this fellow here
flogs jars for three drachmas in the country.
So Trygaeus take some of these sickles
and these jars—take as many as you'd like,
free of charge. And please accept these presents.

⁸⁵Pandion's statue was a place in Athens where important public notices were posted, in this case the name of citizens going on the next military expedition.

PEACE

We're bringing you these things as wedding gifts
from what we've sold, the profits we have made.

TRYGAEUS

All right. Put them over here beside me, 1400
and go inside as quickly as you can to eat—
there's an arms dealer coming and he looks
as if he's really angry.

*[Enter an Arms Dealer, carrying a load of his goods, with an Armourer, a Trumpet Dealer, a
Spear Maker, and a Helmet Maker, each carrying a lot of samples of his trade.]*

ARMS DEALER

Damn it, Trygaeus, [1210]
you've completely ruined me!

TRYGAEUS

You poor man,
what's the matter? Are you crestfallen?

ARMS DEALER

You've wiped out my trade, my livelihood,
and this man's and this spear maker's, too.

TRYGAEUS

Well then, what should I pay for these two crests?

ARMS DEALER

What are you offering?

TRYGAEUS

What's my offer?

I'm ashamed to say. Still, a lot of work 1410
has gone into this attachment bracket,
so I might offer for the two of them
three measures of dried figs. I can use them
for dusting off the table.

ARMS DEALER

All right, done.
Now go and bring the figs.

*[Trygaeus takes the helmet crests and goes into the house. The Arms Dealers talks to his
companion.]*

PEACE

Well, it's better [1220]
than getting nothing.

[Trygaeus re-emerges with the helmet crests, which he throws at the Arms Dealer.]

TRYGAEUS

Get these out of here!
Take them from my house! To hell with them!
These aren't helmet crests. They're shedding hair!
I wouldn't pay a single fig for them.

ARMOURER

What's a poor fellow like me going to do 1420
with this curved breastplate? It's beautifully made
and worth ten minas.

TRYGAEUS *[taking the breastplate]*

With this one here
you won't lose money. Let me purchase it
for what it cost. It could be really useful
when I need to shit . . .

[Trygaeus puts the armour on the ground and starts pulling up his clothes, as if he is going to crap in the metal.]

ARMOURER

Stop insulting me
and what I have to sell.

TRYGAEUS

Like this, but it needs [1230]
three stones placed beside it.⁸⁶

[He sits on the armour.]

Hey, it works.

ARMOURER

How will you wipe yourself, you idiot?

⁸⁶Sommerstein observes that the Greeks used stones to wipe themselves.

PEACE

TRYGAEUS [*picking up stones and reaching through the arm holes on the metal*]
One hand goes through this hole, the other one . . .

ARMOURER

You wipe yourself with both your hands at once? 1430

TRYGAEUS

Yes, by god, so I don't get arrested
for concealing oar holes on the ship.⁸⁷

ARMOURER

So you're going to sit down to take a shit
on something worth ten minas?

TRYGAEUS

Yes I am, you fool. Do you imagine
I'd sell my asshole for a thousand drachmas?⁸⁸

ARMOURER

All right, then, hand the money over.

TRYGAEUS [*standing up and rubbing his bum*]

No, my good man, it irritates my ass.
Take it away. I won't be buying it.

TRUMPET MAKER

What am I going to do with this trumpet. 1440 [1240]
I once paid sixty drachmas for it.

TRYGAEUS

Pour lead in this hollow part, then up here
fix a long stick on top. And then you'll have
a target for your game of cottabus.

TRUMPET MAKER

Damn you, you're making fun of me.

TRYGAEUS

All right,

⁸⁷People paying for the warships sometimes stopped up the oar holes to save themselves the expense of a full crew of rowers. Inspectors required crew members to put both hands through the oar holes so that they could count the actual number of rowers.

⁸⁸Historians estimate (roughly) that 1 drachma in Aristophanes's time was worth about 25 dollars today. A mina is equivalent to 10 drachmas.

PEACE

SPEAR MAKER

We're being insulted. Come on, friend, let's go.

[The various arms dealers and weapons manufacturers all leave. As Trygaeus gives his next speech, two young boys emerge from the house.]

TRYGAEUS

Yes, you should, because children of our guests
are coming here to take a piss. I think
they're also going to sing the opening parts
of what they will perform. Now, young lad, 1470
what song do you intend to sing? Stand here
beside me and before you go inside
sing the beginning of your song.

SON OF LAMACHUS *[chanting]*

"So now let us begin with younger warriors . . ."

[1270]

TRYGAEUS

Stop singing of warriors, you wretched child.
We're at peace. And you're a cursed idiot.

SON OF LAMACHUS *[continuing]*

"When they'd come close up against each other,
they smashed their ox-hide bucklers and their embossed shields."

TRYGAEUS

Shields? Will you stop reminding us of shields!

SON OF LAMACHUS *[continuing]*

"Then came men's groans with shouts of triumph too."

1480

TRYGAEUS *[interrupting]*

Men's groans? By Dionysus, you'll be crying
as you sing out those groans and embossed shields.

SON OF LAMACHUS

Then what should I sing? Tell me what you like.

TRYGAEUS *[quoting from Homer]*

"Thus they feasted on cattle meat." Stuff like that. [1280]
"They set out breakfast, all the sweetest food to eat."

PEACE

SON OF LAMACHUS *[reciting again]*

“Thus they feasted on cattle meat and, tired of war,
loosed their sweating horses from the harnesses.”

TRYGAEUS

That’s the stuff. They were fed up with warfare
and then they had a feast. Sing about that—
about how they ate after they were tired.

1490

SON OF LAMACHUS

“When they were finished and had regained their strength . . .”

TRYGAEUS

I’m sure they were feeling really splendid.

SON OF LAMACHUS *[continuing]*

“ . . . and poured out from the towers. A mighty shout arose . . . ”

TRYGAEUS *[interrupting]*

To hell with you, boy, you and your battles!
You sing of nothing but war. Whose son are you?

[1290]

SON OF LAMACHUS

Me?

TRYGAEUS

Yes, by god, you.

SON OF LAMACHUS

I’m Lamachus’s son.

TRYGAEUS

Bah! Listening to you sing, I was wondering
if you might be the offspring of someone
addicted to the war, who’s sad without one.
Go away! Go sing your songs to spearmen.
Where’s that young son of Cleonymus?

1500

[The Son of Lamachus goes in the house and the other child, the son of Cleonymus, steps forward.]

Sing me something before you go inside.
I don’t think you’ll sing about stuff like that.
Your father’s a far too prudent man.

PEACE

SON OF CLEONYMUS *[singing]*

“Some man from Sais now glories in my shield,
that splendid shield, which I left, against my will,
beside a bush . . . ”

TRYGAEUS *[interrupting]*

Tell me, you little prick,
are you singing of what your father did? [1300]

SON OF CLEONYMUS *[continuing]*

“But I saved my life . . . ”

TRYGAEUS *[interrupting]*

And shamed your parents.
But let’s go in. I’m sure you won’t forget
what you’ve just been singing about the shield, 1510
not with that father of yours.

[Trygaeus and the Son of Cleonymus start to go into the house. Trygaeus turns to address the Chorus.]

You people who are staying here, your work
is to chomp on all this stuff, chew it up—
don’t just pretend you’re working. Get to it
like real men, with both jaws grinding hard.
You poor sods, your white teeth are no use at all
if they’re not used for chewing. [1310]

[Trygaeus goes into the house.]

CHORUS LEADER

We’ll take care of it. Thanks for telling us.
Now those of you who were hungry earlier 1520
get going on this hare. It’s not every day
you come across cakes going round unclaimed.
So eat up, or I say you’ll soon be sorry.

[Trygaeus emerges from the house.]

TRYGAEUS

You must speak fair words now, and let the bride
come out here. And bring the wedding torches.
Let all the people celebrate together

PEACE

and sing and dance with us. Now, too, we must
take all equipment back to our lands once more,
once we have danced and poured out libations,
kicked out Hyperbolus, and made our prayers
to gods to enrich the Greeks, and make us all
harvest many barley crops together,
with lots of wine, figs to eat, and may our wives
bear children for us, and may we gather
once again the good things we started with,
all the things we've lost and set aside
the glittering iron of war.

1530 [1320]

[Opora comes out of the house with her attendants.]

Come, wife, to the fields,
and, my lovely one, may you lie
in such beauty at my side.

[1330]

1540

[In the following exchanges one half the Chorus sings in response to the other half.]

FIRST HALF CHORUS

Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!⁸⁹

SECOND HALF CHORUS

O thrice blessed man, you deserve
these splendid things you now possess!

FIRST HALF CHORUS

Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!

SECOND HALF CHORUS

Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!

FIRST HALF CHORUS

What shall we do with her?

SECOND HALF CHORUS

What shall we do with her?

FIRST HALF CHORUS

We'll harvest her fruit.

⁸⁹The traditional wedding song, a tribute to the god of weddings, Hymen or Hymenaeus.

PEACE

SECOND HALF CHORUS

We'll harvest her fruit.

FIRST HALF CHORUS

Those in the front,
lift up the groom. Come, men,
let's carry him off.

1550

[1340]

SECOND HALF CHORUS

Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!

FIRST HALF CHORUS

Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!

[The Chorus raises Trygaeus up in the air.]

CHORUS LEADER

You'll have a fine home
without any troubles,
tending your figs.

FIRST HALF CHORUS

Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!

SECOND HALF CHORUS

Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!

FIRST HALF CHORUS

His fig is huge and thick.

1560

SECOND HALF CHORUS

And her fig is sweet.

[1350]

TRYGAEUS

You'll say that when you're feasting,
when you're drinking plenty of wine.

CHORUS

Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!
Hymen, Hymenaeus, O!

TRYGAEUS

Good bye, men, good luck,
and if you follow me

PEACE

you'll be eating flat cakes!

[The wedding procession exits, with everyone singing and dancing.]