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CHRIS CAREY

Iambos

Iambos has a long and rich history. As a literary form it emerges in the seventh century BCE, though as with all the lyric genres it must be heir to a long pre-literate tradition. It flourishes for about a century, after which it attracts no major talents until it excites the imagination of Hellenistic poets. It then acquires a further lease of life in Rome through its influence on the works of Catullus and Horace.

We have no definition of iambos before the classical period and even then we are given not a definition but either passing references or indicative characteristics. Though iambos as a genre is resurrected in the Hellenistic period, its reemergence comes mediated through the prism of Hellenistic tastes and trends which inevitably involve refashioning and some degree of redefinition. We can however put together a plausible if tentative picture.

Though it is difficult when reconstructing iambos to escape the gravitational pull of the adjective 'iambic' with its connotations of metrical form, there is good reason to suppose that the term is not in origin metrical.¹ Our first encounter with the word *iambos* is in an opaque fragment of Archilochus (215 W):

καί μ' οὔτ' ἰάμβων οὔτε τερπωλέων μέλει.

And neither *iamboi* nor pleasures (*terpôlai*) interest me.

Since *terpôlê* is never a metrical term, iambos is unlikely to have a primarily metrical force here. Since the word *iambos* is so persistently associated with Archilochus by later writers, it is possible that this word refers to Archilochus' poetry. In the classical period the term *iambos* is applied to compositions of different metrical form, which again suggests that as a designation of a type of composition it is not primarily metrical. Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1418b28) uses the word of a poem in trochaic tetrameters and of another in iambic trimeters;

¹ For a recent discussion which reopens the possibility of iambos as originally a metrical term see Rotstein (forthcoming).

Herodotus (1.12) uses the term of the same trimeter poem. It is likely therefore that *iambos* in origin designates either content or occasion or both.²

Archaic and classical sources offer only limited help on the question of the precise nature of *iambos*. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1448b) distinguishes between two kinds of poetry, praise (*epainoi*) and ‘blame’ (*psogoi*) and associates the verb *iambizein* with the latter.

Verbal aggression is also the feature of Archilochus’ poetry singled out for mention by Pindar (*Pyth.* 2.52–5). The association of *iambos* with mockery is also suggested by the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, where (200–5) a female servant named Iambe cheers up the grieving Demeter on her arrival at Eleusis in disguise:³

But unlaughing and tasting no food or drink
she sat wasting with longing for her deep-girt daughter,
until with teasing (χλεύης) loyal Iambe
with much jesting (παρασκώπτουσα) induced the august goddess
to smile and laugh and have a cheerful heart,
she who later too pleased her moods.

The connection of the name Iambe with *iambos* is inescapable. Her wit is indicated by the noun *chleuê* and the verb (*para*)*skôptein*, which elsewhere refer not simply to wit but specifically to mockery. The representation of *iambos* as mockery (here beneficial) of a victim coheres with other sources.

Mockery and abuse are not unique to *iambos*. They are already present in Homeric epic. Invective finds its way intermittently into lyric, especially in Alcaeus. But for Greek thinking mockery and invective are especially prominent in *iambos*. Another distinguishing feature is linguistic register. Archaic verse more generally lacks the explicitness of *iambos*, as evidenced for instance in Hipponax’s *mêtrokoitês* (‘motherfucker’) of Boupalos. The three major archaic exponents of *iambos* also share an interest in details and incidents from everyday life of a sort which rarely find a place in other poetry, in particular food and sex.⁴ Again the distinction is relative, not absolute. Feasting is an important theme in much Greek poetry and provides the setting for much of the *Odyssey*. And the *symposion* is embedded explicitly or implicitly in most small-scale Greek poetry. But *iambos* is distinctive for the level of interest in the minutiae of eating and drinking as distinct from the affective and convivial aspects. Sex too is omnipresent in Greek literature from Homer onwards. But in other small-scale archaic poetic forms erotic behaviour focuses on subjective emotional experience, not objective physical

² West 1974, 22; Brown 1997, 14. ³ For Iambe see Brown 1997, 16 ff.; Rosen 2007, 47–56.

⁴ For food see Pellizer and Tedeschi 1990, xxviii; West 1974, 34.

fact. Iambos explicitly mentions body parts and describes processes which are avoided or mentioned allusively or fleetingly elsewhere. Like Old Comedy, iambos generally stresses sex where other genres stress love. A case in point is Archilochus' graphic description of fellatio (42 W):

ὡσπερ αὐλῶι βρῦτον ἢ Θραεῖξ ἀνέρ
ἢ Φρυξ ἔμυζε· κύβδα δ' ἦν πονεομένη.

Like a Thracian drinking beer through a straw
Or a Phrygian she slurped, and she was hard at it bent forward.

Another is Semonides' description of what looks like sodomy (17W):

καὶ τῆς ὀπισθεν ὀρσοθύρης ἠλσάμην.
And I drove in at the back doorway.

And as with invective, in its treatment of sex iambos is free to incorporate a degree of vulgarity which is otherwise rare in Greek poetry.

A further feature of iambos identified by Bowie is the presence of a pronounced narrative element.⁵ Narrative of personal experience (as distinct from narration of myth as exemplum) is common in archaic lyric;⁶ so again we are not dealing with a feature exclusive to iambos. But it may be that unmediated narrative of everyday experience was more pronounced in iambos.

Some of these elements may reflect the distinctive origin of iambos. *Aischrologia* (indecent language and insult) played a part in the Eleusinian Mysteries and in other cults with a fertility aspect to them. Iambe's role in the hymn is evidently an aetiology for cult practice at Eleusis, while her name suggests that iambos may have its origin in ritual mockery and ribaldry. This is supported by the later biographical tradition which links Archilochus and his family to the cult of Demeter and Dionysus.⁷ A cult origin also goes some way toward explaining the similarity between Athenian Old Comedy and iambos: sexual and scatological explicitness, propensity for personal abuse and interest in food.⁸ Aristotle (*Poet.* 1449a) traces comedy back to the phallic processions which persisted in some parts of Greece into and beyond his own day. This is conjecture – but plausible conjecture from an intelligent observer. The meagre evidence supports the hypothesis that the two genres share an origin in rituals of inversion of norms. However, though hypothetical origin may explain some distinctive aspects of iambos, by the early archaic period the link to cult was intermittent at most and too heavy an emphasis on origins risks obscuring the diversity and flexibility of the genre in its historical forms.

⁵ Bowie 2001b. ⁶ Gentili 1988, 109. ⁷ See most recently Brown 1997, 45–7.

⁸ On this relationship see most recently Bowie 2002b.

Archilochus

We can date Archilochus securely to the seventh century BCE on the basis of a fragment of his poetry which alludes to an eclipse of the sun (122.1–4 W):

χρημάτων ἄελπτον οὐδέν ἐστιν οὐδ' ἀπόμοτον
 οὐδὲ θαυμάσιον, ἐπειδὴ Ζεὺς πατὴρ Ὀλυμπίων
 ἐκ μεσαμβρίας ἔθηκε νύκτ', ἀποκρύψας φάος
 ἡλίου †λάμποντος, λυγρόν† δ' ἦλθ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους δέος.

There is nothing which can be ruled out nor sworn impossible
 nor marvellous, since Zeus the father of the Olympians
 turned midday into night, hiding the light
 of the sun as it shone, and grim fear came upon humans.

There is no reason to doubt that this alludes to a specific event, probably the total eclipse of 648 BCE. We can also recover Archilochus' place of birth and some key activities in which he participated, especially the colonial struggles for control of the island of Thasos, which forms the background to a number of fragments. We also have a hagiographic and mythologising inscription from Paros (SEG 15.517) relating to a Hellenistic hero-shrine of Archilochus, which gives some further information, derived partly from his poetry and partly from local tradition.

Beyond this much remains uncertain. According to Aelian (*Varia historia* 10.13) the oligarch Critias complained that if Archilochus had not revealed the facts, 'we would not have learned that he was the son of the slave Enipo nor that he left Paros for Thasos because of poverty and need, nor that on arrival he found the people there hostile, nor that he verbally abused both friends and enemies alike. In addition, said Critias, we would not have known that he was a seducer, if we hadn't learned it from him, nor that he was lascivious and wild and – yet the most shameful of these revelations – that he threw away his shield.'⁹

Critias' reading of Archilochus is simultaneously accurate and misleading. The shield incident is 'real', in the sense that it was reported by Archilochus, though it remains difficult to interpret. Archilochus' self-presentation as a seducer is confirmed by the later tradition and by fragment 196a W², discussed below. Archilochus may well have claimed that he left Paros through 'poverty'; but 'poverty' (*penia*) is a flexible term in Greek authors of all periods, subjective and relative, not objective and quantifiable. Relative to others of his class, or relative to the earlier situation of himself and his family, Archilochus may have been 'poor'. This is entirely compatible with the supposition that (like almost all

⁹ For Critias' criticism of Archilochus see most recently Rosen 2007, 248–52.

poets in antiquity) he was a member of the elite, and the inscriptional evidence (for all its hagiographic distortion) suggests that his family were among the leaders of his society. The reference to servile birth could perhaps be evidence for illegitimacy, though even if true that might be of little significance, since even in the classical period states differed in the familial and political rights accorded to bastards. But scholars rightly advise caution here. The suspiciously apt 'speaking name' of the mother (*Enipô*, from *enipê*, 'blame') suggests that Critias may have taken literally a metaphorical claim by Archilochus to a generic pedigree as 'son of Blame'.

The most significant event in Archilochus' life for Hellenistic and later writers was his relationship with Lycambes. The story told later is that Lycambes promised his daughter Neoboule in marriage to Archilochus but reneged on the promise, and that Archilochus attacked Lycambes and his daughters so ferociously in his poetry that they committed suicide. In the reaction against biographical criticism in the latter part of the twentieth century this story was rejected by several scholars and it was suggested that Lycambes, his family and the betrayal were part of a local folk entertainment tradition.¹⁰ The 'I' speaking in the attacks on Lycambes in Archilochus' poetry is then not the historical Archilochus but a fictive *persona*. However, wherever we can establish the identity of the 'I' in Archilochus, it is almost invariably Archilochus and not an assumed personality. We can certainly establish the historicity of at least one of Archilochus' addressees, Glaucus, which makes it rash to turn the rest into figments. It is wiser to suppose that Lycambes and his family were real.¹¹ The fragments of Archilochus' poetry present Lycambes (173 W) as oath-breaker and Neoboule (fr.196a W²) as duplicitous. The account of what looks like the seduction of Neoboule's sister in fragment 196a (discussed below) confirms later references to attacks by Archilochus on the chastity of Lycambes' daughters and so suggests that Hellenistic writers, like Critias, drew their biographical statements from the poems. However, if we accept that Archilochus told of alliance and betrayal, we need not accept his version.¹² And we can dismiss the suicide. The recurrence of this topos in accounts of authors of lampoon and the fact that Iambe, eponym of iambos, allegedly hanged herself,¹³ suggest that here as often in the biographies of Greek poets myth-making supplements or replaces fact. But the suicide tradition is not entirely without value, since it does give a (hyperbolic) sense of the power of invective in a society with a strong sense of honour and shame.

¹⁰ See recently Miller 1994, 28–9; Stehle 1997, 240; and for a discussion of the *status quaestionis* Brown 1997, 50 ff. with n. 29.

¹¹ Certainly the later Parian tradition as represented in *SEG* 15.517 viewed Lycambes as a historical personage.

¹² See Slings 1990, 25; Irwin 1998. ¹³ See Carey 1986, 60.

In Archilochus' hands iambos is a flexible medium with a wide range of themes and tones, overlapping with other small-scale archaic literary forms which share its first person focalisation, differing only in its breadth of linguistic and thematic register. Archilochus uses epodic metres for explicit sexual material (42, 119 W) and for what looks like subjective love poetry (191, 193 W) comparable with archaic erotic lyric and elegy. Fragment 96 W has a military theme, a subject matter especially common in elegy. Fragment 114 W, one of the most celebrated of Archilochus' poems, offers an assertive and abrasive attack on semblance without substance:

οὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγὸν οὐδὲ διαπεπλιγμένον
οὐδὲ βοστρύχοισι γαῦρον οὐδ' ὑπεξυρημένον,
ἀλλὰ μοι μικρὸς τις εἴη καὶ περὶ κνήμας ἰδεῖν
ροϊκός, ἀσφαλῆως βεβηκῶς ποσσὶ, καρδίας πλέως.

I do not love a big commander nor one with a straddling pose
nor proud of his locks nor well shaved.
No, let mine be some small man and in appearance
bandy-kneed, standing firm on his feet, full of heart.

For all we know, the poem may have gone on to attack an individual. But that does not negate the fact that iambos could discuss larger social and ethical issues which would be equally at home in other archaic genres.

The fragments as a whole show a number of recurrent characteristics. Perhaps the most striking is vividness. Archilochus has a very fine feeling for crisply observed and expressed descriptive detail:

ἡ δέ οἱ σάθη
ὥστ' ὄνου Πριηνέως
κήλωνος ἐπλήμυρεν ὄτρυγητάγου.

His schlong
like that of an ass of Priene,
a he-ass grain fed, was in full spate.

(Archil. 43 W)

καὶ πεσεῖν δρήστην ἐπ' ἀσκόν, κάπῃ γαστρὶ γαστέρα
προσβαλεῖν μηρούς τε μηροῖς,

and to fall hard at work on a bag and press belly against belly
and thighs against thighs.

(Archil. 119 W)

In narratives this vividness manifests itself in particular in the use of direct speech, which is striking for its prominence in such a small surviving corpus (19, 23, 122 probably, 176, 177, 187, 196a W²). He has a capacity for pithy

statements which encapsulate a thought with great vigour which bestows freshness even on commonplace ideas:

ἐν δ' ἐπίσταμαι μέγα,
τὸν κακῶς <μ'> ἔρδοντα δεινοῖς ἀνταμείβεσθαι κακοῖς.

One big thing I know –
To pay back the man who harms me with grim harm.

(Archil. 126 W)

πόλλ' οἶδ' ἀλώπηξ, ἀλλ' ἐχῖνος ἐν μέγα.

The fox knows many things but the hedgehog one big one.

(Archil. 201 W)

His linguistic register ranges between the dignified and the coarse. He also makes good use of the fact of performance by giving the poems an element of unpredictability which keeps its audience guessing as to the direction which a poem will take and allows the poet to use surprise to keep his audience attentive.

It was however invective for which Archilochus was predominantly remembered in later antiquity. In Archilochus' hands invective is a highly flexible tool. It can be blunt and harsh. 188 W² is an attack on an unidentified female:

οὐκέ]θ' ὁμῶς θάλλεις ἀπαλὸν χροῖα, κάρφετα[ι γὰρ ἤδη
ὄγμοι]ς, κακοῦ δὲ γήραος καθαιρεῖ
. . . .], ἀφ' ἱμεροῦ δὲ θορῶν γλυκὺς ἴμερος π[ροσώπου
πέπτω]κεν· ἦ γὰρ πολλὰ δὴ σ' ἐπήϊξεν
πνεύμ]ατα χειμερίων ἀνέμων < > πολλακίς δε[

No longer does your soft skin blossom; it is already dried out
with furrows, and the . . . of old age destroys it.
And sweet desire has leaped from your face
and fallen. For truly many blasts of stormy winds
have assailed you and often . . .

There is an unashamed and explicit exultation in the disfiguration, reflected in the relentless accumulation of detail. But there is more. The theme is commonplace in later literature and presumably was a commonplace mode of attack in Archilochus' day. It is lifted here above the commonplace both by its vividness and by its use of metaphor and hyperbole. The victim's face is not merely lined but furrowed;¹⁴ simultaneously the word κάρφεται ('is dried out') in v.1 presents the face as like chaff. This vegetal metaphor is extended in the lines which follow, where desire has fallen from her face.

¹⁴ The text here is uncertain. I accept Snell's emendation (ὄγμοις) of the nominative singular ὄγμος presented in Hephaestion. For a survey of recent views see Brown and Gerber 1993.

The speaker then picks up on the idea of time and change. The winds here hover between the literal – resuming the notion of physically drying out (κάρφεται) – and the metaphorical, suggesting the physical effect of vicissitude. Despite its blunt physicality, the poem shows an oblique approach to its theme often deployed in Archilochean invective. The poem begins not with hyperbole but with understatement which could at first be mistaken for sympathy.

This oblique approach recurs in 122 W, which begins as an awed and immediate reflection on a profound and unsettling experience and its implications for the human condition but then moves to talk about individuals, presumably to present their behaviour as being as startling as the eclipse.¹⁵

Arguably the best example of Archilochus' oblique approach to his theme is fragment 196a W², probably the most subtle invective to survive from antiquity. Though fragmentary, this text offers our fullest example (before the discovery of the new elegiac papyrus) of Archilochus' narrative technique. When the fragment becomes legible, a young woman is speaking to a young (14) admirer. He is evidently eager for sex and she attempts to restrain or divert him, offering a choice between abstinence (perhaps with delay, while he waits for her to be ready) or another girl in the household whose looks she commends and who is available immediately. The young man persists in his desire for the girl in front of him and urges that they need not have sexual intercourse (10–24):

Daughter of Amphimedo,
 that good and [wise?]
 woman now beneath the dank earth,
 the goddess's pleasures
 are many for young men
 besides the sacred thing itself. One of these will serve.
 These things at leisure
 when ... grows dark
 you and I will plan.
 I'll do as you say.
 A great ...
 beneath the coping and ... the gates.
 Don't begrudge me, my dear.
 I'll aim for the grassy
 meadow.

¹⁵ According to Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1418b) the words were spoken by a father criticising his daughter. We do not know whether the father was Lycambes.

Instead of full penetration, he offers a compromise – either withdrawal or intercrural coitus. The substitute woman offered is however rejected in forceful terms (24–8):

Be sure of this: Neoboule
 another man can have.
 Ugh! She's overripe.
 Her maiden bloom has shed its petals
 and the charm which she had before.

He goes on to revile Neoboule for her lasciviousness and duplicity, in contrast to the girl in front of him. The scene ends with sex with the girl.

So I spoke, and taking the girl
 in the luxuriant flowers
 I laid her down. And with a soft
 cloak I covered her, and held her neck in my arms.
 As she ... with fear
 ... like a fawn
 I fondled her breasts gently with my hands
 where her coming prime
 showed her young skin.
 and caressing her whole beautiful body
 I shot forth my [white?] strength
 touching blonde hair.

It is difficult to do justice to the complex effects achieved here. In its sequence of demure refusal, persistence and ultimate seduction, the encounter echoes the celebrated sexual encounter between Hera and Zeus in *Iliad* book 14, which also ends in sex among the flowers.¹⁶ The sex act is exquisitely structured, in that we start with the breasts and follow his hands over her body before the poem like the activity described ends in ejaculation. The account is vivid and racy. Yet there is a restrained delicacy both in language and in conduct. The speaker uses periphrasis when offering compromise sex, not the coarse language sometimes used by Archilochus when speaking of sex (as in 119 W above). Apart from the word 'breast' (itself normal in Greek literature of all kinds), her body is not described, nor is his. Everything remains in soft focus. The poem has (for us) an almost romantic feeling.

It is here however that the great subtlety of the poem resides. He treats the girl with consideration and (verbally) with respect. Yet in a world where a female's chastity is vital to her family's honour, her behaviour is shameful for a free woman.

¹⁶ See in particular Van Sickle 1975, 126.

It is here that the identity of the parties becomes important. It seems inescapable that Neoboule is the alternative partner offered by the girl and the narrator's evaluation of Neoboule corrects and rejects hers. Her statement (4) that she and Neoboule belong to the same household suggests that they are kin; and since the tradition gives Lycambes at least two daughters, it seems likely that this girl is her sister. Neoboule is reviled as faithless and sexually promiscuous and her sister in turn is revealed to be sexually available despite a facade of virtuous restraint. Her compliance tacitly undermines the speaker's contrast between the two sisters for the audience. The irony goes further, since, though the speaker praises the girl's honesty in contrast to Neoboule's deviousness, she betrays her sister in giving herself to a man she believes to be interested in her sister.

This poem shows no overt aggression toward the girl. But the respect turns out to be part of the rhetoric of generating narrative plausibility and thereby inflicting greater damage than the crude use of pejorative language. For those who recall their Homer, the incident from *Iliad* 14 is also loaded, in that the situation is one in which a male persuades a female to have sex but the sex is actually the goal of the female. The Homer source may imply that the girl is considerably more eager for sex than she appears. This is likely to have been one of the attacks on the Lycambides in which the poet accused them of unchastity attested indirectly by the Hellenistic tradition.

We also have fragments of a poem attacking Lycambes himself (172–81 W). The poem opens with an address to Lycambes which contrasts present and past to stress the reversal in society's perception of Lycambes (172 W):

πάτερ Λυκάμβια, ποῖον ἐφράσω τόδε;
 τίς σὰς παρήειρε φρένας
 ἦις τὸ πρὶν ἠρήρησθα; νῦν δὲ δὴ πολὺς
 ἀστοῖσι φαίνεαι γέλως.

Father Lycambes, what is this you've devised!
 Who unsettled your wits
 with which previously you were furnished? Now you are seen
 as a rich source of laughter for the townsfolk.

The reason for this reversal is Lycambes' breach of his oath to Archilochus (fr.173):

ὄρκον δ' ἐνοσφίσθης μέγαν
 ἄλας τε καὶ τράπεζαν.

You have rejected the great oath
 sworn by salt and table.

The poem narrated the story of the fox and the eagle. This use of animal fable to underscore his point is a device of which Archilochus was

fond.¹⁷ According to the story, known from Aesop's fables, the fox and the eagle made a compact to spare each other's offspring. The eagle then ate the fox's young. In Archilochus the fox prays to Zeus for revenge, since the eagle's nest is unassailable. Subsequently the eagle snatches meat from an altar. A burning coal attached to the meat burns the nest and, in Aesop, the young of the eagle drop ready-cooked for the fox to eat. Here there is a complex relationship between poetry and revenge. The poem is at one level the revenge. In pillorying Lycambes the poet holds him up to scorn. That is, however, not the total effect. The fable asserts that nobody is above punishment and specifically divine punishment. As Zeus by implication punishes the eagle for his breach of the oath, so Lycambes can expect to be punished. However, in a world where action is regularly caused at both divine and at human level simultaneously, divine and human revenge go hand in hand. The fable tells of a parent who offends against justice and is punished as a parent through the destruction of its young. We know from other fragments that Archilochus inflicted his revenge on the daughters as well as on the father. Against this background the fable looks like an implied threat to attack Lycambes' children.¹⁸ Lycambes' stupidity pilloried at the beginning lies not simply in the failure to recognise the inevitability of divine punishment but in the provocation of a man who is capable of bringing a formidable verbal talent into play as part of his strategy of revenge.

The attack on Lycambes raises a larger question about the social stance of the iambist. It has been suggested that the iambist always attacks from the position of the outsider.¹⁹ This view has a certain appeal, particularly in the case of Archilochus. In many of his poems scholars have in the past recognised a unique and individual voice.²⁰ Certainly he speaks with a remarkable vigour. However, many of his personal statements are in fact merely an unusually sharp articulation of common values and his most iconoclastic pronouncements often turn out to be in tune with ideas discernible from epic onwards.²¹ Archilochus the outsider is not a modern invention (he is there in Critias); but invention he is. Christopher Brown argues rightly that Archilochus' attacks are firmly based on shared social values.²² It is the victim, not the poet, who is marginalised. The use of the fable is significant here. Though as a popular form it is fitting for a genre which often concerns itself with everyday life, it is like myth a universalising medium which locates alleged offender and victim within larger general patterns of crime and punishment, turning personal affront into public concern and treating Lycambes as a

¹⁷ Cf. 185–7 W, also 23.16 W and 201 W. ¹⁸ Cf. Irwin 1998.

¹⁹ Miralles and Pörtulas 1988, 11–50. ²⁰ The classic statement is in Snell 1953.

²¹ See in particular Russo 1974. ²² Brown 1997, 42, 69.

general warning. Revenge and retaliation are treated not simply as personal satisfaction but as justice.

We are not told where Archilochus performed his poetry. Some of the elegiac poetry advertises itself as sympotic. There is evidence from the secondary tradition that Archilochus may have performed some iamboi in a festival context. There is however no reason to suppose that all or even most of his poetry was performed in the context of civic ritual. Probably most of the iamboi, like most small-scale archaic poetry, were performed in the *symposion*.²³

Semonides

Of Semonides' life nothing can be said with certainty, beyond the connection with the island of Amorgos. He is probably to be dated to the first half of the seventh century.²⁴ In the case of Semonides we are particularly badly served by the nature of what remains. The fragments indicate that his output included first-person narratives dealing with incidents from everyday life. These included an interest in eating and drinking and tales of sexual experiences.²⁵ But so little of these poems survives that it is impossible to develop any sense of Semonides' narrative manner and even our sense of linguistic register is limited. The references to these lost poems are however invaluable in that they confirm that in his hands, as with Archilochus, the iamboi was a flexible medium which could descend to the physicality of sex and also address issues of serious social and ethical concern. The most substantial fragment is the sustained attack on women (Sem. 7 W). The affinities of this poem to Archilochus' attacks on Lycambes and his daughters are very visible. Both are aggressive, both have targets. Both use shared contemporary values as the basis for their attack. The difference is that Archilochus has precise individual targets in view, while Semonides takes the whole female sex as his target. Evidently the focus of iamboi could expand and contract at need. Archilochus attacks the chastity and duplicity of Neoboule and (more subtly) her sister. Semonides makes use of a related but wider sense of male anxieties as the basis for his diatribe. The basis of the poem is the classification of women on the basis of a set of animal characteristics. The essential idea is that each type of female does not merely resemble an animal but was actually created from an animal, the type of animal determining the characteristics of the human female. Though lacking the sustained narrative of the Archilochean use of the beast fable, it draws on the same popular tradition.

²³ Cf. Stehle 1997, 215; Bowie 2002b, 38–9. ²⁴ Brown 1997, 70–2.

²⁵ See Pellizer and Tedeschi 1990, xxvi–xxxiv.

The structure is essentially additive and the forward thrust – and arguably much of the appeal – is the inventiveness with which the poet finds yet more bases for comparison. In turn we have a sow, a vixen, a bitch, an ass, a weasel, a mare, a monkey and a bee. The poet does not adhere rigidly to this schema. The list of animals is interrupted by the introduction of two elements, earth and sea. There is a certain amount of repetition between animals. And the desire to assimilate the females to the animals leads to a loss of sharpness of distinction of characteristics. The poem, however, is not an exercise in logic. There is in this no attempt to argue. The poem proceeds by assertion and each type of female becomes the subject of a vivid vignette. It is from the liveliness of the vignettes that the poem derives much of its persuasive force. Some of these are very effective in themselves. The finest of all is the luxurious and high-maintenance mare (57–61):

Another was born of the long-maned mare.
 She turns away from servile work and labour
 and would never touch a mill or lift
 a sieve or throw the dung from the house,
 or sit near the oven, because she shuns the soot.
 She makes love to a man perforce.
 She bathes herself clean every day
 twice, sometimes thrice, and rubs on perfume.
 She has her mane always combed out
 Long, covered in flowers.
 A woman like this is fine to look at
 for others, but for her husband she is a bane,
 unless he is a tyrant or a sceptred king
 who takes delight in such things.

In all these vignettes only one female, the bee (83ff.), has any real positive qualities. In all the other cases any seeming virtues are either specious or turn out to be ephemeral (27ff., 108–9). Inevitably for the reader in a world sensitised by feminism the poem invites the question: how serious? No simple answer is possible. It is difficult to dismiss the poem as simply entertainment,²⁶ especially in view of the sustained generalising attack on women which follows the individual types and the reference at the end to the most dangerous female of them all, Helen. The poem reflects a suspicion and resentment of women which runs through Greek (and much subsequent) culture. It also reflects a recognition that women for all the problems men detect in them are essential, inescapable, desirable.²⁷ It could be regarded as in a sense an act of revenge, more generalised than that of Archilochus, but

²⁶ As Lloyd-Jones 1975. ²⁷ See Osborne 2001, 56.

based in male anxiety about, and dependency on, women. At the same time the poem evidently has the power to amuse a male audience, and Osborne has suggested that the likely place of performance was the *symposion*. The humour is not entirely comfortable, even for its male audience; but humour is often found in close proximity to, and often has its roots in, anxiety.

The other substantial fragment (1 W) is very different. It deals not with individual targets or generic targets but with the vanity of human wishes. It begins:

ὦ παῖ, τέλος μὲν Ζεὺς ἔχει βαρύκτυπος
 πάντων ὅσ' ἐστὶ καὶ τίθησ' ὅκη θέλει·
 νοῦς δ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἀνθρώποισιν, ἀλλ' ἐπήμεροι
 ἅ δὴ βοτὰ ζόουσι, οὐδὲν εἰδότες
 ὅκως ἕκαστον ἐκτελεστήσει θεός.
 ἐλπίς δὲ πάντας κάπιπειθείη τρέφει
 ἀρηκτον ὀρμαίνοντας.

My boy, Zeus the loud thunderer holds the fulfilment
 of all things that are and sets them as he wishes.
 Mankind do not possess understanding but creatures of a day
 they live like beasts, completely unknowing
 how the god will bring each thing to its end.
 But hope and confidence nourish them
 as they strive for the impossible.

Though the poem criticises human folly, it lacks the adversarial nature of the satire on women. The poet finds in himself all the attitudes he criticises. Here iambos is used as a vehicle for philosophical reflection. The closest parallel to this poem is found not in iambos but in the elegiacs of Solon's so-called *Prayer to the Muses* (Sol. 13 W). Again one notices the flexibility of iambos with its ability to move between gross themes and language and serious reflection.

Hipponax

Hipponax is securely dated to the sixth century.²⁸ He is in key respects radically different from his predecessors. Hipponax withdraws from the larger social, ethical and political issues explored by Archilochus and Semonides.²⁹ Though the later tradition maintains that Hipponax was exiled,³⁰ in what survives of his poetry there is no political engagement. As well as narrowing its focus, iambos changes its social register. In Archilochus

²⁸ Degani 1984, 19–20. ²⁹ Cf. Brown 1997, 87–8.

³⁰ See the notice in *Suda* Ἰππώναξ, Test. 7 Degani.

and Semonides the social level of the poetic *persona* remains that of the archaic aristocrat as in other small-scale archaic poetry. In Hipponax by contrast both the narrator and his social milieu are to be found at the bottom end of the socio-economic spectrum. The narrator defines himself as poor (32, 34 W) and describes his companions in similar terms (13–14, 79 W). The sense of being among the dregs of society is increased by the prominence in the poems of the *pharmakos* (scapegoat).³¹ The essence of the purificatory *pharmakos* ritual is the inversion of the normal rules of selection for ritual participation, in that poor and ugly people were selected as the vehicle for purging the community. The language is consistent with the world depicted. Where Archilochus and Semonides use the Ionic dialect, Hipponax mixes this with elements of Lydian, suggestive of a hybrid population on the edge of the Greek world. The linguistic register also differs. Sexually explicit language is more prominent and more graphic in Hipponax than in Archilochus or Semonides. The metre also changes, in that prominent among Hipponax's metres is the so-called 'limping iambic' (*skazôn* or *chôliambos*).³²

One aspect of the social setting in particular reinforces the gulf between Hipponax and his predecessors. There are strong hints that the speaker is a thief (3a, 79 W).³³ Hermes, the god of thieves, is prominent in the poetry. Where Archilochus and Semonides attack their targets from within the collective value system, Hipponax operates as an outsider, subverting or ignoring the value system.

The recurrent sense that we are in a world of poverty and ugliness is reinforced by another prominent feature of his poetry, parody. We have seen a readiness to play with epic intertexts in Archilochus. The presence of parody in Hipponax is not a fundamentally new phenomenon. The extent however is a new departure in iambos. It has been suggested plausibly³⁴ that an encounter with an old woman, Iambe, mentioned by the early Byzantine scholar Choeroboscus in relation to Hipponax was derived from his narrative of his own poetic initiation. The anecdote is offered as the origin of the choliambos favoured by Hipponax. We appear to have an initiatory encounter similar to that of Hesiod with the Muses on Mount Helikon. There is also a second intertext in play. The meeting with an ugly old woman washing clothes on the seashore suggests that of Odysseus with the young and beautiful Nausicaa in Homer's *Odyssey*. This in turn forms part of a pattern of sustained engagement with epic,

³¹ Hipp. 5–12 W; probably also 37, 92, 95, 104, 118, 128 W.

³² On this metrical pattern see Battezzato, this vol., 137.

³³ For interpretations of the latter fragment see West 1974, 144; Degani 1984, 265–6.

³⁴ Rosen 1988a, Brown 1988; see also Fowler 1990.

and specifically with the *Odyssey*.³⁵ The female who plays such a prominent role in Hipponax's social and sexual life, Arete, shares her name with the queen of the Phaeacians. The nymph who imprisons Odysseus for seven years, Calypso, seems to reappear in Hipponax's Cypso (127, 129 W); her name ('bender') suggests either fellatio or sexual penetration from the rear. Rosen has suggested that the boxing match with Irus in the *Odyssey* may lie behind the boxing match with Boupalos in Hipponax (120–1 W). Hipp. 74 W seems to be entitled *Odysseus* and 77 W probably mentioned the Phaeacians. 128 W combines a generic parody of epic invocations with the presentation of the victim as an Odysseian monster. Also reminiscent of epic, and especially of the role of Athena in the *Odyssey*, is the role of Hermes as divine patron of the poet (79 W) on a night raid as a thief. It is interesting that Odysseus even lurks behind the Iliadic parody of Hipponax; Pòrtulas has stressed the relationship between Hipp. 16 and 72 W and *Iliad* book 10. The use of the *Odyssey* creates a complex relationship with the Homeric text. With his capacity for guile and his readiness to act the beggar Odysseus is the ideal precursor of the narrator figure in Hipponax; the world of the *Odyssey* more generally with its prominent presentation of slaves offers an appropriate backdrop for the poverty of Hipponax's milieu. On the other hand, the recurrent focus on the Phaeacian narrative in Hipponax's parody draws on the other aspect of the *Odyssey* as a fantasy narrative. The paradise of Phaeacia forms an implicit countercontext to the grimy demi-monde created by Hipponax. It is no surprise that this vivid demi-monde with its pronounced contrastive engagement with heroic epic appealed so much to Hellenistic writers.³⁶

The propensity for parody is a feature shared with fifth-century comedy. At one level this is no more than the humour created by grotesque juxtaposition. At another it reinforces the element of iambic inversion, since the serious world of epic is mocked. It also however constitutes a claim by Hipponax to be the Homer of his trade. Authorial self-consciousness *on this scale* is (at least in contrast with Archilochus and Semonides) a distinguishing feature of Hipponax's iambos; it is a characteristic which aligns him with the lyric poets of the sixth century. It is no surprise therefore that (if poetic initiation lurks behind the anecdote of Choeroboscus) Hipponax explicitly claims an affinity with Iambe.

³⁵ For the role of parody in Hipponax see Degani 1984, 187ff., for parody of the *Odyssey* Pòrtulas 1985, Miralles and Pòrtulas 1988, 77ff, and Rosen 1990.

³⁶ For Hipponax as 'Hellenistic' poet see Brown 1997, 87 n. 34.

There is another respect in which Hipponax is distinctive. Generally in archaic Greek personal poetry, including iambos, even when the narrator/speaker adopts the generic stance of the lover, the drinker or the warrior, explicit disjunction between historical speaker and poetic *persona* is avoided. Hipponax is different. The narrative *persona* is a pauper but the name is aristocratic.³⁷ This in itself need be no more than irony. But against the background of the Greek love of honour the readiness of the poet to present himself in undignified situations (in particular 92 W) makes questionable the identity of narrator and author. Some of the activities narrated are illegal; again one imagines with difficulty such dangerous self-revelation if the narrative is offered as fact. Finally, the poetic self-awareness and intertextual play suggest the hand of a poet of some erudition, and this in turn in the Greek context suggests a member of the elite.³⁸ The suspicion that author and narrator are separable is reinforced by the distancing device of self-naming.³⁹

If the first-person speaker is a fiction, the narratives of Hipponax become a series of dramatic monologues, almost a soap opera.⁴⁰ If the audience shares the poet's distance from the world of the characters, the pleasure for them is like that afforded by *Eastenders*, in that the episodic narrative presents them with the diverse and colourful lives of exotic and largely fictional characters. The difference is that Hipponax's characters unlike most soap opera figures appear to be penniless and shiftless.

The similarity to Athenian comedy here is both suggestive and misleading. Firstly, this is not a step on the way to Athenian comedy, since there is no reason to suppose that Ionic iambos had a formative influence; this is a distinct, parallel development.⁴¹ Secondly, this never becomes dialogue; the form remains monologic. This manifestation of iambos does however develop a fantastic element, though the element of fantasy resides in the parade of grotesques within a broadly realistic plot and not in the impossibilities of the typical aristophanic myth.

There is however a complicating factor. Hipponax's *persona* may be fictive; but Boupalos appears to have been historical. So it looks as though

³⁷ The assumption that the (historical) author was a member of the elite is also suggested by Hipp. 115 W (discussed below).

³⁸ West 1974, 28.

³⁹ The nearest is Sappho, who names herself frequently: Sa. 1.20; 65.5; 94.5; 133 V. However, in Sappho her interlocutors name her in direct speech, so that the name arises naturally from the intimacy of the situation. In Hipponax the narrator usually names himself, as though viewing himself as a character in a story: 32, 37, 79; 117 (dubious authenticity) W; 36 W in the vocative is unusual for Hipponax. 187 Degani is probably spurious.

⁴⁰ For this aspect of the iambus of Hipponax see Miralles and Pòrtulas 1988, 110.

⁴¹ Bowie 2002b.

receive him – there may he endure much misery
 eating the bread of slavery –
 frozen from cold. And from the foam
 may thick seaweed cover him,
 and may his teeth chatter, lying like a dog
 face down and helpless
 at the edge of the breaking waves.
 This I should like to see
 for the man who wronged me, and trod the oaths underfoot
 though before he was my comrade. (Hipp. 115 W)

The structure is exquisite. With slow relish the poet anticipates the fate of his enemy, much as Archilochus revels in the destroyed beauty of his female target. The measured description culminates in the explanation for the curse. Unlike the amoral narrative of most Hipponactean iambos, the use of the language of justice takes us to the world of Archilochean iambos. Likewise the social level implied by the language of comradeship betrayed suggests Archilochus, the lyric of Alcaeus or the elegy of the *Theognidea*. The register too lacks the frank coarseness elsewhere typical of Hipponax. There is no trace of the amoral lowlife found in most of the fragments and no obvious reason to doubt that the poem was spoken by the poet in a *persona* compatible with the historical author. Whatever conclusion we draw about the performance of the soap-opera iamboi, the most likely context for the performance of this poem is the aristocratic *symposion*. Generalisations based on Hipponax's 'fictitious' iamboi mislead in an important respect: there was another quite distinct strand to the work of this complex writer.

FURTHER READING

The most useful general survey of early Greek iambos is Brown 1997. West 1974 is valuable for the definition of the genre and offers insightful comments on specific poems and his entry under 'iambic poetry, Greek' in *OCD*³ offers a general overview. Rotstein (forthcoming) addresses aspects of definition, form and performance. Rosen 2007 locates iambic mockery within a larger satirical framework in Greco-Roman poetry. Bowie 2001b and 2002b offer additional comments on and attributes of the genre. For Archilochus Dover 1964 remains useful, as is Burnett 1983. For Hipponax the most important work is still Degani 1984. Miralles and Pòrtulas 1988 are particularly strong on the role of fiction in Hipponax but overly reductive in their reading of the genre. For editions, commentaries and translations see pp. 388–95.