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Iambos, Comedy and the Question of Generic Affiliation

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Greek Comedy and the Discourse of Genres

Edited by Emmanuela Bakola,
Lucia Prauscello and Mario Telò

CAMBRIDGE

GREEK COMEDY AND THE DISCOURSE OF GENRES

EDITED BY

E. BAKOLA, L. PRAUSCELLO AND M. TELÒ

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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 *komoï* of the *Pompe*. In this sense, Aristotle is both deeply insightful and surely wrong, or at least overstating the case, when he derives comedy specifically from the *phallika*.

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.¹ 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.²

¹ See Willi 2003: 9–10 (and then *passim*) 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 2003: 232–69 for an attempt to establish a base-line Aristophanic grammar (and stylistics) which can be helpful in detecting parodic deviations.

² 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 'negative', but not necessarily or always so; it does, however, nearly always strive to elicit some form of laughter. See M. A. Rose 1993: 3–53, 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 Kugelmeier's taxonomy of 'Reflexe' (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 more organic ways, where there is no question of parody and quite often no apparent self-consciousness about allusion or authorial intentionality. Sometimes these 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.³ 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.⁴ Aristotle 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 Aristotle's frustration and crave information about how these

³ I am thinking here of the many formal devices and structures shared by Athenian tragedy and comedy – e.g. stichic verse, alternation of episodes and lyric passages, and presumably an entire array of stage and costuming 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. Taplin 1986 weighs the evidence for and against a meaningful generic relationship between Attic tragedy and comedy, concluding (173) that 'on the whole they reject ... rather than invite overlap'. This is not to say that there were not many self-conscious 'borrowings', one from the other, as many scholars have discussed (cf. Taplin 1986: 163–5), but in terms of what each genre actually 'does', Taplin finds them worlds apart. Cratin. fr. 342, which refers to someone as engaging in 'Euripidaristophanizing' (Εὐριπιδάριστοφανίζων), offers a rare moment of self-consciousness about how the two dramatic genres might 'fuse'. But without real context, it is impossible to know what it all amounts to: it might well imply that Cratinus thought of Aristophanic comedy as deeply informed by Euripidean tragedy; or it may only suggest that Aristophanes is capable of posing as an intellectual *like* Euripides but was not necessarily *derivative* of him. See Bakola 2010: 24–9, with bibliography, who argues that Cratinus links Aristophanes to Euripides with the word Εὐριπιδάριστοφανίζων in order to highlight his own poetic relationship with Aeschylus.

⁴ 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, long lost to the consciousness of any individual poet or his audience? Such a claim is often made for passages such as Dicaeopolis' lyric *phallikon* at Ar. *Ach.* 264–79, even if the passage itself is not felt to replicate such a ritual song exactly (see e.g. Pickard-Cambridge 1962: 132–62; Rothwell 2007: 16, 25; Halliwell 2008: 207–11, with further bibliography, n. 148): it re-enacts, or perhaps parodies, an aspect of a specific religious festival that we suspect had a long past even by the fifth century, it *seems* to have some bearing on what goes on in Attic comedy (viz. aischrologic mockery), but did Aristophanes put it all together in his mind when he composed this scene? Cf. also Rusten 1977, for a similar argument suggesting a link between Old Comedy and the ritual *gephyrismos*. See Kugelmeier's third category of lyric 'reflexes' in Old Comedy (1996: 3), which includes passages that are best regarded as 'reminiscences' ('Der Reflex *klingt* an ein lyrisches Vorbild an ...'), where it is unclear how conscious the author would have been of what we might call an 'allusion'.

diachronic literary relationships might have actually taken shape: where does Old Comedy come from? What accounts for its distinctive generic hybridity? Will isolating its constituent 'parts' help us understand how it interacted with other genres and, more important, clarify for us what Old Comedy, as a discrete genre itself, actually is supposed to *do*?

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 Iambographic Tradition* (henceforth, *OCIT*),⁵ 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.⁶ Certainly, if Aristophanes can be shown to quote Archilochus (as he does),⁷ or to mention Hipponax by name (as he does),⁸ 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,

⁵ Rosen 1988.

⁶ The methodological problems with arguments for generic affiliation based on lexical similarities were well presented by E. Bowie 2002, 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 fixate unduly on my suggestion that historical figures targeted for mockery by comic poets can in some respects be profitably treated as 'stock characters' (e.g. Hubbard 1991: 41–53 and Kugelmeier 1996: 163–8). I offer some clarification at Rosen 2010: 235 n. 19.

⁷ Rosen 1988: 17–20; Kugelmeier 1996: 169–78. ⁸ Rosen 1988: 14–16; Kugelmeier 1996: 189–94.

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 Archilochean allusions and quotations, was he constructing a *parodic* relationship – a relationship of mocking otherness, not affiliation – with Archilochus, akin to Aristophanes' relationship with Euripides?⁹ Or was it an attempt on Cratinus' part to acknowledge an organic generic 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 approach and consider them – despite their many differences in literary form, performative structures, or even localized social functioning – as, first and foremost, genres of *satire*.¹⁰

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 interaction? 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,¹¹ but for a variety of reasons comic genres have presented particular challenges to thinking outside of familiar philological parameters.¹² In the specific case of *iambos* and Old Comedy, this reluctance to theorize about genre has created some confusion about what we are

⁹ Rosen 1988; Kugelmeier 1996: 178–89; Bakola 2010: 70–9.

¹⁰ For my use of the term 'satire', see Rosen 2007: 3–42, esp. 17–20.

¹¹ See e.g. Farrell 2003, Rosen 2007: 14–17, and now Rotstein 2010 (esp. 3–24), who offers a lucid discussion, with bibliography, of the major theoretical challenges of genre criticism as practised both in antiquity and by theorists of our own time.

¹² 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, cajoling its audiences into 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 critics, for example, being drawn into a satirist's insistence (a conventional trope in itself) that his work must be taken at face value and as representative of a historical reality. See Rosen 2007: 12–13, 243–7.

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:¹³

- (1) How, *historically*, did a particular genre come into being and develop?¹⁴
- (2) How did a given genre represent *itself*, its origin, its history 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 imply 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

¹³ Rotstein 2010 addresses some of these questions as well, *passim*, and explicitly at 3–16, although in her study of the genre of *iambos* 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. 25–6, 52–7).

¹⁴ Few people today conceptualize genres as natural categories in the way we think of objects in the world (e.g. birds, cups, water), and most would assent to the three descriptions of genres as 'category concepts', 'mental representations of abstract entities' and 'cultural products' suggested by Rotstein 2010. Rotstein's synthesis of current approaches drawn from cognitive science is illuminating ('chunking', 'embodiment', '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 given literary work. I do think, however, that the generic identity of *iambos* in antiquity (indeed, even the possibility for ancient audiences to *define* it) was more stable than Rotstein 2010 and E. Bowie 2002 would allow. Bowie's (37) whimsical characterization of *iambos* as an 'à 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 modelled their plays on iambic poets.¹⁵ 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 performance – 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 *psogos* against Lycambes in the seventh century BC, and Aristophanes composed a humorous, obscene *psogos* 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 *iambos* and Old Comedy can be shown to involve many other things besides abuse and political mockery, these elements themselves cannot be regarded as definitional 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,¹⁶ 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 association, at *Pythians* 2.52–7, where he repudiates the iambic poet Archilochus for being *psogeros*. With Pindar, there is never any question of what his

¹⁵ 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 love lyric 'descended from' ancient examples of similar songs? Is *Death of a Salesman* '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 need to be aware of their literary antecedents. Rotstein 2010: 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).

¹⁶ Farrell 2003: 387–8.

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 epinician. 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?¹⁷ 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, than mere philology, since literary works by different authors can 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 Lucilian satire derived from (*pendet*) the poets of Old Comedy.¹⁸ 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 satirists 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 were related to one another simply by virtue of doing similar things, whether or not the poets 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 (*notabant* . . .), 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

¹⁷ This is the central question that Bowie's remark (2002: 37) calls to mind: 'If my arguments [for a multiplicity of "identifying features" of *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 closely with comedy, *abuse*' (my emphasis).

¹⁸ As Freudenburg 2001: 18 succinctly put it: 'The lines are fraught with misinformation that caricatures not only the poets of Greek Old Comedy, but Lucilius 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 both that 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 *OCIT*, 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*.¹⁹ 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

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 progress seemed possible with more folkloric, anthropological or structural approaches. See e.g. Zielinski 1885; Süß 1908; Cornford 1993 [1914] (with J. Henderson's Introduction to the 1993 reprint: xi–xxxiii); more recent discussion in Sifakis 1971, 1992, 2006; Rusten 2006b; Csapo and Miller 2007a: 1–38, Rothwell 2007; Halliwell 2008: 196 n. 120; Bierl 2009: 267–325.

of *iambos*, Old Comedy and even Roman satire, I have argued elsewhere that the concept of 'satire'²⁰ is a reasonably good start, for 'satire' 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 'satirical'.²¹ But to use that adjective is to imply that there is something we consider 'true satire', different from the examples that we label 'satirical'.²² What distinguishes genres *of* satire from genres that may merely *incorporate* satire, is that the work of the former – the *ergon* or *telos* of satire, to borrow terms that Aristotle uses for the function and aim of tragedy²³ – is understood by audiences, authors and critics to be laughter.²⁴ 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. Aischrology 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.²⁵ Even the

²⁰ Rosen 2007: 3–42.

²¹ See now Worman 2008, 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 'satirists'.

²² See Rosen 2007: 22–3.

²³ On Aristotle's use of the terms *ergon* ('function') and *telos* ('aim') for tragedy in *Poetics*, see Halliwell 2002: 204–6 and Woodruff 2009. In the end, Aristotle is not particularly explicit in his use of these terms, and Halliwell's summary (204) exposes Aristotle's thinking here as almost circular: '... the end or function of tragedy is not presented by Aristotle as a matter of some single, discrete factor. It involves, rather, the complete, 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 fulfil 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 attack or complaint plus humour, as Aristotle himself seemed to realize. See further discussion below.

²⁴ On the laughter associated with mockery, ridicule, derision, insult – all features of what we call 'satire' – in Greek culture, see Halliwell 2008: 22–33.

²⁵ See Worman 2008: 153–212, where she argues that 'in fourth-century prose, comedy... was becoming a resource for the kind of outrageous character assassination that entertains the audience and furthers argument' (212).

frequent didactic claims one associates with satirical authors, disingenuous or not, are subservient to the work's goal of humouring an audience.²⁶

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 indignant 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 engaged 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.²⁷ 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 comedic 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.²⁸

²⁶ Satirists commonly make didactic claims for their ridicule and indignation, but such claims tend to be complicated, if not undermined, by their heavy use of (generically indicated) humour and irony. See Rosen (2012).

²⁷ 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: 37), 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 (Rotstein's much subtler 'received *iambos*', see above n. 13)? The problem is knowing when 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), are we even justified in referring to such performances as '*iambos*' to begin with, especially in light of the fact that later antiquity almost univocally came to regard blame and mockery as 'identifying features' of *iambos* and would not readily refer to something as '*iambos*' that did not include mockery? See Rotstein 2010, 319–46, a chapter with the revealing title, 'Invective as the Dominant Feature of *Iambos*'.

²⁸ Rotstein 2010: 96–7, in her analysis of Aristotle's use of the terms *psogos* and *iambos*, lays out Aristotle's varying stances on the matter clearly but, like Bowie, she fixates 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

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.²⁹ 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.³⁰ The more critical

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, generically speaking. To put this another way, if we find a poem 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 contain scenes that play like love lyric, pastoral or comedy. Rotstein 2010: 345 is right to say that 'invective is not a literary genre', but 'invective' 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 Pind. *Pyth.* 2.52–6, had in mind in his complaint about Archilochus as *psogeros* (= a 'blamer', but in the context of Archilochus' comic aims, not so far from our term 'satirical'), whether or not we should assume that Pindar had Archilochus' *iamboi* specifically in mind here (cf. Rotstein 2010: 287). Pindar's insight into Archilochus is not that everything Archilochus 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 (*psogeros*). See also Nagy 1979: 222–8; Rosen 2007: 71, 250. That term, in other words, would still have meaning even in the context of a non-invective, non-satirical poem. Of course, in the end, one has to concede that not enough Archilochean 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.

²⁹ See above, nn. 12, 13.

³⁰ Pace E. Bowie 2002: 48, whose firm denial that Aristotle could have had any notion of 'descent' in mind when he noted similarities between *iambos* and comedy seems overconfident, based as it is on arguments *e silentio*: that [Aristotle] did not [think Old Comedy was descended from *iambos*] is further demonstrated by his total silence on Ionian *iambos*... when he alludes to... the origins

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 this commonalities among different works. This is why Bowie³¹ 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* (1448b24–1449a5) is worth considering here with these issues in mind:

διεσπάσθη δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἥθη ἢ ποιήσις· οἱ μὲν γὰρ σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαύλων, πρῶτον ψόγους ποιοῦντες, ὥσπερ ἕτεροι ὕμνους καὶ ἐγκώμια. τῶν μὲν οὖν πρὸ Ὀμήρου οὐδενὸς ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν τοιοῦτον ποίημα, εἰκὸς δὲ εἶναι πολλούς, ἀπὸ δὲ Ὀμήρου ἀρξαμένοις ἔστιν, ὅσον ἐκείνου ὁ Μαργίτης καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ ἀρμότιον καὶ τὸ ἱαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον – διὸ καὶ ἱαμβεῖον καλεῖται νῦν, ὅτι ἐν τῷ μέτρῳ τούτῳ ἱάμβιζον ἀλλήλους, καὶ ἐγένοντο τῶν παλαιῶν οἱ μὲν ἥρωικῶν οἱ δὲ ἱάμβων ποιηταί. ὥσπερ δὲ καὶ τὰ σπουδαῖα μάλιστα ποιητῆς Ὀμηρος ἦν (μόνος γὰρ οὐχ ὅτι εὖ ἀλλὰ καὶ μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησεν), οὕτως καὶ τὸ τῆς κωμωδίας σχῆμα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν, οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας· ὁ γὰρ Μαργίτης ἀνάλογον ἔχει, ὥσπερ Ἰλιάς καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσεια πρὸς τὰς τραγωδίας, οὕτω καὶ οὗτος πρὸς τὰς κωμωδίας. παραφανείσης δὲ τῆς τραγωδίας καὶ κωμωδίας οἱ ἐφ' ἑκατέραν τὴν ποιήσιν ὁρμῶντες κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν οἱ μὲν ἀντὶ τῶν ἱάμβων κωμωδοποιοὶ ἐγένοντο, οἱ δὲ ἀντὶ τῶν ἐπῶν τραγωδοδιδάσκαλοι, διὰ τὸ μείζω καὶ ἐντιμότερα τὰ σχήματα εἶναι ταῦτα ἐκείνων.

Poetry branched into two, **according to its creators' characters**: the more serious produced mimesis 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 Attic comedy in phallic choral performances'. 'Again, it would have been very easy to say that pre-Crates comedy was a direct descendant of *iamboi*...' In fact, Aristotle does not have to mention *iambos* at 1449a11, 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 (*pace* Rotstein 2010: 87): οἱ μὲν ἀντὶ τῶν ἱάμβων κωμωδοποιοὶ ἐγένοντο ('so some became poets of comedy instead of iambic verses').

³¹ E. Bowie 2002: 48. See above, n. 30.

though probably many poets produced them; but we can do so from Homer onwards, namely the latter's *Margites* and the like. In these poets, it was aptness which brought the iambic metre too into use – precisely why it is called the 'iambic' now, because it was in this metre that they lampooned one another. Of the older poets some became composers of epic hexameters, others of iambic lampoons. Just as Homer was the supreme poet of elevated subjects (for he was preeminent not only in quality but also in composing dramatic mimesis), so too he was the first to delineate the forms of comedy, by dramatizing not invective but the laughable: thus *Margites* stands in the same relation to comedies as do the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to tragedies. And when tragedy and comedy had been glimpsed [i.e. 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.³²

In discussing this passage, Bowie³³ concludes that Aristotle 'writes as if [*iambos* 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 Hipponax 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 Willi and Bowie have done,³⁴ 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

³² Here and elsewhere I reproduce the translations of Aristotle's *Poetics* by Halliwell 1995 (my emphasis).

³³ E. Bowie 2002: 49. ³⁴ 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 fulfil his comedic strategy.³⁵ 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: διεσπάρσθη δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἥθη ἢ ποίησις. 'Poetry', he says, 'split apart according to poets' οἰκεῖα ἥθη', their 'individual characters'. By suggesting that poets are drawn to certain types of poetry according to their respective temperaments (οἰκεῖα ἥθη),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:

παραφανείσης δὲ τῆς τραγωδίας καὶ κωμωδίας οἱ ἐφ' ἑκατέραν τὴν ποίησιν ὁρμῶντες κατὰ τὴν οἰκεῖαν φύσιν οἱ μὲν ἀντὶ τῶν ἰαμβῶν κωμωδοποιοὶ ἐγένοντο, οἱ δὲ ἀντὶ τῶν ἐπῶν τραγωδοδιδάσκαλοι, διὰ τὸ μείζω καὶ ἐντιμότερα τὰ σχήματα εἶναι ταῦτα 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: 23–42, for a fuller exposition of the formal, and psychological, structures of satire.

³⁶ See Rosen and Marks 1999, and Rosen and Baines 2002 for comparative studies of satirical poetics beyond classical authors. For Aristotle, the scaffolding seems to be what lies behind his use of the word (for the first time in extant Greek literature) ἰαμβίζειν at 1448b29, now well discussed at Rotstein 2010: 100–1, who sums up the meaning of the verb as 'to do what is typical of *iamboi*' as it was conceived in the fourth century BC, namely, as she enumerates, humorous, sometimes scandalous, content, aischrology, and *ad hominem* ridicule. Rotstein would say that the idea of *iambos* as 'dominantly abusive' (102) was a conception that was developing in the fourth century, and then applied 'backward to a pre-Homeric age'. Why she resists so categorically, along with Bowie, the idea that early *iambos* 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 judgements either way.

³⁷ There has been some dispute as to whether οἰκεῖα ἥθη refers here to poets or poetry, but see Lucas 1968: 75 *ad loc.*

When poets began to see, through their experience with Homer, what tragedy and comedy were all about, they cathected to one or the other (ὁρμῶντες) in accordance with their φύσεις. In the lines immediately preceding these Aristotle had already established that comedy, as he conceptualized it, was not identical to *iambos*,³⁸ but he still could say that epic and iambic poets of an earlier age (καὶ ἐγένοντο τῶν παλαιῶν οἱ μὲν ἥρωικῶν οἱ δὲ ἰαμβῶν ποιηταί) could map on, by analogy, to the tragedy and comedy of his own day. The kind of person whose *physis* would have drawn him to *iambos*, in other words, would have had the same character as the person who in classical Athens would have been drawn to comedy.

Aristotle is grasping here for that certain something in both *iambos* and comedy that would appeal to a person with such a *physis*, their 'natural bent', irrespective of any arguments about how these genres might be interrelated from a diachronic perspective. In fact, it is striking that Aristotle makes a point of saying a few sections later (1449b) that there is no real memory of what came before comedy. The history of comedy's formal aspects – for example its masks, prologues, number of actors – was unknown because there were no records and no explicit cultural memory, at least none that he had recourse to (τίς δὲ πρόσωπα ἀπέδωκεν ἢ προλόγους ἢ πλήθη ὑποκριτῶν καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἡγνότηται, 1449b3). Even so, however, Aristotle has no trouble in positing a clear generic link between *iambos* and comedy based on his argument that each genre attracted practitioners whose temperaments were themselves linked by their predilection for satiric invective, whether or not they thought very much about how other genres deployed similar literary strategies.³⁹

In short, for Aristotle, the many types of poetry that exist can be categorized according to the kinds of things that each purports to do or what others (audiences, critics) claim that they do. This is an inevitably imprecise procedure, and it is never quite clear what Aristotle regards as

³⁸ Aristotle notes that Homer's *Margites*, for example, was a form (σχῆμα) of comedy that dramatized the 'laughable' (τὸ γελοῖον), which included invective (ψόγος), but not exclusively so. At 1448b30 he cites Homer as the first known composer of ψόγοι in his *Margites*, so it is curious that a few lines later, he says that *Margites* dramatized the laughable, but not invective (οὐ ψόγον). This seems to show that Aristotle thought of ψόγος as a prominent component of a larger work of comedy, but that not all the comic aspects of the work had to be invective. See now Rotstein 2010: 98–104: 'For Aristotle the *Margites* seems to be an item on the margins of the broad category of *psogos* that builds τὸ γελοῖον into a proto-dramatic story (δραματοποίησις)' (103).

³⁹ See above, n. 28, on Pind. *Pyth.* 2.52–7, which anticipates Aristotle's correlation between a type of poetry and the poet's character. For in calling Archilochus *psogeron* there, he imputes to the personality of the poet a quality that he would identify as lying at the heart of Archilochean poetry, namely its fondness for *psogos*. People who are naturally drawn to invective in 'real life' will just as naturally be drawn to poetry that features invective if they decide to become poets.

the actual *criteria* for establishing generic categories. But when he says that certain personality types 'rush' (ὀρμῶντες) 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 (εὐτελής). It is, moreover, a form of comic poetry distinguished from others by its predilection for *psogos* – invective 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 *psogos*; it is enough for him to know that this is the type of poem where a *psogos* could be right at home and, equally important, that its author is the type of person who could be characterized as *psogeros*. When we arrive at Old Comedy, it is obvious, and often noted, that not every episode of every Aristophanic play is satirical or invective. 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 *psogos* himself – someone who by nature (i.e. in keeping with his *physis*) 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 (*phaula*) 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.⁴⁰ He does not himself theorize a concept of

generic affiliation, but it is clear that he is willing, unlike many scholars, to lay aside the many contingencies that individual works exhibit within the contexts of their production in favour of thinking in terms of a work's *ergon*, and that this kind of thinking encourages a consideration of how different genres interact with one another. Aristotle's insight about *iambos* was merely a first step in the generic analysis of *iambos*, but its significance lay in the way it articulated a literary dynamic – what we would call satire or mockery – that could serve as a meaningful criterion for generic classification without relying on specific authorial practices or self-consciousness. The question of a deliberate, authorially self-conscious, historically verifiable affiliation between *iambos* and Old Comedy is impossible to answer with much certainty in the current state of our evidence; but denying that there was one or remaining agnostic on the issue does not mean that the two could not be affiliated according to a different set of criteria that have more to do with *how* humans interact with each other in the world than *how aware* they always are of what they are actually doing.

true that he had no real evidence on which to base this statement, but he seems to have imagined that all those people with 'psogeric' φύσεις, driven to compose in comic forms that involved what we would call 'satire', were people who had really existed. See Rusten 2006b, for the diversity of comic forms in Greek poetry that seem to have been around in the sixth century BC, as potential antecedents to elements found in fifth-century Attic comedy.

⁴⁰ Rotstein's distinction (2010: 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 lines between each approach were considerably more blurred for Aristotle: '... In the empirical approach dithyramb and phallic songs are "historical" ("out of which") forerunners of tragedy and comedy... In the theoretical approach, *iamboi* appear as the conceptual (similar to but not deriving from) consequent of *psogoi*, which I argue is Aristotle's construct, and the conceptual forerunner 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 Attic comedy arose historically and most directly 'out of' phallic songs, and phallic songs would have featured the kinds of *psogoi* associated with *iamboi*, 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* (on comedy and phallic songs see Csapo 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 (οἱ μὲν γὰρ σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαύλων, 1448b25). 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-Peripatetic model of how comedy should be read which deprecated anecdote, 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 *Frogs*.

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