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The Language of Complaint in Archilochus 13 W.

The argument of Archilochus 13 W. is an uncomplicated one. The speaker of this sympotic elegy urges his addressee to turn from the prolonged feeling and expression of sorrow. He supports this injunction by a twofold appeal to *kairos*, or propriety of utterance to occasion.

That is, he proceeds (lines 1-5) by pointing out that complaining of sorrows (*kêdea memphesthai*) inhibits the pleasures of the symposium in terms of literary genre, that complaint and festive song are incompatible with each other; then (lines 5-10) by arguing that the only remedy for sorrow is vicissitude the way sorrow and joy alternate in human affairs. The logic is cogent: Lament and festivity exclude each other, but festivity is should be indulged in its time; therefore lament however genuine must not be perpetual.

Similar interpretations of the poem have been offered but rejected (by e.g. Kamerbeek, Gerber), in part on lexical grounds, which are mistaken. The difficulties center around the opening couplet: *kêdea men stonoenta ... oute tis astôn / memphomenos thaliêis terpsetai* ... "no one 'blaming sorrow' will take delight in the feast," to translate without prejudice. I take this as a general statement, meaning that no one can complain and enjoy festivity at the same time (negatives with main verb and not participle, of course). But interpreters object that the verb *memphesthai* properly means "to criticize, to find fault with" rather than "to complain, lament." Therefore interpreters require the sentence to be elliptical: *kêdea memphomenos* "blaming sorrow" is made to say that no symposiast, of the symposiasts present, will blame [the addressee for feeling and expressing his] sorrow.

But the poem's thrust is precisely to find fault with feeling and expressing sorrow.

Parallels from Archaic, Classical and later Greek show that *memphesthai* can indeed refer to complaining rather than finding fault. This is also the case of other common verbs that more often mean "to blame, criticize, find fault with." (Note that ancient Greek has no exact equivalent for English "to complain".) Thus the elliptical translations generally accepted are unnecessary; and as a bonus, the interpretation I defend also allows for a distinction between the opening second-person singular and the closing plural: the addressee Pericles undergoes no poetic therapy here and is of no psychological interest. It is the community or some plurality within it that needs to "put aside effeminate grief" (10)- namely, by celebrating along with the speaker, or more precisely by not using recent sorrows as an excuse not to celebrate along with him. The poem is public in setting and festive in intent.