Patrimónios Alimentares de Aquém e Além-Mar

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(coords.)
“A display for the whole of Greece”? The narrator’s relationship with his audience in Archestratus of Gela

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Abstract: This article examines the relationship between the narrator and the audience in Archestratus’ *Hedypatheia*, a relationship that provides us with a better understanding of the poem’s didactic and poetic pretensions. I demonstrate that this relationship is founded upon inequality: the narrator is consistently presented as omniscient, while the audience always occupy an inferior position, their very lives less important than the life of luxury which they are expected to pursue. This relationship operates at both a gastronomic and a poetic level. The relationship between the narrator and the addressees situates the poem within Greek poetic aesthetics, espousing a poetics of simplicity. At the same time, the humour and parodic tone of the poem emphasize the poet’s art, how he deals with his subject and the subjects he chooses to include or exclude. Far from being a straightforward catalogue of the best foods in the Greek world, the *Hedypatheia* invites us to negotiate our position through the humorously exaggerated assumption that the addressees of the poem are prepared to lay down their lives for a fish, as well as our reception of the poem itself.

Keywords: Archestratus of Gela - food and literary heritage - poetic authority

Archestratus’ *Hedypatheia*, a hexameter poem which describes luxurious dishes in epic language, has long been an important source for studies of Greek culinary culture during the fourth century BC. For each dish Archestratus discusses, he gives detailed instructions as to where to find the best examples (the best shrimp, for example, come from Iasos), as well as recipes (e.g. it is best to roast the underbelly of an *aulopias* on a spit). Archestratus’ expertise on gastronomic matters was frequently cited by Athenaeus, thanks to whose *Deipnosophistae* approximately 60 fragments of the poem survive, although the *Hedypatheia*’s penchant for fish, a luxury associated strongly with the morally dubious rich of the fourth century BC, aroused the criticism of the Stoics. Rather than examining the specific culinary advice of the poem, which

1 I would like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Matthew Wright and Dr. Karen Ni Mheallaigh, as well as the reviewer, Prof. John Wilkins, Claire Rachel Jackson, and several other colleagues from the University of Exeter for their helpful comments and discussion. All remaining gaffes are my own.

2 For the dating of the poem, see Olson and Sens 2000: xxi-ii and Dalby 1995.

3 The fragments and translation of Archestratus are those used by Olson and Sens 2000. All

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.14195/978-989-26-1191-4_6
has been the subject of previous scholarly work, this article is interested in exploring the poem’s human relationships. These relationships operate on two levels: when the poem is performed, most likely during a symposium, there exists the interaction between the performer and the audience; within the poem, the narrator addresses two specific individuals, Moschus and Cleandrus, to whom the advice is addressed and who stand in for the external audience. Both of these relationships are premised upon the figure of the narrator, whose persona is adopted by the performer, whether or not this performer was Archestratus himself. The first section of this article, therefore, focuses on the persona loquens, the narrator, before turning to examine the relationship between the narrator and the poem’s internal narratees. Overall, I demonstrate that this relationship is founded upon inequality: the narrator is consistently presented as omniscient, while the audience always occupy an inferior position, their very lives less important than the life of luxury which they are expected to pursue.

Before we can turn to examine the relationship between the narrator and the audience, we must appreciate the context in which Archestratus’ poem was produced, particularly its generic affiliation and performance context. Additionally, it is worth briefly considering Archestratus’ poem in the context of the discourse of food in Greek literature.

One of the most conventional generic affiliations for the *Hedypatheia* is that of *paroidia*. This genre consisted of hexameter poems that frequently parody epic poetry, although they often incorporate elements parodying other works. The *Batrachomyomachia*, for example, the only complete surviving example of the genre, combines parodies of epic and fable. Similarly, as we shall see, Archestratus combines his use of epic with the language and style of other literature. However, while *paroidia* was most commonly performed at festivals, the *Hedypatheia* was most likely either read privately or performed during a dinner party or in the symposium that followed. Clearchus provides

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other translations are taken from the Loeb Classical Library with the exception of Matro of Pitane, for whom I consulted Olson and Sens 1999.

4 For the *Batrachomyomachia*’s use of epic and fable, see for example Glei 1984: 18–22.

5 For Archestratus’ use of epic diction, see Olson and Sens 2000: lv–lviii.

6 Hegemon of Thasos, for example, who according to Aristotle (*Po*. 1448a12–3) was the “first writer of parodies”, performed in Athens (“My dear, your husband got 50 drachmas in Athens by his singing”, Hegemon fr. 1.16; cf. Chamaeleon fr. 44 Wehrli). Inscriptional evidence also attests to performances in various Greek cities, such as Delos and Eretria, for which see Rotstein 2012.

7 This setting for the poem is implied by Wilkins and Hill 2011: 13, who discuss how it was common for the Greeks to “[hear] literature recited to them at banquets, in particular at the drinking session (symposium) after the meal,” and Olson and Sens 2000: xxxv similarly suggest that “the *Hedypatheia* is most easily understood as intended to be read privately by or to a small literary circle.”