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ANCIENT COMEDY AND IAMBIC POETRY

GENERIC RELATIONS AND CHARACTER DEPICTION

ABSTRACT: Aristotle distinguishes two basic forms of blame poetry, iambus and comedy, and places them in a line of teleological development. The comic writers of fifth-century Athens (Cratinus, Aristophanes) expressed similar views through their theatrically enlivened poetological conceptions. In this respect, they may reflect theories of contemporary intellectuals, who had perceived the generic connection between iambic poetry and comedy. Both genres have in common the portrayal of humorous human types. The large but cowardly general (Archilochus fr. 114) forecasts the *miles gloriosus* of the comic stage. The characterological sketch of the *kolax*, who gatecrashes rich banquets (Asius fr. 14, Archilochus fr. 124), reappears in a comedy by Eupolis (*Kolakes* fr. 172). The foolish loser who becomes the victim of humiliating mishaps, a central figure in Hipponax and in the humorous poem *Margites*, is also depicted in Aristophanes' lampooning songs (e.g. *Acharnians* 1150–1173). The iambographer takes inspiration from actual figures of his social milieu but invests them with universality and upgrades them to diachronic ethological archetypes.

A FABLE ABOUT PRAISE AND BLAME

Once upon a time, when the gods created the world, they assigned to the two brother Titans, Prometheus and Epimetheus, the task of fabricating living creatures to populate the earth. The two divine craftsmen got down to work and made all kinds of plants, trees, animals, fishes, and birds; their creatures spread over the lands, the seas, and the air. The crown of their labours was the intelligent race of the humans, who soon dominated the earth with the achievements of their civilisation. Epimetheus was so delighted with his works that he could never stop admiring their beauty and exulting at their boundless variety. He was not satisfied merely with the sight of his creations; he also wished to hear about their excellent vir-

tues all the time. Therefore, Epimetheus took a big piece of divine ambrosia from the cellars of Olympus and used it to fashion the form of a wonderful young ephebe, endowed with startling beauty. He breathed life into the young man's figure, gave him the name Ainos (meaning Praise), and sent him out to roam around the earth and extol the marvellous beings of creation. Ainos spent his days glorifying the charms of the world and its inhabitants. His words were so sweet and gracious that they rivalled the beauty of the cosmos itself.

But nothing is ever perfect in the world of Epimetheus. By continuously hearing Ainos' eulogies, the various creatures of the earth started giving themselves airs. Every tribe of fauna and species of flora swelled with pride; its members came to believe that their race was the ne plus ultra of the entire creation, the crown of nature, and consequently that all the other living species owed them eternal respect and submission. The creatures grew arrogant by listening to the grandiloquent praises, and no one of them was content any longer with its prescribed place in the order of the universe. Every being in the world thought that it should itself occupy the throne and be king of the world, and that all the other races should bow to it. As a result, the harmonious coexistence of the different species on the planet was perturbed. Fierce wars broke out; all creatures turned against each other, fought rabidly among themselves, and devoured one another in their struggle for the first place. Caught in the middle of this turmoil, poor young Ainos did not know what to do. He ended up going around in the fields of battle and extolling with his eloquence such things as the heroic manner in which the various creatures threw themselves into the fight, the force they showed in exterminating their enemies, and their courage in front of death. Because of the interminable conflict, the living creatures were in danger of becoming extinct, and the situation seemed to be desperate.

At this point the wise brother, Prometheus, intervened to provide a solution. He picked up some leftovers of the ambrosia, which had fallen into the mire and the dung when Epimetheus carved Ainos' form. Using this material, the divine substance mixed with filth, Prometheus fashioned another figure: a grotesque, deformed dwarf, pot-bellied and crook-legged, with swarthy complexion, hair rugged like an animal's fur, a huge nose, a chin littered with moles, a misshapen body, and a skin that looked like crumbled old papyrus. Prometheus named this abomination Psogos (that is, Blame) and unleashed him into the world to counteract Ainos and refute the latter's words. Whenever Ainos eulogised some creature for its handsomeness or its virtues, the foul Psogos rushed to mock the same creature and found multiple blemishes

in its appearance and its manners. As much as Ainos strove to exalt the glory and magnificence of one or the other animal, so did Psogos shower insults on the same animal, never affording it a moment of peace and quiet.

In this way, oddly enough, the balance and harmony of the world were restored. The various beings no longer swelled with pride for the grand encomia, because the latter were immediately followed by reproaches and mockeries, which sullied the creatures' glory and brought their minds down to pedestrian reality. And if one or another creature sometimes forgot itself and was filled with arrogance because of Ainos' praises, its opponents took care to confront it with Psogos' denigrating words and thus abate the creature's excessive self-confidence.

The story also has a small epilogue. It is said that Muse, the goddess of poetry, fell in love with the pretty young Ainos and seduced him to her bed. From their union a most beautiful boy was born; he was named Hymnos and became the sweetest singer in the world. With a mellow and pleasant voice, Hymnos chanted glorifying odes and lyric encomia to the graces of the creation and its beings. His cantos were so wonderful that one would find it hard to distinguish which one was lovelier — the exalted things themselves or the poetic verses and the music by means of which Hymnos described them in his odes. However, Psogos was jealous of this love union and its fruit, and he was also burning with desire for the charms of Muse. Therefore, one night, when Muse had fallen asleep, Psogos slipped into her bed and enjoyed a night of love with her. When Muse understood what had happened, it was too late. She was pregnant again, and this time she gave birth to a different son: Iambos, a naughty and mischievous boy, with an acute spirit and a sharp tongue. This devilish little rogue had the habit of sneaking in everywhere, taking note of everything that was amiss, and tossing off satirical verses to ridicule it.

The reader will search in vain for this tale in ancient mythographical compendia or in collections of Aesopic fables. I confess that I made it up to serve as an introduction to the present essay; as an aspiring disciple of Protagoras, I followed the model of aetiological fables, which abound in the ancient tradition — the kind of narrative which provides a graphic fictional explanation for phenomena of the natural world or of the human society and culture. Hopefully, my aetiological story will help highlight the double aspect and function, both anthropological and poetical, of praise and blame, *ainos* and *psogos*. Laud and mockery are of course standard traits of human character, innate tendencies of our idiosyncrasy and biological constitution, which are manifested in every cultural context, without exception,

and counterbalance each other in social coexistence. Additionally, however, praise and blame are also elements of poetics, thematic areas of the art of literature; and as such they become the cores of contrasted grammatological genres, which permeate the history of literature already from the beginning of human civilisation.

PROTODRAMATIC IAMBUS AND COMEDY

In the surviving Greek tradition Aristotle is the first critic to use the concepts of praise and blame as grammatological tools for the classification of poetic genres and the historical overview of literary production.[1] In the fourth chapter of his *Poetics*, the ideas of *ainos* and *psogos* determine the primary and age-old distinction of poetry into serious and facetious genres — a distinction which has been established ever since as a fundamental principle in the western literary canon. As Aristotle notes (*Poet.* 4.1448b 24–34), poetry split from the beginning into two different kinds in accordance with the *ἤθη* of its practitioners, in other words, following the temperament of individual poets. Those who had a natural inclination towards dignified and august things dedicated themselves to the artistic depiction of fine actions performed by magnificent men, and therefore composed hymns and encomia for these men's exploits. By contrast, those who tended towards the opposite pole, the mundane and the ridiculous, set out to mock the baser elements of human character, the faults of common mortals, and thus turned to blame.

Around these two main axes —eulogy and satire, poetry of *ainos* and poetry of *psogos*— the forms of literature evolved in the course of time, following the standard pattern of Aristotelian teleology. The poets of praise first applied their efforts to the epic, the genre that extolled the great feats of heroes. Afterwards a more complex form of serious poetry was developed: tragedy, which treated the same heroic subjects but was more artful and grander than the epic and was thus recognised as the predominant poetic expression of dignified matters (*Poet.* 4.1449a 2–6). An analogous evolutionary pattern is traced in the domain of low-level blame poetry. At first the poets of this kind cultivated the iambus; this was the primary manifestation of mocking literature, the satirical counterpoise to the epic. According to

1. Cf. Rotstein (2010) 88–97. Generally on the distinction between praise and blame poetry, see the classic discussion of Nagy (1979) 222–52.

Aristotle, Homer was the archetypical model author of both genres, both of the serious and of the facetious one: on one hand, he composed his heroic epics, and on the other, the funny poem *Margites*, which was the root and origin of iambic poetry and the precursor of comedy (*Poet.* 4.1448b 29–1449a 2). For, as had happened in the area of serious literature, so also with regard to the art of blame the more composite dramatic genre of comedy arose in the end. Comedy replaced the simpler form of the iambus and became the main expressive mode of satirical writers (*Poet.* 4.1449a 2–6).[2]

In this way, Aristotle defined the two basic forms of blame poetry known to the ancient Greek world, iambus and comedy, and placed them in a line of teleological development from simplicity to complexity: from the more rudimentary form to the more complicated one, from the narrative monody of the iambus to the polyphonic drama of comedy. It does not become clear from the condensed notes of the *Poetics* whether the philosopher believed in a genuine genealogical relation between these two forms — in other words, whether he would argue that comic theatre arose indeed from a transformation and expansion of iambic poetry, as tragedy is said in the same chapter of the *Poetics* (4.1449a 9–11) to have been born of dithyramb. However, he certainly thought that the two genres were kindred and immediately associated with each other with regard to their themes and poetic aims. Even if the iambus was not the father and progenitor of comedy, it was beyond doubt a spiritual forerunner and conceptual predecessor of comic drama in the art of blame.[3]

Many decades before Aristotle, the same view seems to have been held by the authors of ancient comedy, who took care to embody it in their works. The comic dramatists of the fifth century look up to the iambic poetry of the Archaic age and acknowledge it as a model of comic theatre.[4] Cratinus, the first satirical genius in Athenian dramatic history, brought Archilochus on stage as a *dramatis persona* in his poetological play entitled *Archilochoi* (a title that presumably means "Archilochus and company", "Archilochus and his supporters"). The central axis of the plot in this comedy was apparently a poetic contest between Archilochus and Homer or

2. On Aristotle's evolutionary schema of poetic forms, see Heath (1989) 347–49; Halliwell (1998) 254–74; Depew (2007); Rotstein (2010) 69–97; Lennartz (2010) 385–97; Rosen (2013) 91–96; Pennanech (2016) 92–99.

3. On Aristotle's views about the connection between iambus and comedy, see on one hand Rotstein (2010) 80–82, 104–11; Rosen (2013) 91–97; and, from an opposed point of view, Bowie (2002) 47–49.

4. See Rosen (1988a) 1–58; Degani (1993) 15–17; Kugelmeier (1996) 169–94.

between the representatives of epic poetry and those of the iambic genre.[5] Archilochus is directly addressed in one fragment (fr. 6), in which he is called "Thasian brine-sauce" (*Θασίαν ἅλμην*).[6] The text extols the vehement and ready-witted reply which the great iambographer gave to the words of the "blind man"; this latter term, in such a context, could not designate anyone other than the legendary blind poet of world literature (at least before Milton and Borges), the epic bard Homer.

There should be little doubt that the two poets appeared in the play and took part in the contest, perhaps surrounded by their fans or followers.[7] Diogenes Laertius (1.12) notes that Cratinus in the *Archilochoi* uses the word "sophists" for the poets who make up the entourage of Homer and Hesiod;[8] and Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 1.24.1–2) transmits a verse from the play (fr. 2, *οἷον σοφιστῶν σμῆνος ἀνεδιφήσατε*, "what a swarm of sophists you stirred up"), in which these poets-sophists[9] are implied to have appeared on stage. The *agon* of the two great poets must have touched on the differences and conflict between the corresponding poetic genres, the solemn epic and the satirical iambus. One may well imagine that the iambic side won the competition and emphasised the value of humour and mockery versus the high-minded decorousness of Homeric epic.

In other words, Cratinus dramatised the grammatological distinction which Aristotle would later establish in theoretical and critical-historical terms in his *Poetics*. The reproachful iambus and the encomiastic heroic epic are presented in both texts as counterbalanced and even rival poetic genres with diametrically opposed aims, cultivated by authors with correspondingly distinct temperaments. It may be suspected that Cratinus would

5. On Cratinus' *Archilochoi*, see Pieters (1946) 32–35, 49–51, 132–35, 205; Pretagostini (1982); Rosen (1988a) 42–49; Kugelmeier (1996) 178–89; Ornaghi (2004) 218–28; Rotstein (2010) 289–92; Bakola (2010) 18, 70–79; Bianchi (2016) 13–113. All fragments of Greek comedy are numbered and cited according to the monumental edition of Kassel – Austin (1983–2001).

6. *εἶδες τὴν Θασίαν ἅλμην, οἵ' ἄττα βαΰζει; / ὡς εὖ καὶ ταχέως ἀπετείσατο καὶ παραχρῆμα. / οὐ μέντοι παρὰ κωφὸν ὁ τυφλὸς ἔοικε λαλῆσαι*, "Did you see what things the Thasian brine-sauce barked? How well and quickly and instantly he paid the other back! Well, as it seems, the blind one did not speak to a deaf-and-mute man".

7. See Pieters (1946) 32–35; Pretagostini (1982) 45–52; Rosen (1988a) 42–43; Ornaghi (2004) 218–23; Rotstein (2010) 289–90; Bianchi (2016) 13–18, 39–46, 62–71; Swift (2019) 42–43.

8. *καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ σοφισταί, καθὰ καὶ Κρατῖνος ἐν Ἀρχιλόχοις τοὺς περὶ Ὅμηρον καὶ Ἡσίοδον ἐπαινῶν οὕτως καλεῖ.* Possibly *Ἡσίοδον* is an error or oversight for *Ἀρχίλοχον*.

9. See Clem. *Strom.* 1.24.2: *Κρατῖνος γοῦν ἐν τοῖς Ἀρχιλόχοις ποιητὰς καταλέξας ἔφη· οἷον σοφιστῶν* etc.

also regard the iambus as a preceding stage or an early presage of taunting satirical comedy, in the same way as the philosopher did. Cratinus fostered sharp invective in his comedies and directed his harsh criticism against the political leaders of Athens, such as Pericles and his circle. The bitter Archilochus, as a character in the play, would have incarnated on stage the poetics of lampoon and aggressive *psogos* and would have functioned as a kind of intra-dramatic personification or mouthpiece of the satirical comic author.[10]

Aristophanes, Cratinus' best disciple, also frequently cites verses of Archilochus in his plays. He treats the Archilochean excerpts in a poetological manner and with literary consciousness. Aristophanes thus reveals the inspiration and influence he has received from Archilochus' works with regard to various aspects of comic composition, in particular mockery and invective, the didactic function of blame poetry, and the use of popular narrative forms such as the animal fable.[11] In the finale of the *Peace* Aristophanes imitates the plot pattern introduced in Cratinus' *Archilochoi* and stages another poetic contest between the epic and the iambus, adapting it to the topical theme of his own play, i.e. the burning historical issue of putting an end to the Peloponnesian War.

In the *exodos* of the *Peace* two boys, who take part in the celebrations for the newly-acquired peace, come out of the house to rehearse the compositions they have prepared to sing in Trygaeus' wedding feast. One of the boys is the son of the belligerent general Lamachus and recites centos of Homeric lines, which exalt epic battles and the glory of warlike heroes (1265–1294). The other boy is the child of the notorious deserter Cleonymus, who is repeatedly mocked by comic poets for having thrown his shield and fled in a battle. Appropriately, this youngster performs Archilochus' famous elegiac couplets about the soldier who similarly cast away his shield and ran to save his life (1295–1304). The young *aoidos* of bellicose heroic epic is of course expelled and excluded from the comic celebration, because he is incompatible with the central interests of comedy, the genre which censures the disastrous war and dramatises the struggle for peacemaking and the jubilation for the triumph of peace. By contrast, Archilochus' epigone, although he is not spared some taunts for his fight-dodging, is nonetheless admitted to the feast, because the iambic poetry of the avoidance of war accords with the

10. Cf. Pieters (1946) 49–51; Kugelmeier (1996) 181–89; Ornaghi (2004) 226–28; Bakola (2010) 18, 73–79; Rotstein (2010) 291.

11. For examples and analysis, see Rosen (1988a) 17–34, 70–75; Kugelmeier (1996) 169–74, 192–94; Zanetto (2001).

Aristophanic comic fiction and its pro-peace programme.[12] Thus, the poetic *agon* of the two boys, at the finale of the *Peace*, recalls firstly the confrontation of epic and iambus from the *Archilochoi* of Cratinus, Aristophanes' master who initiated Attic satirical comedy. Furthermore, the rivalry between Aristophanic comedy and its belligerent enemies is projected backwards onto the ultimate roots of the comic event, reaching all the way back to the mocking poetics of Archaic iambus. In other words, the play fulfils and completes its scenic celebration with a full retrospect on the grammatological past and the literary genealogy of the comic genre.[13]

As it seems, the connection between iambography and comedy, as successive forms in the evolution of blame poetry, was not a discovery of Aristotle's. Already from the last decades of the fifth century the great craftsmen of Athenian comic drama had crystallised the same idea and had made it come alive and materialise on stage, through the episodes of their plays and their theatrically enlivened poetological conceptions. One may wonder whether some contemporary theoretical background lies behind these motifs of Attic comedy — perhaps researches and speculations of thinkers of that time, who would have discerned, in advance of Aristotle, the generic relation between iambography and comic dramaturgy.

The sophists, who were interested in the theory of poetry and wrote on critical and philological questions, would appear to be the ideal candidates for this role.[14] The extant testimonia and excerpts from the relevant writings of major sophists (Protagoras, Prodicus, Gorgias) concentrate mainly on rhetoric, diction, and stylistics, the correct use of language or the construction of discourse and its effects on the recipient's soul.[15] However, there were also thinkers who showed broader interests in their literary treatises and might have touched on grammatological issues. The polymath Democritus, in his book *On Poetry*, discussed the subject of poetic inspiration, that is, the deeper anthropological root of artistic creativity.[16] Glaucus

12. On the competition between Homeric and Archilochean poetry in the finale of the *Peace*, cf. Kugelmeier (1996) 42–43; Compton-Engle (1999); Macía Aparicio (2000) 226–37; Hall (2006) 343, 347–49; Platter (2007) 130–35; Telò (2013); Zogg (2014) 58–70, 130–35, 144–63; Konstantakos (2021a) 110–12.
13. Cf. Telò (2013) 130–135; Konstantakos (2021a) 111–12.
14. For collected information, see Lanata (1963) 185–225, 238–47; Ford (2002) 68–85, 139–57, 188–201; Morgan (2004) 94–101.
15. See Lanata (1963) 189–207; Guthrie (1971) 176–225; Kerferd (1981) 68–82; de Romilly (1992) 59–92; Ford (2002) 161–87; Rademaker (2013).
16. See Democritus, *Περὶ ποιήσιος*, 68 B 16a, 17, 18 Diels-Kranz, referring to the importance of enthusiasm and poetic fury for the creation of poetry. Other literary-critical frag-

of Rhegium, probably the greatest critic of the Classical age, wrote a large study *On Ancient Poets and Musicians*, in which he extensively expounded the history of lyric poetry; he also seems to have discussed about tragedy and Homeric epic.[17] Aristotle himself, in the *Poetics*, vaguely refers to previous critical conflicts on historical and grammatological issues of comedy and tragedy; for example, he mentions Megarian sources which claimed that the comic genre originated in the area of Megara, and implies the existence of polemics between Athenians and Megarians with regard to the paternity of comedy (*Poet. 3*.1448a 29–1448b 2). This literary polemic could have plausibly been carried out by means of rival writings in the form of pamphlets or critical treatises.[18]

If we could still read the lost literary-historical studies of these fifth-century scholars, we might discover many correspondences with ideas now found for the first time in Aristotle's *Poetics*. It seems, for example, that around the time of Cratinus' acme there was much discussion about the generic relationship between comedy and satyr play.[19] Furthermore, the theory about the origins of comedy in phallic rituals, which is put forward as an undisputable fact in the *Poetics* (4.1449a 10–12), is the object of lively comic exploitation in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (241–279).[20] Aristotle may have absorbed in the field of the theory of poetry, as in so many other fields, the earlier traditions of Greek thought. In that case, the comic dramatists, when they draw inspiration from Archaic iambography and hold up the physiognomy of the iambic blame-poet as a persona for their own poetics of lampoon, are in fact enlivening on stage the grammatological theories of their contemporary intellectuals and critics — somewhat like Racine, who gave dramatic form to the austere aesthetic principles of the Abbé D'Aubignac and Boileau, or like the young François Truffaut, when he strove to transform André Bazin's innovative critical ideas into a visual cinematic fiction.

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ments of Democritus concern Homeric criticism and vocabulary, metric, and grammar. See Lanata (1963) 252–69; Ford (2002) 145–46, 165–72; Leszl (2007) 38–40; Brancacci (2007); Enriques – Mazziotti (2016) 279–89.

17. For a collection of testimonia of Glaucus' work, see Lanata (1963) 270–81 and Gostoli (2015) with discussion and commentary. See also Huxley (1968); Ford (2002) 139–42; Rotstein (2010) 230–34.
18. Cf. Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 132, 178–79; Piccirilli (1974); Piccirilli (1975) 141–50; Kerkhof (2001) 13–17, 48–50; Cohn (2016) 9–20; Ornaghi (2016) 283–334.
19. See Shaw (2014) 94–105.
20. See Konstantakos (2012) 151–54.

Was there indeed a genetic relationship between iambus and comedy? This is a controversial topic in modern scholarship. The analogies between these two genres are evident and numerous. Both forms have of course in common the general satirical orientation, the fact that both iambography and comedy ridicule specific, often eponymous personalities from the poet's own milieu, in particular the powerful and the braggarts, the figures of might and authority. There are also many other characteristic similarities: extensive *aischrologia* and obscenity, predominance of lowly subject-matters such as banquets, food, and sexual pleasures, exploitation of the forms of folk speech (Aesopic fables, popular narratives, proverbs, riddles), parody of serious poetry and traditional myth, and even stylistic affinities regarding the use of imagery and metre, the construction of jokes and the types of wordplay.[21]

Based on this extensive corpus of similarities, many experts —from the hallowed Enzo Degani and Martin West to the ever-flourishing Ralph Rosen, Jeffrey Rusten, and Giuseppe Zanetto— argue that iambic poetry did contribute to the generation of comedy: the iambus was one of the precursory art forms, elements of which were absorbed and merged with many other materials of different provenance, so as to finally bring to light the complex and composite genre of comic drama.[22] Other prominent scholars, such as Ewen Bowie and more recently Klaus Lennartz, in his *mega biblion* on the iambus, decline this kind of genetic connection. In their view, iambography and comedy are members of the broader family of satirical arts, but their kinship is indirect, circuitous, and lateral, as distant as the relation of second or third cousins, not a direct linear connection of progeny in a vertical genealogical tree.[23] The two genres certainly share common materials and techniques, but they are not genetically linked to each other; their kinship is not closer than the one they bear to other members of the great satirical family, such as Roman *satura*, goliardic poetry, or modern caricature.

Every historian of literature has to make up his own mind on this dilemma. In my eyes, the decisive factor to support a direct genetic relationship between iambus and comedy is the proto-dramatic character of early iambography. Many iambic poems (by Archilochus, Hipponax, Semonides, and others) take the form of a dramatised monologue. The speaker-narrator

21. For good surveys of the similarities of the two genres, see West (1974) 37; Degani (1993) 23–36; Henderson (1991) 18–23; Zanetto (2001); cf. also Degani (1984) 30–33; Whitman (1964) 36–41.

22. See West (1974) 33–37; Rosen (1988a); Henderson (1991) 17–29; Degani (1993); Kugelmeier (1996) 163–94; Rusten (2006) 39–40; Rosen (2013).

23. See Bowie (2002); Lennartz (2010) 23–25, 310–38.

expresses himself in the first person, presents his own personality, and describes his experiences and adventures; in many cases it is clear that this speaker is a fictional, invented character or role, a poetic persona not identifiable with the iambographer's biographical reality. The iambic poet has made up the speaking personage and his qualities. He has fabricated the narrated incidents and shaped the setting in which his story is placed.[24]

A prominent example from among Archilochus' poems is the well-known fr. 19.[25] The speaker, who starts by claiming that he cares not for Gyges' golden treasures and tyrannical power, was, according to Aristotle's testimonium (*Rhetoric* 3.17, 1418b 28–31), a carpenter called Charon. The reader may wonder: was this Charon truly a humble and modest workman, or would the lost sequel of his poetic monologue prove him to hide a deeper arrogance under his presumed frugality?[26] A similar case is provided by fr. 122: the speaker declares that nothing should look unexpected or paradoxical to humans, given that Zeus has shadowed the light of the sun and cast darkness upon the world in bright midday. Aristotle once again (*Rhet.* 3.17, 1418b 28–30) reveals that these words were placed on the lips of a father speaking about his own daughter. The ancient commentators to this passage of the *Rhetoric* (*CAG* XXI/2, pp. 255–56 Rabe) add a few more details of context: the speaking father, according to one scholion, had an ugly daughter, and someone taunted him for this. The parent therefore responds: "Nothing is unexpected in the world — so why wonder if I chanced to beget an ugly daughter?" Another scholion, cited immediately afterwards, adds that the father made promises about his daughter's dowry; his interlocutor then pointed out that the old man had no substantial fortune to support such promises, but the father replied that nothing is beyond hope.[27]

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24. See the seminal studies of Dover (1964) 200–212; West (1974) 27–37; Burnett (1983) 2–7, 19–23, 31–32; see also Miralles – Pòrtulas (1983) 21–48, 58–59, 109–11, 131, 135–57; Rosen (1988b); Stein (1990) 55–56, 70–74; Bartol (1993) 71–74; Bowie (1993) 28–36; Degani (1993) 22–23; Steinrück (2000) 6–10, 71–80; Kantzios (2005) 76–82; Aloni (2006); Rosen (2007) 243–68; Rotstein (2010) 63–65, 198–200, 307–9; Lavigne (2008); Budelmann (2009) 14–17; Allan (2019) 9–11.
25. All fragments of iambic poets are numbered according to the classic edition of West (1989–1992).
26. Cf. Vox (1988), and also the ironical portrait of the moneylender Alfius in Horace's *Epode* 2: Nagy (1979) 248; Bowie (2001) 15–16; Rotstein (2010) 65, 199–200; Swift (2019) 243–45; Allan (2019) 6.
27. Arist. *Rhet.* 3.17, 1418b 28–30: *καὶ ὡς Ἀρχίλοχος ψέγει· ποιεῖ γὰρ τὸν πατέρα λέγοντα περὶ τῆς θυγατρὸς ἐν τῷ ἰάμβῳ "χρημάτων ἄελπτον οὐδέν ἐστιν οὐδ' ἀπώμοτον".* Comm. *ad loc.*: *ἄλλος εἶχε θυγατέρα δυσειδῆ καί τις διέβαλεν αὐτὸν ὡς κακὴν θυγατέρα ἔχοντα· ποιεῖ γοῦν ὁ Ἀρχίλοχος τὸν πατέρα αὐτῆς ἐν ἰαμβικοῖς στίχοις λέγοντα οὕτω περὶ τῆς θυ-*

It would seem that the afflicted father used the initial *exemplum* of the solar eclipse to find some encouragement and bolster up his own hopefulness: even though his daughter was ugly, even though he himself had no money to endow her with, the girl might still find a suitable bridegroom, for nothing is unbelievable in our life.[28]

There are further examples of this kind. In a couple of fragments by Semonides of Amorgos the voice of a professional cook is heard: he boasts about the fine cheese he has procured, an import from Achaea (fr. 23), and about the great dexterity with which he roasted and carved a piglet, as though he were a priest officiating in a sacrifice (fr. 24).[29] Even when the poetic "ego" happens to bear the same name as the iambographer, this does not necessarily mean that the poem is autobiographical and offers an authentic expression of the author's individual experience. The Hipponax who whines and moans in most of the compositions by the homonymous Ephesian poet, this miserable, famished crook, who goes about in rags in cold weather and wanders among the whores and the tramps of the Ionian demimonde — this character must have little to do with the real author of the iambic poems. Hipponax the *pauvre diable* is also an invented role, an early picaresque hero. He is a sophisticatedly vulgar creation of humorous poetic fantasy, drawn from the universe of the scabrous Ionian novella.[30]

Therefore, when the performer of the iambic poem —who is often to be identified with the author himself in the cultural conditions of the Archaic age— stands in front of the audience and recites his composition,[31] he practically undertakes and impersonates a role: he represents the personage delivering the monologue (the cook, the carpenter, the braggart, the father of an ugly maid, the ragged burglar); he plays the role of a fictional character,

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γατρός· "οὐδὲν τῶν χρημάτων, ἤτοι τῶν πραγμάτων, ἄελπτον οὐδ' ἀπώμοτον καὶ ἀνέλπιστον· τί γοῦν καινόν, εἰ καὶ ἐμοὶ δυσειδὴς θυγάτηρ ἐπεγένετο;" σχόλιον· παρεισάγει πατέρα ὑπισχνούμενον περὶ προικὸς τῆς οἰκείας θυγατρὸς καὶ λέγοντα πρός τινα ἀντιλέγοντα μηδὲν ἔχειν ὡς οὐδὲν ἀνέλπιστον.

28. On the possible context of the poem, see Burnett (1983) 67–69; Steinrück (2000) 7–9; Swift (2019) 307–8.

29. At least for fr. 24 Athenaeus (14.659e–f) testifies that it was spoken by a *mageiros*. See Dohm (1964) 4–5; West (1974) 33; Kantzios (2005) 58.

30. See West (1974) 28–30; Degani (1984) 119–59, 181–86; Miralles – Pòrtulas (1988) 109–36; Rosen (2007) 11–15; Carey (2008) 96–99; Carey (2009) 162–66; Alexandrou (2016) 23; Boedeker (2016).

31. On the performance of Archaic iambus, see Bartol (1993) 61–70; Aloni (2006); Lennartz (2010) 235–97; Rotstein (2010) 253–78; Lavigne (2016) 80–92; Swift (2019) 12–14; Allan (2019) 5–8.

like an actor in a rudimentary form of monologic theatre.[32] The iambus, if envisaged as performance before an audience, turns into a kind of monodrama. Moreover, it is a monodrama with facetious contents and a mocking disposition, that is, a primordial version of comedy.

In this respect, the Archaic iambus recalls another age-old type of monodramatic performance known from the Near East, the so-called *aluzinnu*. The *aluzinnu* was a special functionary of the serving personnel in the temples and courts of ancient Mesopotamia, attested since the early second millennium BCE. Gradually, this profession spread more widely in the area of Western Asia, reaching Hittite Anatolia and Syria, from where the neighbouring Greeks of Ionia and the islands of the eastern Aegean could have easily become acquainted with it. The tasks of the *aluzinnu* included the entertainment of the participants in festivities and celebrations, in particular of the faithful who gathered for the great religious festivals or the holy days of the temple. For this purpose, the *aluzinnu* used to present facetious spectacles and teasing jests.[33] Lists of the *aluzinnu*'s jokes are preserved on cuneiform tablets,[34] somewhat like the joke books consulted by the fools and jesters of the Elizabethan age, or like the collections of anecdotes compiled nowadays by the stand-up comedians of night clubs.

The *aluzinnu* appeared before the congregated audience and impersonated various characters, for example pretentious incantation-priests, exorcists, diviners, and other temple functionaries, perhaps also sacred prostitutes. He parodied their characteristic behaviour, their airs, and their manner of speech. He often used vulgar humour and obscene jokes. The Greek term *alazon* is probably derived from the name of the *aluzinnu*: the *ἀλαζών* is someone who pretends to be something superior to what he is in reality, like the *aluzinnu*, the low-brow jester who acts the role of the priest or the expert and claims to have undergone grand adventures.[35] As it transpires, the *aluzinnu* is the oldest known form of comic monodrama; together with Archaic Greek iambography, they constitute the remotest

32. Cf. West (1974) 27–37; Rankin (1977) 90; Miralles – Pòrtulas (1983) 110–16; Heath (1989) 349; Bartol (1993) 68–70; Kantzios (2005) 19; Rosen (2007) 25–26; Lavigne (2008); Carey (2009) 165.
33. On the *aluzinnu*, see Foster (1974) 74–79; Römer (1978); West (1997) 496–98; Griffith – Marks (2011); Rumor (2016); Rumor (2017).
34. See Foster (1974) 74–78; Römer (1978) 53–65; Griffith – Marks (2011) 29–30; Rumor (2016) 588–90; Rumor (2017) 199–206.
35. See West (1997) 496; Griffith – Marks (2011); Rumor (2016); Rumor (2017) 188–90, 202–6.

forerunners of stand-up comedy. The most ancient and rudimentary manifestations of iambic performance in Greece, which would have still been on the level of folk song and improvised versification,[36] before the genre was artistically consummated in the hands of accomplished poets, would conceivably have resembled the loose-tongued performances of the *aluzinnu*.

In both cases, however, the primeval stand-up comedy is integrated in the context of a religious ritual, in the world of the sacred. The *aluzinnu* belonged to the temple personnel, and his ludicrous shows were presumably meant to contribute to the joyful atmosphere that prevailed in the god's festival. Similarly, the mocking poetry of the iambus has been often connected with mystic cults, such as the Mysteries of Demeter, in which the members of Archilochus' family are reported to have been hereditary hierophants.[37] As in the East, so in Ionia the jeering iambic performance was developed from the obscene jests and the sharp invective which occupied a sanctioned place in religious celebration. Foul-mouthed Lenny Bruce probably did not suspect that his art ultimately derived from the *gephyrismoi* of the initiates over the river Cephisus.

Given the mimetic and proto-dramatic nature of the iambus, I believe that this genre must have contributed, to a certain extent, to the genesis of comedy. Certainly, it was not the only progenitor of comic theatre. As has been proved by decades-long scholarly researches (from Pickard-Cambridge to Jeffrey Rusten), the multifaceted and multi-inclusive phenomenon of Attic comedy was a product of polygenesis. Athenian Old Comedy was formed from the amalgamation of ingredients drawn from various sources, from many kinds of hilarious and carnival pageants, rituals, and spectacles that were widespread in Archaic Greece. Phallic processions, folk performances of Choruses disguised as animals or creatures of the imagination, popular mimes and farces — all these forms contributed patterns and materials which were fused together to produce the composite structure of comedy.[38]

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36. On these early iambic performances, see West (1974) 33–37; Bartol (1993) 65–67; Brown (1997) 31–37; cf. Lennartz (2010) 60–63, 164–69.
37. See West (1974) 23–27; Burnett (1983) 24–27; Miralles – Pòrtulas (1988) 45–50; Henderson (1991) 13–19; Brown (1997) 16–47; Gerber (1999) 1–4; O'Higgins (2003) 37–85; Kantzios (2005) 12–20; Carey (2009) 151. A wide-ranging and detailed survey is offered by Lennartz (2010) 160–79, in spite of his reserved position; cf. Rosen (2007) 47–61; Rotstein (2010) 167–82. According to Allan (2019) 5, "few now believe that its (= iambus') performance was tied to fertility cults of Demeter and Dionysus"; these would be perhaps the happy few.
38. See Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 132–94; Ghiron-Bistagne (1976) 207–97; Reckford

Iambography, with its satirical mood, narrative contents,[39] character representations, and above all with its mimetic and performative aspect, must have been one of the multiple fathers of comic drama. George Seferis once wrote that our words are the children of many; sometimes this is true not only of words but also of the poetic creations composed of them.

It is noteworthy that, from among all these pre-comic and proto-comic forms, only spectacles of a choral and processional type are traced in Archaic Attica, the motherland of comic theatre. The forerunners of comedy attested on Athenian soil were presented by a homogeneous group of performers with a common and unified dramatic identity, like the members of the Choruses of Classical drama in later times. The archaeological findings from Archaic Attica include vases which depict phallic processions, zoomorphic Choruses, and other performances of groups dressed up as fantastic creatures, monsters, giants, dwarves, or natives of exotic lands.[40] However, neither in Attica nor in other Ionic regions is there any trace of spectacles of the type of the mime or farce, that is, humorous scenes with everyday subject-matter, acted by a small number of performers who play individualised roles. Such popular mimes are known only from Doric states, such as Sparta, Corinth, Megara, and the colonies of South Italy; for these areas the mime spectacles are well attested both by material monuments and by literary sources.[41] No comparable data exist for Athens and Ionia during the early age before the emergence of comic drama. Were there no folk farces and mimes in Archaic Attica? Were local facetious pageants restricted to group processions and choral performances?

A possible explanation emerges if one considers that iambography flourished precisely in these Attic-Ionic regions, given that iambus was a creation of the Ionian Greeks. Iambic poetry, being a form of facetious monodrama which often took its subject-matter from situations of social life and mocked human types of the poet's familiar environment, belonged to an aesthetic category analogous to and very much overlapping with that

(1987) 443–98; Rusten (2006); Csapo – Miller (2007); Rothwell (2007) 6–37, 213–27; Shaw (2014) 26–43; Konstantakos (2021b) 99–114.

39. On the narrative contents of iambic poetry, see Bowie (2001); Carey (2008).

40. See in general Konstantakos (2020) 9–10 with further bibliography. On the phallic ceremonies, see mainly Csapo (1997) 265–77; Bierl (2001) 300–61; Iozzo (2009). On the zoomorphic and fantastically dressed Choruses, see Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 151–60; Sifakis (1971) 73–93; Green (1985); Rusten (2006) 44–56; Rothwell (2007) 28–80; Konstantakos (2021b) 99–114.

41. See Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 134–40, 162–87; Kerkhof (2001) 1–50; Ornaghi (2016) 245–82; Konstantakos (2012); Konstantakos (2020).

of the folk farces of Doric populations. Although the iambus was delivered by a single performer and did not afford live dramatic dialogue, like the mimes, the iambic composition drew its materials from the same thematic area as the mimes and ridiculed similar experiences. The art of iambography was indigenous in the Ionic areas, where it was developed from an early age as a literary form of high artistic level. Already in the seventh century Archilochus was composing iambic poems with unsurpassable spiritual force and literary sophistication; his tradition was carried on by other polished poets. The high literary accomplishment and poetic prestige of iambic poetry was perhaps responsible for bringing about the decline or suppression of popular, improvised, and cruder forms of analogous thematic and aesthetic range, such as farces and mimes, in the corresponding Ionic areas. It is an attested fact in the literary history of many peoples and periods that the flourishing of accomplished artistic and poetic forms tends to marginalise and repress the corresponding folk genres, while conversely the lack of high literary production favours the bloom of popular creativity; the output of folk imagination and craft expands in such cases, to fill up the poetic void.[42]

CHARACTER DEPICTION AND MOCKERY

Apart from the other thematic, stylistic, and aesthetic affinities, an interesting parameter shared by Archaic iambus and comedy is the satirical ethology and ethography, the representation of humorous characters and human types. The authors of Archaic iambus developed a rich gallery of such figures, which were destined to enjoy a bright career later in comic theatre. In the extant iambic fragments one may trace, among other types, the braggart soldier, the gluttonous parasite, the cunning and profiteering hetaira, the prodigal young man and his grumpy, tight-fisted father, the quack doctor, the charlatan seer, the cook, the miser, and the uncouth rustic. Such personages are sometimes the speakers of the iambic compositions. More frequently they are described by the narrator of the poem: the text provides a humorous sketch of their *ethos*, their character and qualities, and ridicules their faults

42. For example, Modern Greek folk song reached an exceptionally high level of poetic accomplishment and force during the time of the Turkish occupation of the Greek-speaking world, partly because of the poor quality of most of Greek literary poetry between the last phases of the Byzantine Empire and the early nineteenth century. Cf. Seferis (1974) 216–17.

and excesses.[43] Even in this case, although they are not enlivened and mimetically represented, like the figures of the comic stage, but remain the personages of a narrative, these iambic characters are already endowed with the basic distinctive traits of their comic epigones. They are adorned with lively and graphic details which forecast the character depiction of comic drama.

For example, Semonides puts verses on the lips of a hetaira, who anoints herself with perfumes and exotic cosmetics while she is waiting for her customer, a merchant (fr. 16):[44]

> *κἀλειφόμην μύροισι καὶ θυώμασιν*
> *καὶ βακκάρι· καὶ γάρ τις ἔμπορος παρῆν.*
>
> And I was anointing myself with unguents and scents and *baccaris*, for a merchant was present. (Transl. D. E. Gerber, adapted.)

This kind of scene, with the courtesan adorning herself in her boudoir, will be frequently repeated in Attic comedy, from the self-seeking professional coquettes in the plays of Pherecrates (fr. 73–79, fr. 143), Antiphanes (fr. 146), Eubulus (fr. 97), and Alexis (fr. 103) to Plautus' *Mostellaria* (157–292).[45] Hipponax describes in bleak terms a prodigal hedonist who has wasted his property on luxurious dinners (fr. 26):

> *ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ἡσυχῇ τε καὶ ῥύδην*
> *θύνναν τε καὶ μυσσωτὸν ἡμέρας πάσας*
> *δαινύμενος ὥσπερ Λαμψακηνὸς εὐνοῦχος*
> *κατέφαγε δὴ τὸν κλῆρον· ὥστε χρὴ σκάπτειν*
> *πέτρας {τ'} ὀρείας, σῦκα μέτρια τρώγων*
> *καὶ κρίθινον κόλλικα, δούλιον χόρτον.*
>
> For one of them, dining at his ease and lavishly every day on tuna and savoury sauce like a eunuch from Lampsacus, ate up his inheritance; as a result he has to dig a rocky hillside, munching on cheap figs and coarse barley bread, fodder for slaves. (Transl. D. E. Gerber.)

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43. On the gallery of characters in Archaic iambus, see generally West (1974) 32–33, 37; Degani (1993) 23–30; Kantzios (2005) 57–59, 85–89; Aloni (2006) 89–92; Lennartz (2010) 486; Konstantakos (2015) 62–63.
44. Cf. West (1974) 33; Bowie (2001) 7–8; Kantzios (2005) 54, 58.
45. See Legrand (1917) 81–82; Arnott (1996) 273–83; Auhagen (2009) 63, 69–72, 185–89.

These lines may have been spoken by a peevish rustic or a mean penny-pincher, possibly the prodigal youth's parsimonious father.[46] This couple, the young spendthrift in confrontation with the rough and tight-fisted peasant, runs through the history of comedy, from Strepsiades and Pheidippides in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, through Middle Comedy, and up to Demea and his sons in Terence's *Adelphoe*.[47]

Archilochus breathes life into the figure of the ponderous doctor, who lists his cures and medicaments for tumours and eczemas (fr. 67.1–5, where the medical terminology is still discernible, in spite of the miserable state of the papyrus):

]. τομηι
]λήσομαι·
ἐσθλὴν γὰρ ἄλλην οἶδα τοιούτου φυτοῦ
ἴησιν]δοκέω·
]κακά·

Surgery ... I shall ... for I know another good cure for such a growth ... I think ... evils ...[48]

This type is exceedingly popular in the Greek comic repertoire, from the primitive popular farces of ancient Sparta and Megara to the refined ethographies of Epicharmus and Crates and then to Middle and New Comedy. Like his Archilochean predecessor, the medical man of the comic stage advertises his pharmacological concoctions, diagnoses the supposed diseases of ailing characters with pompous authority, and prescribes therapies for treatment.[49]

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46. See Roux (1964) 124–26; West (1974) 29, 33, 141; but cf. the reservations of Alexandrou (2016) 69–71.
47. On the prodigal youth and the thrifty *senex* in comedy, see Legrand (1917) 129–30; Wehrli (1936) 50–55, 70–75; Gil (1974) 156–59; Hunter (1985) 75–76, 95–109; Maurice (2007) 154–58. Cf. Degani (1991) 50, who compares Hipponax's poem with a plethora of comic parallels.
48. Cf. Kantzios (2005) 57–58, 76. Archilochus fr. 66 (from *Epimerismi Homerici* ε 178, p. 322 Dyck: *ἀφ' οὗ τὸ φῦμα* "*μηρῶν μεταξύ*" *Ἀρχίλοχος*, "the growth/sarcoma between the thighs") may also be part of a medical doctor's speech on tumours and cures.
49. See e.g. Sosibius, *FGrHist* 595 F 7 (from Athenaeus 14.621d–e, on primitive Spartan farces); Crates fr. 46; Ameipsias fr. 17; Phrynichus fr. 64, fr. 66; Antiphanes fr. 6; Alexis fr. 146; Euphron fr. 3; Men. *Asp.* 439–64; Plaut. *Men.* 889-956. On the doctor as a stock comic character, see Gil – Alfageme (1972); Arnott (1996) 431–32; Imperio (1998) 63–75; Imperio (2012); Ingrosso (2016).

Semonides, in another passage, caustically criticises an inveterately squalid fellow, who takes pride in going about unwashed, dresses in filthy clothes, and grows a long unkempt beard (fr. 10a):

> *καὶ μήτ' ἄλουτος γαυρία σύ, μήτ' ὕδωρ*
> *θαύμαζε, μηδὲ κουρία γενειάδα,*
> *μηδὲ ῥύπῳ χιτῶνος ἕντυε χρόα.*
>
> Do not take pride in being unwashed, do not stand in awe of water, do not let your beard need trimming, and do not deck out your body in a filthy tunic. (Transl. D. E. Gerber.)

Perhaps this ostentatiously unclean *alazon* was an ascetic philosopher, indifferent to the well-being of his body due to his absorption in his lofty thoughts. If so, Semonides' hero forecasts the Socrates of Aristophanes' *Clouds* and the Pythagorists of Middle Comedy, who similarly practice bodily squalor and abstinence from baths as a principle of their philosophical way of life.[50]

Interestingly, many of these figures of the iambic corpus do not represent general ethological categories, like the stock characters of the later comic stage. Rather they constitute satirical portraits of particular personalities from the iambic poet's social environment. Nonetheless, even though the iambographer takes as his starting point the caricature of individual persons from his familiar milieu, he manages to invest their behaviour with a broader notional range and a sense of general application. Thus, these satirical figures rise to become universal symbols of entire characterological categories; they surpass the limits of the community which inspired their creation, and successfully serve to ridicule analogous human types in many other social and historical contexts. This capacity of upgrading the individual case into a universal, emblematic type, which is inherent in the gallery of characters of the Archaic iambus, will be found again in the satirical sketches of Old Comedy. The comic poet targets one or another of his famous contemporaries, but through his personal invective he highlights the universal validity of the criticised foibles and guarantees the perpetual value of his criticism.

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50. See e.g. *Clouds* 102–4, 184–86, 834–37; Alexis fr. 201; Aristophon fr. 9, fr. 10, fr. 12. On the squalor and unkemptness of the philosophers of the comic stage, see Sanchis Llopis (1995) 71–76; Imperio (1998) 107–11, 122–23; Keramari (2020) 125–31.

Let us examine, for example, the renowned fr. 114 of Archilochus, in which two types of military leader are juxtaposed and compared with each other: the large general with the elegant coiffure and the malformed, crook-legged veteran, who is full of courage despite his unimpressive appearance.

> *οὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγὸν οὐδὲ διαπεπλιγμένον*
> *οὐδὲ βοστρύχοισι γαῦρον οὐδ' ὑπεξυρημένον,*
> *ἀλλά μοι σμικρός τις εἴη καὶ περὶ κνήμας ἰδεῖν*
> *ῥοικός, ἀσφαλέως βεβηκὼς ποσσί, καρδίης πλέως.*

I have no liking for a general who is tall, walks with a swaggering gait, takes pride in his curls, and is partly shaven. Let mine be one who is short, has a bent look about his shins, stands firmly on his feet, and is full of courage. (Transl. D. E. Gerber.)

As I have demonstrated in another essay, also published in this journal, the big-bodied general of this poem epitomises the typical characteristics of the braggart soldier, the *miles gloriosus*, as he is found later in comic drama, from Aristophanes to Plautus and beyond.[51] Like the military blowhards of the comic stage, the Archilochean *strategos* has an impressive physique, a large build, and walks with a long swaggering gait.[52] The well-groomed curls, for which he is proud, became an integral constituent of the soldier's scenic type and were standardised in the wavy hairstyle of the mask borne by the arrogant officer in Middle and New Comedy.[53]

On the other hand, the contrast between the large general and the dumpy and bow-legged veteran is not limited to their external appearance; it extends to their stamina, bravery, and performance in battle. If the latter has a heart full of courage and stands steadily on his feet while fighting, this implies that the large-bodied marshal, conversely, is not brave-hearted and does not keep his position in battle.[54] His long shanks, which are

51. See Konstantakos (2015) 48–52 with further bibliography.
52. Cf. Konstantakos (2015) 44, 49–50, for a list of parallels.
53. See the description of the comic soldier's mask by Pollux (4.147): *τῷ δ' ἐπισείστῳ, στρατιώτῃ ὄντι καὶ ἀλαζόνι … ἐπισείονται αἱ τρίχες*. Cf. Legrand (1917) 488; MacCary (1972) 280–81; Petrides (2014) 8, 96, 189–90, 213–16, 231, 240.
54. Cf. Russo (1974) 142–43; Burnett (1983) 43–44; Toohey (1988) 3–4; Stein (1990) 65–68; Müller (1994) 177–79; Tsantsanoglou (2008) 175.

emphasised in the description, only help him to run and flee more swiftly.[55] Thus, the Archilochean general displays the characteristic discrepancy between appearance and reality, *δοκεῖν* and *εἶναι*, which is emblematic of the comic category of the *alazon*. His impressive looks and boastful disposition are only a superficial veneer which hides his pusillanimity and desertion.

Many scholars, from Martin West and H. D. Rankin to Kyriakos Tsantsanoglou, detect in this mocking miniature allusions to particular officials of Archilochus' contemporary Parian society. The large *strategos* is identified as Glaucus, the poet's friend, whom Archilochus also taunts elsewhere for his affected hairstyle (e.g. fr. 117); or he is taken to refer to a powerful political leader, such as the populist Leophilus (fr. 115) or Amphitimus the son of Peisistratus (fr. 93a–b), who are lampooned in other iambi.[56] Such connotations would have been immediately perceived by Archilochus' original audience, although they would have been lost for the readers and listeners of other times and places.[57] Nevertheless, it would be wrong to focus exclusively on these occasional aspects and the topical inspiration of the poem. Archilochus amalgamated his individual satirical target with archetypical ethological categories and standard, timeless figures of the humorous tradition.[58] His artful mockery may be read on a double level: on one hand, there is the direct allusion to the protagonists of a specific historical occasion; on the other hand, his work illustrates with equal success universal types, which were accepted as models of characterography by the later comic tradition.

Archilochus' concise but acute and suggestive ethological sketch was destined to come alive again on the comic stage in the person of side-splitting figures, from Lamachus in the *Acharnians* to Pyrgopolynices in the emblematically titled *Miles Gloriosus*. It is worth comparing Archilochus' verses with a parallel passage from the Aristophanic corpus: the character sketch of the braggart taxiarch from the second parabasis of the *Peace* (1172–1190), which develops and expands the satirical cameo of the Archilochean general. Composed again in trochaic tetrameters, as is usual for the epirrhemes of the parabasis, this Aristophanic tirade looks like an iambic composition emboxed in the comedy.

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55. Cf. Snell (1975) 61; Toohey (1988) 7; Müller (1994) 179.
56. See West (1974) 31–32, 130; Rankin (1977) 44, 90–91; Burnett (1983) 43; Stein (1990) 67–68; Tsantsanoglou (2008) 169, 175–76, 179.
57. Cf. Bowie (1993) 30; Rosen (2007) 251–52; and the broader discussion of Lennartz (2010) 258–84.
58. Cf. Toohey (1988) 8–9; Müller (1994) 180; Carey (2009) 154; Swift (2019) 295–96.

μᾶλλον ἢ θεοῖσιν ἐχθρὸν ταξίαρχον προσβλέπων
τρεῖς λόφους ἔχοντα καὶ φοινικίδ᾽ ὀξεῖαν πάνυ,
ἣν ἐκεῖνός φησιν εἶναι βάμμα Σαρδιανικόν·
ἢν δέ που δέῃ μάχεσθ᾽ ἔχοντα τὴν φοινικίδα,
τηνικαῦτ᾽ αὐτὸς βέβαπται βάμμα Κυζικηνικόν·
κᾆτα φεύγει πρῶτος ὥσπερ ξουθὸς ἱππαλεκτρυὼν
τοὺς λόφους σείων· ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἕστηκα λινοπτώμενος.
ἡνίκ᾽ ἂν δ᾽ οἴκοι γένωνται, δρῶσιν οὐκ ἀνασχετά,
τοὺς μὲν ἐγγράφοντες ἡμῶν, τοὺς δ᾽ ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω
ἐξαλείφοντες δὶς ἢ τρίς. αὔριον δ᾽ ἔσθ᾽ ἥξοδος.
τῷ δὲ σιτί᾽ οὐκ ἐώνητ᾽· οὐ γὰρ ᾔδειν ἐξιών·
εἶτα προσστὰς πρὸς τὸν ἀνδριάντα τὸν Πανδίονος
εἶδεν αὑτόν, κἀπορῶν θεῖ τῷ κακῷ βλέπων ὀπόν.
ταῦτα δ᾽ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀγροίκους δρῶσι, τοὺς δ᾽ ἐξ ἄστεως
ἧττον, οἳ θεοῖσιν οὗτοι κἀνδράσι ῥιψάσπιδες.
ὧν ἔτ᾽ εὐθύνας ἐμοὶ δώσουσιν, ἢν θεὸς θέλῃ.
πολλὰ γὰρ δή μ᾽ ἠδίκησαν,
ὄντες οἴκοι μὲν λέοντες,
ἐν μάχῃ δ᾽ ἀλώπεκες.

Much better this than to stare at some goddamned taxiarch wearing three crests and a very bright crimson cloak, which he claims to be the dye of Sardis; but if he has to give battle on some occasion, dressed in this crimson cloak, then he himself gets drenched in the dye of Shitland. Afterwards, he is the first to run away, like a tawny horse-cock, shaking his crests, while I stand there as though guarding the hunting nets. And when they return home, they do intolerable things; they enter some of our names on the roster and erase others, haphazardly, two or three times. Tomorrow the army departs, but this man has bought no provisions; he had no idea he would be going on campaign. Then he stands in front of Pandion's statue, sees his own name, and rushes away dumbfounded, looking miserable in his misfortune. This is what they do to us, the country folk, though not so much to the city people, these shield-throwers before gods and men. For all this, god willing, they will render account to me; because they have done me much wrong, acting like lions at home but like foxes in battle.

The taxiarch of the *Peace* shows off his impressive looks, like his Archilochean precursor. Aristophanes produces a variation of the motif, concentrating chiefly on the officer's uniform, his magnificent military apparel with the triple crests and the purple cloak. The comic poet also expressly

illustrates the officer's desertion, which is only suggested in the iambic poem through the contrast between the braggart and the brave general. Aristophanes graphically describes how the taxiarch flies away like a winged monster, in order to escape from battle. In the same way as the Archilochean general's long shanks are ironically echoed in his flight, when they serve him to withdraw more swiftly, so also in the Aristophanic lampoon the elements of the taxiarch's superb appearance are sarcastically reflected in the image of his retreat. His bright purple cloak is soiled when the officer defecates from fear; his triple crests quake as he runs away.[59]

At the end of the epirrheme the comic poet expands the portrait of the braggart officer with additional motifs, which betray again the Archilochean origins of the entire conception, because they are drawn from other satirical compositions by Archilochus. The blustering but cowardly officers, like this taxiarch, are said to be dodgers who have thrown away their shields (ῥιψάσπιδες, 1186) in the eyes of gods and men. This is an obvious reference to the emblematic shield-thrower of Greek poetry, the narrator of Archilochus fr. 5, who cast away his shield to save himself in the battle against the Saians. Indeed, this notorious poem is cited verbatim slightly later, in the finale of the *Peace* (1298–1301), by one of the guests' sons in Trygaeus' feast. Moreover, Aristophanes uses imagery from the animal kingdom to condemn the unworthy military leaders, who pretend to be lions in the rear but behave like foxes on the battlefield. The use of such similes points to the ethological typology of animals familiar from the corpus of Aesopic fables, and the reader is reminded that Archilochus also exploited fable material in his poetry. The figures of his iambi are sometimes incarnated as cunning foxes or other beasts, and each one of them stands for a characteristic ethical quality, according to the system of animal symbolism that prevails in the Aesopic tradition (see e.g. the fox and the perfidious eagle in the epode of fr. 174, or the wily fox and the vainglorious monkey in fr. 185).[60]

Aristophanes begins with the intention of castigating a gang of officials from his contemporary Athenian reality: the warmongering military leaders who exploit the circumstances of the war with Sparta so as to gain state positions and advance their careers, at the expense of plain citizens, who

59. On the taxiarch of the *Peace* as a *miles gloriosus*, cf. Konstantakos (2016a) 147–49.

60. On Archilochus' poetic use of animal fable, see the fundamental studies of van Dijk (1997) 138–48 and da Cunha Corrêa (2010) 17–162. See also Burnett (1983) 61–65; Brown (1997) 59–66; Kantzios (2005) 35–38; Gagné (2009); Lennartz (2010) 204–12; Swift (2014); Swift (2019) 28–31.

bear the burden of the armed conflict. For this purpose, Aristophanes draws inspiration from Archilochus' mocking iambi, which he adapts to the historical conditions of his own city. Like the great iambographer, the comic poet moves beyond personal invective and *onomasti komoidein*: instead of denouncing an eponymous military captain, he sketches the boastful and cowardly taxiarch as a universal social type, a satirical miniature of the recognisable *miles gloriosus* of the comic stage. In the end, Aristophanes enriches the Archilochean core of his composition with additional motifs borrowed from other works of Archilochus, and thus emerges as a faithful practitioner of iambic poetics.

Another apt example is offered by the figure of the *kolax*, the flatterer or parasite, another stock type of classical comedy with roots in the character repertoire of Archaic poetry. Asius of Samos, a poet of the sixth century BCE, vividly depicts a precursory specimen of this character in a poem which, though written in elegiacs, bears the marks of the satirical iambic genre (as happens also with several of Archilochus' elegies).[61] The central figure of this composition is called *κνισοκόλαξ*, "a fat-flatterer" or "flatterer for grease", and is described as a miserable wretch (fr. 14):

χωλός, στιγματίης, πολυγήραος, ἶσος ἀλήτῃ
ἦλθε κνισοκόλαξ, εὖτε Μέλης ἐγάμει,
ἄκλητος, ζωμοῦ κεχρημένος· ἐν δὲ μέσοισιν
ἥρως εἱστήκει βορβόρου ἐξαναδύς.

> Lame, tattooed, aged, like a beggar came the fat-flatterer, uninvited and in need of soup, when Meles was getting married; and in their midst he stood, a hero risen from the mud. (Transl. D. E. Gerber.)

An old man, filthy and crippled, the *knisokolax* comes uninvited to a marriage feast, hungry for soup, and stands amidst the guests like a ghost that has suddenly risen from the mire of the underworld. This early figure has important differences from the typical parasite of comedy. The latter, as a rule, is in his prime and endowed with full bodily powers, so as to promptly fulfil the errands assigned him by his patron.[62] He is not presented as a

61. On this interchangeability of metre and generic identity, see Dover (1964) 183–90; West (1974) 18–19, 27, 31–32; Rankin (1977) 43–44; Kantzios (2005) 100–31; Aloni (2006) 95; Lennartz (2010) 130; Nicolosi (2013) 17–21, 71; Nicolosi (2016) 175–77.

62. On the parasite's youth, see e.g. Alexis fr. 262; Ephippus fr. 20; Plaut. *Men.* 446, 494;

squalid beggar, a cripple, or a wretched phantom. Nonetheless, a couple of significant elements connect Asius' grotesque caricature with the parasites of the stage.[63] The "flatterer for grease" appears in the banquet without invitation; he wants to eat at the host's expense, without being entitled to and without contributing to the cost. This is also the comic parasite's central purpose of life.[64] Furthermore, Asius' protagonist displays the typical preoccupation with food in its most material and tangible manifestation: he covets soup and is attracted by the grease of roast meet, just like the parasites of comedy, who dream of substantial meals and choice foodstuffs.[65] The very name *κνισοκόλαξ* implies that its bearer means to offer flattery (*κολακεία*) in return for his participation in the feast, another mark of the stock scenic type.

Archilochus had already sketched a variant of the same ethological category, adapted to the iambic spirit of invective against particular personalities from the poet's milieu. In a poem he reproves one of his acquaintances, named Pericles, for having gatecrashed a symposium without invitation (fr. 124b):

> *πολλὸν δὲ πίνων καὶ χαλίκρητον μέθυ,*
> *οὔτε τῖμον εἰσενείκας* < – ∪ – × – ∪ – >
> *οὐδὲ μὲν κληθεὶς* < ∪ – × > *ἦλθες οἷα δὴ φίλος,*
> *ἀλλά σεο γαστὴρ νόον τε καὶ φρένας παρήγαγεν*
> *εἰς ἀναιδείην.*

> Although you consumed a large quantity of unmixed wine, you did not contribute to the cost ... nor again did you come invited ... as though a friend, but your belly led astray your mind and wits to shamelessness. (Transl. D. E. Gerber.)

Pollux 4.146. Cf. the praise of his considerable bodily powers in Aristophon fr. 5, fr. 10; Antiphanes fr. 193. See Ribbeck (1883) 41; Nesselrath (1990) 310–12; Arnott (1996) 731.

63. Cf. Ribbeck (1883) 4–5; Tylawsky (2002) 13–16; Storey (2003) 188; Corner (2013) 47, 50.

64. See e.g. Eubulus fr. 72; Amphis fr. 39; Antiphanes fr. 193, fr. 227, fr. 252; Ephippus fr. 20; Alexis fr. 213, fr. 259; Timocles fr. 8; Diphilus fr. 74; Diodorus fr. 2; Apollodorus of Carystus fr. 29, fr. 31; Plaut. *Capt.* 69–87; Ter. *Phor.* 338–45. On the comic parasite and his desire for free meals, see Ribbeck (1883) 15–16, 34–35; Nesselrath (1985) 57, 65–66, 100; Nesselrath (1990) 310–11; Arnott (1996) 609–11, 725; Damon (1997) 28–29, 74–75; Wilkins (2000) 71–74; Corner (2013) 47–51.

65. See e.g. Alexis fr. 233; Timocles fr. 10; Sophilus fr. 7; Diphilus fr. 60, fr. 61; Plaut. *Capt.* 902–8, *Men.* 77–109; and below, n. 72.

Coming to the banquet uninvited, not paying one's share for the communal feast, eating and drinking greedily, and behaving shamefully as a result — all these are regular practices of the parasite in the symposia of comedy.[66]

In many other iambic passages the targets of ridicule are personages who show gluttony and consume large quantities of food.[67] Hipponax denounces a man who gorges himself on partridges and hares, seasons pancakes with sesame, and dips waffles into honey (fr. 26a).[68] In other poems he castigates eponymous trenchermen. One of them, named Sannus, cannot restrain his voracity. He looks like a ravenous heron feeding with its beak; yet his body remains meagre and withered, as though the famine were nesting in his belly and making him waste away (fr. 118).[69] Another one, called "son of Eurymedon" (possibly "son of Sir Plenipotentiary"),[70] gulps down food in the same way as the mythical Charybdis used to swallow the sea; he looks as though he carries a carving knife inside his stomach, and breaks every rule of decorum at dinner (fr. 128).[71] Semonides describes some persons who grab offal or entrails like kites (fr. 12). Perhaps some of these unrestrained eaters were parasites and showed their gluttony in a feast they had gatecrashed. Especially in Middle and New Comedy this kind of voracity is a trademark of the parasite: the latter is capable of devouring huge quantities of food with a great speed, cannot check himself in front of the

66. Cf. Ribbeck (1883) 8–9; Wilkins (2000) 71; Corner (2013) 50, 64–65.

67. Cf. in general Miralles – Pòrtulas (1983) 36–37; Slings (1987) 92–93; Bettarini (2017) 105–13.

68. It is widely believed that fr. 26a is to be connected with the description of the prodigal glutton who ate up his patrimony in fr. 26 (Degani [1991] 52–53; Gerber [1999] 373). It is not certain, however, that both passages come from the same poem; see Alexandrou (2016) 68–69.

69. *ὦ Σάνν', ἐπειδὴ ῥῖνα θεό[συλιν φορ]εῖς / καὶ γαστρὸς οὐ κατακρα[τεῖς, / λαιμᾷ δέ σοι τὸ χεῖλος ὡς ἐρῳδιοῦ / [ ] / τοὖς μοι παράσχες [ ] / σύν τοί τι βουλεῦσαι θέ[λω. / (...) τοὺς] βρα[χίονας / καὶ τὸ]ν τράχ[ηλον ἔφθισαι, / κα[τεσθίεις δέ·] μή σε γαστρίη [λάβῃ / [ ] / πρῶτον μὲν ἐκδὺς νεῖμ[ον], αὐλήσει δέ σοι / Κίκων τὸ Κωδάλο[υ μέλος*, "O Sannus, since you sport a sacrilegious nose and have no control over your appetite, lend me your ear ... I want to give you some advice. Your beak is as ravenous as a heron's ... Your arms and neck are wasted ... see that you don't get colic ... first strip ... Cicon will pipe you the tune of Codalus" (transl. D. E. Gerber).

70. On the comic connotations of the name, see Degani (1984) 189–92, 217; Degani (1991) 128; Faraone (2004) 211, 225–26; Bettarini (2017) 105–9; Allan (2019) 218.

71. *Μοῦσά μοι Εὐρυμεδοντιάδεα τὴν ποντοχάρυβδιν, / τὴν ἐν γαστρὶ μάχαιραν, ὃς ἐσθίει οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, / ἔννεφ', ὅπως ψηφῖδι < > κακὸν οἶτον ὀλεῖται / βουλῇ δημοσίῃ παρὰ θῖν' ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο*, "Tell me, Muse, of the sea swallowing, the stomach carving of Eurymedontiades who eats in no orderly manner, so that through a baneful vote determined by the people he may die a wretched death along the shore of the undraining sea" (transl. D. E. Gerber).

loaded table and its full dishes, and swoops down on the foodstuffs with the catastrophic force of a hurricane.[72]

Once again, it is worth confronting the iambographers' ethological moulds with a full portrait of the type from the acme of Old Comedy. In Eupolis' *Kolakes* the Chorus was made up of representatives of this profession, whose highest aim in life is to eat well in opulent banquets without paying for the cost.[73] In this case the character sketch is placed on the lips of the flatterers themselves in the parabasis, and the iambic lampoon is transformed into a piece of sarcastic self-presentation (fr. 172).

ἀλλὰ δίαιταν ἣν ἔχουσ' οἱ κόλακες πρὸς ὑμᾶς
λέξομεν. ἀλλ' ἀκούσαθ' ὡς ἐσμὲν ἅπαντα κομψοὶ
ἄνδρες· ὅτοισι πρῶτα μὲν παῖς ἀκόλουθός ἐστιν
ἀλλότριος τὰ πολλά, μικρὸν δέ τι †κἀμον† αὐτοῦ.
ἱματίω δέ μοι δύ' ἐστὸν χαρίεντε τούτοιν
<–> μεταλαμβάνων ἀεὶ θάτερον ἐξελαύνω
εἰς ἀγοράν. ἐκεῖ δ' ἐπειδὰν κατίδω τιν' ἄνδρα
ἠλίθιον, πλουτοῦντα δ', εὐθὺς περὶ τοῦτόν εἰμι.
κἄν τι τύχῃ λέγων ὁ πλούταξ, πάνυ τοῦτ' ἐπαινῶ,
καὶ καταπλήττομαι δοκῶν τοῖσι λόγοισι χαίρειν.
εἶτ' ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἐρχόμεσθ' ἄλλυδις ἄλλος ἡμῶν
μᾶζαν ἐπ' ἀλλόφυλον, οὗ δεῖ χαρίεντα πολλὰ
τὸν κόλακ' εὐθέως λέγειν, ἢ 'κφέρεται θύραζε.
οἶδα δ' Ἀκέστορ' αὐτὸ τὸν στιγματίαν παθόντα·
σκῶμμα γὰρ εἶπ' ἀσελγές, εἶτ' αὐτὸν ὁ παῖς θύραζε
ἐξαγαγὼν ἔχοντα κλῳὸν παρέδωκεν Οἰνεῖ

But we will describe for you how the flatterers live; so listen to how we are thoroughly elegant men! We who have, first of all, a slave attendant — generally belonging to someone else— and a little ... of him. I also have these two lovely robes, one of which routinely changing for the other I march off to the marketplace. And when I spy someone there who is a fool but rich, I am immediately part of his entourage. If the rich guy happens to be speaking,

72. See e.g. Antiphanes fr. 82, fr. 87; Alexis fr. 183, fr. 263; Eubulus fr. 29, fr. 30; Cratinus Junior fr. 8; Anaxippus fr. 3; Plaut. *Capt.* 909–21; Ribbeck (1883) 13–19, 34–36; Nesselrath (1985) 29–36, 42–46, 484–85; Nesselrath (1990) 309–17; Arnott (1996) 546–47, 660–62; Damon (1997) 25–29; Wilkins (2000) 71–72, 78–86; Tylawsky (2002) 71–76, 82, 89–90, 101–3; Corner (2013) 51–55, 58–61, 72–75.

73. On Eupolis' *kolakes* and their self-presentation, see Nesselrath (1985) 39–42; Wilkins (2000) 75–77; Storey (2003) 188–93; Tylawsky (2002) 43–51; Napolitano (2012) 16–21, 124–54; Olson (2016) 34–35, 87–107.

> I praise his remarks lavishly, and I act astounded, pretending to take delight in his words. Then we go off to dinner, each of us in a different direction, to get a foreign barley-cake, where the flatterer must immediately offer many witty remarks, or else he is dragged out. And I know that exactly this happened to the tattooed Acestor; for he told an offensive joke, and then the slave dragged him outside with a collar around his neck and handed him over to Oeneus. (Transl. S. D. Olson, adapted.)

The audience is called to perceive the poet's blame against the *kolakes* indirectly, through the flatterers' own ironically charged narration about their tactics. This technique is already familiar from Archaic iambography, even though it is not traced in the surviving fragments which refer to flatterers or parasites. Often in iambic compositions the narrative "I" of the poem is represented in an ironical and satirical manner; the speaker is indirectly mocked and becomes ridiculous by means of the text placed on his lips, due to the inconsistency or the exaggeration of his words, his feelings, or the actions he describes.[74] Eupolis transplants this practice to the presentation of his flatterers, who unfold their ludicrous portrait in the epirrheme of the parabasis, again like an iambic cameo inserted in the middle of the comic plot.

Eupolis' characters are also uninvited intruders; they accost rich patrons and sneak into their banquets. In their comic self-presentation the reciprocal offering of flattery, which was only implied in the nickname of Asius' *knisokolax*, is explicitly revealed. The toadies hasten to praise everything that their foolish patron says; they pretend to admire his wonderful speech, and of course they are obliged to make themselves pleasant with witty compliments during the dinner-party.[75] This is the price they have to pay for enjoying the feast. The impudence and impropriety, to which the unbridled Pericles is said to have been led in Archilochus' poem, are explained and specified further. One of the flatterers, Acestor the "branded" or "tattooed" one (*στιγματίας*, an epithet also attributed to Asius' beggarly vagabond), once uttered an indecent joke and was punished straightaway; the slaves threw him out of the house and handed him over to the gaoler.[76]

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74. See Vox (1988); Stein (1990) 70; Lavigne (2008) 100–2, 108–9; Rotstein (2010) 63–65, 198–200; Swift (2019) 243–44, 307–8; and the discussion of Archilochus fr. 19 and fr. 122 above.
75. Cf. Nesselrath (1985) 23–29; Tylawsky (2002) 50; Storey (2003) 190–92; Napolitano (2012) 144–45; Corner (2013) 51, 63–67; Olson (2016) 91–92.
76. On the interpretation of the name of Oeneus (*Οἰνεῖ*) in the last line (probably a guardsman or executioner), see Napolitano (2012) 146–50; Olson (2016) 94–95.

Mishaps of this kind became one of the parasite's emblematic experiences in the comic tradition. This scenic figure lives under a constant fear lest he lose the dinner he looks forward to, even at the last moment. Even when he is in the banquet hall, in front of the loaded table, he runs the risk of committing some blunder and being chased away.[77] If the poems by Archilochus and Asius had been preserved in their entirety, perhaps the reader would find out that the misdeeds of Pericles and the *knisokolax* similarly caused their violent expulsion from the feast. Hipponax envisages a much rougher end for his gluttons: Sannus is deemed worthy of being stripped naked and publicly disgraced; the son of Eurymedon is cursed to be lynched by stoning, like a *pharmakos*.[78] From the iambus to comedy, the parasite is constantly threatened with the dire fate of becoming the scapegoated eater.

The last comic type to be examined brings us back to the Aristotelian classification of the forms of blame poetry. According to the philosopher, a seminal moment in early Greek literary history provided both the roots of satirical poetry and the beginnings of comedy. The humorous poem entitled *Margites* was generally attributed to Homer by the ancients.[79] Aristotle also reproduces this widespread fallacy without reservation (*Poet.* 4.1448b 34–1449a 2). In fact, the *Margites* must have been composed during the seventh or sixth century BCE.[80] It was a work very akin to iambography, and Martin West rightly included its remains in his classic edition of early iambic and elegiac poems.[81] The *Margites* consisted of dactylic hexameters, which parodied epic versification and were alternated at irregular intervals with iambic trimeters, one of the emblematic metres of the iambus. This structure resembles, at least in a rudimentary form, the combination of disparate units of versification in the so-called *asynarteta* of Archilochus' epodes.[82]

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77. See e.g. Antiphanes fr. 202.11–14; Alexis fr. 243, fr. 258; Timocles fr. 11; Diphilus fr. 53, fr. 62; Nicolaus fr. 1; Plaut. *Capt.* 461–97, *Men.* 663–67, *Stich.* 181–92, 469–96, 587–630; cf. Alciphron 3.2, 3.7, 3.17, 3.20; Ribbeck (1883) 39–40; Nesselrath (1985) 47–48, 60–63; Konstantakos (2020) 20.
78. See chiefly Miralles – Pòrtulas (1988) 49–69, 84–100, 133–36, and Faraone (2004) 211–24, 237–42; also Degani (1984) 201–2, 223–24; Slings (1987) 89–92; Rosen (1988a) 21–22; Alexandrou (2016) 40–43.
79. See testimonia 1–12b, 14a–15, 17 in the edition of Gostoli (2007); also West (2003) 240–44.
80. See Bossi (1986) 41–43; West (2003) 227; Gostoli (2007) 11–13.
81. West (1989–1992) II 69–78. Cf. Rankin (1977) 36, 86; Gostoli (2007) 9–10, 15, 18; Rotstein (2010) 98–104; *contra* Lennartz (2010) 462–72, who bases his refutation on minutiae and misses the larger picture.
82. Cf. Langerbeck (1958) 34; Page (1964) 145–49; Rankin (1977) 86; Steinrück (2000) 92–97; Gostoli (2007) 9–10, 15.

Above all, the humorous subject-matter and derisive content of the work point to iambic poetics. As far as can be seen, the *Margites* focused on the caricature of a laughable character. The protagonist, the eponymous Margites, was presented as a foolish and ignorant man who undertook many kinds of tasks without possessing the knowledge or skill required for them, and was ridiculed as a result (see fr. 2–7 Gostoli, fr. 2–3 and 5–6 West). One of the central episodes of the poem must have been the silly hero's wedding, in particular his first night with his bride. Margites was so naive and ignorant that he did not know anything about the sexual act and had no idea what to do with his newly-wedded wife in their bridal chamber (fr. 8a–d Gostoli, fr. 4 West).[83] The scoffing tone, the sexual jibe, the themes of urban and domestic novella, all these elements connect the poem with the world of the Archaic Ionian iambus. Albin Lesky and Martin West appositely remark that the creator of *Margites* had an idiosyncrasy close to that of Hipponax.[84]

With his abysmal ignorance and incapacity, Margites provides the earliest known incarnation of an archetypical humorous personage, whom scholars usually call "the comic fool" or "the comic failure". This is the antihero who becomes laughable because he continuously fails in the duties and responsibilities he shoulders, commits all kinds of blunders, spectacularly belies other people's expectations, proves ludicrously incompetent for

83. This episode is reconstructed from the information provided by many ancient sources, mainly postclassical authors, grammarians, scholiasts, and lexica. Among the most telling references are the following: (1) Hesychius *μ* 267 (fr. 8d Gostoli): *Μαργε<ί>της· μωρός τις ἦν, μὴ εἰδὼς μίξιν γυναικός. καὶ <ἡ> γυνὴ προτρέπεται αὐτόν, εἰποῦσα σκορπίον αὐτὴν δῆξαι καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς ὀχείας <δεῖν> θεραπευθῆναι* ("Margites: he was an idiot who did not know about copulation. His wife encouraged him by saying that a scorpion had bitten her and that she had to be healed by means of intercourse"). (2) Eustathius, *Parekbolai on the Odyssey* 1669.48–50 (fr. 8c Gostoli): *ὃν ὁ ποιήσας τὸν ἐπιγραφόμενον Ὁμήρου Μαργίτην ὑποτίθεται εὐπόρων μὲν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν γονέων φῦναι, γήμαντα δὲ μὴ συμπεσεῖν τῇ νύμφῃ ἕως ἀναπεισθεῖσα ἐκείνη <ὑπὸ τῆς μητρὸς> τετραυματίσθαι τὰ κάτω ἐσκήψατο, φάρμακόν τε μηδὲν ὠφελήσειν ἔφη πλὴν εἰ τὸ ἀνδρεῖον αἰδοῖον ἐκεῖ ἐφαρμοσθείη· καὶ οὕτω θεραπείας χάριν ἐκεῖνος ἐπλησίασεν* ("the author of the *Margites* that bears Homer's name represents him as having been born to exceedingly affluent parents, but when he married he did not fall upon his bride until she, at her mother's instigation, pretended to have suffered a wound in her lower parts, and said that no remedy would be of any help except for a male member being fitted to the place: so it was that he made love to her, for therapeutic purposes"). (3) Schol. in Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 160, p. 143 Dilts (fr. 8e Gostoli): *τῇ δὲ γαμετῇ οὐκ ἐχρῆτο· δεδιέναι γὰρ ἔλεγε μὴ διαβάλλοι αὐτὸν πρὸς τὴν μητέρα* ("he did not have sex with his wife; for, as he said, he was afraid lest she would accuse him in front of her mother"). See also Dio Chrysostom 67.4; Schol. Luc. *Philops.* p. 162.7–15 Rabe. Cf. Radermacher (1908) 445–47; Langerbeck (1958) 53–63; Gostoli (2007) 10, 80–82; West (2008); Pralon (2011) 152–57.

84. Lesky (1971) 111–12; West (2003) 227; cf. Rotstein (2010) 99.

all the tasks he puts his hand to, and every act of his leads to disaster.[85] The inimitable Mr. Bean, Inspector Clouseau from the *Pink Panther* series, and the blundering spy Johnny English are the most famous representatives of this type in our own time; and if one brings to mind their cinematic and televised adventures, one understands what a great gift such a role is for the talented comic actor. If by some good fortune a papyrus with the full text of the *Margites* came to light, it would be worth making a film of it starring Rowan Atkinson — unless Peter Sellers were to be resurrected specifically for this purpose.

Aristotle claims that *Margites* provides the ideal model of comedy, because its poet dramatised not blame but the laughable *per se*;[86] in other words, the work did not focus on lampoon and reproof but afforded hilarious entertainment through the presentation of funny situations. However, at this point Aristotle's *Poetics* perhaps does not afford a complete and spherical picture. It is probable that the *Margites* had a satirical purpose and included a modicum of topical invective. According to the erudite testimonium of Eustathius of Thessalonica, Margites was presented in the text as the child of extremely wealthy parents (*Parekbolai on the Odyssey* 10.552, 1669.48–49: *ὁ ποιήσας τὸν ἐπιγραφόμενον Ὁμήρου Μαργίτην ὑποτίθεται εὐπόρων μὲν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν γονέων φῦναι*; cf. the accursed glutton Eurymedontiades, "son of Sir Very-Powerful", in Hipponax fr. 128). This significant detail about the hero's upper-class status gives the work a marked tone of social satire: the offspring of the distinguished family, the scion of the ruling class, was proved to be an incompetent and ridiculous personage, unfit for all the various duties that his social position prescribed for him.

Eustathius' information also engenders the suspicion that Margites' character might have been a caricature of a particular individual from Archaic Ionian society. Perhaps the poem vilified, more or less cryptically, a known aristocrat of the city of Colophon, where the action appears to have been set. If this is true, then the *Margites* would also have operated in the manner of iambography: the poem set off from the topical blame of a

85. See Rankin (1977) 63; Winkler (1985) 159–65, 289–91; Steinrück (2000) 93; Lazarus (2014) 143–208; Konstantakos (2016b).

86. *Poet.* 4.1448b 36–1449a 1: (Homer) *τὸ τῆς κωμῳδίας σχῆμα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν, οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας· ὁ γὰρ Μαργίτης ἀνάλογον ἔχει, ὥσπερ Ἰλιὰς καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια πρὸς τὰς τραγῳδίας, οὕτω καὶ οὗτος πρὸς τὰς κωμῳδίας*, "he was the first to show the outline of comedy, since he dramatised not blame but the laughable as such; for, as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are analogous to tragedy, so his *Margites* provides an analogy to comedies".

particular individual from the poet's immediate environment, but upgraded the ludicrous portrait of this personage to a universal human type and thus bequeathed a diachronic ethological archetype to the later humorous tradition.

One of the side-splitting scenes of the poem, no doubt connected to the protagonist's eventful wedding night, survives in a mutilated form in the remains of a papyrus (P. Oxy. 2309, fr. 9 Gostoli, fr. 7 West).

κ]ύστιν[, χ]ειρὶ δὲ μακρῇ
] τεύχεα, [κ]αί ῥα ἔλασσε
δυοῖσι δ' ἐν π]όνοι[σι]ν εἴχετο
]ν· ἐν δὲ [τ]ῇ ἀμίδι
] ἐξελεῖν δ' ἀμήχανον
κ]αί ῥ' ἐνώμειξεν ταχύ
] κ[αιν]ὴν ἐφράσσατο μῆτι[ν·
ἀνόρουσε] λιπὼν ἄπο δέμνια [θερμά
ὤειξε] θύρας, ἐκ δ' ἔδραμεν ἔξω
]ων διὰ νύκτα μέλα[ιναν
]ύσειε δὲ χεῖρα[[ς]]
δι]ὰ νύκτα μέλαιν[αν
]μεν οὐδὲ φανίο[ν
] δύστηνον κάρ[η
]εδόκεεν λίθ[
]ωι καὶ χειρὶ παχ[είῃ
λέπτ' ἔ]θηκεν ὄστρα[κα

... bladder, and with hand outstretched [he set his dick to] the pot, and thrust [it in. Then in two] pinches he was caught ... while in the chamber pot ... and it was impossible to get it out ... and he very soon pissed into it ... He thought of a new stratagem ... [He jumped up,] leaving the [warm] bed ... [opened] the doors and ran out ... through the dark night ... and ... his hand ... through the dark night ... and no torch [he had] ... unlucky he[ad] ... thought it was a stone ... and with his stout hand ... [sma]shed the pot [on it ...] (Transl. Martin West.)

In spite of the gaps and the amputated phrases, a rough idea of the happenings may be acquired. Margites lies on his bed and seems to have an erection. For some reason, he thrusts his erect penis into a chamber pot. Possibly he does so to urinate, although a more amusing version may also be imagined: the hero may have misinterpreted some ambiguous instructions

given him beforehand by the bride, or his mother-in-law, or another personage. In ancient Greek popular parlance the woman's vagina was sometimes metaphorically represented as a vase or vessel.[87] Thus, if the silly Margites had received a euphemistic piece of advice, such as "you must thrust your organ inside ... you know, inside that vessel" (or something to that effect), he might have taken this to mean the handiest vessel that was immediately available in the surroundings of his marriage bed. In any case, due to his clumsiness, Margites also pushes into the pot his long and thick hand; as a result, his limbs get stuck in the pot, and the hero is unable to extricate them. A hilarious struggle starts: Margites strives to throw the chamber pot away, without success. Finally, he thinks of a bright idea; he rises from his bed, opens the gates, and rushes out into the black night. As he proceeds in the darkness, without a light, he bumps his head on something. In the end, he slams the pot on a stone and smashes it, thus gaining his freedom.[88]

This amusing episode glaringly shows the hero's maladroitness and his foolish blunders. The sexual and obscene aspect of his mishap relegates him to the lowest level of ridicule. Analogous scenes occur also in other iambic poems featuring characters of the same type, i.e. laughable losers who suffer adversities related to the genitals and sex. In two fragments by Hipponax the central figure is a man who has been afflicted with erectile dysfunction and seeks a cure in rituals of sympathetic magic.[89] During these ceremonies he is subjected to various humiliating procedures. In one case (fr. 78), when the man visits the sanctuary of the ithyphallic Cabiri, the practice involves a needle, charcoal embers, a smelt, and dung-beetles. In the end, the patient returns home, eats mulberries, dyes his nose (or probably his male member) with their red juice, spits three times on it, and rubs it (perhaps for masturbation).[90] In the second composition the ceremony is performed

87. Examples come mainly from comedy and later romances: e.g. *Ecclesiazusae* 847; Eupolis fr. 60; Lucian, *Asinus* 6; *Alexander Romance* 1.8.3; Henderson (1991) 143–44.

88. On this episode, cf. Langerbeck (1958) 59–63; Bossi (1986) 31–34; West (2003) 225–26; Gostoli (2007) 58–60, 82–84; Pralon (2011) 153–54.

89. See West (1974) 142–45; Miralles – Pòrtulas (1988) 9–21, 73–76, 84–85, 90–94; Faraone (2004); Degani (2007) 117–18, 121–23; Ormand (2015) 60–62; Boedeker (2016) 63–64, 72; Alexandrou (2016) 162–74, 199–213; Allan (2019) 209–12. Earlier bibliography is listed in Degani (1991) 91–92, 103–6, 230.

90. Fr. 78.5ff.: *ὥσπερ τραγω[/ ὐ]πέατι καί μιν[/ ὥσπερ Κίκωνα[/ .].[..] ἐδυσφήμει τε κα.[/ ..].ας μαρίλην ἀνθρ[άκων / σέλα]ς δὲ κ[α]ὶ πῦρ οὐκ ἐσέρχε[τ' οὗ π]υρρ[όν / ..... ἀ]θερίνην ἐς Καβείρ[ων] φοίτε[σκε / τὸν λ[..]ριῶνα μῆνα κα[ν]θαρο[/ ἐ]λθὼν δ' ἐς οἶκον, συκάμινα δ[ει]π[νήσας, / καὶ τῷ κιμαίῳ τόν[δε] ῥῖνα φοινίξα[ς, / ἐπιπτύσας τρὶς καὶ τ[/ ἀ]π' ὧν ἐδέψατ' ὡς .[*, "like ... with an awl and ... like Cicon ... he used indecent language and ...

under the barbaric-sounding commands of a Lydian witch. This time the man's ordeals are even more shameful and disgusting: the patient's testicles are whipped with a fig branch, and something is injected into his arsehole, causing him to defecate profusely. Thus the poor wretch is covered in filthy excrement, which attracts a swarm of dung-beetles to him (fr. 92).[91] In iambography, as in the *Margites*, the humiliation of the comic loser passes through an outbreak of vulgarity provoked by the lower functions of the body: afflictions of the genitals, urination, and defecation mark the bungler's ridiculous plight.

The comic poets of Athens inherited this type from earlier satirical tradition. The Dionysus of the *Frogs* has been read as an embodiment of the model of the comic failure; he is the great blundering god, whose inefficiency and bewilderment on various occasions runs through the first part of the play and affords the main source of humour.[92] Dionysus has dressed up in Heracles' garments for his journey to Hades, but he does not possess the fortitude and spirit to properly perform this hero's part and fulfil his role to the end. He always cowers before danger, gives up his heroic pretence, and exchanges clothes with his slave Xanthias, leaving the latter to face the terrifying situations (e.g. 279–311, 464–502, 522–673). In the end Dionysus cannot even persuade the inhabitants of the underworld that he is a god; he

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embers of charcoal ... and he did not approach ... the flaming fire (and offering?) a smelt he would go to the temple of the Cabiri throughout the month of ... dung beetle(s) ... and going into his house he dined on mulberries, and dyeing this red at the nose with the juice he spat three times and ... jerked off ..." (transl. D. E. Gerber). As argued by several scholars, the term *ῥῖνα* in this text refers not to the nose but to the tip of the man's penis; there is no parallel for this use, but it might be a metaphor from vulgar parlance or slang. See West (1974) 143; Brown (1983) 88–89; Henderson (1991) 243–45; Alexandrou (2016) 172–73; Gerber (1999) 413.

91. *ηὔδα δὲ λυδίζουσα· "βασκ...κρολεα". / πυγιστί· "τὸν πυγεῶνα παρ[". / καί μοι τὸν ὄρχιν τῆς φαλ[/ κ]ράδη συννηλοίησεν ὥσπ[ερ φαρμακῷ / .].τοις διοζίοισιν ἐμπεδ[/ καὶ δὴ δυοῖσιν ἐν πόνοισ[ι / ἥ τε κράδη με τοὐτέρωθ[εν / ἄνωθεν ἐμπίπτουσα, κ[/ παραψιδάζων βολβίτωι[/ ὦζεν δὲ λαύρη· κάνθαροι δὲ ῥοιζέοντες / ἦλθον κατ' ὀδμὴν πλέονες ἢ πεντήκοντα· / τῶν οἱ μὲν ἐμπίπτοντε[ς / κατέβαλον, οἱ δὲ τοὺς οδ..[/ οἱ δ' ἐμπεσόντες τὰς θύρα[ς / τοῦ Πυγέλησι[.....]..[*, "She spoke in Lydian: '*Baskati krolel*', in Arsish, 'your arse ...' and my balls ... she thrashed with a fig branch as though (I were a scapegoat) ... fastened securely by forked pieces of wood (?) ... and (I was caught?) between two torments ... On the one side the fig branch ... me, descending from above, (and on the other side my arse?) spattering with shit ... and my arse-hole stank. Dung beetles came buzzing at the smell, more than fifty of them. Some attacked and struck down (?) ..., others (whet their teeth?), and others falling upon the doors ... of the Arsenal ..." (transl. D. E. Gerber).

92. See Lazarus (2014) 143–69, 192–208; also Whitman (1964) 232–40; McLeish (1980) 55, 141–43.

is unable to prove and defend his identity (628–673). Obscene and scatological incidents are interspersed in this antiheroic course towards failure. Dionysus repeatedly soils himself out of fear (308–310, 479–491), like the wretched protagonist in the poem of Hipponax.

Variations of the same character are detected in some of Aristophanes' mocking songs, which narrate the mishaps of such heroes of the fiasco. These songs, regardless of their lyric composition and metrical structure, are in essence small iambic numbers inserted into the comic action, vignettes of invective usually placed on the Chorus' lips.[93] As already observed above, in comic dramaturgy the Chorus is often the bearer of iambic expression. As a representative and mouthpiece of the mocking poet, the Chorus is charged with delivering the lampooning songs which the poet composes for his drama. In these iambic cantos of comedy the lower bodily functions predominate again; the victim is ridiculed through scatology and the operations of the belly and the arse.

An eloquent example is the last strophic choral song before the *exodos* of the *Acharnians*, in which a certain Antimachus is derided. Antimachus was a rich Athenian citizen, probably also active in political forums and legislative bodies of the *polis*. He is criticised because he did not entertain the comic Chorus with the customary dinner-party when he had been appointed choregus at the Lenaia (1150–1173).[94]

Ἀντίμαχον τὸν ψακάδος †τὸν ξυγγραφῆ† τὸν μελέων ποιητήν,
ὡς μὲν ἁπλῷ λόγῳ κακῶς ἐξολέσειεν ὁ Ζεύς·
ὅς γ' ἐμὲ τὸν τλήμονα Λήναια χορηγῶν ἀπέλυσ' ἄδειπνον.
ὃν ἔτ' ἐπίδοιμι τευθίδος
δεόμενον, ἣ δ' ὠπτημένη,
σίζουσα, πάραλος ἐπὶ τραπέζῃ κειμένη
ὀκέλλοι· κᾆτα μέλ-
λοντος λαβεῖν αὐτοῦ κύων
ἁρπάσασα φεύγοι.

τοῦτο μὲν αὐτῷ κακὸν ἕν, κᾆθ' ἕτερον νυκτερινὸν γένοιτο.
ἠπιαλῶν γὰρ οἴκαδ' ἐξ ἱππασίας βαδίζων,

93. See further *Acharnians* 836–59; *Knights* 973–96, 1264–1315; *Wasps* 1265–83; cf. Silk (1980) 125–38; Moulton (1981) 18–47; Parker (1997) 6–11; Silk (2000) 161–67, 181–91; Olson (2002) 280.

94. On Antimachus and the taunting song against him, see Moulton (1981) 18–24; Reckford (1987) 475–82; Parker (1997) 149–51; Olson (2002) 348–52.

εἶτα κατάξειέ τις αὐτοῦ μεθύων τὴν κεφαλὴν Ὀρέστης
μαινόμενος· ὁ δὲ λίθον λαβεῖν
βουλόμενος ἐν σκότῳ λάβοι
τῇ χειρὶ πέλεθον ἀρτίως κεχεσμένον·
ἐπάξειεν δ' ἔχων
τὸν μάρμαρον, κἄπειθ' ἁμαρ-
τὼν βάλοι Κρατῖνον.

Antimachus son of Drizzler, the drafter of bills, the composer of bad songs; to put it bluntly, may Zeus terribly eradicate him! He is the one who, as producer at the Lenaea, unkindly dismissed me without dinner. May I yet see him hungry for squid, and may it lie grilled and sizzling by the shore and make port safely at his table; and then, when he is about to grab it, may a dog snap it up and run away with it! That is one curse for him; and here is another, to happen to him in the night. As he walks home shivering after galloping his horse, I hope some drunkard —mad Orestes!— knocks him on the head; and when he wants to grab a stone I hope in the darkness he grabs in his hand a fresh-shat turd, and holding that glittering missile let him charge at his foe, then miss him and hit Cratinus! (Transl. Jeffrey Henderson.)

Following his favourite tactics, Aristophanes merges inside the same compositional unit various elements and modes of iambography, which present-day readers may trace separately in different iambic poems. The canto takes the form of an extensive and imaginative imprecation: the Chorus-members curse Antimachus to experience a series of misfortunes, and contemplate with pleasure the sufferings that will thus befall him, so that he may be punished for the dinner he deprived them of. This kind of composition is known from the iambic corpus. Frequently the narrator of the iambic poem wishes that his enemy meet with terrible evils and disasters, in retaliation for the wrongs he has committed. An emblematic case is the famous epode by Hipponax (fr. 115, sometimes attributed to Archilochus) against his faithless former comrade. The speaker curses the perjurer to be shipwrecked, disgorged by the waves naked on the coast of Thrace, and there captured by the wild natives and thrown into slavery.[95] Archilochus

95. Many scholars compare this epode with the Aristophanic song: see Whitman (1964) 38; Reckford (1987) 480–82; Rosen (1988a) 71–73; Kugelmeier (1996) 192–94; Nicolosi (2007) 81–82; Lennartz (2010) 330–32.

may have delivered equally intense imprecations against Lycambes and his daughters in his corresponding epodes.[96]

The form of the Aristophanic song reproduces this iambic mode. However, the afflictions concocted by the comic Chorus for Antimachus, in themselves, are not so terrible as the irreparable evils envisioned by Archilochus and Hipponax for their enemies.[97] Antimachus' misfortunes resemble rather the mishaps befalling Margites and the other hilarious antiheroes of comic failure; they consist in humiliating incidents which ridicule the victim without endangering his life and existence. The Chorus wishes that Antimachus may have an appetite for eating fried squid, which will be waiting for him, delicious and steaming hot, on the table; but suddenly, as the man is ready to enjoy his meal, a dog will snatch the squid from inside his hands. Then, while the miserable fellow will be returning home ill with agues and shivers, after a ride on his horse, may he be attacked in the street by a drunken hoodlum and have his head split in two. Antimachus should reach out with his hand to take hold of a stone and strike back, but should grasp by mistake a fresh turd instead.

In other words, Antimachus, the inadequate choregus, is condemned to be plagued by ill luck in everything he attempts. His favourite delicacies are stolen, and he is left hungry. As he is returning from a ride, he is seized by shivers and attacked in the street; and everything he touches turns into dung. His experiences are very close to the world of Margites, whose initiatives and actions invariably end up in ridiculous failure. The nocturnal adventures of both these heroes present notable analogies. Both of them go about in the darkness in a sorry state, receive a bump on the head, and their misfortune is associated with filthy bodily excretions, urine or faeces. The Aristophanic Antimachus is yet another metamorphosis of the ethological archetype of the comic loser, which links —like all the other characters examined above— the mocking creations of the iambus with the satirical drills of Attic comedy.

96. Cf. Lennartz (2010) 331. For surveys of the traditions concerning Archilochus and Lycambes, see West (1974) 26–28; Rankin (1977) 47–56; Carey (1986); Brown (1997) 50–69; Lennartz (2010) 195–219.

97. Cf. Reckford (1987) 476–77, 480–82; Lennartz (2010) 331–32.

EPILOGUE

No one remembers any longer who that Pericles was who showed up at banquets without invitation, or which aristocratic booby was the living model of Margites, or which dastardly officers hide behind Archilochus' big *strategos* and the crested taxiarch of the *Peace*. This is the destiny of blame poetry: its topical aspect is bound to be lost in time or to end up dissected in the learned commentaries of philologists. There is, however, also the other side: the universal function of satire, which surpasses the contemporary and the *onomasti* and sketches general human types, such as can retain their validity through time and nurture the humorous tradition of all historical periods and social milieus. If we look carefully enough, we may discover their equals even around us.

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