

A hypothesis for the issue of interlocution in the prologue of Aristophanes' *Birds*

This research explores a new hypothesis regarding the issue of interlocution in the prologue of *Birds*. The aim of this paper is to split the first trimeter in the middle, so that EVELPIDES start it and PEISETAIROS goes on. The proposed attribution of lines to the characters EVELPIDES and PEISETAIROS is based on the linguistic analysis of the passage, a comparison with the rest of the comedy and insights derived from the *scholia*. The problem of interlocution was first observed by MARZULLO (1978), who noted discrepancies between the lines spoken by PEISETAIROS and his typical comic portrayal as “comic hero”, as well as similar inconsistencies with EVELPIDES, who embodies the “comic shoulder” elsewhere in the play. The manuscripts provide evidence for change of speakers (LOWE 1962), but it appears that the two characters have been swapped, according to MARZULLO.

Considering the potential for arbitrary alterations in the names of speaking characters and the possibility of later interventions, a different interlocution from what is presented in the manuscripts becomes plausible. Following MARZULLO's idea, various editors proposed their own interpretations of line and character combinations, accepting and rejecting aspects of the manuscript tradition.

This research suggests a new perspective by advocating the division of line 2. The possibility of splitting lines between the two characters in the prologue had previously been considered for lines 12 and 25. The goal is to find a compromise between the interlocution in the manuscripts and the characters' portrayals throughout the rest of the comedy. In this proposed interlocution, the word διαπραγείης, typically regarded as trivial, is attributed to the comic character EVELPIDES, while the character PEISETAIROS, the comedic hero, demonstrates

determination as he grapples with the birds' cryptic instructions. This hypothesis regarding interlocution offers then a possibility of aligning the characters in the prologue to their development in the rest of the play, without the complete inversion of the speakers' names as written in the manuscript.

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