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Iambos, Comedy and the Question of Generic Affiliation

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inherits to a far greater degree than tragedy or even satyr-play. For this reason comedy can fairly be called a 'genre of genres' and in this respect too it resembles its cultic Dionysian matrix. Old Comedy draws freely upon all musical and speech genres, but Old Comedy mostly draws its form and contents from the cognate Dionysian genres of tragedy, satyr-play, dithyramb, iambos and the sub-literary choral komoi of the Pompe. In this sense, Aristotel is both deeply insightful and surely wrong, or at least overstating the case, when he derives comedy specifically from the phailike.

CHAPTER 3

Iambos, comedy and the question of generic affiliation

Ralph Rosen

It is a commonplace to note Old Comedy’s many explicit interactions with other literary genres. Indeed, parodic, mocking comedy, in particular—which characterizes much of Aristophanes and probably many of his fragmentary or lost contemporaries—derives much of its appeal, if not its very raison d’être, from its relationship with other genres. In the case of Old Comedy, parody of tragedy is the most famous instance of its self-conscious dialogue of genres, but there are many others as well—its parody of epic and lyric poetry, for example, and even of contemporary prose genres of history, philosophy, medicine and rhetoric. The relationship that Old Comedy fashions for itself with all such genres is one of alterity, by which I mean that its success depends at the most basic level on the fact that these target genres are other than, different from, comedy, and would under ordinary circumstances be out of place within the comic enterprise. Literary parody within comedy, in short, is a process of ‘allusion’, construed in the most traditional sense of the word as indicating a conscious attempt by the poet to play to an audience’s familiarity with a literary tradition that is not comedy (or at least not Aristophanic comedy), and which would be laughable when incorporated into it.\(^\mathrm{2}\)

\(^\mathrm{2}\) See Willi 2001:9-10 (and then pause) on linguistic ‘register variation’ in Aristophanes. Not all register variation in Aristophanes is parody, but most parody involves some sort of register variation to mark it as a language that is different from an expected norm. See Willi 2001: 133-69 for an attempt to establish a base-line Aristophanic grammar (and stylistics) which can be helpful in detecting parodic deviations.

\(^\mathrm{3}\) Literary parody (as opposed to parody in other artistic modes, such as music, where the term can be used neutrally to describe thematic borrowing), especially in comic genres, tends to be mocking and repressive, but not necessarily or always so: it does, however, nearly always strive to elicit some form of laughter. See M. A. Rune 1959:3-33, for the history of terms for parody, and in particular, the relationship between parody and ridicule; for parody in Aristophanes in particular, see Goldhill 1991: 205-11. On the problem of sorting out the different kinds of allusion in Old Comedy—from benign citation to overt parody—see Nigglsmayer’s taxonomy of ‘Reflex’ (1996: 3-4) that he uses in discussing how poets of Old Comedy interacted with Greek lyric poetry.
This otherness of a parodied text within comedy makes it fairly easy to spot and to understand in context, and it explains why scholars have often analogized the relationship between a comedy and the texts it parodies to that between parasite and host. But Old Comedy also interacts with other genres in far more diverse ways, where there is no question of parody and quite often no apparent self-consciousness about allusion or authorial intentionality. Sometimes there are instances where texts interact with each other synchronically as a function of cultural forces that a poet may or may not pay any attention to, such as the ways in which Athenian tragedy and comedy share the same stage and are influenced by common production and performance protocols. 6 Other times comic texts interact with previous authors diachronically, reflecting a generic heritage so old and complex that no single poet could possibly trace a comprehensive history of origins. 7 Aristophanes himself put his finger on the problem for Old Comedy when he noted at _Poetics_ 1448a that the early history of Greek comedy could not really be known because no records were kept before its formal state recognition at the City Dionysia (486 BC). We still, in fact, share Aristophanes’ frustration and crave information about how these

1 I am thinking here of the many formal devices and structures shared by Athenian tragedy and comedy—e.g., stock wits, alternations of episodes and lyric passages, and presumably an entire array of stage and costume practices now largely lost to us. It is likely that in such cases poets were not terribly self-conscious about whether they were “interacting” with one genre or another. Tafel 1986 151 citing the evidence for and against a meaningful generic relationship between Aristic tragedy and comedy, concluding (157) that the whole story rejects . . . rather than offers overlap. This is not to say that there were not many interactions “intertwined” ones from the other, as many scholars have discussed (cf. Tafel 1986 163–5), but in terms of what each genre actually lost, Tafel finds these worlds apart. Critios, fl. c. 430, which refers to someone as engaging in “epideictic/epithanatologia” (Epid. 288–90), offers a rare moment of self-consciousness about how the two dramatic genres might “meet.” But without real context, it is impossible to know what it all amounts to: it might well imply that Critios thought of Aristophanic comedy as deeply influenced by Euripidean tragedy, or it may only suggest that Aristophanes is capable of playing on an intellectual like Euripides who was not necessarily derivative in his. See Bakker 2005 24–9, with bibliography, who argues that Critios finds Aristophanes to Euripides with the word Epid. 288–90 in order to highlight his own poetic relationship with Aeschylus.

6 This area includes the many questions about “origins” did Old Comedy evolve, e.g. out of forms inherited from other realms of human activity, such as religious ritual, or lost to the consciousness of any individual poet or his audience? Such an claim is often made for passages such as Diceros’ lyric _phdfakes_ at _Aesch_ 124–79, even if the passage itself is not felt to replicate such a ritual song exactly (see e.g., Pickard-Cambridge 1962 153–62; Rohrwasser 2007 16, 23; Halwee 2008 207–12, with further bibliography, n. 143) it re-extends, or perhaps parodies, an aspect of a specific religious festival that we suspect had a long past by the fifth century, it seem to have some bearing on what goes on in Aristic comedy (87, archetypal mockery), but did Aristophanes put it all together in his mind when he composed this scene? Cf. also Rutter 1977, for a similar argument suggesting a link between Old Comedy and the ritual _gyptasis_. See Kugelmeier’s third category of lyric “reflexes” to _Old Comedy_ (1966), which includes passages that are “regarded as reminiscences” (Der Reflexe bringen ein ein _lyricus Verhild am . . . “), where it is unclear how conscious the author would have been of what we might call an “allusion.”

7 While we cannot here take up the grand (and, it has to be said, intractable) problem of Old Comedy’s ‘ultimate’ origins, I would like to address a specific aspect of Old Comedy’s generic provenance that has a bearing both on the question of its early, pre-fifth-century—and so, pre-historical—forms, and on how it came to be conceptualized in later periods of antiquity when it had become a genre to be read or studied rather than performed. In my book _Old Comedy and the Lambicographic Tradition_ (henceforth, _OCIT_), I tried to make a case for Old Comedy’s close generic dependence on the tradition of iambic poetry, most famously represented by Archilochus in the seventh century BC and Hipponax in the sixth. Since then, there has been considerable scholarly progress on the iambic poets, and some useful engagement with, and criticism of, the approach I took in that work, so this seems a fitting time to revisit the position I argued for in that work.

The conception of ‘generic dependence’ that I was working with in _OCIT_ was standard for philological scholarship at the time—look in authors working in genre A for lexical similarities with authors working in genre B, collect overt allusions and pay special attention to passages where one author mentions an earlier one by name. Next, affirm the suspected connection, if possible, by finding ancient testimonia that support the notion of generic affiliation. This method is neither illegitimate nor inconsequential as a first pass at the problem. 8 Certainly, if Aristophanes can be shown to quote Archilochus (as he does), 9 or to mention Hipponax by name (as he does), 10 we have the beginnings of an argument for at least some sort of relationship among these poets. But the real question is what kind of relationship, Are Aristophanes’ quotations of Archilochus categorically different from his far more numerous and full quotations of tragic poets,

9 The methodological problems with arguments for generic affiliation based on lexical similarities were well presented by E. Bowie 2003, on which see discussion below. Although I find his scepticism at times excessive, his challenge affords us an opportunity to articulate what, in the first instance, we are seeking when we ask how literary genres interact. Other critiques of my argument for generic affiliation tended to focus unduly on my suggestion that historical figures intended for mockery by comic poets can in some respects be profitably treated as ‘stock characters’ (e.g., Halwee 1971 41–53 and Kugelmeier 1996 163–83). I offer some clarification at Rosen 2010 335 n. 19.
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for example? Or to put it another way, when Cratinus wrote a play entitled Archilochoi, almost certainly bringing Archilochus on to the stage in some guise, and peppering the play with Archilochian allusions and quotations, was he constructing a parodic relationship— a relationship of mocking otherness, not affiliation —with Archilochus, akin to Aristophanes’ relationship with Euripides? Or was it an attempt on Cratinus’ part to acknowledge an organic generically oriented relationship between his poetry and Archilochus’ that was more knowing hommage than parody? I argued for this latter position in OCIT, but the case can be made even more forcefully that iambos and Old Comedy were powerfully and uniquely affiliated, I believe, if we move beyond a strictly philological and consider them —despite their many differences in literary form, performative structures, or even localized social functioning—as first and foremost genres of satire.8

The key issue in any discussion of generic affiliation is the question of authorial self-consciousness: if we say that various genres are ‘affiliated’ or ‘connected’, or whatever metaphor we choose, does it matter that the poets whom we think were influenced by others were aware of the processes by which they were influenced? Is this kind of self-consciousness an essential criterion for even speaking of ‘influence’ to begin with? And is ‘influence’ even the appropriate word to use in cases where there seems to be no awareness on the author’s part of how his work interacts with anyone else’s, even when we seem to be able to see a clear case of imitation? These are questions that genre theorists in other literary fields have wrestled with for some time, and classicists, too, have not been insensitive to the complexity of the problems,10 but for a variety of reasons comic genres have presented particular challenges to thinking outside of familiar philological parameters.11 In the specific case of iambos and Old Comedy, this reluctance to theorize about genre has created some confusion about what we are looking for when we come to the question of how the two relate to one another.

Much of the confusion has arisen because scholars have often conflated what are really four distinct questions:

1. How, historically, did a particular genre come into being and develop?12
2. How did a given genre represent itself, its origin, and its ‘essence’, and why did it do so in that way?
3. What did the audience think of the genre of Old Comedy?
4. How have critics (and this can include authors themselves, contemplating the provenance of literary genres) understood a given genre’s origin, history and ‘essence’, and why did they do so in that way, especially if their claims turn out to be historically inaccurate?

Sometimes scholars will assume that the one will necessarily follow from the other, but, in fact, as I would like to argue here, actual historical dependence between, or affiliation of, genres need hardly impinge on self-consciousness of such a relationship, nor need we always assume that what an author tells us about generic history is historically ‘accurate’.

The argument of OCIT illustrates well the need to clarify which questions we are seeking to answer, and the evidence that can be brought to bear on them. Everyone would agree that Old Comedy and iambos share some literary features: both can employ invective, obscenity, episodic narrative structures, and so forth. I wanted to argue that these shared features suggested that the later genre, Athenian Old Comedy, in some sense descended from the earlier one, and that the comic poets were both aware of the generic affiliation they had with iambographers and self-consciously indebted to those earlier poets for many of the stylistic features for which they were famous in their own time, especially obscenity and political

10 See e.g. Fawell 2003, Rosen 2007: 14–17, and now Rosen 2010: esp. 7–24), who offers a lucid discussion, with bibliography, of the major theoretical challenges of genre criticism as practiced both in antiquity and by theorists of our own time.
11 Among other things, comedy, and in particular satirical strands of comic literature, tend to construct for themselves a historically specific reality that exists primarily in the here and now, engaging its audience in thinking that there must be some relation between their lived reality and reality of the comic performance. Matters become even more complicated when authors speak in their own voice in their works, especially when they mock other people who would be known to the audience and make claims for themselves that have the veneer of a veridical truth. One can find even the most sophisticated criticism, for example, being drawn into a syllogistic insinuation (a conventional trope in itself) that his work must be taken at face value and as representative of a historical reality. See Rosen 2007: 11–13, 243–7.3
12 For example, by the time of Archilochus, and the Hellenistic period, the genre had been defined by many others, and it was given a specific identity as a satirical genre. The early archilochoi, in particular, were not concerned with the genre of archilochoi, as it was later defined by the Hellenistic period.
13 Rosen 2010 addresses some of these questions as well, panikos, and explicitly at 3–16, although in her study of the genre of iambic she is mostly concerned with my question 4, below, i.e. she is less interested in an answer to the question of what iambos is, an answer that would take the form of a definition. (But rather) the history of the conceptualization of iambos as a literary genre (14). She focuses on what she calls the ‘received iambos’, which focuses on authors who were ‘received into’ the tradition by ancient authors and scholars themselves (cf. 14–6, 15–7).
14 Few people today conceptualize genres as natural categories in the way we think of objects in the world (e.g. birds, cats, water), and would want to the same of the,‘genre concepts’, ‘natural representations of abstract entities’ and ‘cultural products’ suggested by Rosen 2010. Rosen’s synthesis of current approaches derives from cognitive science is illuminating (‘chunking’, ‘embedding’, ‘scripting’, 10–13), and helpful for explaining why it is often so difficult— for original audiences as well as for us who study them—to pin down the generic identity of a literary work. I do think, however, that the generic identity of iambic is in a sense (indeed, every possibility for ancient audiences to ‘define’ it) was more stable than Rosen’s 2010 and E. Bowie 2003 would allow. Bowie’s (97) whimsical characterization of iambos as an ‘a la carte menu’, for example, seems overstated. See further discussion below.
mockery. Let us say, however, that the philology, and even the testimonia,
are not strong enough to sustain the position that Attic comedy 'descended'
from the iambos or that Athenian comic poets knowingly modeled their
plays on iambic poetry. What would this actually mean for the question of
generic affiliation? How self-aware of their literary forebears must poets
be before we can legitimately speak in terms of generic 'descent', 'affiliation'
or 'influence'? Other criteria have been invoked to downplay or
even deny a meaningful affiliation between iambos and comedy: 'social
conditions', length of work, composition of the audience, modes of per-
formance — each of these categories looks quite different for iambos and
Old Comedy. Another way of putting this might be to say that although
Archilochus composed a humorous, obscene paeon against Lycabue in the
seventh century b.c., and Aristophanes composed a humorous, obscene
paeon against Cleon in the fifth, the date and conditions of performance,
audience composition and reception were so different that any similarities
between them were more likely coincidental than indicative of any sort of
lineal relationship.

The major premise behind this statement is that because both iam-
bios and Old Comedy can be shown to involve many other things
besides abuse and political mockery, these elements themselves cannot be
regarded as definition of either genre. As a basic principle, this seems
unobjectionable enough; just because we can find similar phenomena in
two genres does not necessarily mean that they are related in anything
more than a coincidental way. As Farrell has pointed out, Pindar's Odes
may have been commissioned to praise victors, but they could on occasion
include blame and criticism as well; the mere appearance of 'blame' in his
Odes does not, however, suddenly turn Pindar into a 'blame poet', and he
even famously goes out of his way to distance himself from such an associa-
tion, at Pythians 2.52-7, where he repudiates the iambic poet Archilochus
for being paeon. With Pindar, there is never any question of what his

As E. Bowie 2002, who concludes that we should not think of Attic comedy as 'descended' from, or
even 'strongly influenced' by, iambos. See also Willi 2002: 7-10. The real issue, it seems, is the use of
'descent', which again returns us to the question of authorial self-consciousness is a modern pop-lure
Lyric 'descended from' ancient examples of similar usage? In Death of a Sibyl 'descended from'
Greek tragedy? A case could be made for either position in both examples, depending on whether
one uses the word 'descent' to imply that authors used to be aware of their literary antecedents.
Bowie 2002: 86-8 distinguishes between genres that develop 'out of' other genres, and those that
are 'similar to but not deriving from' other genres. This distinction highlights well the problems
inherent in the terms we use to discuss influences on, and relationships between, genres, since the
actual difference between the two options is not always easy to pinpoint. (See further discussion
below, n. 40.)


Odes are supposed to 'do' — Pindar in this context composed praise poetry,
no matter what other literary elements he deployed, some of which, as we
have seen with iambos, may even be generically at odds with the goals of
epic poetry. So, in the case of iambos and Old Comedy, the real question is:
how important is abuse and comic mockery to each, and what is it actually
doing in each one? And if we can determine that the 'work' being done
by such elements in each genre is functionally similar, would this similarity
effectively constitute generic affiliation?

This is a far more profitable direction for us to take in considering
iambos and comedy. I believe, as mere philology, since literary works by
different authors may certainly function in similar ways, as similar 'speech
acts' with similar claims to efficacy — even if the words and forms they
use are dissimilar to each other's. Horace offers a useful case in point: he
did not have philology, or even history, on his mind when he noted at the
opening of Satires 1.4 that Lucillian satire derived from (pender) the
poets of Old Comedy. This is one of the most famous pronouncements
of generic affiliation in all of classical literature, especially since it addresses
the bifurcation I have discussed earlier between generic self-consciousness
on the one hand (Horace seems to want us to believe that all Roman
saturists would have been conscious of a literary, or at least discursive, debt
to Old Comedy and could draw on the antecedent genre for allusive play)
and, on the other, the notion of an 'organic' generic affiliation (Old Comedy
and Roman satire related to one another simply by virtue of doing similar
things, whether or not the poems realized it).

What exactly has Horace sensed here in Old Comedy that seemed
relevant to Roman satire? He says clearly enough that it was the libertas
of Old Comedy, its freedom to attack prominent wrongdoers, that he
admires, even if (as he claims) his own speech has to be more constrained.
There is an interesting, playful bit of generic gamesmanship at work here;
for by denying that he is able to do in his satires what Old Comedy could
(note below...). Horace both distances, apologetically, the nature of his own
work from Old Comedy, and at the same time brings it into closer contact
by implying that in a perfect world where speech was unconstrained (as he
believed it was in fifth-century Athens) his satires would be just like Old

This is the central question that Bowie remarks (2002: 27) calls to mind: 'if my argument [for a
multiplicity of "identifying features" at iambos] were to be correct, their relevance... would be to
diminish the importance within iambos of that element which has most often been seen as linking it
with comedy, abuse' (my emphasis).

As Freudenburg 2001: 8 succinctly put it: 'The lines are fraught with misinformation that caricatures
not only the poets of Greek Old Comedy, but Lucilian as well.' See Rosen 2007: 6-10 for discussion
and further bibliography.
Comedy. If Horace had never written these lines, or if they were lost to us, how willing would we be to think of Roman satire and Old Comedy as affiliated genres? A strict historicist would probably conclude that any resemblance between Roman satire and Old Comedy was coincidental or arose, one might say, "independently." Certainly no one, ancient or modern, would claim that the relationship between Roman satire and Old Comedy was anything like that between Roman comic drama and Greek New Comedy, where it can be easily shown that both the relationship was historical and that the Roman comic poets were well aware of that fact. Horace's statement in *Satires* 1.4 about satire's provenance in Old Comedy is by all measures eccentric, in fact, at least when considered as a piece of literary history. But what might we imagine prompted it? What kind of relationship between the two genres did Horace perceive—despite whatever a historian might think—that could be both 'valid' and yet unhistorical at the same time?

These are questions that can be applied equally to the problem of how Old Comedy was related to *iambos*, where the historicity of a generic relationship—which is to say, clear evidence that the former descended organically and formally from the latter—cannot be well established. We are left, instead, with impressions from the poets of Old Comedy, as I discussed in *OCT*, that remind us of Horace on satire: they sensed that what they were doing with their comedies was somehow 'like' an antecedent genre, even if they would have been unable to make a historically legitimate argument for lineage and descent. Their clear interest in *iambos*, however, like Horace's interest in Old Comedy, ought to be sufficient to prompt us, in turn, at the very least to consider what inspired this interest in the first place.

To answer this question, it is helpful for us to think in terms of a genre's 'dynamics' rather than any static qualities of form or language. What distinguishes one genre from another, to rephrase my earlier question, becomes more a matter of what they do than of what they are. This approach allows us to reframe our search for a genre's defining features by asking what it is about a given literary work that no other genre would be able to replicate in quite the same way, and with the same effect. In the case of *iambos*, Old Comedy and even Roman satire, I have argued elsewhere that the concept of 'sativre' is a reasonably good start, for 'sativre' is a broad term that is not defined by specific literary elements—metres, or structures or performance protocols—but rather by its dynamics, the way it sets out to construct a particular relationship between an author and an audience over against some other person or abstract thing. Satirical authors may draw on a common arsenal of tropes or devices (obscenity, low diction, parody and personal mockery, just to name a few), but none of these itself defines satire, and most of them can be found in any number of other genres. Greek orators, lyric poets and even tragedians mock individuals, use obscenity or engage in parody, and in such moments we may even say that these authors are being 'sativre'. But to use that adjective is to imply that there is something we consider 'true satire', different from the examples that we label 'sativre'. What distinguishes genres of satire from genres that may merely incorporate satire, is that the work of the former—the *eikon* or *telos* of satire, to borrow terms that Aristotle uses for the function and aim of tragedy—is understood by audiences, authors and critics to be laughter. This is laughter of a rather specific kind, of course, but it always lurks behind the mockery and ridicule found in this kind of literary work, and there usually is no further *telos*, despite an author's occasional (and equally humorous) claims to the contrary. Aesthetically may pepper a forensic or persuasive speech, for example, and elicit laughter from its audience at that moment, but laughter is hardly that work's *telos*; it functions more as rhetorical spice—strategically deploying humour in a work that is not otherwise generically characterized as comic.

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19 Scholars of an earlier era seemed more sympathetic to conceptualist approaches such as this, particularly as a by-product of their obsession with finding the 'origins' of Old Comedy. If concrete historical (and pre-historical) evidence was lacking, some program seemed possible with more etic, anthropological or structural approaches. See e.g., Zelinski 1885; Sime 1980; Crossley 1991; 1994 (with J. Henderson's introduction to the 1994 reprint); 2002 (with S. Henderson's introduction to the 2002 reprint); 2009 (with S. Henderson's introduction to the 2009 reprint); 2011 (with S. Henderson's introduction to the 2011 reprint). Since the 1990s, more recent discussion in *Silsbee* 1976, 1979, 1988, 2006; Rutter 2006; *Tempo* 2007: 1–8, 49–58; *Bibliography* 2007; *Handbook* 2008: 166–171; *Bibliography* 2011: 167–173.


21 See *Davidson* 2003 on the wide range of classical Greek authors who deploy these many abusive tropes. These tropes allow us to consider many of these authors satirical, but not necessarily 'sativre'.

22 See *Rosen* 2007: 23–33.

23 On Aristotle's use of the terms *eikon* ('function') and *telos* ('aim') for tragedy in *Poetics*, see *Handbook* 2003: 24–5 and *Woodfruffe* 2004. In the end, Aristophanes is not particularly explicit in his use of these terms, and *Handbook*'s summary (244) exposes Aristotle's thinking here as absurdly circular: '...the end or function of tragedy is not presented by Aristophanes as a matter of some single, discrete factor. It involves, rather, the complex, harmonious fulfillment of the "nature" of the genre, and that is something that embraces all the major principles set out in the *Poetics*—principles of structure and unity, of agency and character, of the arousal of the genre's defining emotions.' Does this amount to saying that the nature of tragedy is for it to fulfill its nature? The function of satire is, by contrast, much easier to articulate than that of tragedy, since it involves a rather specific recipe of shock or complaint plus humour, as Aristophanes himself seems to realize. See further discussion below.

24 On the laughter associated with mockery, ridicule, derision, insults— all features of what we call 'sativre' in Greek culture, see *Handbook* 2008: 23–33.

25 *See Ryan 2005: 115–121*, where she argues that 'in fourth-century prose, comedy...was being transformed into a vehicle for the kind of outrageous character assassination that entertains the audience and furthered the argument' (212).
frequent didactic claims one associates with satirical authors, disingenuous or not, are subservient to the work’s goal of humouring an audience. In considering the relationship between iambos and comedy, therefore, we can more easily lay aside the many formal or contextual differences between the two that scholars have legitimately pointed out and instead look at the work each is trying to accomplish. What we find, I think, are strikingly parallel dynamics in play – an author singles out another person for ridicule, usually arrogant over that person’s behaviour or some other abstract issue of the day in which that person is implicated; he speaks to, or in front of, any audience of people who are supposed to be sympathetic listeners; and in the course of his attacks, he makes an audience laugh. It is easy to anticipate objections that such a formulation is simplistic and incomplete – surely not every iambic or comic poet at every moment in a given work is engaging in this very enterprise; and there are, of course, many other aspects of their works that seem to have nothing to do with invective or mockery. But if we start with the (almost tautologous) fact that both iambos and Old Comedy are comic genres, and consider what the preponderant nature of that comedy is – namely, what kind of humour these genres most rely on to distinguish themselves from other comic forms – it is clear that this would be the comedy of personal mockery. It is worth noting, moreover, that iambos and Old Comedy are the only literary genres (certainly the only poetic genres) of Greek antiquity about which this can be said.  

Satirists commonly make didactic claims for their ridicule and irritation, but such claims tend to be complicated, if not undermined, by their heavy use of (generically indicated) humour and irony. See Ruses (2012).  

This notion is what seems to have persuaded E. Bowie 2001, 2002 that iambos has been wrongly conceptualized as, at root, a genre of mockery and blame: ‘iambos was a form of poetry in which a number of identifying features regularly appeared’ (2002: 57), and mockery was simply one of these features. ‘No one of these features,’ he continues, ‘needed to be present for a poem to be recognized as (an) iambos.’ Here we confront again the vexatious question of what we think we are describing – a historical phenomenon that would have been recognizable to contemporary audiences, or a conceptual construct that only crystallized as a genre over time (Routte’s much subtler ‘received iambos’, see above n. 13) The problem is knowing what to consider that a genre has ‘come into being’ in the first place. If there really were archaic performances of iambos that could be completely devoid of anything we might consider, broadly construed, satirical (which I very much doubt, but here our evidence is too incomplete to judge for sure either way), we are even justified in referring to such performances as ‘iambos’ to begin with, especially in light of the fact that later antiquity almost universally came to regard blame and mockery as ‘identifying features’ of iambos and would not readily offer to something as ‘iambos’ that did not include mockery? See Routte 2005, 96-7, in her analysis of Aristotle’s use of the terms jugos and iambos, lays out Aristotle’s varying stance on the matter clearly but, like Bowie, she focuses on the issue of individual iamboi that may not actually contain abuse: the different forms of abuse figure only in part of the works by poets of the ‘received iambos’, while they are found in other genres of poetry as well (97). See above, p. 89, on the difference between satire as a genre and genres that merely incorporate satirical elements but do something else, generally speaking. To put this another way, if we find a poet with no abuse by a poet who otherwise has a predilection for abuse, does that mean that the poet cannot be considered, in terms of generic categorization, a poet of abuse? It seems more profitable to identify an author’s genre as a function of his entire known oeuvre, and of what we can know about what this oeuvre is supposed – by author and audiences alike – to be doing. No one would ever say, for example, that Euripides is not a tragedian because his plays sometimes include scenes that play like love plays, pastoral or comedy. Routte’s 2005: 14 (it is right to say that ‘iambic is not a literary genre’, but ‘iambic’ is not synonymous with ‘satire’), which, even if we are unwilling to regard it as a bona fide genre as such, is certainly a literary mode that can define certain authors and the genres they work in. This is surely what Pindar 5. 25-6, 5-7, 11, 23-6, had in mind in his complaint about Archilochos as jugos (i.e. a ‘blamer’, but in the context of Archilochos’ comic iunios, not so far from our term ‘satirist’), whether or not we should assume that Pindar had Archilochos’ iambos specifically in mind here (cf. Routte 2005: 187). Pindar’s insight into Archilochos is not that everything Archilochos composed was blame poetry, but that so much ‘blaming’ could be found in his work that he can legitimately be characterized with an adjective that reflects this (jugos). See also Nagy 1970: 44-6; Routte 2007: 71, 250. That term, in other words, would still have meaning even in the context of a non-inventive, non-satirical poem. Of course, in the end, one has to concede that not enough Archilochos poetry survives to make any very certain judgement about the variations in generic character across his different works; which is why the testimony of a witness relatively close in time to Archilochus, such as Pindar, is all the more revealing.

39 See above, nos. 12, 13.  

40 Paus. E. Bowie 2002: 44, whose firm denial that Aristotle could have had any notion of ‘deceit’ in mind when he noted similarities between iambos and comedy seems overconfident, based as it is on arguments e ialia ‘that [Aristotle] did not (think Old Comedy was descended from iambos) is further demonstrated by his total silence on iambic jugos ... when he alludes to ... the origins of comedy and iambos. As most modern genre theorists are quick to point out, genres are defined not by any kind of reified essence, but phenomenologically: literary works exist within a social and cultural context; people respond to them and classify them according to how they perceive them, how they work, what they look like, and so forth. It is people who label genres, and if they conclude that two genres are affiliated, the issue is not so much whether they are ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ to do so, but what has led them to such a conclusion in the first place. Looked at from this perspective, it comes to matter far less whether we can ‘prove’ that the poets of Old Comedy themselves thought of their work as ‘iambic’ than why someone else, able to compare the two genres, would reach that very conclusion. This is why, of course, the testimony of Aristotle’s Poetics has become so crucial for the debates about how (or whether) iambos and Old Comedy are related, for he is our earliest and most explicit testimony (though never explicit enough, alas) that Athenian comedy in some sense evolved out of the iambos. Aristotle’s discussion of this topic at Poetics 1448 does not especially help us with the question of how self-conscious the comic poets might have been about their relationship with iambos, though his acute sense of the literary dynamics at work in each genre certainly makes it likely, prima facie, that he thought they were. The more critical
question is just how Aristotle conceived of their relationship. The case I would like to make on this point is this: even though Aristotle imagines a more or less conventional diachronic history of tragedy at the beginning of Poetics, he is not really concerned with trajectories of influence or authorial self-consciousness. His notions of literary evolution derive rather from a phenomenological analysis and taxonomizing of literary forms and dynamics, and from an attempt to extrapolate from these commonalities among different works. This is why Bowie imagines a false problem when he voices scepticism that Aristotle saw Old Comedy as a 'direct descendent' of iambos, since Aristotle does not seem especially concerned to make an argument for direct descent here.

The relevant passage from Poetics (1448b24–1449a) is worth considering here with these issues in mind:

διεσπερτὴς δὲ κατὰ τὰ διάφορα βήματα ἡ ποίησις: οἱ μὲν γὰρ συμπεριφέρον τὰς καλὰς ἐμμούτισιν πράξεις καὶ τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐθείατοι τὰς τῶν φυλλάκων, πρὸς τῶν ψέφων παυεῖτε, ὡστε πρὸς ἔναν τόδε καὶ ἐγκώμιον. τῶν μὲν οὖν πρὸ Ομήρου οὔδεις ἔχεις εἰτέν τοιοῦτον ποίημα, εἰκός δὲ εἶναι πολλὸς, ὅπως ἐν διαφοράς ἢ ἤκουσας ἢ ἤδεικνύσας ἢ ἤξεσας, ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ θρήματος καὶ τὸ λαμβάνειν ἐκείνης μέτρου—ὅτι καὶ λαμβάνειν καλλίτa νέοι, ὡστε καὶ τὸ μέτρον τοῦτο λαμβάνειν ἄλλης, συν ἐγκώμιον τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ μὲν ἱστοικοὶ οἱ δὲ θρεπτικοὶ ποιηταὶ, ὡστερὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ σπουδαῖον μάλιστα ποιητῆς Ομήρου ήν (μάλιστα γὰρ οἷος ἦν ὁ ἄλλος καὶ μιμήθης δραματικά ήπονεόν), οὕτως καὶ τὸ τῆς κομμῆδας σχῆμα πρῶτος οἰκείον, οἷος τὸ γέλιων δραματικῆς ὑπόσχοντας ἡ γὰρ Μαργηνῆς ἀνάλογα ἔχει, ὡστερὴ τῆς καὶ ἠδοσίᾳ πρὸς τὴν τροχοίδος, οὕτως καὶ οὕτως πρὸς τῆς κομμῆδας παραφράσεως δὲ τῆς τροχοίδος καὶ κομμῆδας ἢ δῆ. Εἰστι κατὰ τὸ ποίημα οἴκεται κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην φύσιν οἱ μὲν οὐκ ἂν τῶν λαμβάνων κομμῆδας συγκρίνωσαν εἰς τούτοις, ὡστε τὸ μέτρον καὶ ἱστοικὰ τὰ σχῆματα εἶναι τούτα διδέον.

Poetry branched into two, according to its creators' characters: the more serious produced mimetic of noble actions and the actions of noble people, while the more vulgar depicted the actions of the base, in the first place by composing invectives (just as others produced hymns and encomia). Now, we cannot name such an invective by any poet earlier than Homer,

of Aric comedy in phillic choral performances. Again, it would have been very easy to say that pre-Crates comedy was a direct descendent of iambos... In fact, Aristotle does not have to mention iambos at 1448a24, because he had already dealt with it in the preceding section, where he had made it clear that iambic writers were precisely the ones who became writers of comedy (see Boscovich 2001: 87): οἱ μὲν δὲν τὰς Λαμβάνων κομμήδια συγκρίνουσι (τούς, γενὸς) poems of comedy instead of iambic verse).

In discussing this passage, Bowie concludes that Aristotle 'writes as if [iamb and comedy] had related features' rather than that the one was 'descended from or strongly influenced by the other' (my emphasis). Even if Aristotle were interested in making this specific point, which is hardly clear from the text, Bowie's scepticism raises an interesting methodological question – if one acknowledges that two genres have 'related features', as Bowie does, what does it take to transform these features into sufficient evidence for generic affiliation? Philosophers might recognize here a variation of the sorites problem (how many individual grains of wheat does it take to make a heap?) and the stakes are far from trivial. For establishing affiliation between literary genres brings us back to our original concern for discovering what each genre is actually trying to do. Put more concretely: if we think we understand what Hippokrates is doing when he mocks Bupalus, and we think that, when Aristophanes mocks his targets, we can detect in him similar goals, formal structures, diction, and so on, a case for affiliation, if not descent, seems assured. Some might object, as Will and Bowie have done, that historical contingencies colour the nature of each poet's mockery too much to argue for anything but the most casual or coincidental affiliation. Why, for example, should we assume that a poet mocking a target in sixth-century BC Clazomenae should be after the same effect as a poet mocking a target in the fifth, when political structures and social relationships were different? Because, I think we can say, each poet would have the same answer to the following question: what are you really trying to do when you make fun of your targets – not at the localized, specific level, but at the most conceptual, poetic one? To this

33 Here and elsewhere I reproduce the translation of Aristotle's Poetics by Hallowell 1995 (my emphasis).
34 E. Bowie 2002: 49. 35 See above, n. 15.
question, each would doubtless answer that he is ultimately interested in making his audience laugh, and the mode he has decided to adopt is one of satire and mockery; each would claim he has privileged a satirical mode because something about his targets annoys him, and the indignation that results allows him to fulfill his comic strategy. 36 Exactly how each puts this together in a given poem is highly idiosyncratic, of course, but the same satirical scaffolding can be seen sturdily in place in each case, in examples from antiquity to the present. 36

Aristotle himself also urges us not to fixate on the contingencies of individual authors and works, but rather to think in terms of literary telos, dynamics and a largely unconscious evolutionary process. The opening line of the passage quoted above is a key statement: ἐπειδὴ δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἶκα ἡθοὶ ἡ θεωρεῖν. "Poetry," he says, "split apart according to poets' oikēs ἡθοί", their 'individual characters'. By suggesting that poets are drawn to certain types of poetry according to their respective temperaments (oikēs ἡθοί), 37 Aristotle attempts to isolate fixed, 'natural' categories that can unify a multiplicity of poetic forms, regardless of how these forms might relate to one another diachronically or as a function of authorial intention. Aristotle's phrasing of this process at 1449a is revealing:

παραφανείας δὲ τὴς τραγουδίας καὶ κωμῳδίας οἱ ἡθοὶ ἑκτέρας τὴν ποιήσας οἰκοδομής κατὰ τὴν οἰκῆς φύσιν οἱ μὲν αὑτὸ τῶν λαίμων κωμῳδισθείσοι ἔγενσαν, οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπεὶ τραγῳδοδιδάσκαλοι, διὸ τὸ μέτρα καὶ ἐνεπερήφανε τὸ σχῆματος εἶναι τοῦτο ἐκείνων.

And when tragedy and comedy had been glimpsed [in Homer], those whose own natures gave them an impetus towards either type of poetry abandoned iambic lampoons to become the comic poets, or epic to become tragedians, because these newer forms were grander and more esteemed than the earlier.

35 See Rosen 2007: 25-42, for a fuller exposition of the formal, and psychological, structure of satire.
36 See Rosen and Markes 1999, and Rosen and Bianis 2005 for comparative studies of satirical poetries beyond classical authors. For Aristotle, the scaffolding seems to be what lies behind his use of the word (for the first time in current Greek literature) ἡθοεν γεγονος at 1449a, now well discussed at Boettner 2000: 100-4, who traces up the meaning of the word as to 'what is typical of iambus' as it was conceived in the fourth century bc, namely, as the enumerates, humorous, sometimes scurrilous, comicus, etc., which is identified with the iambic lampoon. Aristotle would say that the idea of iambus at 'dominantly abusive' (102) was a conception that was developing in the fourth century, and then applied, 'backed away to the pre-Homeric age'. Why does she so contemptuously along with Rovee, the idea that early lampoons might also have been 'dominantly abusive' (or at least, to use a phrase with broader connotations, 'dominantly satirical') in its own day eludes me, especially given the paucity of actual fragments from the period that would allow us to make definitive judgments either way.
37 There has been some dispute as to whether oikēs ἡθοὶ refers here to poets or poetry, but see Lucas 1965: 73 ad loc.
the actual criteria for establishing generic categories. But when he says that certain personality types 'rush' (δραμώντες) to compose in one genre, these poets are rushing towards something, and that something is both real and specific in his mind. *Iambos*, for example, is for Aristotle a distinct subspecies of comedy, which is itself a subcategory of what he calls the non-serious (έτοιμα). It is, moreover, a form of comic poetry distinguished from others by its predilection for *poëgos*—inventive and mockery; it likes to make one set of people laugh by exposing others to mockery. Aristotle is not concerned if individual examples of *iambos* can be found that might not feature a *poëgos*; it is enough for him to know that this is the type of poem where a *poëgos* could be right at home and, equally important, that its author is the type of person who could be characterized as *poëgers*. When we arrive at Old Comedy, it is obvious, and often noted, that not every episode of every Aristophanic play is satirical or inventive. But if we were to ask Aristotle what sort of person a poet of Old Comedy would be, there can be little doubt that he would say it was someone who loved a good *poëgos* himself—someone who by nature (i.e. in keeping with his *physi*) revelled in being funny through personal mockery and who deployed the many literary tropes associated with such an enterprise. Such tropes themselves were not necessarily stable and could vary in detail from poet to poet, but on this point too Aristotle would doubtless have found unifying generic categories for them, if only by characterizing them all as low (*phasis*) and non-serious (cf. Poet. 1448b25–8, quoted above).

Aristotle’s basic position on the relationship between *iambos* and Old Comedy, therefore, is not, in the end, especially complicated: he did think they were related, in ways that I have discussed, and he did imagine some sort of *historical* relationship between them, although he had to remain agnostic about the details. He does not himself theorize a concept of

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40. Rosett’s distinction (2001: 86–8) between Aristotle’s ‘theoretical’ and ‘empirical’ approaches to the history of poetry makes good sense up to a point, but I suspect the line between each approach were considerably more blurred for Aristotle: ‘... in the empirical approach *dithyrambs* and *phallic* songs are “historical” (that of which?) instruments of tragedy and comedy... in the theoretical approach, *iambos* appear as the conceptual (similar so but not deriving from) consequent of *poëgos*, which I argue is Aristotle’s construct, and the conceptual instrument of comedy. It is not clear to me why the two approaches need be mutually exclusive, either for Aristotle or for ourselves. If Aristotle thought that Aristoc comedy arose historically and most directly ‘out of’ phallic songs, and phallic songs would have featured the kinds of *poëgos* associated with *iambos*, why would he have had any trouble in thinking that phallic songs themselves had a historical — not only a conceptual — relationship with *iambos*, that they arose ‘out of’ *iambos* (in comedy and phallic songs see Coph in this volume). In Aristotle’s speculative literary history, after all, all comic forms ultimately derived from the split between the poets of the ‘serious’ and the vulgar non-serious (οὐ γὰρ σωματικricula τῆς φύσεως, ἐπέκτεινον τὴν τινὶς σινεομένην καὶ τὴν τοιοῦτον, ὃ ἔντελλεντος τῷ τῶν ψαλίδων, 1480b5). It is
a way of reading that renounced the premise of polis-based civic utility in favour of a programme of scholarly inquiry which would neutralize comedy politically and subordinate it to the courtly project of ordering the literary universe under a divine monarch, the Pleiad tragedians made what would turn out to be a decisive contribution to the generational struggle of poetry and philosophy, comedy and tragedy, and finally Athens and Alexandria for ownership of the discourses of criticism: asserting an anti-Pepysian model of how comedy should be read which deprecated anecdotage, prosopography, and rhetorical and formalist theory in favour of a new kind of philologically informed close reading of the texts, and canonizing the comedians of tragedy's own golden age as the masters of the genre, in defiance of contemporary taste and practice. The absence of practising comedians from the early Museum may itself have been an essentially political fact: at any rate it left the field free for tragedians to claim critical ownership and canonization rights over comedy, after a century and a half of one-sided dialogue in which comedy had asserted its own unchallengeable entitlement to discursive mastery of other genres and tragedy in particular. It seems clear enough that what we thought we knew about Lycophron is as wrong as what we once thought we knew about Euphronius, and that the real story of the founding fathers of scholarship on comedy is still waiting to be told. But their ultimate triumph in the contest to determine which comedies would be read and how was not merely a decisive episode in the history of literary scholarship and critical practice: it was also tragedy's final revenge for the Prin. 

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