The *genre* constitutes a recurrent descriptive model in Aristotle’s thought.\(^1\) It is based on the Platonic notion of diaeresis: to know is to divide in genres (γένη) and species (εἴδη).\(^2\) In his works of logic Aristotle states that the concepts we are able to grasp with the mind can be classed as εἴδη and γένη;\(^3\) in works of biology substances and natural objects are classified according to their attribution to εἴδη and γένη.\(^4\) By projecting the logical and biological model onto anthropological realities, these notions of γένος and εἴδος can also be used as classificatory tools for human activities.\(^5\) In the *Politics* Aristotle identifies and describes the species of constitutions (εἴδη τῆς πολιτείας).\(^6\) Thus the art of poetry comprises various species (εἴδη), each characterized by prerogatives of its own,\(^7\) while in the sphere of dialectic four different γένη of discussion (διαλέγεσθαι) can be identified.\(^8\) Rhetoric is made up of three genres.

This use of terminology requires some clarification. In his works of logic Aristotle distinguishes γένος from εἴδος according to a relationship in which the former represents the more comprehensive element (the relationship

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2. In the work *Parts of Animals* 642b5, when he treats of the classification of animal species, Aristotle expresses a certain skepticism about the diaeretic method of Plato: sometimes the series of dichotomies is pointless and only one constitutes a significant difference; sometimes dividing genres creates complications rather than clarification. Nonetheless, in the works of logic the position is more nuanced: Aristotle does not refuse the diaeretic method but argues the need to refine it, as is clear from the central books of the *Topics* and from Book 2 of *Posterior Analytics*, cf. Zanatta (1996) vol. I p. 109.
3. Cf. especially Book 4 of the *Topics*. Γένος is one of the constituent parts of the definition: through a “difference” (διαφορά), it is possible to define “species” (εἴδη). In the catalogue of Aristotle’s work, preserved by Diogenes Laertius (5.22), we find the mention of a treatise entitled Περὶ εἴδων καὶ γένων (*On Species and Genres*).
5. Cf. Garver (2009) 1–3. Also in this case the Platonic lesson plays an important role: in the *Phaedrus* Plato submits rhetoric to the synthetic/diaeretic method of the dialectic, discovering the affinities between speeches, produced by the creative activity of man, and the natural realities: “genres” exist for both (cf. Part II chap. I3.2).
8. *SE* 165a38—165b1 (T. 91).
of species with genre serves to indicate the relationship of inclusion). For the genres of rhetoric Aristotle uses above all the noun γένος, although he sometimes also uses εἶδος. In the presentation of the three genres the two terms occur within a few lines of one another. Comparison with the other works in the Aristotelian corpus shows that the Rhetoric is not an isolated case: the overlapping of the two terms can also be seen, for example, in the classifications of animal and vegetal species.

9 Cf. in particular Top. 121a12–14; 127a20 ff.
10 Moreover in the Rhetoric εἶδος and γένος are employed with different meanings. Cf. Wartelle (1982) s.v. γένος, εἶδος.
11 1358a3 and 1358b8 (T. 53). Bekker (1859) and Cope (1877) prefer the reading γένη also at 1358a36. But the same oscillation can also be found elsewhere in the Rhetoric: the word εἶδος to indicate rhetorical genres is at 1396b29. Cf. Grimaldi (1980–1988) vol. I p. 79.
12 Cf. the Index Aristotelicus of Bonitz (1970) 151 ff. and Pellegrin (1982) 103 ff. We must bear in mind that in the horizon of Aristotelian logic, the same concept can be either a γένος or an εἶδος: “animal” is a species of the genre “living thing” but, at the same time, is the genre of “flying animal”, “water animal”, “land animal”, “man”, etc.
13 Po. 1447al–18 (T. 50). Following Halliwell (see his Introduction to Aristotle’s Poetics p. 7–8), we translated μίμησις with the Greek based term mimesis.

9.1 The Genres of Poetry

Right from the incipit of the Poetics, Aristotle links the definition of the techne with the classification according to genres:

περὶ ποιητικῆς αὐτῆς τε καὶ τῶν εἰδῶν αὐτῆς, ἣν τινα δύναμιν ἔκαστον ἔχει, καὶ πῶς δὲι συνισταθήσεΐ τοὺς μύθους εἰ μέλλει καλὰς ἔξειν ἡ ποίησις, ἐτὶ δὲ ἐκ πόσων καὶ ποιῶν ἕστι μορίων, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἃσα τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστὶ μεθόδου, λέγωμεν ἄρξαμεν κατὰ φύσιν πρῶτον ἀπὸ τῶν πρῶτων. ἔποποιεί δὲ καὶ ἡ τῆς τραγῳδίας ποίησις ἐτὶ δὲ κωμῳδία καὶ ἡ διθυραμβοποιητικὴ καὶ τῆς αὐλητικῆς ἡ πλείστη καὶ κιθαριστικῆς πᾶσαι τυγχάνουσι οὖσαι μιμήσει τὸ σύνολον· διαφέρουσι δὲ ἀλλήλων τρισὶν, ἢ γὰρ τῷ ἐν ἑτέρῳ μιμείσθαι ἢ τῷ ἑτέρα ἢ τῷ ἑτέρως καὶ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον

We are to discuss both poetry in general and the capacity of each of its species; the canons of plot construction needed for poetic excellence; also the number and character of poetry’s components, together with the other topics which belong to the same inquiry—beginning, as is natural, from first principles. Now, epic and tragic poetry, as well as comedy, dithyramb, and most music for flute and lyre, are all, taken as a whole, kinds of mimesis. But they differ from one another in three respects: namely, by producing mimesis in different media, of different objects, or in different modes.