

Demosthenes' *Ἰαμβοφάγος*: Archilochean Invective in Aeschines' *Against Timarchus*

In his speech *On the Crown*, Demosthenes says of Aeschines: “as to what this slandering *iambos*-eater has ever done on your behalf, he cannot point out” (ὅ τι μὲν πρόποτ' ἔπραξ' ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ὁ βάσκανος οὗτος ἰαμβοφάγος, οὐκ ἂν ἔχοι δεῖξαι, 139). The reading of *ἰαμβοφάγος* has been much contested, with five terms in total suggested as plausible textual variants (Wankel 1976 and Dilts 2002): 1) *ἰαμβειοφάγος*, “iambics-eater” (attested in Parisinus 2935 and as post corrections in Marcianus 416 and Parisinus 2934); 2) *ἰαμβοφάγος*, “*iambos*-eater” (an emendation based on the *Etymologicum Magnum*); 3) *ἰαμβειογράφος*, “iambics-writer” (attested in Parisinus 2934 and Marcianus 416); 4) *ἰαμβογράφος*, “*iambos*-writer” (attested in Monacensis 485); 5) *ἰαμβειομάχος*, “iambics-fighter” (a variant in Marcianus 416). In this paper, I argue for the reading of *ἰαμβοφάγος* and examine the insinuations and implications of Demosthenes' evaluation of Aeschines as an “*iambos*-eater.”

I begin with an overview of the popular interpretations of and support for the above textual variants, ultimately justifying my preference for *ἰαμβοφάγος*. Next, I provide my own understanding of the term, with especial emphasis on the negative connotations of *iambos* in mid-fourth-century BCE Athens. Classical literature (e.g. Pind. *Pyth.* 2.52-6, Pl. *Lg.* 935e, Arist. *Pol.* 1336b) intimates a strongly held conception of *iambos* as the genre of invective, and Archilochus as the archetypal figure in the tradition (see Rotstein 2010). I suggest, then, that Demosthenes' insult conveys the image of Aeschines as an “eater” (-φάγος) of not just *iambos*, general invective, but particularly the *iamboi* of Archilochus. The results of this section are then employed toward a broader understanding of the abusive qualities of Aeschines' rhetoric, specifically in his speech *Against Timarchus*.

In light of my reading of *ἰαμβοφάγος*, I propose that Aeschines' rhetoric involves

elements of invective that are characteristic of Archilochus' poetry. In what follows, I demonstrate how the manner in which Aeschines conducts his speech corresponds to the literary and cultural paradigm of the founder of *iambos*. Archilochus' iambics and Aeschines' speech both attempt to undermine the positions of their respective rivals, who are then systematically marginalized from the community at large through the use of physiognomic arguments. There is also a parallel in the biographical tradition, wherein, much like how Archilochus' iambics drove Lycambes' daughters to hang themselves, Aeschines' speech led Timarchus to hang himself upon the conclusion of the trial ([Plut.] *Mor.* 840f.). Though this tradition is highly suspect, it may speak to the popular appraisal of Aeschines' speech *Against Timarchus* as a destructive piece of invective reminiscent of Archilochus' poetry.

I argue, then, that Demosthenes has picked up on the affinities between Archilochus and Aeschines, and that his attack on Aeschines as an “*iambos*-eater” was intended to solidify, and encourage recognition of, these striking similarities. The variant *ιαμβοφάγος* thus functions as an effective and potent term of abuse that craftily imbues Aeschines' rhetoric with iambic – Archilochean – aggression.

Bibliography

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