

Greek Hymns

Selected Cult Songs from the Archaic to the
Hellenistic period

Part One: The texts in translation

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Figure 1: Apollo and Artemis, with Hermes (left) and Leto (right). Rf volute krater, possibly by Palermo Painter. J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California. 415-410 BC.

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Introduction

1 The nature of Greek hymns

1.1 What is a hymn?

When we consider basic forms of religious worship both in antiquity and in modern societies, the singing of hymns in some form or other features conspicuously. The religious act typically constitutes a demonstrative change in behaviour or situation compared with a secular norm. A person adopts a particular attitude in order to pray, whether standing with hands clasped, or kneeling with head bowed, or prostrate on the ground: the important point is that the attitude marks the person praying in a manner recognizable to him and to others – and to the god concerned. One or more people may move from secular to sacred space around an altar, temple or shrine in order to offer worship. Buildings serving a religious purpose are normally marked off from surrounding construction by the style of architecture or the objects (altar, statuary, votive offerings etc.) set up in or around them. Religious dress, hairstyle, manner of walking or speech may differ from the everyday. And the transition between secular and sacred behaviour is frequently ritualized, whether by ceremonial washing, or a formal call for silence (Greek εὐφημεῖν) or a gesture (the Catholic crossing himself with holy water on entering a church). An animal destined for sacrifice is similarly marked out from the rest of the herd: it may be washed or adorned in some manner in order to make it seemly for sacrifice. From the point of view of the worshipper, all these actions serve to make his approach to god more acceptable: by adopting conventional modes of dress, behaviour, speech, location and even attitude of mind, the worshipper believes he will find god's favour and come closer to achieving his purpose. From an observer's point of view, religious behaviour represents a complex of utterances and actions (Greek: λεγόμενα καὶ δρώμενα) intricately linked with, but markedly distinct from, other areas of social life.

The hymn may also be viewed in this light. As a form of utterance,

it is distinguished from normal speech by any or all of the following features: words uttered by a group of people in unison; melody; metre or rhythm; musical accompaniment; dance performed either by the hymn-singers themselves or an associated group; repetition from occasion to occasion. And when we wish to distinguish the hymn from other forms of song, even choral song, we only have to consider the person or entity to whom the composition is addressed: the hymn differs from normal speech or song in turning from human society to address a god or company of gods either directly (second-person address: ‘Du-Stil’) or indirectly (third-person address: ‘Er-Stil’) or even vicariously (first-person annunciation). The hymn-singer has typically removed himself from a secular environment to join with others in abandoning their normal manner of everyday discourse in order to address a god using all the resources of artistic embellishment available.

Of course, there is considerable overlap between hymns and other forms of utterance in terms of form, content, and function. Formally, a hymn may be indistinguishable from a secular poem: there is no metre, poetic register or compositional technique¹ exclusively reserved for religious poems performed in cult. And a distinction based on religious content can be difficult to maintain too. As Easterling (1985, 34-49) correctly observes, there is no clear distinction in Greek poetry between the sacred and the secular: many forms, such as epinician odes or tragedy, are imbued with religious elements such as hymnic address, prayer, divine or mythic narrative; likewise, many hymns contain literary elements such as narrative of divine or heroic exploits, or *ekphrasis* of places favoured by gods, or dialogue between gods or gods and people. The most ribald forms of literature – a satyr-play, for example, or Aristophanic comedy – may concern the gods directly or contain a choral ode indistinguishable from a cult hymn. But even if we cannot draw an absolute distinction between hymns and other lyric forms in terms of religious content, there is a pragmatic difference of emphasis and purpose between the cult hymn and the literary piece, however religious in theme. The cult hymn is a form of worship directed towards winning a god’s goodwill and securing his or her assistance or favour. Literature is concerned with the entertainment and enlightenment of the audience addressed: it may treat of the gods but it does not address them directly. It may guide an audience to a heightened

¹With the exception of certain repeated cries or refrains (*epiphthegmata*) such as ἰὴ παῖάν in a paian or ἰὸ Ἰαχχέ in the procession of Eleusinian *mystai*.

understanding of the influence of divinity on human affairs, but it does not devote its resources to securing something from that divinity through its performance.

There is another form of discourse which shares the hymn's goal of securing divine goodwill: prayer.² Hymns share many of the compositional elements characteristic of prayers: there is the same direct address of a deity, the same gesture of supplication and often the same express request for help or protection. A distinction may be possible here by considering both the compositional elements of the two forms and their differing function in worship. Formally a hymn is likely to be a more finished artistic product than a prayer, both in terms of articulated speech and narrative and in performance. For the case of Mesopotamian hymns and prayers, Edzard draws a distinction with respect to the speed and manner of delivery of both forms: prayers tend to be uttered quickly, more in the manner of normal speech, without overt artistic embellishment, whilst hymns are sung or recited in a slow, deliberate and repetitive manner which emphasizes the performance itself.³ Simply to say that prayers are spoken and hymns are sung, however, will not do.⁴ As we will see, there were various forms of Greek hymn which were spoken or recited rather than sung, and, conversely, prayers which were spoken in unison and rhythmically by a congregation. In terms of function Pulleyn (1997, 49f.) has drawn an interesting distinction between prayer and hymn: the latter, by being a finished artistic product employing refined techniques of praise and persuasion, represents a kind of offering to the god, a verbal ἄγαλμα, or 'delight', comparable to a sacrifice or a votive offering, designed to please the god and store up divine favour (χάρις) toward the hymn-singer and the com-

² A number of collections and studies of ancient Greek prayers have appeared in recent decades: Versnel (1981); Graf in Faraone & Obbink (1991, 188-213); Aubriot-Sévin (1992); Pulleyn (1997); Kiley (1997).

³ 'Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen' in Burkert & Stolz (1994, 19-32); Pulleyn (1997, 54) writes: "The most obvious superficial difference between hymns and prayers consists in the fact that hymns were of their essence musical and prayers were not. A prayer can in principle be very simple. When one starts rehearsing a catalogue of the attributes of the deity, one is getting onto different territory. When one puts the whole thing into verse and sets it to music, it has moved a long way from being a prayer."

⁴ Pulleyn (1997, 44f.) takes issue with Bremer's earlier definition of a hymn as a 'sung prayer'. Pulleyn's main objection is not that hymns were not sung, but rather that the prayer element of a hymn may be small or negligible compared to the praise and adoration of the god; accordingly he denies that the performance criterion of singing/not singing is decisive.

munity he/she represents. Prayer, on the other hand, is a less embellished form of request in return for a different kind of offering on the part of the petitioner (sacrifice, libation, votive offering or promise to perform such in the future). In fact, however, this distinction is hard to apply rigorously; as Pulleyn is the first to admit, many spoken prayers contain elements of hymnic embellishment, and many hymns contain prayers, sometimes extensive and detailed.⁵ He suggests that linguistic embellishment of prayers is the result of the influence of hymns, but one could easily argue the reverse, that hymns are simply more refined prayers which develop and elaborate the elements of linguistic and artistic embellishment. We must content ourselves with recognizing complementary forms of religious discourse here, with a greater emphasis in the case of hymns on the attributes of song and dance, in short, performance on the part of the worshipper(s).⁶

Because hymns represent a relatively advanced, artistic, form of worship we should not regard them as secondary, or late, in any way compared to other forms. The earliest cultures of which we have cognizance, and the most primitive still existing today, have their songs of worship or supplication of divinities. There is no stage of Greek literature or culture known to us which lacks a fully developed range of cult songs. Homer, for example, refers explicitly to paianes sung to Apollo, choruses to Artemis, songs in honour of agricultural deities such as Linos.⁷ And the collection of essays in *Hymnen der alten Welt im Kulturvergleich* (Burkert & Stolz, 1994) shows that the Greeks' Egyptian, Hittite, Mesopotamian and Persian neighbours and predecessors all possessed a vital hymnic tradition as part of their divine worship. Together with prayer, the performance or recitation of hymns forms the verbally articulated complement to expressive action in religious worship. The doing and the saying or singing are inextricably linked and mutually supportive. When people move in procession to a place of worship they not only (typically) carry an effigy or symbol of the god in whose honour they are processing, they sing a hymn celebrating the god's glory: the action is identified and justified by the use of traditional

⁵For an interesting example of a prayer to Asklepios (for relief from gout) composed in a metrical and hymnic form, see *IG III i* Addenda no. 171a (pp. 488-9), a composition by Diophantos Sphettios.

⁶Race (1990, 103 n.50) says: "The distinction between cultic hymns and prayers mainly involves a question of emphasis"; prayers, in his opinion, emphasize the request made of a god, whereas hymns "have more elaborate invocations", and sometimes contain no request.

⁷Paian: *Il.* 1.146; choruses for Artemis: 16.181; Linos-song: 18.570.

songs.⁸ And when they reach the god's altar they form up and sing more hymns before performing an action such as sacrifice or libation. The hymn is communication within the community and with the god(s) addressed.⁹ As soon as ritual action is conceived as being performed *for* some deity, or in his honour, verbal communication becomes necessary and legitimate. And we know of virtually no religion which does not in some form posit gods attributed with intelligence.¹⁰ For this reason it appears to us of dubious heuristic value to 'explain' religious cult through ritual behaviour postulated for early man on the basis of observation of primates, to the virtual exclusion of higher expressions of religious belief such as are found in hymns.¹¹ True, the sacrificial rite may reflect hunting rituals among early man, which may in turn bear some resemblance to primates' behaviour, but it is only when a 'Mistress of Animals' has been conceived of, *for* whom one performs the sacrificial ritual and *to* whom one sings such songs as Euripides, *Hipp.* 61-71 (our no. 10.3.2), that religion has been born.

It is particularly necessary to stake out a claim for the importance of our subject within Hellenic studies, as, whilst many might agree that ancient Greek hymns were important in the arts and religion, there is a *de facto* tendency to ignore them. The reason is not far to seek: the vast majority of archaic and classical cult hymns have vanished without trace. Wilamowitz (1921, 242) wrote: "Die gottesdienstliche Poesie der alten Zeit ist verloren",¹² and the statement is not far from the truth. It is only in the Hellenistic period that survivals become more frequent owing to the increasing use of written records of religious cult. Below we will exam-

⁸Note the interesting passage in Apuleius, *Met.* 11.9.5 Helm, describing religious hymns sung during a procession in honour of Isis: *carmen vetustum iterantes, quod Camenarum favore sollers poeta modulatus edixerat, quod argumentum referebat interim maiorum antecantamenta votorum*, "they repeat an ancient hymn which a skillful poet had composed with the help of the Muses, and which had as its contents the preludes (or *aetia*) of their ancestors' sacred rites".

⁹This double aspect of communication is brought out well in Danielewicz (1976, English summary pp. 116-26). See further below p. 59.

¹⁰Buddhism being a notable exception.

¹¹We have in mind particularly the 'ethological' interpretations sometimes proposed by W. Burkert, most recently in *Creation of the Sacred. Tracks of Biology in Early Religion*, Cambridge Mass. 1996.

¹²Cf. N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, (first published 1864), reprint 1980, Baltimore, 6: "But where are the hymns of the ancient Hellenes? They, as well as the Italians, had ancient hymns, and old sacred books: but nothing of these has come down to us."

ine the discrepancy between the acknowledged fact of the prominence of hymn-singing in all forms of religious worship and the sad state of transmission of texts. At this juncture it is essential to point out the dangers involved in allowing this dearth of transmitted texts to distort our reading of Greek literature and religion. For many forms of literary production appear to have descended directly or indirectly from choral worship of the gods: Aristotle, for example, states that both Attic tragedy and comedy descended from various forms of cult song (*Poet.* 1449a10ff).¹³ Even more directly, choral lyric generally would simply not have arisen without a long tradition of 'choruses for the gods and heroes'. But the dependence of later (transmitted) literature on (lost) hymns does not end with the external conditions of performance or delivery. There is a whole hymnic tradition of praise poetry which makes itself apparent in epinician poetry,¹⁴ in encomia of people and places, and in literary hymns which employ the form of ancient cult hymns in new social and emotional settings.¹⁵

The disregard of hymns for lack of texts is even more regrettable in the field of Greek religion. In the leading works on Greek religion of our time, hymns are scarcely mentioned as a vital part of cult. Indeed we are repeatedly told that what mattered in Greek religion was doing the right things: sacrificing in the right manner above all. When the verbal aspect of religion is considered, it tends to be under the heading of 'myth'. What is seldom adequately realized, however, is that myth is the substance of hymns, and that the stories told about the gods in myths were in fact the stories sung to the gods in worship in order to flatter, remind, praise and cajole a recalcitrant stone image into beneficial action.¹⁶ Once this is realized, myths cease to appear merely as speculative narratives *about* the uncanny powers of the universe,¹⁷ and may be seen partly, and perhaps primarily, as

¹³The major and persuasive thesis of Herington's *Poetry into Drama* (1985) is that tragedy represented a new amalgam of traditional forms, mainly various forms of cult poetry.

¹⁴Well analyzed by Race (1990, 85-117) in his chapter 'Style and Rhetoric in Opening Hymns'.

¹⁵Examples in our chapter on 'Lesbos and Ionia'. Cf. Danielewicz (1974).

¹⁶Cf. Furley (1995a, 40-45). Even the subtle analysis of J.-P. Vernant tends to neglect this intrinsic connection: he treats myth and ritual as two separable aspects of religion in (e.g. 1987, 164-68).

¹⁷B. Gladigow, 'Mythische Experimente – experimentelle Mythen', in: R. Schlessier (ed.), *Faszination des Mythos. Studien zu antiken und modernen Interpretationen*, Basel/Frankfurt 1985, 61-85, uses the expression 'Gedankenexperiment'.

narratives designed to ‘capture’ precisely those powers through words.¹⁸ By reminding a god through hymnic worship of his mighty and beneficent deeds in the past, the worshipper wishes both to define the deity addressed and his powers, and to secure a measure of that power for himself through divine grace.¹⁹ Whilst the whole ‘myth and ritual’ school of interpretation has worked on the premiss that there is an intrinsic connection between the two modes – the ritual and the mythical – it has not been adequately grasped just how close the link in fact was: the myths formed the substance of hymns sung before or during the ritual.²⁰ Conversely, narrative acquires a new and enhanced dimension when it is realized that it was not intended solely for human recipients, but primarily for the ears of the deity about whom it narrates. The Python myth in Apolline cult, for example, is not only narrative of an exciting kind, it also features in numerous hymns to Apollo which seek to emphasize his might, and to petition for help in a current situation. By narrating the deeds of the gods, the *Homeric Hymns* define the characters and areas of power of these gods (see Clay, 1989). These definitions then become the basis and legitimation of cult. Thus the narrative becomes a kind of charter for the god’s claim to worship of a certain kind, and conversely the basis for the worshipper’s expectation of help. In practical terms, the student of ancient religion must, in our opinion, pay close attention to any surviving hymnic texts relating to a cult concerned, and, in their absence, consider notices relating to their possible content. Later scholarship in antiquity is frequently helpful here: in one instance, a late author, Himerios, relates in prose the entire content of an original (lost) hymn to Apollo by Alkaios (no. 2.1).

One main purpose of this book, then, is to attempt to restore an imbalance. By collecting surviving hymnic texts from various anomalous contexts – inscriptions, papyri, Hellenistic scholarship as well as literary genres such as epic, lyric, tragedy, comedy – we attempt to gain as full a picture as possible of the sum of ancient Greek hymns and the variety within the genre as a whole. Just as the restorer of vases must collect a

¹⁸One may compare the excellent elucidation of this aspect of mythical narrative in the case of epinician poetry in A.P. Burnett’s *Art of Bacchylides* 1985, ch. 1.

¹⁹Race (1990, ch. 4) uses the term ‘hypomnesis’ to describe this function of narrative in hymns: the god is ‘reminded’ of his prowess so as to induce him to repeat the performance in the worshipper’s interest.

²⁰For all her enthusiasms, Harrison (1963) was not guilty of this bias, as she made the ‘Hymn of the Kouretes’ (our no. 1.1) the basis of *Themis*.

multitude of shattered fragments, assess their original position, reassemble them as best he can, while conscious that there are gaps which will probably never be filled, we have collected and attempted to order the *disiecta membra* of ancient Greek hymnography. We hope that the result will be profitable for both literary and religious studies.

1.2 Ancient theory

It is time now to consider the principles of that order more carefully. Was there a genre of hymn in ancient Greece, or rather, was there *one* genre or many? ‘Hymn’ is, of course, a Greek word (ὕμνος) but its etymology and origin remain obscure. We find a number of ancient etymologies, none convincing. The *Etym. Gud.* 540.38 Sturz gives the following account: “Hymn comes from ‘remain’, being something which ‘remains’, because it draws the words of praise and the virtues into a durable form”²¹ This derivation emphasizes the celebratory aspect of hymns, their function to record and document praiseworthy deeds and powers. It does not explicitly mention the gods. Linguistically it is more than suspect, involving a most unlikely syncopation of the verb *hypomenō* to *hymenō*, hence *hymnos* from *hypomonos*. This ‘etymology’ is also given by Proklos, who records another possible derivation, from the (rare) verb ὑδμεν, which he glosses as ‘speak’ (ibid.). Here one would have to assume a syncopated form of a passive participle of the verb;²² but even if such a process was linguistically viable, the meaning ‘speak’ is hardly germane, or germinal, to any essential quality of the hymn. Finally, a number of passages in poetry exploit the similarity between the stems *hymn-* and *hyph-* from the verb *hyphairō*, ‘weave’.²³ However, such etymological play belongs more in the realm of lyric inventiveness than the essential development of language.²⁴

²¹ὕμνος· παρὰ τὸ ὑμένω τὸ ὑπομένω, ὑπόμονός τις ὄν, καὶ ἐν συγχοπῇ ὕμνος, καθὸ εἰς ὑπομονὴν καὶ πράξιν ἄγειν τὰς τῶν ἐπαίνων ἀχοάς, καὶ ἀρετάς. Cf. Proklos ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 320a9-10: ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑπόμονόν τινα εἶναι; *E.M.* s.v. ὕμνος· κατὰ συγχοπῆν, ὑπόμονός τις ὄν, καθὸ εἰς ὑπομονὴν καὶ μνήμην ἄγει τὰς τῶν ἐπαινουμένων πράξεις καὶ ἀρετάς, “‘hymn’: a thing which is lasting (*hypomonos*), because it draws the deeds and powers of those praised into a durable and memorable form”.

²²Perfect ὑσμένος→ὕμνος, or ὑδόμενος→ὑδμένος→ὕμνος cf. Wünsch (1914, 141).

²³ὕμνον ὑφαίνειν, cf. Bacchylides 5.9; id. *Dith.* 19.8. For the force of the metaphor ‘weave a hymn’ see Scheid & Svenbro (1996, 118-19).

²⁴Wünsch (1914, 141) approves this derivation whilst Chantraine, *Dict. Etym.* s.v. cautions against it.

At an early stage it bore the general sense of ‘song’, though possibly with connotations of praise or celebration.²⁵ The more specific meaning ‘song of praise for a god’ developed from that, and is current in the classical period. Plato, for example, draws a clear distinction between hymns (ὕμνοι) as songs in praise of gods, and encomia (ἐγκώμια) for men (*Rep.* 10.607a).²⁶ An ancient definition of *hymnos* used in this religious sense runs “*hymnos* is discourse in the form of adoration, with prayer conjoined with praise, addressed to a god”.²⁷ The definition contains a number of essential points: the hymn *worships* (προσκυνέω) *gods* with combined *prayer* (εὐχή) and *praise* (ἔπαινος). We may compare this with another ancient definition given by Dionysios Thrax (2nd c. BC): “the ‘hymn’ is a poem comprising praises of the gods and heroes with thanksgiving”.²⁸ This formulation specifies that a hymn has *poetic* form (ποίημα), includes heroes among recipients of hymnic worship,²⁹ and uses the expression *eucharistia*, ‘thanksgiving’ to denote an essential element of the worshippers’ offering of song.

In a way the more general ancient term for the collective singing of a deity’s praise by a group denoted the whole activity (song, dance, place of worship): *choros*, the chorus which learnt the dance steps, the words and the melody which in combination constituted the hymn’s performance. To ‘set up a chorus’ (χορὸν ἱστάναι) for the performance of ritual songs became the standard term for the inauguration of hymns in performance.³⁰ Numerous passages describe the founding of the cult of a god or hero, either in conjunction with the erection of an altar and/or temple in his/her honour or with reorganization of the cult. For example, at Bacchylides 11.108ff., when Artemis persuaded Hera to relieve the daughters of Proitos from their god-sent madness, they built her an altar and temenos and ‘in-

²⁵ See the *PW* article ‘Hymnos’ by Wünsch, 141-2.

²⁶ Cf. *Etym. Gud.* 540.42 Sturz.

²⁷ *Etym. Gud.* ὕμνος· ἔστιν ὁ μετὰ προσκυνήσεως καὶ εὐχῆς κεκραμένης ἐπαίνωι λόγος εἰς θεόν.

²⁸ 451.6 Hilgard: ὕμνος ἔστι ποίημα περιέχον θεῶν ἐγκώμια καὶ ἡρώων μετ’ εὐχαριστίας.

²⁹ In this collection we do not include hymns to heroes, limiting ourselves to those addressed to recognized divinities. For an interesting early ‘hymn’ to the hero Achilles see Simonides fr. 10-11 West²; cf. L. Sbardella, ‘Achille e gli eroi di Platea. Simonide fr. 10-11 W²’, *ZPE* 129, 2000, 1-11.

³⁰ LSJ s.v. ἱστῆμι iii 4; cf. Aristoph. *Clouds* 271 with Dover’s note, and *Birds* 219 with Dunbar’s note; Burkert (1977, 168).

stituted choruses of women' (καὶ χοροὺς ἴσταν γυναικῶν), whose role no doubt was to hymn Artemis. The hymn-singing which typically accompanied the inauguration or restitution of a cult is well illustrated by Aristophanes *Peace* 774ff., where the goddess Peace is restored to the accompaniment of joyous hymn-singing. Names such as Stesichoros, 'Chorus-Trainer' or Hagesichora, 'Chorus-Leader', Terpsichora (one of the Muses), 'Chorus-lover', point to the familiarity of the concept. At Eur. *El.* 177-78 we find the term used not of inaugural rites but of the regular choral singing performed by Argive girls for Hera.³¹

In earlier work we have discussed in greater detail the relation of the generic term ὕμνος with the various sub-categories of sacred song named in antiquity.³² Our position may be summarized here. A passage of Plato might at first sight be taken to point to a distinction between hymns proper and other types such as paians, dithyramps and nomes.³³ The Alexandrian classification of religious choral lyric (by e.g. Pindar, Bacchylides) into separate books of paians, dithyramps etc. and hymns seems to point in the same direction. And at one point in his discussion of this very point, the taxonomy of sacred song, Proklos uses the expression 'the hymn proper' (ὁ κυρίως ὕμνος) of a song of divine praise sung round the god's altar³⁴ in contradistinction to prosodia and other forms which, although addressed to the gods, are, by implication, distinct from 'hymns proper'. These and other passages led Harvey (1955, 166) to conclude that there was a specific poetic form for the 'hymn proper', a monostrophic poem to the gods sung by a stationary chorus.

On the other hand, as Harvey recognizes, there was a general sense to the word ὕμνος current in antiquity which made it the generic word for songs for gods, and other terms, such as dithyramps and paians, subdivisions of the genus. A statement of Didymos quoted by Orion (p. 155-6 Sturz) runs: "The hymn is distinct from enkomia, prosodia and paians not in that the latter are not hymns, but as genus (sc. is distinct) from species. For we call all forms of song for the gods hymns, and add a qualifying

³¹ οὐδ' ἴστασα χοροὺς / Ἀργείαις ἅμα νύμφαις.

³² Bremer (1981, 204); Furley (1993, 22-24); Furley (1995a, 31-32).

³³ *Laws* 700b1-5: καὶ τι ἦν εἶδος ὠιδῆς εὐχαί πρὸς θεοῦς, ὄνομα δὲ ὕμνοι ἐπεκαλοῦντο. . . καὶ παίωνες ἕτερον, καὶ ἄλλο, Διονύσου γένεσις οἶμαι, διθύραμβος λεγόμενος: "... and one form of song consisted of prayers to the gods – these were called 'hymns' – ... and paians were another form, and another, the birth of Dionysos, I think, was called 'dithyramb'".

³⁴ *Bibl.* 320a19-20 ὁ δὲ κυρίως ὕμνος πρὸς κιθάραν ἦιδετο ἐστώτων.

expression such as prosodion-hymn, paian-hymn etc.’³⁵ Proklos appears to be quoting Didymos when he writes: “They (sc. previous authorities) called generically all compositions to the gods hymns. That is the reason why one finds them relating the prosodion and the other genres already mentioned to the hymn as species to genus. For one can observe them writing (sc. such expressions as): ‘prosodion-hymn’ or ‘enkomion-hymn’ or ‘paian-hymn’ and the like”.³⁶ It is in this general sense in which it is legitimate to use ‘hymn’ to mean any song celebrating or petitioning a divinity. The emergence of separate books of ‘hymns’ by Pindar or Bacchylides, then, as opposed to their paians and dithyrambos etc., may be attributed to the Alexandrians’ method of classification: any composition which could be clearly identified as a dithyrambos or paian or parthenion etc. by compositional elements³⁷ was categorized accordingly; the remainder, which defied specific classification, was put into a book called ‘hymns’, but actually equivalent to ‘miscellaneous hymns’.³⁸

In the passage quoted above (*Laws* 700b1-5), Plato gives the first indication of an ancient taxonomy of religious song. First he distinguishes hymns as sung prayers to the gods (εὐχαὶ πρὸς θεούς, ὄνομα δὲ ὕμνοι ἐπεκαλοῦντο) from a conceptual opposite – dirges, songs of mourning (θρήνοι) – then he goes on to name paians, dithyrambos and nomos as separate categories of musical song. The categories are said to represent ‘musical types’ but the dithyrambos is additionally described as a song about Dionysos’ birth (Διονύσου γένεσις) (see Harvey, 1955, 165ff.).

³⁵ Ὑμνος... κεχώρισται τῶν ἐγκωμίων καὶ τῶν προσοδίων καὶ παιάνων, οὐχ ὡς κακείων μὴ ὄντων ὕμνων, ἀλλ’ ὡς γένος ἀπὸ εἶδους. πάντα γὰρ εἰς τοὺς ὑπερέχοντας γραφόμενα ὕμνους ἀποφαινόμεθα, καὶ ἐπιλέγομεν τὸ εἶδος τῷ γένει, ὕμνος προσοδίου, ὕμνος παιᾶνος... οὕτω Δίδυμος ἐν τῷ Περὶ λυρικῶν ποιητῶν.

³⁶ *Bibl.* 320a12-17 Henry: Ἐκάλουν δὲ καθόλου πάντα τὰ εἰς τοὺς ὑπερέχοντας (nos: ὑπερόντας Severyns: ὑπηρέτας codd.) γραφόμενα ὕμνους· διὸ καὶ τὸ προσόδιον καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τὰ προειρημένα φαίνονται ἀντιδιαστέλλοντες τῷ ὕμνῳ ὡς εἶδη πρὸς γένος· καὶ γὰρ ἔστιν αὐτῶν ἀκούειν γραφόντων ὕμνος προσοδίου, ὕμνος ἐγκωμίου, ὕμνος παιᾶνος καὶ τὰ ὅμοια. One notes also the definition in the *Onomastikon* of Pollux (I 38): ὠιδαὶ εἰς θεοὺς κοινῶς μὲν {παιᾶνες} ὕμνοι, ἰδίως δὲ Ἀρτέμιδος οὐπιγγος, Ἀπόλλωνος ὁ παιάν, ἄμφοτέρων προσόδια, “Songs to the gods are called ‘hymns’ generally, an *oupingos* to Artemis specifically, a *paian* to Apollo, *prosodion* to both”. That παιᾶνες before ὕμνοι should be deleted is strongly suggested by the subsequent definition of ‘paian’ as a song specifically attributed to Apollo.

³⁷ Such as the *epiphthegma* ἰὴ παιάν of a paian.

³⁸ Haldane (1977) also came to this conclusion about the status of the so-called ‘hymn proper’.

The Alexandrian classification of genres of religious poetry builds on this Platonic beginning. On the one hand we observe the Alexandrian editors dividing choral lyric by Pindar, Bacchylides, Simonides (and others) into separate books of paians, dithyrambs, prosodia etc.³⁹ On the other, citations from Didymos and in particular the epitome of Proklos' *Chrestomathy* in Photios' *Library* convey a detailed picture of scholarly attempts at classification of religious song.

Proklos begins, like Plato, by distinguishing religious from non-religious types of song, although allowing that some types fall into an intermediate category.⁴⁰ Of religious songs he names the hymn, prosodion, paian, dithyramb, nome, adonidion, iobakchos and hyporchema. Of mixed types – performed within the context of a religious service but possibly containing praise of humans – he lists partheneion, daphnephorikon, tripodophorikon, oschophorikon and euktikon. After explaining (as we have seen above) how 'hymn' has both a generic and particular sense, he describes the chief attributes of these classes. The prosodion is defined as a hymn sung to aulos accompaniment while the chorus processes to the altar; this is distinguished from the 'hymn proper' sung at the altar to kithara music (320a18-20). The other genres are defined principally by the deity and/or specific cult to which they belong: paians, nomes, daphnephorika, tripodophorika were at home in various cults of Apollo; the dithyramb and iobakchos belonged to Dionysos; the oschophorikon was an Athenian cult song belonging to Dionysos and Athena; the adonidion was clearly named after Adonis.

But Proklos goes beyond a mere classification by cult origin. In the case of the nome and dithyramb he gives a more detailed analysis, explaining that the dithyramb employs wild and exciting rhythms and musical

³⁹ On this subject cf. Schröder (1999a, 126-152). A list of Pindar's works is found in a medieval manuscript, the codex Ambrosianus, which contains among other introductory material a life of Pindar at the end of which is stated γέγραφε δὲ βιβλία ἑπτακαίδεκα ὕμνους, παιᾶνας, διθυράμβων β', προσοδίων β', παρθενείων β', φέρεται δὲ καὶ γ' ὁ ἐπιγράφεται κεχωρισμένων παρθενείων ὑπορχημάτων β', ἐγκώμια, θρήνους, ἐπινικίων δ'. This life is printed by Drachmann as belonging to the *Scholia Vetera* (the quotation is found in vol. I, p. 3); that it is not a piece of medieval scholarship is certain (i) because most of the books listed were already lost in late antiquity and hence unknown to medieval scholars, and (ii) by the fact that an almost identical list is found in a papyrus written 2nd/3rd cent. A.D.: *POxy* 2438, 35-40. It is virtually certain that the list is a product of Alexandrian learning (most probably from Callimachus' *Pinakes*).

⁴⁰E.g. partheneia, daphnephorika, which, says Proklos, "are written for the gods but contain praise of men".

modes in keeping with its patron deity, Dionysos (see further chapter 7 in this volume), whilst the nome is stately and dignified to match this quality of Apollo.⁴¹ Moreover, Proklos is sometimes in a position to describe accurately the supposed aition of the festival for which a particular lyric class of hymn was composed, e.g. daphnephorikon, tripodephorikon and oschophorikon. The fact that details about the inauguration of the other types are not given may indicate that their origin lay in the distant and inscrutable past.⁴²

Proklos' taxonomy applies to genres of lyric poetry. Its chief criterion is the link between a song type and the cult in which it belonged, but other aspects are given some weight: the place of the song within a ceremony, whether during the procession or accompanying the sacrifice; the absence or presence, and sometimes nature, of dance accompaniment; the type and mode of musical accompaniment; the aesthetic qualities of the songs; their geographical distribution; aetiology of the cult concerned. In short we possess in Proklos' work (based on Alexandrian scholarship) what one might call a pragmatic, or functional, classification of cult hymns: one which chiefly takes into consideration the context of the songs' performance.⁴³

It is this corpus of cult lyric poetry which is most sadly lacking among surviving texts. Were it not for papyrus finds of a fragmentary but quite

⁴¹Rutherford (1995b) argues that the contrast drawn by Proklos between the nome and the dithyramb must originally have applied to the paian and dithyramb. He surmises that Proklos was working from a fourth-century source, possibly Herakleides of Pontos.

⁴²It should be noted, however, that various explanations of the origin of the major types of paian and dithyramb were in circulation. The paian was associated with celebration of Apollo's victory over Python; the dithyramb was linked etymologically and mythologically with Dionysos' birth: see p. 250.

⁴³Käppel (1992, 38ff.) maintains that the Alexandrian classification of lyric poetry (on which Proklos drew) depended more on formal characteristics (presence or absence of epiphthegma, prevalence of myth etc.) than on considerations of context and function: "Darin offenbart sich ein gegenüber dem 5 Jh. v. Chr. grundlegend veränderter Gattungsbegriff: An der Stelle der Funktion des Gedichtes tritt die Form als gattungsunterscheidende Kategorie" (p. 41; see now Käppel (2000) for analogous arguments on the dithyramb specifically). But this, as we have seen, is too one-sided. The Alexandrian classification, in separating out paians from dithyramps etc., was indeed trying to allocate certain poems and styles to certain cults (the 'Sitz im Leben' of poetry), but where the circumstances of a poem's original performance were not recorded, they had to fall back on formal characteristics within the poem itself to reconstruct its affinity with cult performance. Harvey's criticism (1955, 160f.) that the Alexandrian headings "represent a piece of schematization" which did not always work, not being comprehensive enough for all the local variations of cult and song, is of course correct, but does not invalidate the whole scheme.

substantial sample of the paians, dithyrambs (and other types) of Pindar and Bacchylides, Wilamowitz' gloomy verdict would be almost literally true. To a certain extent we can fill the gap by extrapolating backwards from Hellenistic texts – in particular we possess a good number of Hellenistic paians – and synchronically from the literary imitations of 'authentic' cult songs which are so numerous in tragedy and comedy. But it is in this area that we must concede the most glaring disparity between our knowledge that hardly a religious festival took place without elaborate and formal hymn-singing and the extreme scarcity of authentic transmitted texts before the fourth century. Let us examine some general features of these cult hymns in order to set the scene, as it were, for all the lost texts and those fragmentary remnants which are collected between these covers.

1.3 *Cult song*

Men and women worship the gods, but the gods – the Greek gods at least – show them how to do it by celebrating themselves, as it were (cf. Rudhardt, 1992, 181-87). Parallel to the widespread phenomenon in vase-painting of gods performing acts of worship – libation, sacrifice – there are several interesting passages of early Greek poetry in which the Olympian community instructs humans how to worship them by setting an example. The description of Apollo's kitharodic performance on Olympus, for example, to choric accompaniment by the Muses and Horai provides a divine model for similar human performances of kitharodic hymns (e.g. the nome) with choric accompaniment:

“And straightaway (sc. on Apollo's arrival on Olympus) the gods turn to music and song. The Muses form a chorus singing in sweet voice of the immortal gifts of the gods and the hardship of men... And the fair-haired Graces, the benevolent Horai, Harmonia and Hebe, Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus dance hand in hand... Phoibos Apollo plays the kithara, taking fine high steps, and radiance takes his whole being, his feet flash and his robe gleams.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *HH*Apollo 187-206: ἀντίχα δ' ἄθανάτοισι μέλει κίθαρις καὶ ἀοιδή./ Μοῦσαι μὲν θ' ἅμα πᾶσαι ἀμειβόμεναι ὀπὶ καλῆι / ὕμνευσίν ῥα θεῶν δῶρ' ἀμβροτα ἤδ' ἀνθρώπων / τλημοσύνας. . . αὐτὰρ εὐπλόκαμοι Χάριτες καὶ εὐφρονες Ὕραι / Ἄρμονίη θ' Ἥβη τε Διὸς θυγάτηρ τ' Ἀφροδίτη / ὄρχευντ' ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῶι χειρας ἔχουσαι. . . αὐτὰρ ὁ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων ἐγκιθαρίζει, / καλὰ καὶ ὕψι βιβιάς, αἴγλη δέ μιν ἀμφιφασκίνει / μαρμαρυγαί τε ποδῶν καὶ εὐκλώστοιο χιτῶνος. On this passage cf. Lonsdale (1996, 51ff.). Apollo's role as chief musician among the gods is well illustrated by e.g. Aristoph.

And later in the same work Apollo sets the precedent for the procession from Krise to his temple in Delphi to the tune of paians:

“Off they set. Lord Apollo, son of Zeus, led the way, holding his *phorminx* in his hands, playing beautifully upon it and taking fine high steps. The Cretans followed, marching in time, toward Pytho and they sang ‘*i ēpaiēon*’ in the manner of paians sung by Cretans in whose hearts the Muse has planted the gift of song.”⁴⁵

No text, perhaps, is quite so programmatic in this connection as the proem to Hesiod’s *Theogony*. In this long hexameter poem – possibly the very *hymnos* with which Hesiod won a prize at Archidamas’ funeral games in Chalkis⁴⁶ – Hesiod relates the generations of gods preceding, and leading up to, the present kingdom of Zeus at the head of the family of Olympians. He is inspired to do this by an encounter with the Muses, who, archetypally, are said to sing of the birth of the almighty gods. They are depicted as a permanent heavenly chorus lauding the might of Zeus and singing of his ancestry.⁴⁷ So when the epic poet – Hesiod in the first instance – invokes the Muses to assist him in singing a hymn to the gods, he is going to the very source of knowledge and expertise in this department. The Muses confer the power of acceptable song because they themselves practise the art among the gods.⁴⁸

In Pindar’s Herakles-dithyramb (fr. 70 B, our no. 5.2) Dionysos introduces the Olympians to his orgies in a clearly programmatic way. After lines criticizing an earlier style of dithyramb, Pindar refers to the way the

Birds 217-220: ἴν’ ὁ χρυσοκόμας Φοῖβος... ἀντιψάλλων ἐλεφαντόδετον φόρμιγγα θεῶν ἴστησι χορούς: “Where golden-haired Phoibos plays the ivory-fitted phorminx and leads the choruses of gods”.

⁴⁵*HHApollo* 514-18. For text and further discussion see p. 80f.

⁴⁶*W&D* 656-7: ἔνθα μέ φημι / ὕμνωι νικῆσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ’ ὠτῶεντα. On this hymn see Minton (1970).

⁴⁷Lines 36-44 “Well, let us begin with the Muses who delight the mind of Zeus on Olympus with their hymning; they sing of the present, the future and the past, singing in unison. Their tireless voice flows forth beautifully from their mouths. The abode of Zeus the loud-thundering father laughs to hear the clear voice of the goddesses ringing out. The first subject of their immortal song is the reverend birth of the gods”. The dependence of mortal singers on the divine precedent of Apollo and the Muses is made explicit in ll. 94-5.

⁴⁸Menander Rhetor Περὶ Σμινθιακοῦ (Russell & Wilson, 1981, 438) states in this connection that the author of such a hymn should say: “I have inquired of the Pythia how best to praise Apollo, the greatest god; since the oracle has withheld a response, I will appeal to the Muses for guidance”.

immortals themselves celebrate Bacchic revels on Olympus (οἶαν Βρομίου [τελε]τάν / καὶ παρὰ σκά[πτ]ον Διὸς Οὐρανίδαί / ἐν μεγάροις ἴσταντι):

“The whirring beat of drums round the reverend Great Mother begins; there is percussion from castanets and torches burn under the illuminated pines; the Nymphs emit loud gasps and ecstatic cries accompanied by tossing head movements. The all-conquering thunderbolt, breathing fire, is in action and the spear of Ares. The potent aegis of Athena speaks with the hissing of myriad serpents. Solitary Artemis travels easily on her car drawn by a team of lions she has yoked for the Bacchic rites; and he (sc. Dionysos) is enthralled by the dancing even of these groups of animals.”

It is not simply that the gods in these passages provide a divine precedent for human celebrations in their honour; an additional aspect to be considered is that humans, in performing worship which they believe imitative of a divine precedent, feel subsumed into divine company for the brief span of their celebration. This is the purpose of the various aspects of *mimesis* in religious ceremonial: the cult image suggests the presence of the god and provides the focus for the religious adoration; the god is given the gifts and offerings which are thought to entice him; but above all, the congregation sing the words which they trust will fall on receptive ears: the god’s name, pedigree, areas of power and heroic deeds. The very act of hymn-singing assimilates the worshipper with the divine nature through its beauty and its uplifting quality.⁴⁹ Strabo, probably drawing on Poseidonios, describes this phenomenon:

“It is a common characteristic of both Greeks and foreigners to perform religious services in an atmosphere of relaxed festivity, whereby some rituals are performed with enthusiasm and some not, some are accompanied by music, some not... Nature would have it thus: for relaxation, by distracting the human spirit from its day-to-day occupations, leads it in an appropriate manner to the divine; enthusiasm appears to partake of a certain divine inspiration and to be close to the prophetic state. Music, which encompasses dancing and rhythm and melody, leads us thereby toward the divine through the pleasure in skilled performance. For whilst it is well said that men imitate the gods best whenever they do good, it is perhaps more appropriate to say ‘whenever they are truly happy’. And that (viz. happiness) is found in joyful gratitude, in the celebration of festivals and making music... Accordingly the Muses are counted as gods and Apollo

⁴⁹Cf. Lonsdale (1995, 32-34).

is called ‘Leader of the Muses’ and poetry as a whole is felt to be ‘hymnic’ insofar as it is beautiful (10.467-468).”⁵⁰

We have already seen how Proklos attributed aesthetic qualities of the dithyramb and nome to the characters of the gods addressed: orgiastic melody, words and rhythms for Dionysos, dignity for Apollo. The mimetic poetics of Greek hymns is a theme to which we will be constantly recurring: the hymn-singer’s prime intention of pleasing and attracting the god addressed by a manner of approach in keeping with his divinity: ‘assimilation to god’ (ὁμοίωσις θεῶι), as the expression was formulated by philosophers.⁵¹ A particularly striking example is supplied by one of our texts: the Palaikastro Hymn of the Kouretes (no. 1.1). We know that the story of the rescue of Zeus as a baby from his infanticide father was localized in Crete and that armed warriors known as the Kouretes danced a circular dance to the clashing of cymbals to drown out the wails of the infant. The Kouretes in the Palaikastro hymn address Zeus as ‘Greatest Kouros leading the train of gods’ (ἰὼ μέγιστε κοῦρε. . . δαμόνων ἀγώμενος), thus recognizing him as their divine leader; they describe the performance of their own hymn round the ‘well-built’ altar to the music of strings and auloi; in poorly-preserved lines they relate the birth legend of Zeus and then, in a remarkable series of anaphoric invocations, invite Zeus to ‘leap’ (θόρε) beneficially on their fields, homes and institutions. It is more than likely that the word ‘leap’ was accompanied by a mimetic leap on the part of the dancers;⁵² the composition of the hymn points toward relatively swift strophic movements with a driving trochaic refrain in between. Hence the

⁵⁰κοινὸν δὴ τοῦτο καὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐστὶ, τὸ τὰς ἱεροποιῶας μετὰ ἀνέσεως ἑορταστικῆς ποιεῖσθαι, τὰς μὲν σὺν ἐνθουσιασμῶι, τὰς δὲ χωρὶς, καὶ τὰς μὲν μετὰ μουσικῆς, τὰς δὲ μὴ (. . .) καὶ τοῦθ’ ἡ φύσις οὕτως ὑπαγορεύει· ἢ τε γὰρ ἄνεσις τὸν νοῦν, ἀπάγουσα ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἀσχολημάτων αὐτόν, δεόντως τρέπει πρὸς τὸ θεῖον· ὃ τε ἐνθουσιασμὸς ἐπίπνευσίν τινα θεῖαν ἔχειν δοκεῖ καὶ τῶι μαντικῶι γένει πλησιάζειν. ἢ τε μουσικῆ περι τὸ ὄρχησιν οὔσα καὶ ῥυθμὸν καὶ μέλος, ἡδονῆι τε ἅμα καὶ καλλιτεχνίαι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἡμᾶς συνάπτει κατὰ τῆς αὐτῆς αἰτίας· εὖ μὲν γὰρ εἴρηται καὶ τοῦτο, τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τότε μάλιστα μιμεῖσθαι τοὺς θεοὺς ὅταν εὐεργετῶσιν, ἄμεινον δ’ ἂν λέγοι τις ὅταν εὐδαιμονῶσιν. τοιοῦτον δὲ καὶ τὸ χαίρειν καὶ τὸ ἑορτάζειν καὶ μουσικῆς ἄπτεσθαι (. . .) οὕτω δὲ καὶ αἱ Μοῦσαι θεαὶ καὶ Ἀπόλλων Μουσηγέτης καὶ ἡ ποιητικὴ πᾶσα ὑμνητικὴ καλὴ οὔσα. S. Radt, who is preparing a new critical edition of Strabo, kindly made his text available to us here.

⁵¹Cf. H. Dörrie, ‘Überlegungen zum Wesen antiker Frömmigkeit’, in: E. Dassmann and K. S. Frank (eds.), *Pietas, Festschrift Bernhard Kötting, JbAC suppl. vol. 8*, Münster 1980, 3-14 (esp. 6f.).

⁵²Cf. Burkert (1977, 168-9).

chorus in this instance perform actions and words which commemorate the mythical precedent: the Kouretes' savage but salutary song and dance round the infant Zeus. The hymnic performance becomes an artistic re-enactment or recollection of the god's first coming.⁵³

The recreation of an original mythical moment, frequently the god's first coming, proves a dominant theme in hymnic celebration.⁵⁴ Hymns to Apollo celebrate two principal events: the god's birth in Delos and his first coming to Delphi. An original triumphant advent sets the precedent for all future celebrations of the god's anticipated attendance of the festival. The opening of Callimachus' second hymn (to Apollo), for example, captures the spirit of excited anticipation of the god's coming. The Bacchic dithyramb was said by Plato to be equivalent to the god's birth (*Laws* iii, 700b: Διονύσου γένεσις οἴμαι); hymns to Asklepios concentrated on the god's birth legend as their primary motif;⁵⁵ the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* – not a lyric hymn – elaborates the birth myth of Hermes into an exciting and amusing novella. Lost hymns to other gods, Hephaistos or Athena, for example, may well have concentrated on the famous birth legends of these gods.

In the case of festivals inaugurated within living memory the mythic moment tended to be an epiphany of the god or a case of special intervention. The paian to Asklepios by Isyllos of Epidauros (no. 6.4) was written for an inaugural celebration of a procession and sacrifice in honour of Asklepios following the god's helpful intervention in battle against Philip's invasion. The author of the inscription not only laid down the precise form in which the god was to be honoured – a procession, accompanied by the very paian whose text is recorded, of leading aristocratic youths bearing the appropriate floral wreaths for Apollo and Asklepios – but also recorded details of the historical occasion on which Asklepios had helped the community. The festival celebrates an historical moment, but

⁵³Satyric choruses provide another good example: they imitate the appearance and behaviour of Dionysos' mythical *thiasos* of satyrs.

⁵⁴Burnett (1985, 5-14) formulates this point very well. On p. 14 she sums up: "It was the function of choral poetry to introduce a bit of demonic power into a rite or festival, and so the performers would often mime an event that had been touched with supernatural force. The idea was to activate a moment so numinous that some of its electricity could be tapped for the present ceremony – providing of course that the gods were pleased with the song."

⁵⁵Sophokles' paian to Asklepios (no. 7.3), written for the inauguration of the god's cult in Athens, addresses in its opening lines the god's mother.

it also establishes – or rather confirms – the timeless bond between patron god and community which has existed since the god's birth in the locality.

Proklos' description of the inauguration of the Boeotian Daphnephoria⁵⁶ follows a very similar pattern: the god, in this case Apollo, helps the local community in battle against invaders, and his aid is celebrated in the form of a new ritual and hymn form created specially for the occasion. A stick of laurel wood is elaborately decorated with metal and floral embellishments – interpreted by the neo-Platonist Proklos as symbols of the cosmos – and then carried in procession, accompanied by the hymns called daphnephorika, to Apollo's temple. The daphnephorikon is one of Proklos' mixed divine-and-human genres: we can understand how it encompassed praises of humans as well, since the military victory won by the Thebans was attributed to the joint endeavours of a certain general and Apollo.

The way in which historical events in which local gods were perceived to have had a guiding hand were integrated into existing patterns of worship is a theme which emerges clearly in the case of the two famous Delphic paian to Apollo with musical notation (nos. 2.6.1 and 2.6.2). These hymns take as their inaugural myth the coming of Apollo to Delphi and his defeat of Python before assuming control of the Delphic oracle, but they both incorporate a corroborative mythico-historical moment in their central section, the defeat of Brennus' Celtic forces in 278 BC. with the aid of Apollo and other local divinities. In this way we see the flexibility of cult in accommodating new instances of the god's power into existing structures of worship. An original mythical moment is readily combined with new historical events to establish a continuum between myth and the history of a community through its collective worship.⁵⁷

In the case of hero-worship, the mythical moment tends to be the crisis in the hero's or heroine's life for which he or she was famous. There was a Corinthian cult of the murdered children of Medea, for example; Alcestis

⁵⁶Ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 321a.

⁵⁷Burnett (1985, 7-8) writes that "Choral lyric, on the other hand, saw time as a pool in which past events sank aimlessly but never ceased to be. Any agitation could bring a fragment of yesterday up from below, and what the dancers did was give this pool of time an artful, ritual stir. . . And since the archaic past included legend as well as history, engulfing what we call fiction as well as what we call fact, the stock of ancient moments was almost infinite. Myths, however, recalled the times when men were most open to demonic influence, and consequently mythic moments were the most commonly chosen for revival by the celebrating community."

was celebrated by choruses of girls in Sparta not for her rescue from death, as Euripides relates it, but for her willingness to sacrifice her life for her husband.⁵⁸ The rites accorded Hippolytos at Troizen focused on his death at the hands of Poseidon: the festival of a hero's demise frequently affords an opportunity to celebrate the power of the god involved.⁵⁹

1.4 Performance

Performers

The authorities and artists who were in charge of ceremonies in Greek states will have found more ways of performing hymns than we can ever trace from our scanty evidence. But a few things may be said with some confidence about the performers, about the place of performance, and about musical accompaniment and dancing. Our oldest testimony on performers is *Iliad* 1.472-4. As a measure to alleviate the plague which has afflicted the army,

“... the young Achaean soldiers propitiated the god all day long by singing a beautiful paian; they sang of (sc. Apollo) the far-reacher, and he was pleased in his mind as he listened.”⁶⁰

This passage suggests that all the Achaeans who accompanied Odysseus on his mission joined in the singing of the paian to the god. Similarly, in Xenophon, *Hell.* 4.7.4, when the Spartans and their allies, preparing for an attack on Argos, are all too literally shaken by an earthquake, they respond by singing a paian to Poseidon: the king's personal attendants (literally ‘those in the royal tent’) start the singing, then all the soldiers join in.⁶¹

Frequently, however, groups of singers performed on behalf of the community; and this must have been the rule whenever longer and/or more

⁵⁸Eur. *Alc.* 445ff.: hero-rites including hymns were conducted in her honour in the month Karneion; there were unspecified celebrations at Athens too.

⁵⁹Eur. *Hipp.* 1425: Artemis promises honorific rites to Hippolytos in Troizen after his death; girls before marriage will cut their hair and mourn for him in chorus (μουσοποιός ἐς σὲ παρθένων... μέριμνα). The tomb of a hero around which rites were performed tended to be in the temenos of a god, thus emphasizing the relationship; e.g. Neoptolemos' tomb at Delphi.

⁶⁰οἱ δὲ πανημέριοι μολπῆι θεὸν ἰλάσκοντο / καλὸν ἀείδοντες παιήονα κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν / μέλποντες ἐκάεργον, ὃ δὲ φρένα τέρπετ' ἀκούων.

⁶¹καὶ οἱ μὲν Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἀρξαμένων τῶν ἀπὸ δαμοσίας (sc. σκανᾶς) πάντες ὕμνησαν τὸν περὶ τὸν Ποσειδῶ παιᾶνα.

difficult hymns had to be chanted. In Athens, for example, trained choruses performed (i.e. sang and danced) dithyrambs at the Dionysia and the Thargelia. Months before the performance the choregos selected fifty men or fifty boys from his own tribe, and had them trained professionally.⁶² Similarly, in the month Anthesterion the Athenians sent out a sacred expedition, *θεωρία*, to Delos, at which a trained chorus performed a paian in honour of Leto, Apollo and Artemis (see below).⁶³ The Athenians were also accustomed to send a *theōria*, the so-called Pythais, to the same god's Delphic sanctuary, but only on special occasions; apart from official representatives of the city the expedition consisted of a boys' chorus, the *πυθαῖστα παῖδες*. On the first of the two Pythais about which we are informed, the boys (thirty-nine of them) sang a paian to Apollo; on the second this musical duty was performed by a chorus of professional adult singers, *technitai* (see below); their number, too, was thirty-nine (nos. 2.6.1 and 2.6.2).

Participation in these choruses for the gods was part of community life, a way of learning a city-state's religious traditions and expressing one's devotion to the recognized gods. It was essential for children growing up to take part in certain rituals, which usually involved spending a period of time in the service of a particular god's cult. The chorus of women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, for example, say collectively "When I was seven, I was one of the Arrhephoroi, then at ten I was a 'corn-grinder' for (Athena) Archegetis, then I was a 'bear' at the Brauronia (sc. for Artemis), and, as a pretty girl, I served as 'basket-carrier' (sc. at the Panathenaia for Athena)."⁶⁴ Service in all these cults will have required of the girls not only the performance of ritual actions and the wearing of traditional clothes, but also the learning of the hymns to be sung in honour of the goddess in charge of each cult. Boys had equivalent choral duties: they sang in boys' choirs at the Dionysia, Anthesteria, Lenaia and Thargelia, for example, and no doubt many others. One might almost say that the 'three *kē*'s' in Athenian primary education – *grammatikē*, *mousikē* and *gymnastikē* –

⁶²Cf. Pickard-Cambridge (1927, 31-38); especially important is Antiphon Rh. 6.11-13.

⁶³A single chorus: Xen. *Mem.* 3.3.12, and Plut. *Nic.* 3.5-6. The *Ath. Pol.* 56 says of this *theōria* to Delos (ἡ εἰς Δῆλον) that the ship – a triacontor – carried the fourteen youths to Delos escorted by an Architheoros.

⁶⁴641-646: ἐπτα μὲν ἔτη γεγῶσ' εὐθὺς ἡρρηφόρου· / εἴτ' ἀλετρις ἢ δεκέτις οὔσα τάρχηγέτι· / καίτ' ἔχουσα τὸν κροκωτὸν ἄρκτος ἢ Βραυρωνίους· / κάκανηφόρου ποτ' οὔσα παῖς καλλή... Cf. P. Brulé, *La fille d' Athènes. La religion des filles à Athènes à l'époque classique: mythes, cultes, société*, Paris 1987.



Figure 2: Dancers of a *partheneion*. Rf krater by Villa Giulia Painter in Rome. C. 450 BC.

served to equip them for this one central activity: the performance of cult songs for the gods.⁶⁵ For this they needed to understand the words of the songs, and to master the music and dance-steps which accompanied them.⁶⁶

Very few of the doubtless numerous and ubiquitous *partheneia*, ‘maiden-songs’, survive. The Louvre papyrus of Alkman’s *partheneion* allows us a tantalizing glimpse of the merry atmosphere of such a piece, probably

⁶⁵Or to put it the other way round: service in these *choroi* provided a main focus of primary education; cf. Plato, *Laws* 672e ὅλη μὲν που χορεία ὅλη παιδευσίς ἦν ἡμῖν, “all choral dancing constituted the entirety of education in our opinion” (cf. *ibid.* 796c); various contributors to *Arion* 3.1, 1995, take up this point: Bacon (1995, 14-15); Lonsdale (1995, 34-37); Nagy (1994/95, 44) writes: “I suggest that the most accurate and appropriate term for describing the experience of the Athenian chorus members is in fact *paideia* in the sense of liberal ‘education’ – which is precisely the inherited function of the chorus”.

⁶⁶Note the expression used by the *chorēgos* in Antiphon 6.11 to describe the ‘school’ he set up in his own home to train a boys’ chorus for the Thargelia: διδασκαλεῖον...κατεσκεύασα.

performed by a chorus singing in honour of Artemis Orthia.⁶⁷ Ps. Plutarch (*de Musica* 17, 1136f) states that “many partheneia were composed by Alkman, Pindar, Simonides and Bacchylides”; the Alexandrians knew of – and probably had in their library – as many as three books of Pindar’s partheneia (see above n. 39). The girls were not only paying tribute to a goddess through their choruses, they were also presenting themselves to the menfolk of the community in a favourable light.⁶⁸ This is the background for the numerous tales in myth of a girl snatched by a passionate man or god from Artemis’ chorus-line.⁶⁹ Callimachus says in an elaborate conceit (*H* 3.170-182) that the beauty of the nymphs dancing in Artemis’ chorus-line would stop even the sun in his tracks. The training for, and singing of, *partheneia* was, then, an element of a girl’s upbringing which not only introduced her to the main deities of her community, but also represented a semi-official presentation to the community at large, a coming-of-age ceremony at which she might secure a partner for the future. The rf. vase by the Villa Giulia painter (fig. 2) shows a dignified example of the girls’ chorus.

It is possible that in some circumstances the paian formed the male equivalent of the partheneion as that genre of sacred song which young males learned and performed as part of their training in the traditional ceremonies of their particular polis (see further p. 2ff.). Rutherford has argued that the typical performers of the paian were young men of military age (ephebes) who, in performing the disciplined and orderly paian in honour

⁶⁷At line 61 the girls say about themselves ἄμιν ὀρθρία φᾶρος φεροίσας, but the scholion reports that Aristophanes of Byzantium read Ὀρθία, i.e. Artemis Orthia.

⁶⁸See in particular Eur. *IT* 1144-1152 where the chorus of Greek women nostalgically recall their dancing as unmarried girls in fine dresses and hair arranged in hanging locks; released from their mothers’ supervision they joined the other girls in a kind of beauty contest (147 ἀμίλλας χαρίτων).

⁶⁹E.g. the story Aphrodite tells to Anchises in *HHAphr.* 117ff. νῦν δέ μ’ ἀνήραζε χρυσόρραπις Ἀργεῖφόντης / ἐκ χοροῦ Ἀρτέμιδος χρυσηλακάτου κελαδαινῆς. / πολλαὶ δὲ νύμφαι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεισίβοιαι / παίζομεν, ἀμφὶ δ’ ὄμιλος ἀπείριτος ἐστεφάνωτο. “Hermes of the golden staff snatched me from the midst of a chorus of Artemis... Many young women and girls who bring a price in cattle were celebrating and there was a huge crowd of onlookers...” Cf. *Il.* 16.181: τῆς δὲ κρατὺς Ἀργεῖφόντης / ἠράσατ’, ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδὼν μετὰ μελπομένησιν / ἐν χορῶνι Ἀρτέμιδος. . . , “and the mighty Argos-Slayer (= Hermes) fell in love with her when he saw with his eyes among (the other girls) singing in a chorus of Artemis...” Eur. *Hel.* 1312-14 (the daughter of the Mountain Mother snatched from a chorus:) τὰν ἀρπασθεῖσαν κυκλίων / χορῶν ἔζω παρθενίων / μετὰ κουρᾶν. Cf. Calame (1977); Dowden (1989).

of the archetypically young and invincible Apollo, were demonstrating the strength and solidarity of their community which rested on their collective effort.⁷⁰

Although we are, as usual, best informed about Athens, the institution of trained choruses of men, women, girls and boys from a state's citizen-body representing the whole community at festivals of the gods is attested all over the Greek world. In the archaic and classical period the representatives were not professional musicians and dancers, but rather ordinary citizens trained specially for the particular purpose. A striking and tragic instance is recorded by Herodotus (6.27.2): a chorus of one hundred boys was sent by the Chians to Delphi (before or around 500 B.C.), of which all but two were 'carried away' by epidemic disease (λοῦμος ἀπήνευξε).⁷¹ Much later we hear of delegations of 'hymnodoi', a term defined by Pollux (*Onom.* 1.35) in connection with performances at Eleusis. The word itself, denoting presumably a singer with the official duty of singing a cult hymn, is not new: a 4th c. Attic inscription celebrates one Theodoros, a 'hymnodos', in elegiac verses.⁷² In the imperial period 'hymnodoi' becomes a common term in inscriptions from various cities in Asia Minor relating to the cult of the Roman emperor and/or of Roma and Augustus.⁷³ But the term is also found in a series of 2nd c. A.D. inscriptions found in Klaros by L. Robert;⁷⁴ these texts record delegations sent to Apollo by several cities (Laodikeia, Hierapytna, Phokea, Chios etc.) and contain lists of singers,

⁷⁰Rutherford (1995a, 115-16): "Thus, there turns out to be a connection between the performance of the paean and the mechanism of initiation. There is a precise analogy to the initiatory function of the partheion. . . Song-dance performance by *choroi* of young men and women conveyed coded moral messages about the standards of behavior expected of the members. . . Therefore paeanic song-dance represents the organization and exhibition of the collective strength of adult males. . . The invocation of Paian/Apollo concomitant with performance of paeanic song-dance can be construed as an external projection of the strong, youthful male – the ideal citizen."

⁷¹Another example: thirty-five young people were sent annually from Messene to participate in the Daphnephoria festival in honour of Apollo (? and Artemis) at Rhegium: see F. Costabile, 'Il culto di Apollo quale testimonianza della tradizione corale e religiosa di Reggio e Messana', *MEFR* 91, 1979, 525-45.

⁷²W. Peek, 'Aus der Werkstatt', *Studies presented to D.M. Robinson*, Saint-Louis 1953, 312-18.

⁷³In Pergamon: *IGR* (Cagnat) iv 353; Smyrna: *Inscr. of the Brit. Mus.* 600a5; Halikar-nassos: *ibid.* 894, 13; Nikopolis: *IGR* (Cagnat) I 562, 565, 1413; Hypaepa *ibid.* 1608; Kyzikos: see H. Halfmann, 'Hymnoden von Asia in Kyzikos', in: E. Schwertheim (ed.), *Mysische Studien*, Bonn 1990, 21-26.

⁷⁴*SEG* 37, 1987, 961-80.

called *hymnōdoi* (or ‘hymn-singers’, οἱ ὑμνήσαντες). The numbers vary between five and fifteen persons, either boys or girls, or a mixed chorus of boys and girls. The choruses were accompanied by official managers (παιδονόμοι) and in some cases mention is made of the ‘choir-master’ (καθηγησάμενος τοῦ ὕμνου) who taught the young singers. In one case the Laodiceans record a certain Nedullianus as their ‘hymn-writer for life’ (ὑμνογράφος διὰ βίου⁷⁵). At Miletos there was a guild of professional hymn-singers called ‘molpoi’.⁷⁶

The professionalization of hymn-singing in the Hellenistic period is further evidenced by the widespread activity of ‘Professional Singers of Dionysos’ (Διονύσου τεχνῖται). Numerous cities had their own (competing) guild of such professionals, who performed choral song and dance at religious ceremonies and pan-Hellenic competitions.⁷⁷ Limenios’ Delphic Paian, for example, dating to 128/7 BC (no. 2.6.2), was performed by the Athenian guild of Technitai. Bélis (1992), the author of the most recent edition of the epigraphic hymns from Delphi, argues that the Athenian Technitai were, in this instance, consciously competing with a rival group, the Technitai of the Isthmos and Nemea (see p. 100).

Were hymns sung solely by choruses, or were there solo performances by the poet himself or a lead singer in cult worship, or perhaps a mixture of both? Clearly – with the exception of traditional songs such as the Elean women’s song to Dionysos (no. 12.1) – a single poet was responsible for writing the words of a hymn, setting them to music and instructing a chorus in the dance steps to accompany them. In this sense an Attic tragedian was always a *didaskalos*, a teacher of the words, music and choreography to other performers. The celebrations following Agathon’s victory in the tragic competition, described by Plato in the *Symposion*, show that the poet, even if he did not act, was recognized as the author of the play and took the credit for its success. In the Hellenistic period we find a number of inscriptions which record the honours awarded to a single poet (e.g. Limenios and Aristonoos at Delphi, see nos. 2.6.2 and 2.4) for composing a hymn which formed part of a religious service; in some cases it is also recorded that the poet took part in the actual musical performance. But the

⁷⁵IGR iv.1587, 14-15.

⁷⁶Μολποί at Miletos and its colony Olbia: SIG 57; see Graf (1974a), Gordon (2000, 350). For μολποί in Ephesos: IK 11.1 and 27.3; Mytilene IGR (Cagnat) IV 46.

⁷⁷I.E. Stefanis, *DIONYSIAKOI TECHNITAI*, Heraklion 1988; Sophia Aneziri, *Die Vereine der dionysischen Techniten in der hellenistischen Zeit*, Diss. Heidelberg 1997.

question remains: were the words of a hymn always sung in unison by a chorus, or were some sung by a solo voice (the poet himself on occasion), in alternation perhaps with choral passages?⁷⁸

Davies (1988) has argued that the dividing line between solo and choral lyric may not have been as hard and fast as many in the last two centuries have believed. The recovery of long sections of Stesichoros' narrative poems shows that these were composed in lyric triads – normally taken as the hallmark of choral poetry – although their length and their 'Homeric' manner indicate that they were meant for solo recital. Davies argues, not that there was not a distinction between solo and choral lyric, but rather that most poets probably composed in both modes at different times. We should not imagine that all Doric lyric was choral and all Aeolic or Ionian lyric solo. He also considers two possible forms of 'mixed' performance: (1) a solo singer sings while a chorus dances an accompanying dance (2) some passages of a given lyric are sung by a solo voice, others by the whole chorus. The latter possibility is admitted in the case of Bacchylides by Maehler (1982, part 1, 1 with n. 4). A very long choral lyric such as Pindar's fourth Pythian might respond well to such a division between solo and choral passages. Aristotle's word for the leaders of dithyrambs (*Poet.* 1449a11 τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον) points to a similar distinction between a vocal leader of a chorus and the chorus itself. The scene on an Attic red-figure vase by the Kleophon Painter appears to illustrate the situation whereby a poet sang (probably a dithyramb) to aulos music while a male chorus provided standing accompaniment (fig. 3 on p. 27; *ARV*² 1145, 35). The mouths of the chorus members are open, indicating perhaps that they are singing, but their position (in silhouette) is clearly distinct from that of the poet/chorus leader (frontal).

'Agathon's hymn' in *Thesm.* (our no. 11.3.1) appears to exemplify the antiphony between chorus leader and chorus, unless the teaching situation depicted by Aristophanes falsifies the true mode in which the final hymn will be sung. In the play, Agathon is shown engaged in lyric dialogue with a chorus of women (imaginary, as we argue in our discussion). Repeatedly Agathon gives a lead and the chorus takes up the theme and elaborates upon it. The pattern is also visible in the hymns Aristophanes included in *Lysistrata* to accompany the signing of a peace treaty between the Athenians and the Spartans (our no. 11.2); here ambassadors from both sides

⁷⁸The ancient term for voices in counterpoint was *amoibaion*.



Figure 3: A dithyramb chorus in action. Rf bell krater by Kleophon Painter. Copenhagen National Museum. C. 420 BC.

proclaim solo invocations of deities who are to watch over, and enforce, the peace treaty, to which a chorus utters an *epthymnion*, or formulaic response. Tragic hymns, too, are often divided between a solo voice and the chorus, either with matching parts given to both (called then an *amoibaion*), or with the lead taken by a solo voice and formulaic responses given by the chorus. The parodos of Euripides' *Helen* affords a good example of the former: Helen strikes up a prayer-hymn to the underworld powers in an expression of grief for the many fallen at Troy, to which the chorus respond with a matching antistrophe (167-190).

In the Hellenistic period the role of the solo voice in cult poetry may have become so dominant as to reduce the choral responses to single lines. The 'Adonis-song' in Theocritus 15 was sung by a woman soloist, although she refers to a choral refrain in her song; several hymns by Callimachus are put into the mouth of an unidentified speaker whose monologue is interrupted only by single line refrains from an imagined chorus. Bion's *Lament for Adonis* has a similar structure: a single narrative voice is punctuated at regular intervals by exhortations to a chorus to sing the formulaic lament

for Adonis. We assume that these literary instances reflect to some degree cult practice: there is no need to assume that a hymn could only be performed by a chorus. Just as in other forms of music solo voices alternated with choral passages, hymns may often have followed this pattern.⁷⁹ The 4th-c. Athenian hymnōdos Theodoros may very well have been a solo artist as he is celebrated in the inscription mentioned above as a fine artist (p. 24).

In some notably conservative communities (e.g. Sparta, Arcadia) learning the traditional hymns to be sung on certain occasions was obligatory for the citizens. Around 150 BC Polybius (4.20.8-11) observes that among the old-fashioned inhabitants of Arcadia there was still a custom, enforced by law, that all boys from a very early age onwards (ἐκ νηπίων) be trained in singing the traditional hymns and paians. He goes on to report that in annual festivals the boys and the young men dance not only the old repertoire but also the songs composed by Timotheos and Philoxenos, and that – although the Arcadians do not consider it shameful to reject other cultural acquisitions (μαθήματα) – nobody can withdraw from these singing activities “because of the obligation for everyone to learn them” (διὰ τὸ κατ’ ἀνάγκην πάντας μανθάνειν). Xenophon evidently regards it as right and proper that his hero, the Spartan king Agesilaos, returns home for the Hyakinthia immediately after completing a successful military campaign and joins in the community dancing and singing of the paian like any other citizen.⁸⁰

Place of performance

Those familiar with Christian church services might assume that Greek hymns were sung *inside* ‘god’s house’, i.e. his temple, perhaps before the cult image itself which was (usually) placed seated in the *cella*. But Greek religion was conducted largely out of doors: processions and sacrifice –

⁷⁹That was the case in a very early form of community song: the ritual laments in the *Iliad* sung for Hektor (Bk. 24) by Andromache, Hekabe and Helen; each solo lament is followed by a general lament by the assembled women (ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες 722; cf. 746, 760, 776).

⁸⁰*Ages.* 2.17: ἀναπετάσας τῆς Πελοποννήσου τὰς πύλας οὕτως οἴκαδε ἀπελθὼν εἰς τὰ Ἰακίνθια, ὅπου ἐτάχθη ὑπὸ τοῦ χοροποιοῦ, τὸν παιᾶνα τῷ θεῷ συνεπέτελει: “After opening the gates of the Peloponnese in this way he went home for the Hyakinthia and joined in singing the paian to the god at the place assigned to him by the chorus-master”.



Figure 4: Sacrifice with processional hymn. Painted wooden tablet from Pitsa. C. 540 BC. Athens, National Archaeological Museum.

both typically accompanied by hymn-singing – focussed on the spatial transition from town to temple and in particular on the altar erected outside the temple entrance. Aristophanes (*Clouds* 307, cf. *Peace* 397) mentions ‘most holy processions to the gods’ (πρόσοδοι μακάρων ἱερώτατοι). According to Pausanias (4.4.1) processional hymns (προσόδια) were current from the beginning of the archaic period, as Eumelos composed one for the Messenians when they wanted to send a *theōria* to Delos.⁸¹ One of the painted wooden tablets from Pitsa in Corinthia (6th c. BC) depicts precisely the scene of a *prosodos* to an altar, with hymn-singing to lyre and aulos music (fig. 4 on p. 29).⁸² The term *prosodion* is occasionally found in inscriptions, and Athenaios (253b) informs us that when the Athenians welcomed Demetrios Poliorketes as their liberator, they composed paians and procession-songs in his honour (ἐποίησαν εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν Δημήτριον παιᾶνας καὶ προσόδια).⁸³ In the Hellenistic period *prosodia* seem to have become very popular; inscriptions record victories won by poets at festivals in Delphi, Thespiai, Lebadeia (see Bremer, 2000, 61 with n.9).

⁸¹ τὸ δέ σφισιν ἄισμα προσόδιον ἐς τὸν θεὸν ἐδίδαξεν Εὐμήλος; see Pavese (1987, 53-57).

⁸² The picture is a votive offering to the Nymphs offered by a Corinthian man (whose name is illegible); the women’s names are Euthydika and Eukolis.

⁸³ For one such see *CA* pp. 173-5, composed by one Hermokles, cited by Athenaios 253D.

In his *Life of Nicias* (3.4-6) Plutarch gives a vivid description of the particularly brilliant performance in (?)417 BC of a processional hymn sung by an Athenian chorus on approaching Delos.⁸⁴ We are told that the choruses sent by city-states to sing at the Apollonia used to arrive at the island in some confusion and start to sing their hymns without any proper order or decorum. Nicias took elaborate measures to rectify this situation: he had a pontoon bridge constructed in Athens with which to bridge the narrow strait between the small island of Rheneia and Delos. He landed first at Rheneia with a chorus and sacrificial animals and put his (festively decorated) bridge in place by night; then, when day dawned, “he led the procession and chorus in honour of the god across the bridge; in lavish outfit, the chorus sang (sc. the hymns) as they crossed”.⁸⁵ Plutarch does not record the texts of the hymns or to which gods they were addressed, but we can be sure they concentrated on the Delian ‘trinity’ Apollo, Artemis, Leto – possibly also Delos itself (see below p. 36).

Heliodoros’ novel *Aithiopika* contains a detailed description of the processional hymns performed by girls’ choruses during an embassy of Ainianes from Thessaly to Delphi where they intended to entreat the hero Neoptolemos for protection of their city. Although the description is part of a fictional narrative, Heliodoros was clearly concerned to provide an authentic setting. After describing the hecatomb of cattle which ambled – presumably up the Sacred Way – toward Apollo’s precinct, Heliodoros’ narrator states:

“Some pretty and shapely Thessalian girls with their hair down accompanied these herds of cattle with their drivers. They were divided into two choruses; the girls in one chorus bore hand-baskets (καλαθίσκοις) filled with flowers and fruits in season, the other group carried head-baskets (χανῶ) full of sacrificial cakes and incense-burners with which they filled the air with sweet-smelling smoke. Their hands were not occupied by holding these baskets, which they bore aloft on their heads; they held each other’s hand either in a straight (στυγίρη) or in a crossing (ἐγκάρσιον) chorus-line so that it was possible for them simultaneously to walk forward and to dance. The other chorus provided the actual musical song for

⁸⁴This is W.K. Pritchett’s preferred date: *The Greek State at War* iii, Berkeley/London 1979, 331. Further discussion: S. Hornblower, *A commentary on Thucydides*, vol. I, Oxford 1991, 517ff.

⁸⁵εἶθ’ ἅμα ἡμέραι τήν τε πομπήν τῶι θεῶι καί τὸν χορὸν ἄγων κεκοσμημένον πολυτελεῶς καὶ αἰδοντα διὰ τῆς γεφύρας ἀπεβίβαζε. Cf. Furley (1995a, 33-4). After the sacrifice and the competition and the banqueting he devoted the bronze palm-tree as an offering to the god”.

them for it had the job of singing the entire hymn.” (3.2)

Heliodoros also gives the text of the hymn to Thetis and Neoptolemos which the chorus of girls sang; it begins and ends with the same line – “Thetis I sing, Thetis of the golden hair” – an indication that the hymn might be repeated to provide continuous choral accompaniment to the fairly lengthy procession of a hundred cattle and sundry other sacrificial animals. We note how one chorus sang the hymn while the other danced an accompaniment – an arrangement similar to that mentioned for Delian choruses in Call. *H* 4.304-306, where a men’s chorus sang while a women’s chorus danced.⁸⁶ Heliodoros abbreviates the hymns sung when the procession reached Neoptolemos’ grave, saying merely that the men and women uttered their respective traditional cries.⁸⁷

The arrival of the chorus at the temple marks the next ‘dramatic’ setting for a hymn: the worshippers stand before the palace of the ruler, as it were, and wait for the gates of the temple to open. Precisely such a custom is attested for the Ionian city of Teos. Since Dionysos was the most important divinity here, it was a standing rule (at least in Tiberius’ time) that every day the ephebes, accompanied by their priest, sang hymns in his honour at the opening of the temple doors.⁸⁸ That this was not an isolated custom in just one city but goes back to earlier centuries is shown by the opening lines of Callimachus’ *Hymn to Apollo*. The speaker is stationed in front of Apollo’s temple, and when he observes that the god is about to appear, he orders the doors to open⁸⁹ and the boys to begin their singing and dancing: “Bolts of the gates, open now of your own accord! You locks do likewise! For the god is no great distance away. And you young men! Prepare

⁸⁶Lines 304-6: οἱ μὲν ὑπαείδουσι νόμον Λυκίοιο γέροντος,.../ αἱ δὲ ποδὶ πλήσσουσι χορίτιδες ἀσφαλὲς οὔδας. See p. 147. Lucian, *de saltat.* 16, says of another Delian chorus (of boys, at the Apollonia or Dionysia, cf. Bruneau (1970, 70)) that some boys sang to aulos and kithara music while a chosen few danced an *hyporchema*: παίδων χοροὶ συνελθόντες ὑπ’ αὐλῶν καὶ κιθάρων οἱ μὲν ἐχόρευον, ὑπορχοῦντο δὲ οἱ ἄριστοι προκριθέντες ἐξ αὐτῶν τὰ γούν τοῖς χοροῖς γραφόμενα τούτοις ἄσματα ὑπορχήματα ἐκαλεῖτο.

⁸⁷3.5 ἀλόλυξαν μὲν αἱ γυναῖκες, ἠλάλαξαν δὲ οἱ ἄνδρες.

⁸⁸Sokolowski (1955, no. 28, lines 8-10): ὕμνους ἀιδεσθαι [καθ’ ἐκά]στην ἡμέραν τοῦ προκαθηγεμ[όνος τῆς πόλεως] θεοῦ Διονύσου ἐν τῇ ἀνοίξει τ[οῦ νεῶ] ὑπὸ τῶν ἐ[φ]ήβων καὶ τοῦ ἱερέως τῶν παι[δῶν] κτλ.

⁸⁹On the opening of doors cf. O. Weinreich, *Türöffnung* (= *Religionsgeschichtliche Studien*, Darmstadt 1968, 38-298); on this passage of Callimachus see Williams (1978, 15ff.), and Bing (1993).

yourselves now for the song and dance!”⁹⁰

Sacrifices, which took place in front of the temple, were often accompanied by hymn-singing; the term *parabōmion*, ‘by-the-altar’, is used to denote such a song,⁹¹ and sometimes the location around the altar is given in the text of the hymn (e.g. in no. 1.1, the Dictaeon hymn to Zeus, lines 9-10: ἀεῖδομεν ἀμφὶ βωμὸν οὐερκῆ) or in the instructions accompanying the hymn (e.g. the *lex sacra* accompanying the Erythraean paian (no. 6.1), lines 34-35: “first sing the following paian round Apollo’s altar”⁹²

Turning from public to private hymns, it is clear that certain religious songs were performed in a domestic setting; prayer-hymns were called for at a certain stage of men’s *symposia*;⁹³ wedding-songs invoking Aphrodite, Eros and Hymen were performed outside the home of the bridal couple;⁹⁴ Dikaiopolis’ hymn to Phales in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* (263-270) is a (jocular) example of how a single farmstead might celebrate its own private rural Dionysia, with the whole household joining in the cult songs and dances. No doubt other domestic rites such as the Genesia or Amphidromia (Samter, 1901, 59ff.), associated with the formal acceptance of a new family member, were accompanied by prayers to the household gods (Zeus Ktesios, Hestia, Hermes, Hekate) which might include traditional sung texts. Magical hymns (see below p. 47ff.) were private by definition; Simaitha in Theocritus’ second idyll performed her nocturnal incantations against Delphis in the privacy of her home assisted only by one servant; all the texts of the magical papyri were meant to be performed by a solitary practitioner at home, by night.

⁹⁰αὐτοὶ νῦν κατοχῆς ἀνακλίνασθε πυλάων, / αὐταὶ δὲ κληῖδες· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς οὐκέτι μακρὴν / οἱ δὲ νέοι μολπὴν τε καὶ ἐς χορὸν ἐντύνασθε. (6-8)

⁹¹Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci Inscr. Sel.*, Leipzig 1905, 309: μετὰ τὸ συντελεσθῆναι... τὰς θυσίας, αἴσαι τοὺς ἐλευθέρους παιῖδας παραβώμιον κτλ. The inscription is from Teos, 2nd c. BC.

⁹²παιωνίζειν πρῶτον περὶ τὸν βωμὸν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τόνδε τὸν παιῶνα κτλ. Further examples: Xouthos in Eur. *Ion* instructs his wife (and the serving-women) σὺ δ’ ἀμφὶ βωμοῦς... εὐχου; the hymn at 452ff. (our no. 10.3.2) follows; id. *IA* 676 στήσομεν ἄρ’ ἀμφὶ βωμόν, ὦ πάτερ, χορούς; ibid. 1480 ἐλίσσετ’ ἀμφὶ ναὸν / ἀμφὶ βωμὸν Ἄρτεμιν.

⁹³See esp. Xenophanes B1 (West) quoted on p. 44 and 161 below. Skolia belong in this category; for examples, see no. 7.2 and, for a non-Athenian example, Ion of Chios fr. 27 West; Aristotle’s hymn to Virtue (no. 7.4) was intended for regular performance at meetings of the philosophical circle. Ariphron’s paian to Hygieia (no. 6.3) was also sung at symposia.

⁹⁴For a literary example see Eur. *Phaethon* 227-244 Diggle.

Dance

We are poorly informed about the nature of the dances performed in various cults;⁹⁵ nor does the metre of hymns permit us to identify particular dances. A number of bare names survive: the dance called sikinnis was a speciality of choruses in satyr-plays where the primary reference was to the cult of Dionysos (Eur. *Cycl.* 37); there was a ‘geranos’ or stork-dance connected with the myth of Theseus’ triumphant return from Crete having slain the Minotaur; it consisted apparently of a number of winding movements of the chorus, perhaps in imitation of Theseus’ path through the labyrinth.⁹⁶ Pyrrhic dances in which the dancers bore arms or brandished them in a minatory manner are recorded for several festivals, sometimes in connection with the ‘enhoplian’ metre.⁹⁷ It is likely that the Cretan hymn of the Kouretes (no. 1.1) was performed by youths in armour, as they were imitating an original dance of this nature by the mythical Kouretes on the occasion of Zeus’ birth.⁹⁸

In some cults song and dance (e.g. dithyramb, iobakchos) was wild and licentious;⁹⁹ vase-painting shows dancing Bacchantes, for example, in a sequence of ‘stills’ which might be combined using the techniques of cartoon cinematography to bring their motions to life. In others (e.g. paian, nome) dignity and decorum were called for.¹⁰⁰ No doubt the combination of music, dance and song gave atmosphere and individuality to a particular cult. The chorus of *mystai* in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (our section 11.4) conveys a vivid impression of the atmosphere of excitement and mystery which accompanied the procession to Eleusis for the celebration of the Eleusinian rites of Demeter and Kore. The repeated chant ‘Iakch’ ō Iakche!’ (υ—υ—υ—) combined with the predominant ionic rhythm of the cult songs (υυ—

⁹⁵For a good recent treatment of dance and ritual play see Lonsdale (1996).

⁹⁶Plut. *Thes.* 21, see K. Latte, *De saltationibus Graecorum capita quinque*, Gießen 1913, 67-71; Bruneau (1970, 29-32).

⁹⁷E.g. the Panathenaic dance in arms, ἐνόπλιος ῥυθμός, performed by youths called ‘pyrrhichistai’. Cf. Lysias 21.1: Plato, *Laws* 815a. Lucretius (*DRN* 2.600ff.) vividly describes the dance in arms of the *galloi* in the cult of Magna Mater. See generally Lawler (1964), Lonsdale (1996, 148ff.).

⁹⁸Cf. Lonsdale (1996, 148ff.) Perhaps this was the Cretan ‘prylis’ dance, explained by the scholiast as a dance in arms (enhoplian), celebrating Zeus’ infancy (Callimachus, *HZeus* 50-54). For the *prylis* see p. 377.

⁹⁹Proklos ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 320b12f.: ἔστι δὲ ὁ μὲν διθύραμβος κεκινημένος καὶ πολὺ τὸ ἐνθουσιῶδες μετὰ χορείας ἐμφαίνων κτλ.

¹⁰⁰Cf. Philochoros ap. Athen. 14.628a: μεθ’ ἡσυχίας καὶ τάξεως μέλποντες.

—) must have rung in the ears of participants long after the event. By analogy with the Korybantic rites, which, apart from constituting a religious cult, also undertook ritual healing by music therapy, whereby the ‘patient’ was treated by that particular melody and rhythm to which he was most responsive, we may assume that ancient festivals had their own individual musical and rhythmic quality. Different gods stimulated different rhythms in their worshippers.

Musical accompaniment

Hymns to the gods were performed to musical accompaniment; the usual instruments were the aulos, a wind-instrument West recommends translating as ‘oboe’, and stringed instruments such as the barbitos, phorminx or kithara (see Appendix C in vol. II). Frequently a combination of both wind and strings was employed, as in the Delphic paians with musical notation.¹⁰¹ In some cults – Dionysos, Mother of the Gods (= Kybele) – percussion instruments such as the ty(m)panon were used, and we find one reference to castanets in a song for Artemis probably sung by a chorus of girls (no. 12.3). Musicians did not stand still while a chorus danced to their accompaniment, as one might imagine from modern orchestras, quartets or even pop groups; the passage from the *HHApollo* quoted above (p. 14) shows Apollo playing the kithara and moving freely round and between the choruses of goddesses with steps which presumably underlined the rhythm.¹⁰² In the Epidaurian hymn to Pan (no. 6.5) we find a similar description of the musician leading the dance of nymphs while he plays, in this case on the syrinx (= Pan-pipe).¹⁰³ Wind instruments prevent the musician singing; kitharodists on the other hand may sing as they play, and competitions in *kitharōdia* show that they did.

The music of ancient Greek hymns is only preserved in a few exceptional cases, among them the famous two Delphic paians and an anonymous paian to Apollo (no. 12.4);¹⁰⁴ readers seeking information on the musical score accompanying these texts should consult specialist publi-

¹⁰¹Cf. no. 2.6.1, l. 12-14. Iphigeneia’s wedding-song was to be accompanied by aulos, kithara and syrinx (Eur. *IA* 1036-39).

¹⁰²202-3 καλὰ καὶ ὕψι βιβάζς... μαρμαρυγαὶ τε ποδῶν: “taking fine high steps... the twinkling of his feet”.

¹⁰³Cf. *HHPan* 19.15, and 19-27.

¹⁰⁴For a fragmentary hymn in dactylic hexameters with musical notation from Epidauros see West (1986).

cations on ancient Greek music such as those by Pöhlmann (1970), West (1992) or Hagel (2000).

Music was inseparable from ancient cult. Two passages describing the Hyperboreans, who represented in some ways a distant and admirable ideal for the Greeks, a people whom Apollo chose to visit for substantial portions of the year, illustrate the fact. Ps. Plutarch (*de Musica* 14) states that in earlier times the Hyperboreans sent their sacred embassies to Delos to the music of auloi, Pan-pipes and kithara.¹⁰⁵ And in *P* 10, which includes the Hyperboreans as its myth, Pindar says that the Muse characterizes their lifestyle: everywhere resounds the choral singing of girls and the music of lyres and pipes:

“The Muse is never distant from their life-style. Everywhere choruses of girls and the loud strains of lyres and melodies of auloi ring out.” (37-39)¹⁰⁶

A passage from a cletic hymn composed around 480 (Theognis 773-8) illustrates how the Greeks saw their worship as inseparable from music. The poet addresses Apollo:

“Come in person, and keep the sacrilegious army of the Medes away from this city! Then at each return of spring the people of Megara will offer you a glorious hecatomb in festive mood, taking joy in lyre music and in lovely celebration, in the dancing of paians and in exclamations around your altar.”¹⁰⁷

1.5 Cult song and Pan-Hellenic festival

If one plotted on a map of Greece the cults celebrated in surviving hymns and in notices about lost works, there would be a wide dispersal of isolated or single occurrences, but significant clusters round the principal pan-Hellenic cult centres at which there were musical competitions: Delphi, Delos, Athens, Epidauros, roughly in that order.¹⁰⁸ In particular the

¹⁰⁵τὰ ἐξ Ἵπερβορέων δ' ἱερὰ μετ' αὐλῶν καὶ συρίγγων καὶ κιθάρας εἰς τὴν Δῆλόν φασι τὸ παλαιὸν στέλλεσθαι.

¹⁰⁶Μοῦσα οὐκ ἀποδαμεί / τρόποις ἐπὶ σφετέροισι· παντᾶι δὲ χοροὶ παρθένων / λυρᾶν τε βοαὶ καναχαί τ' αὐλῶν δονέονται.

¹⁰⁷αὐτὸς δὲ στρατὸν ὕβριστὴν Μήδων ἀπέρυκε / τῆσδε πόλεος, ἵνα σοι λαοὶ ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ / ἦρος ἐπερχομένου κλειτὰς πέμπωσ' ἑκατόμβας / τερπόμενοι κιθάρῃ καὶ ἔρατῃ θαλίῃ.

¹⁰⁸Cf. Herington (1985, *passim*, esp. 161-166).

cults of Apollo and his related deities at Delphi and Delos shine forth – like the god himself – in prominence and splendour. Time and again it is the Delian ‘trinity’ of Apollo-Artemis-Leto (combined sometimes with the island of Delos itself) which receives hymnic worship at Delos itself and in external texts relating to Delos.¹⁰⁹ The ancient hymnic tradition at Delos was connected with a legendary figure, Olen of Lycia, who was reputed to have composed the authoritative cult hymns of the Delian gods, including Eileithyia, who helped at Apollo’s birth. Unfortunately none of Olen’s hymns survive, and of the innumerable cult hymns which must have been performed by state *theōriai* to the Delian Apollonia festival, only a few fragments survive.¹¹⁰

The situation is similar at Delphi. Here we find a slightly different constellation of gods: Dionysos, Athena and, to a lesser extent Poseidon, join the Delian triad of Apollo, Artemis and Leto. As we shall see (pp. 80ff.), Apollo’s arrival at Delphi and foundation of the Delphic oracle were closely associated with one type of cult song, the paian. Other ancient Delphic hymns by nebulous figures such as Boio and the Peleiadai sang of the founding of the oracle by travellers from the far distant north, the Hyperboreans, and of Zeus and Gaia as the primordial powers at Delphi (below p. 92). We hear of an early musical competition at Delphi for a ‘hymn to the god’, first won by a Cretan Chrysothemis. The Delphic cult and the musical events of the Pythian games were clearly another highly productive centre of hymns to Apollo and his circle. As chance would have it, we possess a fair number of epigraphic hymns from Delphi from the fourth c. BC onwards, but none from Delos.

The situation at Athens is more complex. On the one hand we find local cults – the Thargelia for Apollo, Eleusinian Mysteries for Demeter and Kore, Panathenaia for Athena – attracting contributions in their musical and religious competitions from international artists,¹¹¹ and on the other, from the fifth century on, the City Dionysia festival,¹¹² which, as we shall see in the chapter on Athens, generated a vast repertoire of religious hymns to all manner of gods as part of the drama being enacted. We

¹⁰⁹E.g. the stasimon in Euripides *IT* 1234-82 = no. 10.4.

¹¹⁰For an account of the references to Olen’s lost hymns and a selection of the surviving Pindaric fragments, see the chapter on Delos.

¹¹¹The dithyrambs of Pindar and Simonides for performance at Athens are a good example.

¹¹²And to a lesser extent the Lenaia.

have to distinguish here between actual cult hymns – those composed and performed for the deity worshipped at a particular festival – and theatrical hymns which purport to be examples of the former type but are in fact part of the dramatic illusion. The situation is complicated still further in some dramas of Aristophanes in that the hymns sung by the chorus tend to fall within the *parabasis*, i.e. that section of the play in which the chorus steps out of its dramatic rôle and addresses the audience directly either as the poet's mouthpiece or as representatives of a section of the Athenian population. Here such hymns as those to Athena and Poseidon in the *Knights* (nos. 11.1.1 and 11.1.2) might on the one hand be classed as genuine cult hymns to gods of the *polis*, but on the other hand they are not performed within the setting of a state festival to either Athena or Poseidon, but as devotional *extranea* to the play proper.¹¹³

At Epidauros Apollo and his son Asklepios hold centre-stage both in cult and accompanying hymns (as we shall see), but related deities such as Hygieia, Pan and the Mother of the Gods join the local pantheon. Epidauros established itself as the centre of Asklepios' healing cult in the course of the late sixth and fifth centuries, and claimed – sometimes with missionary fervour – priority in this regard. Other cult centres of Asklepios and the hymns associated with them were either direct offshoots of the Epidaurian cult (as in the case of Athens), or looked to Epidauros as the authoritative home of the god. We have decided to group those hymns to Asklepios deriving from the god's Ionian cults – in particular the various versions of the Paean Erythraeus (named after the oldest extant version recorded on stone at Erythrai), and the opening prayer-hymn of Herodas' fourth *mimiambos* which probably relates to the Asklepieion at Kos – with the Epidaurian hymns as reflecting a common Epidaurian stock.

The question of associated deities at particular cult centres is an important one.¹¹⁴ The parodos of Sophocles *OT* (no. 9.2) is a good example: although the chorus is primarily concerned about a message from the Delphic oracle, they entreat not only Apollo but also Artemis, Zeus, Athena,

¹¹³For discussion and examples of dramatic hymns see the chapters on all four major dramatists.

¹¹⁴Cf. Vernant (1987, 169) "According to the city, the sanctuary, or the moment, each god enters into a varied network of combinations with the others. Groups of gods do not conform to a single model that is more important than others: they are organized into a plurality of configurations that do not correspond exactly but compose a table with several entries and many axes, the reading of which varies according to the starting point and the perspective adopted."

Dionysos in a composite paian praying for delivery from plague. The choice of gods in this hymn depends partly on the constellation of gods established at Delphi and partly on the Theban recipients of the Delphic message, who attached particular importance to Dionysos. One god will frequently not do in Greek worship: he or she may provide the focus of worship or supplication, but frequently close associates in the Olympian pantheon or neighbours in local cult are invoked to strengthen the appeal. The same tendency is reflected in prayer or oath-taking, where a hierarchy of gods from most powerful to most subordinate or local is invoked.¹¹⁵ Simply the naming of many gods becomes a litany in its own right; there was a widespread fear in ancient Greece of angering a divinity or weakening one's case by omitting a god inadvertently or otherwise. Although it is true that worshipful address in hymn or prayer form concentrates on selected gods to the temporary exclusion of others,¹¹⁶ the Greek gods as depicted in myth and called upon in worship were collaborative and social rather than individualists operating alone. The relatively numerous hymns to 'All the Gods' (e.g. at Epidauros, no. 6.7 and in Aristoph. *Thesm.*, no. 11.3.2) show this tendency carried to its logical conclusion.

Throughout the history of Greek hymnography there was – as we shall see – creative tension and interaction between the influence and prestige of famous cult centres and the literary tradition cultivated by poets. From the earliest period poets in Greece tended to be itinerant, moving from place to place to perform at religious festivals or in answer to a commission from a wealthy patron. The poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*,¹¹⁷ for example, asks the Delian women to relate to all comers in the future that, of all singers to have graced the temple, the 'blind bard of Chios' had most impressed them. This international character of poetry and poets has been recognized as a major factor in the development of a pan-Hellenic religion over and above local specialization.¹¹⁸ Poets wrote works for specific festivals and constellations of local gods, but they drew on a common stock of literary motifs and models for the composition. Thus a literary tradi-

¹¹⁵As early as *Il.* 3.276-80, where Agamemnon ratifies the oath-sacrifice with a prayer to Zeus, Helios, Rivers and Earth and underworld powers – probably Zeus and Persephone cf. 9.457.

¹¹⁶What Versnel (1990, esp. 194-97) calls the 'henotheistic moment' in polytheism.

¹¹⁷Possibly Kynaithos, although Thucydides (3.104) accepts Homeric authorship. For Kynaithos see schol. Pindar *N* 1c, and M.L. West, *CQ* 25, 1975, 161ff.

¹¹⁸E.g. Herington (1985, 3ff.).

tion – including hymns – developed to a certain extent independently of the religious and cultural centres, although these provided a platform and a compositional focus. We may observe the two forces – local cult and poetic tradition – at work in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Although it is, in many ways, a charter for the foundation and conduct of the Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter and Kore, a certain reticence, and even at times inaccuracy, about details of the cult reveal the poet to have been an outsider whose expertise lay more in his command of epic narrative technique than in the details of cult.¹¹⁹

Most of the hymns in this collection show this literary quality even when they were composed for a specific occasion. The two Delphic hymns to Apollo, for example, were performed at the Athenian sacred embassy to Delphi called Pythais, but their language and content draw heavily on earlier literary treatments of Apollo's birth and arrival at Delphi.¹²⁰ Some hymns appear to be purely local in content and character: the Elean women's invocation of Dionysos, for example (no. 12.1), or the Palaikastro Hymn of the Kouretes (no. 1.1), invokes a god in terms which stand apart from the mainstream of Greek poetical tradition. For this reason they appear to be 'primitive' in character, going back to a stage of religion prior to the establishment of a pan-Hellenic profile of most of the gods through itinerant poets and international poetry competitions. For all the texts treated in this volume, however, one should bear in mind these two major factors affecting the particular form each hymn takes: on the one hand there stands the poet, steeped from infancy in 'tales about the gods' and educated in the poetic tradition which he hopes to perpetuate and enrich, and on the other the cult with its traditions and formalities which must be respected by the composer of hymnic texts for performance there.¹²¹

We intend the organization of this collection of hymns to reflect the above general considerations. Our first consideration has been the religious centre to which a particular hymn belongs: chapters on Crete, Delphi, Delos, Epidauros, Thebes and Athens include the epigraphic texts found there (or nearby) together with those transmitted in a literary form but intended for performance at that particular cult centre. We have placed Crete first

¹¹⁹Cf. Clinton (1986). His later work *Myth and Cult: The Iconography of the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Stockholm 1992, argues that the hymn relates more closely to the Thesmophoria festival than to the Mysteries.

¹²⁰Cf. Furley (1995a); Moens (1930); Rutherford (1988).

¹²¹This is the focus of the collection of essays edited by Cassio & Cerri (1991).

partly because of the seminal importance of Minoan civilization and its sequel for the whole of Greek culture, and partly because of the importance of the single text preserved from an East Cretan town, Palaikastro: the hymn to Zeus as ‘Greatest Kouros’. The second most important principle is the distinction between literary and non-literary texts, although, as we have pointed out, there is cross-fertilization between the two. We possess no inscriptions of archaic hymns from Lesbos and the Islands, but we do have a number of texts by lyric poets of this period which in their form are closely modelled on cult hymns and clearly serve a religious purpose even if not that of communal worship at a calendrical festival. The section on lyric hymns from Lesbos and the Ionian islands adheres to the principle of geographical origin (with its connection to specific local cults) but contains exclusively literary texts. The same is true of the four chapters on the great Athenian dramatists: these hymns are all ‘literary’ in the sense that their place of performance is the theatre of Dionysos in Athens, but they all reflect a particularly Athenian view of local and foreign cults and therefore have a basis in regional religion. The introductions to these sequences of literary hymns aim to show their affinities both to the dramatic art in which they belong and the actual cult to which – for the purposes of the play or literary ‘scene’ – they relate.

2 *A survey of the extant remains*

It will be seen, then, that our emphasis in this collection is on lyric hymns sung by a chorus (or by a solo singer, or a combination of the two) within the context, whether real or fictional, of religious cult. And it is this ideal type which Auden uses as foil to his vision of the impersonal horror of twentieth-century warfare in ‘The Shield of Achilles’:

She looked over his shoulder
 for ritual pieties,
 white flower-garlanded heifers,
 libation and sacrifice,
 but there on the shining metal
 where the altar should have been,
 she saw by his flickering forge-light
 quite another scene...

She looked over his shoulder
 for athletes at their games,
 men and women in a dance
 moving their sweet limbs
 quick, quick, to music,
 but there on the shining shield
 his hands had set no dancing-floor
 but a weed-choked field...

A wide variety of hymnic texts survive from antiquity which share the defining property of being addressed to one or more gods, but which were not all sung or danced, nor intended for performance in a cult context at all. This is another way of saying that we find hymnic texts in almost all genres of literature – lyric, epic, dramatic, elegiac poetry – as well as in some prose genres. The classification of these hymnic texts according to literary form coincides to a large degree with the labels available for classifying genres of poetry itself (see Furley, 1993). A brief survey of the main groups, with an indication of our principles of selection, is given below.

2.1 *The Homeric Hymns*

This collection of some thirty hexameter pieces in epic or sub-epic dialect,¹²² of widely varying length, was transmitted not as part of the Homeric corpus, but with other hymns: six by Callimachus, the Orphic Hymns and Proklos' hymns.¹²³ They contain internal features which indicate that they were intended as preludes to competitive recital of epic poetry.¹²⁴

- the transitional formula with which the majority close: “I shall respectfully remember you (sc. the deity addressed) in yet another

¹²²On the dating see Janko (1982). One, no. 8 to Ares, is clearly much later than the others.

¹²³For details of this (lost) codex and its offspring, see R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* vol. II Oxford 1951, lv-lxxxv ff., and more recently Bulloch (1985). The hymn to Demeter was discovered later in a single Leiden manuscript; for a reconstruction of another ‘missing’ hymn, to Dionysos, and edition of the fragments which probably belonged to it, see West (2001).

¹²⁴See M. Constantini and J. Lallot, ‘Le προοίμιον est-il un proème?’, in: *Le texte et ses représentations. Études de littérature ancienne*, vol. III, Paris 1987, 13-27.

song. . .” (αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ’ ἀοιδῆς). A variant is found in no. 9 (to Artemis): “I begin my song with you first and foremost; having begun with you I will turn to another song” (αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ σε πρῶτα καὶ ἐκ σέθεν ἄρχομ’ αἰεῖδειν, / σεῦ δ’ ἐγὼ ἀρξάμενος μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον).

- occasional references to competitive performance: e.g. no. 6, to Aphrodite, 19-20: “Grant me the victory in this competition and stir my song!” (δοῦ δ’ ἐν ἀγῶνι / νίκην τῶιδε φέρεσθαι, ἐμὴν δ’ ἔντυνον ἀοιδίην).

Thucydides confirms this impression when he calls the extant *HHApollo* a ‘prelude’, προοίμιον, to Apollo (3.104.4 ἐκ προοιμίου Ἄπόλλωνος). In his monograph *Das Prooimion. Eine Form sakraler Dichtung der Griechen* Böhme (1937) describes the prooimion as a hexameter hymn to the gods performed in conjunction with, but with content independent of, the following recitation of epic.¹²⁵ Apart from the corpus of *Homeric Hymns*, we can see how both the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* of Hesiod open with prooimia to the gods (the Muses in the former, Zeus in the latter) as lead-in to the main subject. Pindar says that rhapsodes usually began with a prooimion to Zeus;¹²⁶ ps. Plutarch confirms that competition singers aimed to secure divine favour at the beginning of their performances with a hymn.¹²⁷

The fact that we possess a sizeable collection of ‘Homeric Hymns’ and only scattered remnants of all the other genres of religious hymns has led some scholars to formulate a basic distinction between ‘rhapsodic hymns’ (i.e. the Homeric Hymns and their like) on the one hand and cult hymns on the other. Race, for example, writes: “The main intention of rhapsodic

¹²⁵See further: Fröhder (1994); Aloni (1980, 30) writes: “il termine *prooimion* sembra caratterizzare in modo stretto un componimento che intrattiene un rapporto organico e contestuale con altre composizioni – le *oimai* – rispetto alle quali esso addita la funzionalità specifica di un canto introduttivo e preparatorio”.

¹²⁶*N 2.1*: ὅθεν περ καὶ Ὀμηρίδαι/ ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων τὰ πόλλ’ ἀοιδοὶ / ἄρχονται, Διὸς ἐκ προοιμίου. . .

¹²⁷*De mus.* 6.1133c τὰ γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς ὡς βούλονται ἀφοσιωσάμενοι ἐξέβαινον εὐθὺς ἐπὶ τε τὴν Ὀμήρου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ποίησιν. Ps. Plutarch is speaking about kitharodes here, but rhapsodes too certainly prefaced their recitation of Homeric epic with a prooimion. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.14, 1415a11 (= *PMG* 794, Timotheos) records that dithyramb poets also began with a prooimion (τὰ μὲν γὰρ τῶν διθυράμβων (sc. προοίμια) ὅμοια τοῖς ἐπιδεικτικοῖς); cf. J.H. Hordern, *CQ* 48, 1998, 290-1.

hymns is to sing *about* the god; they are characteristically more impersonal than cultic hymns, describe the god in the third person ('Er-Stil'), and are more concerned with relating the god's attributes and achievements than with obtaining any specific request. . . Cult hymns in contrast, are decidedly more personal; they address the god in the second person ('Du-Stil'), often are concerned with a specific situation, and emphasize the request" (Race, 1990, 102-6, here p. 103). Now whilst there is truth in these remarks, two qualifications are necessary: (1) it is a mistake to regard all cult hymns as a homogeneous body distinct from rhapsodic hymns. In fact cult hymns (and other types of hymns discussed below) show considerable disparity according to the cult in which they featured, or the literary genre to which they belonged; (2) the emphasis on 'objective narrative' which Race detects in the *Homeric Hymns* has more to do with the literary genre – epic – to which they formed a prelude, than to their character as hymns. It is not that the rhapsode did not address a request to the deity concerned – he did: an explicit or implied request for divine favour in his recital of epic – but rather that the conventions of such rhapsodic performances influenced the type of hymn thought suitable.

The *Homeric Hymns* and their like were probably at home in rhapsodic competitions at the pan-Hellenic centres (Delos, Delphi, Athens) but we should not rule out the possibility that they could be performed at more informal recitations of epic at banquets, for example.¹²⁸ We have not included any of the *Homeric Hymns*, partly because excellent editions of them exist,¹²⁹ and partly because they are not cult hymns in any real sense.

2.2 Lyric monody

We possess a number of poems by lyricists such as Sappho, Alkaios, Anacreon, Ibykos, which have close affinities with religious hymns but which were probably not intended for performance in official cult (cf. Danielewicz, 1974). By analogy with the rest of their work, we should envisage these poets singing their works to lyre accompaniment before a group of friends in an informal setting, either private party or banquet.¹³⁰ Hymn-singing, in particular of a paian, was a standard feature of the symposion.

¹²⁸Cf. Clay (1989, Introduction). Demodokos' lay about Hephaistos and Aphrodite in the *Odyssey* was, of course, performed at a banquet.

¹²⁹E.g. Allen *et al.* (1936); Cássola (1975); Zanetto (1996).

¹³⁰One recalls Polykrates' invitation to e.g. Ibykos and Anacreon to come and entertain him at his court: in Hdt. 3.121, Polykrates was banqueting in his ἀνδρῶν with, among

In his description of an ideal symposium Xenophanes writes (fr. 1.11-14): “In the middle of the room stands the altar, decorated with flowers all around, and the entire house resounds with music and celebration. Sensible men should in the first place hymn the god, and in so doing use stories that are not scandalous and thoughts that are pure.”¹³¹ The sympotic *Theognidea* opens with an impressive hymnic invocation of Apollo and Artemis. Aristotle’s *Hymn to Virtue* (no. 7.4), called by some sources a paian for his dead friend Hermeias, was most likely intended for delivery at a philosophical banquet.

These texts draw on hieratic forms to address the gods in a non-cult setting. There was also lyric monody intended for cult recital. Since Pausanias refers to it in his description of the site (10.8.10), Alkaios’ lost paian to Apollo (no. 2.1) is likely to have been performed at Delphi. There were also kitharodic prooimia, that is, hexameter hymns to the gods, sung by a solo singer to kithara accompaniment. The form was attributed to innovations made in particular by Terpander,¹³² and the dactylic character of recently discovered fragments of Stesichoros indicates that he, too, was an exponent of this form. The first competition for a ‘hymn to the god’ at Delphi may well have been in this genre (p. 91).

We include a number of works by solo lyricists (Sappho, Alkaios, Anakreon) which may be classed as sung prayers or solo hymns; they form a sub-group within the œuvre of Aeolic (Lesbian) and Ionian lyric.

2.3 Choral lyric

Enough has already been said on the general features and ancient classification of the various types belonging in this genre of song. Survivals of the ‘genuine article’ from the archaic and classical period are almost entirely limited to papyrus finds of the paians, dithyrambos, prosodia and partheneia

others, Anakreon, when Oroites’ messenger arrived.

¹³¹βωμὸς δ’ ἄνθεσιν ἂν τὸ μέσον πάντῃ πεπύκασται, / μολπή δ’ ἀμφὶς ἔχει δώματα καὶ θαλίη. / χρῆ δὲ πρῶτον μὲν θεὸν ὑμνεῖν εὐφρονας ἄνδρας / εὐφήμοις μύθοις καὶ καθαροῖσι λόγοις.

¹³²Plut. *De mus.* 4.1132d πεποιήται δὲ τῷ Τερπάνδρῳ καὶ προοίμια κιθαρωδικὰ ἐν ἔπεσιν. (See also the passage quoted in n. 127). Likewise the nome: Proklos, ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 320a35: Δοκεῖ δὲ Τέρπανδρος μὲν πρῶτος τελειῶσαι τὸν νόμον ἡρώωι μέτρῳ χρησάμενος. Later poets are said in both cases to have freed these forms from the restriction of hexameters and to have used a multiplicity of metres. On the nome see below pp. 334ff.; Rutherford (1995b).

of Pindar and Bacchylides and to a much lesser extent Simonides. We have included a representative selection from these papyrus texts: Pindar's sixth and ninth paian, composed for performance at the Delphic Theoxenia festival and the Theban Ismenion respectively; frs. 5, 7b and 12 from his Delian paians as the sole surviving texts from state *thēoriai* to Delos; two major fragments of Pindar's dithyrambs, one for Athens (no. 7.1), the other for Thebes (no 5.2),¹³³ and finally the surviving scraps of Pindar's 'Hymn to Zeus for the Thebans' (5.1), placed first in the Alexandrian edition of his hymns.

Despite their high literary merit, we include none of Bacchylides' dithyrambs, as the form in his hands seems nearly completely emancipated from its original cult context.¹³⁴ From the classical period we also possess a vast array of dramatic hymns, that is, choral song-dances in honour of gods incorporated into the plays by all four major dramatists. Separate chapters attempt to do justice to this material.

The survival rate of genuine cult hymns improves somewhat from the fourth century on, when such texts began to be recorded on stone at the major cult centres. Some of the surviving texts are clearly traditional – e.g. the Palaikastro hymn to Zeus and the *Paeon Erythraeus* to Asklepios – whilst others record a new composition which found favour in a particular year: examples are the Delphic compositions by Limenios, Isyllos and Philodamos. Delphi and Epidauros have proved particularly fertile in this connection, with Athens coming in a disappointing third. Nor need the relatively late date of these texts diminish their importance in our eyes: the form and language of hieratic poetry was clearly so conservative and traditional that they are unlikely to differ radically from their lost predecessors. We have included all the significant texts we could find in this area, provided they are sufficiently legible. Few of these texts exist in modern English critical editions and they have never been collected in the present manner.

2.4 Callimachus

With the exception of the fifth hymn, *The Bath of Pallas Athena*, which is in elegiacs, Callimachus' hymns are written in hexameters. Their dic-

¹³³For Pindar's dithyrambs see van der Weiden (1991).

¹³⁴For Bacchylides' dithyrambs see vol. 2 of H. Maehler's excellent annotated edition 1997, Bremer (2000), and our discussion in chapter 7.

tion, however, is not uniform imitation of Homeric epic (as in the case of Apollonius of Rhodes); hymns 5 and 6 are composed in literary Doric. In length they vary from 96 lines (Zeus) to 326 (Delos), thus falling midway between the major Homeric hymns (c. 500 lines) and the short ones. They are all addressed to a single god, as with the *Homeric Hymns*, and all contain invocations of the deity in ‘Du-Stil’ as well as third-person narrative of the god’s deeds. Although the narrative element features strongly, as in the *Homeric Hymns*, Callimachus experiments in Hymns 2, 5 and 6 with a ‘mimetic’ presentation. That is, they are delivered as if by someone present at a religious ceremony commenting on, or giving instructions for, the ceremonial procedure. Now most scholars are agreed that these vivid commentaries on ritual would make poor ‘scripts’ for real ceremonies, as, for one thing, the timing is most awkward – the narrator launches into a long mythical narrative to fill a gap in the ceremony, or announces occurrences such as the creaking of carriage wheels or whinnying of horses which might not in reality be forthcoming at just that moment (e.g. 5.2ff.). Moreover, who was this ‘master of ceremonies’, as he has been dubbed by modern writers, commenting on, and supervising, ritual? We do not know of ancient equivalents, although heralds of course led a congregation in prayer and indicated the correct form of worship. The conclusion seems inevitable that Callimachus’ hymns are purely literary in intention,¹³⁵ although containing a great deal of authentic lore about actual cult titles and manner of worship of the gods. They were composed, like the rest of his work, for the educated literati of Alexandria and elsewhere, who would appreciate his allusions to obscure mythical variants, and his clever combinations of earlier poetic forms and dialects. For although the *Homeric Hymns* are his chief model, some of the conventions of choral lyric have been observed,¹³⁶ and some of the dramatic quality of theatre seems to

¹³⁵Cf. M. Haslam, *Callimachus*, Hellenistica Groningana vol. 1, ed. by M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit, G.C. Wakker, Groningen 1993, 125, says: “The Hymns, it goes without saying, are literary texts. To call them religious is simply to say that they inscribe themselves within the genre. If we ask, Why hymns? the best answer might be, Why not? There was much mythological material about the gods, and generically contextualizing it as ‘hymnic’ had multiple poetic advantages over more straightforwardly narrative forms of presentation.” R. Pretagostini (Cassio & Cerri, 1991, 254) takes the same stand: “Questi inni non sono certo stati scritti da Callimaco per essere inseriti nell’ ambito della cerimonia rituale a cui nel testo si fa continuo riferimento; il poeta ha solo voluto creare l’illusione, tutta letteraria, della circostanza ipotetica in cui l’ inno avrebbe potuto essere presentato al pubblico”.

¹³⁶Cf. Cairns (1992, esp. 10ff.).

inspire the mimetic hymns. We omit Callimachus' hymns for the same reasons as the *Homeric Hymns*.¹³⁷

2.5 Philosophical and allegorical hymns

From the fourth century on there is a growing number of literary texts in hymn form addressed to personified abstractions. Hymns to Health, Fortune, Wealth, Memory, or Virtue, become typical of a new trend associated with Hellenistic religiosity: the movement away from the traditional Olympians in favour of more philosophical abstractions.¹³⁸ No doubt philosophy and the development of philosophical schools were responsible for a certain disenchantment with the crude and brutal myths associated with the Olympic gods, and a desire to worship ethically more satisfying ideals. A high point in this area is Kleantes' *Hymn to Zeus*, in which the traditional figure of Zeus is converted into the divine principle of Stoic cosmology.¹³⁹ The Greek poet Mesomedes, employed by Hadrian, wrote a number of hymnic evocations of such disparate phenomena as Nemesis, the Adriatic Sea, and Nature itself (see Horna, 1928). Since most of these texts are not cult texts in the true sense we omit them, with the exception of Aristotle's hymn to Arete (no. 7.4).

2.6 Magical hymns

The publication of the magical papyri has disclosed another minor corpus of hymns: those recorded as spoken (or chanted) invocations of gods to assist the magician in a *praxis*.¹⁴⁰ They are mainly hexametric in form,

¹³⁷ Apart from Pfeiffer's definitive Oxford edition 1949, cf. Lombardo & Rayor (1988), editions of individual hymns include: Williams (1978) on the hymn to Apollo, Hopkinson (1984) on the hymn to Demeter, Mineur (1984) on the hymn to Delos, Bulloch (1985) on the *Bath of Athena*.

¹³⁸ As in several areas, Euripides foreshadows later ages in this practice: his dramas contain a number of hymnic evocations of abstract entities: Hestia in *Ba* 370ff., for example, or Ananke in *Alk.* 962ff. Nilsson, *GGR* vol. II 206-7, traces the beginnings of this tendency to the fourth century, in art and poetry: "Im Anfang des vierten Jahrhunderts... wurden bildnerische Gestaltungen von Personifikationen häufig...". Parker (1996, 227-37) prefers to speak of 'cultic deification of abstract forces' (p. 235) rather than personification. Cf. M. Meunier, *Hymnes philosophiques*, Paris 1935.

¹³⁹ Cf. Hopkinson (1988, 27-29; 131-36); P. Cambronne, 'L'universel et le singulier. L'Hymne à Zeus de Cléanthe. Notes de lecture', *REA* 100, 1998, 89-114; W. Cassidy, 'Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus', in Kiley (1997, 133-38).

and vary in length from a few lines to approximately fifty. The deities addressed are recognizably Olympians, though sometimes in a distinctly post-classical garb with accretions of Egyptian, Jewish and sometimes Christian attributes. Strings of evocative epithets characterize the style, with myth reduced to a single epithet or single allusive line. Magic spells consisting of meaningless or near-meaningless strings of syllables (including the so-called Ephesia Grammata (see Kotansky, 1991, 111f.)) are often included in the Greek texts, along with quotations from poets of great authority (esp. Homer) for their efficacious properties. Apollo is still a favourite deity and his appearance in the magical papyri bears many of the attributes of his normal Delphic personality.¹⁴¹ The prayer at the close of a magical hymn is typically for the god invoked to appear and assist the magician in performing the task he has undertaken (prophecy in the case of Apollo). The magical hymns preserved on papyrus are a distinctly sub-literary genre, with frequent breaches of metre, but they are fascinating records of what one might call an ‘underground’ branch of religion. They have left traces in mainstream literature as well: the ‘binding spell’ uttered by the Erinyes in Aesch. *Eum.* 321-396 (our no. 8.3.1), is like an extended, metrical *katadesmos*, such as we find on curse tablets, uttered against an enemy to bind his freedom of action. Theocritus 2 (*Pharmakeutria*) is similarly a literary embellishment of a common occurrence in the magical papyri, a spell uttered in this case to curse and vilify an untrue lover. Since, as Szepes (1976) points out, the magical hymns are less hymns in the sense of religious songs than prayers spoken in private by a magical practitioner, we omit them from this collection.

2.7 Prose hymns

The so-called Isis-aretologies are, with the exception of the major hexameter poem from Andros,¹⁴² inscriptions written in prose proclaiming in first

¹⁴⁰Greek text see Preisendanz *et al.* (1973-1974, vol. II, 237ff.); English translation: Betz (1986); studies: Riesenfeld (1946); Szepes (1976); P. Poccetti in Cassio & Cerri (1991, ch. 7); C.A. Faraone, ‘A hymn to Selene-Hecate-Artemis from a Greek magical handbook (PGM IV 2714-83) in Kiley (1997, 195-99).

¹⁴¹See W. Fauth, *Helios Megistos. Zur synkretischen Theologie der Spätantike*, Leiden 1995, 41-55; Furley (1995a, 39f.); Graf in Faraone & Obbink (1991, 188-213).

¹⁴²And the iambic poem from Kyrene, see Peek (1930, 129ff.); for Egyptian hymns to Isis in Greek written in hexameters or elegiac couplets see Bernand (1969, 631-652); an epigraphic hymn in elegiacs to Anubis: R. Merkelbach & J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus*

person style the might and majesty of Isis, sister and paramour of Osiris. They are Greek adaptations of an Egyptian inscription on a stele in the temple of Isis in Memphis. Their style is simple and unadorned, consisting of a litany of Isis' achievements in civilizing the world. Although deriving from the same source, the magnificent inscription from Andros, datable to the 1st c. AD, succeeds in amplifying the prosaic list of Isis' achievements into a cult epic of a linguistic refinement which bears comparison with the most recondite of Callimachus' hymns.¹⁴³ Clearly an Alexandrian scholar exercised all his ingenuity and learning in translating the Egyptian original into literary Doric hexameters. Since the basic form of the Isis aretalogies (first person revelation) and the gods concerned (Egyptian Isis and Sarapis) are largely extraneous to the main tradition of Greek hymns, we omit these texts.¹⁴⁴

The 2nd c. AD rhetorician Aelius Aristides composed a series of prose hymns to Olympian gods; these represented his bow to the gods of the great centres of education and worship which he visited as a travelling lecturer. They belong to the class of speech known as panegyric, 'Festreden' in German. Menander Rhetor in his rhetorical paradigm on Apollo Smintheus demonstrates how such a prose hymn should be composed, and which aspects of the god it should treat.¹⁴⁵ Although in the history of Greek literature the prose hymn represents a late form, comparison with other ancient cultures shows that it need not necessarily be considered so.¹⁴⁶

2.8 *The Orphic Hymns and Proklos*

The so-called Orphic hymns and Proklos' hymns belong to the third and fifth century A.D. respectively, and fall outside our scope for that reason. They are hardly representative specimens of Greek hymns anyway: the Orphic hymns probably belonged to a small community in Asia Minor and

dem griechischen Osten, Bd. 2: Die Nordküste Kleinasiens (Marmarasee und Pontos), Munich/Leipzig, 2001, no. 09/01/02.

¹⁴³Cf. Peek (1930); Vanderlip (1972).

¹⁴⁴See further: Nilsson (1955, vol. II, 216-7); H. Engelmann, *Die delische Sarapisaretalogie*, Beiträge zur Klass. Phil. no. 15, Meisenheim 1964; id. *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis*, Leiden 1975; Y. Grandjean, *Une nouvelle arétalogie d' Isis à Maronée*, Leiden 1975.

¹⁴⁵Cf. Bremer (1995); R. Velardi in Cassio & Cerri (1991, 205-232).

¹⁴⁶E.g. prose hymns in the Avesta: E. Tichy, 'Indoiranische Hymnen' (Burkert & Stolz, 1994, 89ff.).

may never have been in wide use,¹⁴⁷ and Proklos used his compositions to express his personal philosophy.¹⁴⁸

3 *Form and composition*

Let us now consider some aspects of the formal composition of hymns which are shared to a greater or lesser degree by the various groups of texts listed above.¹⁴⁹ On the one hand the Greeks realized that a god, if truly a god, is able to receive a prayer even if it is not sung aloud, or even uttered at all.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless they developed a ‘rhetoric of prayer’ from a very early stage. Examples are abundant in epic, early iambic and lyric poetry: e.g. *Il.* 1.37-43 and 16.233-248, in Archilochus fr. 177 (West) and Sappho 1 (Voigt). Were these poets drawing on an existing tradition, or inventing forms which were then adopted in worship? There is no way of proving either alternative, but a reciprocal relationship seems most likely: the poets no doubt depicted their characters worshipping and praying in an authentic manner, but conversely they will have enriched the forms and vocabulary of cult by setting new standards and models of poetic creativity. As we saw above, the same poets wrote ‘literature’ and cult hymns, and poets were generally seen as ‘interpreters of the gods’ (ἑρμηνεῖς τῶν θεῶν).

Once the elements of this ‘rhetoric of prayer’ were established, they showed a remarkable stability and endurance. Haldane (1977, ch. 3) sees two principal reasons for this:

“The first lies in the ancient regard for literary convention, enjoining the maintenance of formal and stylistic distinctions between the different types of poetry and the use of subjects commonly accepted as appropriate to each. The second lies in the religious conservatism by which that attitude was intensified. Men suppose that what has pleased a god in the past must always continue to do so. The rituals and the forms of words long used in his service are in time themselves regarded as sacred. They belong to the god and are his due. Hence we find that the ὕμνος, despite all the vicissitudes of literary fashion and religious thought which it undergoes in

¹⁴⁷Cf. Quandt (1962); West (1983); Athanassakis (1988); Charvet (1995).

¹⁴⁸See now R.M. van den Berg, *Proclus’ Hymns. Essays, Translations, Commentary*, Diss. Amsterdam 2000.

¹⁴⁹Norden (1913, 143-77) is still fundamental to subsequent studies.

¹⁵⁰In one of his more famous oracles (Hdt. 1.47.3) Apollo pronounced καὶ οὐ φωνεῦντος ἀχοῦω. Cf. Sophocles *El.* 657-8. See P.W. van der Horst ‘Silent Prayer in Antiquity’, *Numen* 41 (1994), 1-25.

the course of its long history, maintains a remarkable consistency from age to age. The same basic pattern, the same formulas, even long after their original meaning has been forgotten, and the same time-honoured myths are repeated down the centuries as long as the Olympian religion survives.”

According to Aristotle, a ‘whole’ consists of a beginning, a middle and an ending. Previous writers on the subject have identified a similar tripartite scheme for hymns. The first part has been identified as the *invocatio*, or *epiklēsis*, the invocation which establishes contact between the speaking person(s) and the divine addressee. Several appellations have been proposed for the middle section: the oldest is Ausfeld’s *pars epica*,¹⁵¹ there is Zielinski’s *sanctio*,¹⁵² and Danielewicz (1976) retains *pars media* throughout: a term which is technically correct, but too nondescript for what is often the richest part of a hymn. Ausfeld’s term applies to the *Homeric Hymns*, but not satisfactorily or consistently to other hymns.¹⁵³ In favour of Zielinski’s term it can be said that in this middle part the worshipper presents if not ‘sanctions’ to compel the god, at least arguments for the god to be propitious. Because these ‘arguments’ generally take the form of elaborate praise of the god’s powers and privileges, Norden (1913, 149) adopted the term *eulogia*. The last part is the prayer, εὐχή, itself. For it is only when the worshipper has established contact with the god and won his/her favour that he can formulate his petition. These three terms – *epiklēsis*, *eulogia*, *euchē* (invocation, praise, prayer) – are useful, but they do not reflect strict ancient usage.¹⁵⁴

A common structural element not accounted for in the above analysis is the opening exhortation to sing the hymn which follows. Comparative material¹⁵⁵ shows that hymns frequently open with an exhortation either to a congregation or to oneself to sing the following hymn. In Greek examples this is represented on the one hand by self-exhortations of the form

¹⁵¹K. Ausfeld, ‘De Graecorum precationibus quaestiones’, *Jb. class. Philol.* 28 (1903), 505 ff.

¹⁵²T. Zielinski, *Religia starzytniej Grecji*, Warsaw 1921; Bremer (1981, 196 n.15) suggested using the term ‘argument’ as English equivalent of *sanctio*.

¹⁵³In his useful monograph Meyer (1933, 5) also rejects the term *pars epica*.

¹⁵⁴The divisions of the Pythian nome, for example, were far more complex, see p. 92.

¹⁵⁵In particular Tichy (Burkert & Stolz, 1994, 80ff.), writing on Indo-Iranian Hymns, analyses hymn forms into: (i) “eine Absichtserklärung oder Aufforderung des Inhalts ‘wir verehren...’, ‘ich will verkünden...’, ‘preist...!’ ” (ii) “Aussagen über einen Einzelgott oder eine stets gemeinsam auftretende Göttergruppe...” (iii) “die abschließenden Bitten um Schutz oder Hilfe”.

“Come now, let me sing of. . .”¹⁵⁶ and on the other by invocations of the Muses to assist the poet to hymn a deity. This latter form also constitutes a kind of self-exhortation, as the Muse is the source of the poet’s inspiration or ability to sing a song. Examples of both these forms are so numerous that we should recognize that the typical opening of a Greek hymn contained two elements: a linguistic marker indicating the speaker’s intention of commencing his hymn and the announcement of whom he chooses to address. A typical example of this combined opening is provided by the Delphic paians to Apollo: “Listen, fair-armed daughters of loud-thundering Zeus. . . come here to praise in song your brother Phoibos. . .” in (1) and “Come here to jutting twin-peaked Mt. Parnassos. . . and conduct my hymns. . . Sing of Pythian Apollo. . .” in (2).

3.1 Invocation

A Greek could hardly address a god in the same informal way as he addressed a passer-by on the street: “You there! Stop, I want a word with you” (οὗτος· ἐπίσχες, σὲ καλῶ.¹⁵⁷) On the contrary, the precise naming of the god addressed was important both from the point of view of politeness and courtesy, so as not to offend a sensitive power, and from the point of view of establishing the precise channel along which one wished divine succour to flow. The composers of Greek hymns often used more names than one to address and identify a god; their motive may have been partly to avoid the sin of omission, and partly to demonstrate technical proficiency to their divine and human listeners.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶Terpander’s opening formula ἀμφὶ μοι αὖτις ἄναχθ’ Ἐκατήβολον αἰδέτω φρήν (Suid. s.v. ἀμφιανακτίζειν), “Now let my heart sing of Lord Apollo. . .” became proverbial as ἀμφιανακτίζειν = sing a hymn. The opening of the hymn in Aristoph. *Clouds* 595 – ἀμφὶ μοι αὖτε Φοῖβ’ ἄναξ – plays on this.

¹⁵⁷E.g. Aristophanes, *Kn.* 240, *Wasps* 395, 1304, *Birds* 1044, *Frogs* 522. Also in tragedy: *Soph. Aj.* 71-2, 89, *OC* 1627.

¹⁵⁸H. Usener, in his famous *Götternamen*, 1896 (= reprint Frankfurt 1948), argued that in Greek and Roman religion there were originally many separate gods with specific functions, and that at a later stage, when the divine population had been thinned out, the old names remained in use: “Nichts ist bezeichnender für die noch lange hin wirkende alte geltung der sondergötter als die tatsache, daß dem feierlichen gebet die nennung des persönlichen gottesnamens nicht genügt. Man sucht nach den treffenden beinamen, und weil die religiöse vorstellung durch die ausbildung des persönlichen gottes in unsicheres schwanken zwischen person und begriff geraten ist, häuft man die beinamen, und tut darin lieber des guten zuviel als daß man sich der gefahr aussetzt das entscheidende wort zu übersehn”. One does not need to accept Usener’s theory of ‘Sondergötter’ to agree that his

The names, surnames, titles are to be found in various quarters. If we look for a moment at the four examples of hymnic prayer listed above, Archilochus 177 presents the bare minimum: “Zeus, father Zeus...” (ὦ Ζεῦ, πάτερ Ζεῦ). Achilles’ address in *Il.* 16.233-4 is more solemn: “Lord Zeus of Dodona, Pelasgian, living far off...” (Ζεῦ ἄνα, Δωδωναῖε, Πελασγυκέ, τήλοθι ναίων). Achilles uses the god’s ‘first name’, then refers to one of his venerable locations in his (Achilles’) homeland, and finally to Zeus’ connection with a prehistoric tribe in that area. Chryses’ appeal to Apollo in *Il.* 1.37-38 is the elaborate address of a professional: “wielder of the silver bow, you who reside in Chryse and most holy Killa and rule Tenedos by force, o Sminthian...” (ἀργυρότοξε, ὃς Χρύσην ἀμφιβέβηκας Κίλλαν τε ζαθέην, Τενεδοῖό τε ἱφι ἀνάσσεις, Σμινθεῦ). The priest identifies the god by his attribute, the dangerous bow which will prove so devastating within a few lines, 48-52,¹⁵⁹ by the area over which his power extends – Chryse, Killa and Tenedos – and by his power to exterminate. In Sappho fr. 1, the poetess salutes Aphrodite for her richly decorated throne,¹⁶⁰ her immortality, her descent from Zeus.¹⁶¹

There were instances when a deity’s true name was felt to be unmentionable because of the awe and terror attached to it. The expedients adopted to meet such difficulties crystallized into conventions of address which remained unchanged for centuries in liturgy. Thus the chthonians, the most fearful of gods, are approached with an excess of caution: “If it is lawful for me to revere with prayers the unseen goddess and you, o king of the benighted ones, Aidoneus, Aidoneus...” (Soph. *OC* 1556-9, our no. 9.3). The ‘renaming’ of the Erinyes, the avenging spirits of the underworld, at the close of Aeschylus’ *Eum.* as ‘Well-Wishers’ (our no. 8.3.2 with notes) is another instance.

observations about the use of compound address (πολυωνυμία) in prayers, and in hymns more especially, are correct. Recently Pulleyn (1994) has argued that the practice of multiplying names in hieratic address, and especially the topos of leaving it to the god to choose his/her favourite title (e.g. Eur. fr. 912.2 Ζεὺς εἴτ’ Ἄιδης ὀνομαζόμενος στέργεις), does not stem from nervousness or uncertainty on the part of the worshipper, but rather reflects long hymnic tradition.

¹⁵⁹In another situation a worshipper may prefer to qualify Apollo as playing on his golden lyre, e.g. Agathon in Ar. *Thesm.* 108.

¹⁶⁰For an alternative interpretation of the epithet ποικιλόθρον = ‘with finely embroidered clothes’, see Scheid & Svenbro (1996).

¹⁶¹Of course Sappho has no use for the gruesome story about Aphrodite’s birth as told in Hesiod’s *Theogony*; she prefers Homer’s: *Il.* 7.370 ff.

The name(s) should normally come as one of the first elements of the hymnic text;¹⁶² and sometimes the worshippers show themselves aware of this ‘duty’, cf. Soph. *OT* 159 : “*First* I call on you, daughter of Zeus, almighty Athena...’ (πρῶτα σὲ κεκλόμενος, θύγατερ Διός, ἄμβροτ’ Ἀθάννα κτλ.). Patronyms or metronyms abound in hymns: Zeus is called *Kronidēs*, *Kroniōn*, or (in the Palaikastro Hymn) *Kroneios*, all denoting the paternity of Kronos. Apollo is ‘Leto’s son’ (Λατοῖδης), Asklepios Apollo’s, Hermes Maia’s etc. In other cases additional names are provided by alternative cult-titles (Apollo + Phoibos, Athene + Pallas),¹⁶³ by names originally belonging to ‘minor divinities’ who have merged with the ‘major’ god (Apollo + Paian, Dionysos + Iakchos), or by the god’s location (Zeus Dodonaios from Dodona, Apollo Pythios or Delios, Aphrodite Kypris etc.). Epithets, epikleseis and appellations of the gods occurring in the texts collected here are listed in Appendix A in vol. 2.

This last element, the god’s location, often occurs in invocations and is of prime importance.¹⁶⁴ In contrast to the god of Christianity whose cosmic omnipresence is fundamental, Greek gods are related to specific locations. Their ‘localisation’ is however different from that of heroes, whose feared and revered presence is limited to their graves, and so to the area in which they might return (as ‘revenants’) from the nether world to harm people. Gods are immortal and enjoy freedom to appear when and where they like. But a god was born at a specific spot (e.g. Apollo on Delos, Hermes on Mount Kyllene), or first stepped on land there (Aphrodite on Cyprus), has her/his ‘original’ sanctuary there (Asklepios in Trikka) etc.; or the location is in some other way the god’s personal domain, area of power. Hymns frequently mention a number of the god’s favourite locations using such formulæ as “whether you abide in *x*, or *y*, *z*, or “who abides in... *x*, *y* or *z*”.¹⁶⁵ The intention is partly, no doubt, to cast the cletic net as wide as possible, but partly also perhaps as another indication of the technical competence of the hymn-writer. In these expressions (a

¹⁶²The delayed ‘Kypris’ in Sappho fr. 2, our no. 4.1, is an exception, unless Aphrodite was named in a missing section of the poem.

¹⁶³Athene is here taken as the proper name of the goddess in the archaic and classical period. It is possible that in the second millennium B.C. Greeks called her Pallas and added for further precision “the Mistress of Athens” (Kn Gg 702, 2: *a-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja*). Cf. Burkert (1985, 44 and 139).

¹⁶⁴See Menander Rhetor 334.25-335.17 (Russell & Wilson, 1981, 8-10).

¹⁶⁵E.g. Theocritus 1.123f. “O Pan, Pan, whether you are in the high hills of Lykaïos or whether you range over Mainolos...” Cf. Aristoph. *Clouds* 269-73; Sappho fr. 35.

participial phrase or relative clause, see below) μέδω, ‘govern, protect’, is often used, a verb almost restricted to this hymnic context: e.g. “Father Zeus, ruling from Ida” (Ζεῦ πάτερ, Ἰδηθεν μεδέων *Il.* 3.276, 320; 7.202; 24.308), “Hail, god whose seat is Kyllene” (Alkaios 308 χαῖρε Κυλλάνας ὁ μέδεις), “O Pan, resident of Arkadia” (ὦ Πάν, Ἀρκαδίας μεδέων Pindar fr. 95 = skolion *PMG* 887.1), “Poseidon, who rules the wind-swept ocean blue” (Πόσειδον, ὅς... γλαυκᾶς μέδεις εὐανέμου λίμνας Soph. fr. 371 Radt).¹⁶⁶

The relation between a god and her/his location can also be expressed by other verbs: ἀμφιέπω, ‘protect’ (e.g. Soph. *Ant* 1118 ἀμφέπεις Ἰταλίαν, *Page Select Papyri* iii 113.1: Ἄκτιον ἀμφιέπων), ναίω (Aristonoos 2), ἀνάσσω (*Il.* 1.38), etc. When a poet wants to stress that the god has received a place as his lot when special areas (like special tasks, see below) were allotted to individual gods, he uses the verb λαγχάνω, ‘obtain as lot’, as of Pan ‘whose allotted place is every snowy peak and mountain pinnacle’ (ὅς πάντα λόφον νυφρόντα λέλογχε καὶ κορυφὰς ὀρέων κτλ. *HH-Pan* 5-7), of the Muses “whose place is Helikon” (Ἑλικῶνα... αἶ λάχετε *paian Delph.* 1.1), the Charites “whose province is the waters of Kephisos” (Καφισίων ὑδάτων λαχοῖσαι Pind. *O* 14.1).

The precise localisation of a divinity in prayer or hymn serves the purpose of the worshipper(s) in two possible senses. If the worship is taking place at the favoured habitat of the god, then emphasizing the god’s connection with that place serves to underline the appeal to the god to attend the ceremony and to increase the congregation’s conviction that the god is present. If, on the other hand, the god is addressed somewhere else, then naming his typical haunts is a way of saying: “I know where you are likely to be; please come here from there to receive my worship”. A good example of the latter is found in Aesch. *Eum.* 288-98, where Orestes appeals to Athena to come from one of her favoured locations (Lake Tritonis or Phlegra) to give him succour at Athens.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶Also in *HHAphr.* 292, *HHHermes* 2, Hes. *Theog.* 54., Soph. *Ant.* 1119, Eur. fr. 912.1, Aristoph. *Kn* 559, 581, *Fr* 664, Herodas, *Mim.* 4.1. In other cases the participial phrase with μεδέων has become fossilized, as it were, together with the location, into an adjective: Ζεὺς ὑψιμέδων (Pind. *O* 8.31), Ino σαλασσομέδοισα (Alkman 50), Poseidon ἀλιμέδων (Ar. *Thesm.* 323).

¹⁶⁷Cf. Plato, *Cratylus*, 400e: “as it is our custom in prayer to call (sc. the gods) by the names and places which they prefer” (ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς νόμος ἐστὶν ἡμῖν εὐχεσθαι, οἵτινές τε καὶ ὀπόθεν χαίρουσιν ὀνομαζόμενοι).

The elements of the invocation – which may not all be present in any one text – may then be identified as follows:

- name(s)
- attributes (epithets, titles)
- genealogy
- place (abode, places of worship)
- companion deities

3.2 Praise

Sometimes the poet, having finished the *epiklēsis*, pretends not to know where or how to begin the *eulogia*, as for example in *HHApollo* 19: “How should I hymn you, who are in every respect rich in hymns?” (πῶς γάρ σ’ ὑμνήσω πάντως εὐύμνον ἐόντα...).¹⁶⁸ But then, having overcome this hesitation, he proceeds. Norden (1913, 221-22) noted that Greek hymns tended to emphasize the dynamic ability of gods (‘dynamische Prädikationsart’) without dwelling on the essential character of the gods (‘essentielle Prädikationsart’), a common feature of hymns in Near-Eastern cultures.¹⁶⁹ Norden went on to analyze in detail the way multiple predication of the deity’s powers is achieved: either as full-blown independent sentences, or (more often) with participial phrases or relative clauses; either in the second or the third person singular (‘Du-stil’ and ‘Er-stil’ respectively).

The form the *eulogia* takes is determined by the poet’s strategy. In the majority of cases his aim is twofold: in the first place to evoke the presence of the god and to ‘realize’ the meeting, the contact between god and worshipper(s), in a satisfactory way; second, to build up an ‘argument’, i.e. a ‘ground’ on which the worshipping community or individual can deliver their prayer. For this double goal to be attained there is one basic

¹⁶⁸Other instances are late e.g. Theocr. 22.25, Call. *Hymn to Delos* 28-29, Aristides 43.6; Men. Rhetor 437-8.

¹⁶⁹Cf. Assmann (in Burkert & Stolz, 1994, 33ff.) on Egyptian hymns in so-called ‘Pronominalstil’.

requirement, *euphēmia*, literally ‘well-speakingness’.¹⁷⁰ *Euphemia* is a twofold ideal embracing what was left unsaid as well as what was actually uttered. It entails on the one hand the scrupulous avoidance of any word or expression which, because it has dire or dismal associations, might exert an untoward influence, or which, being inappropriate, might offend the divine ear. On the other hand it enjoins that the language used by the worshipper should be auspicious and seemly; through the careful selection of titles, narratives etc., he should suggest that the deity was a being of grace and favour in every way qualified to grant what is required.

In some cases, e.g. at an annual festival in honour of a god, the poet may aim at not much more than a general effect, viz. that the god and also the audience¹⁷¹ feel that worthy praise has been bestowed upon the god, and that this year’s celebration has been at least as splendid as in preceding years.

In another case, e.g. when the god’s help is needed for a particular purpose, the poet may add to the conventional praise a reminder in narrative form, *hypomnēsis*, of how the god helped on a previous occasion. Sappho fr. 1 is an elaborate example of this type; cf. also Soph. *OT* 165-8 and Aristoph. *Thesm.* 1157-8. This rhetorical trick of a ‘reminder’ is sometimes used the other way round: the hymn reminds the god of services rendered (worship offered) by the mortals who address him/her. Only a fragment of Kallinos’ elegiac hymn to Zeus on behalf of the Smyrnaeans survives (fr. 2+2a West), but enough to see this principle at work.¹⁷² A particularly eloquent example is found in the hymnic prayer uttered by the chorus of Theban women in Aeschylus’ *Seven*: “O you our gods, protect our city, and show that you cherish it; take to heart the sacrifices of the townsfolk, and, having done so, come to our rescue. Be mindful, I pray, of

¹⁷⁰Cf. Plato’s prescription for his ideal Cretan state (*Laws* 801a1): τὸ ὠιδῆς γένος εὐφημον ἡμῖν πάντῃ πάντως ὑπαρχέτω, “let our (religious) singing of all kinds be in every way completely *euphemon*”. This echoes the words of poets: Pindar *P* 10.35 εὐφραμίαις μάλιστ’ Ἀπόλλων χαίρει, “Apollo takes pleasure above all in *euphamiai*”; and Eur. *HF* 694 τὸ γὰρ εὖ τοῖς ὕμνοισιν ὑπάρχει, “eulogy is the keynote of hymns”. Instances of the injunction to practice *euphemia* are found in Aesch. *Pers.* 620, *Suppl.* 694, *Eum.* 1035, Eur. *IA* 1467-9, Aristoph. *Birds* 1719, Call. *H* 5.139, Makedonikos’ paian to Apollo and Asklepios (our no. 7.5) 2.

¹⁷¹For this distinction between the two ‘directions’ in communication of hymnic discourse see p. 59.

¹⁷²Σμυρναίους δ’ ἐλέησον... μνήσαι δ’ εἴ κοτέ τοι μηρία καλὰ βοῶν / (Σμυρναῖοι κατέκηναν), “Have mercy on the Smyrnaeans... And remember if ever the Smyrnaeans burned fine thigh-bones to you...”.

the rituals our city always performed in your honour”¹⁷³ In these cases the reminder serves to persuade the gods to save the *community*; an interesting example of a hymn reminding a god of services rendered by private persons is found in the hymn composed by Nikiades for Nikias and his wife (no. 12.5).

Then again the poet may feel that the god will be most pleased by a narrative, *diēgēsis*. For the content of this narrative a poet has various choices. He may tell the story of the god’s birth, as Isyllos does in his paian to Asklepios; the Epidaurians, too, will have been satisfied to hear that their god is ‘autochthonous’ and not imported from elsewhere. Sometimes the poet combines the narrative of the birth of a god with a specific benefit conferred by him on mankind, e.g. in *HHHermes* the god’s invention of the lyre, in Pindar *P* 3.47-53 Asklepios’ healing arts. Or he can relate in epic manner the prowess of the god in combating monsters, e.g. Athena’s part in the Gigantomachy, a theme which must have been celebrated in many an Athenian hymn, or Apollo’s slaying of the Python, as in the two Delphic paians with musical notation. In other cases the poet presents the story of the god’s epiphany, as at the end of *HHDemeter* and Isyllos’ paian to Asklepios;¹⁷⁴ or he may just give an elaborate account of the god’s central activity.¹⁷⁵

In the late Hellenistic and Roman era a new genre of texts developed from this hymnic convention of presenting, as part of a hymn, a narration of the god’s (mainly mythical) great and beneficial deed: these often included miracles (especially miraculous healings) wrought by the god. Modern scholarship has coined the term ‘aretalogy’ for this type of texts (see above p. 48f.).

We may summarize the possible elements of the praise part of a hymn as follows:

- predication of powers through relative clauses or participles
- repeated (anaphoric) addresses

¹⁷³ἰὼ φίλοι δαίμονες, / λυτήριοι τ’ ἀμφιβάντες πόλιν / δείξαθ’ ὡς φιλοπόλεις. / μέλεσθέ θ’ ἱερῶν / δαμίων, μελόμενοι δ’ ἀρῆξατε / φιλοθύτων δέ τοι πόλεος ὀργίων / μνήστορες ἐστέ μοι (176-81).

¹⁷⁴Epiphany is the central theme of Duris’ hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes, Athen. 53d-f: in 307 BC the Athenians celebrated the arrival of this ‘liberator’ as if he were a god.

¹⁷⁵This is the dominant element of the *Homeric Hymns*. Burkert (1994, 11) writes: “Der Gott zeigt sein Wesen in den Situationen des Mythos: Aphrodite liebt, Apollon singt, und Hermes stiehlt”.

- *hypomneseis*, ‘reminders’, of earlier benefits conferred by the deity, or earlier worship offered by petitioners
- *ekphraseis*, ‘descriptions’, of the god, his haunts, actions
- narratives¹⁷⁶

There is an important distinction to be made here: in many hymns the rhetoric of the text works on two different levels (or channels) of communication. In every hymn there is always the internal communication addressed by the worshipping mortal(s) to the god. But in many cases there is also *external* communication between the poet and/or the performers and the audience. An example is Pindar’s sixth paian (our no. 2.2) in which the chorus sings about Apollo, and invokes him as Paian at the end; in the opening section of the paian, however, Pindar addresses Delphi and the Delphians. It is not necessary here to discuss the nature and tenor of first-person statements in the Pindaric poems (see p. 211, n 1), but more relevant to keep to the general point just made, well expressed by Danielewicz (1976, 119):

“The specific character of the hymn is to be seen in the simultaneous existence of two communicative settings, the first of which (the author/performer → the formal addressee, viz. the god) is supplemented by a new one: the author/performer → the real recipient, viz. the listeners. The latter setting enables the poet to deal with the theme of the utterance from a distance: to begin and conclude with a meta-textual formula, to treat the addressed god, until the moment of salutation, as an object of description or narration, to emphasize the presence of the performer, and to imply the virtual audience.”

Danielewicz’ discussion is aimed primarily at the Homeric and the Callimachean Hymns, but his observation is also illuminating for hymns generally. In quite a few instances hymnic texts are ‘self-referential’: the poet celebrates in the text of his hymn the origin and power of music, the delight taken by gods in hymns, and he may even refer to specific details (musical instruments, dancing movements etc.) of this very performance. Already in the *Homeric Hymns* we find an instance: in *HHHermes* the god

¹⁷⁶Race (1990, 86) includes further categories: appositives, explanations, *gnomes*, amplification. The list could probably be extended even further.

is shown making the first lyre and performing two hymns (54-62 and 422-33).¹⁷⁷ This phenomenon of ‘self-referentiality’ (or ‘immanent poetics’) is in some cases confined to one or two words: ‘the paian flares’ (παῖαν δὲ λάμπει Soph. *OT* 186); in other cases it extends over a whole stanza as in the first stanza of the Palaikastro hymn to Zeus, or even forms the climax of the whole religious poem: e.g. Eur. *Ba* 135-169.¹⁷⁸

3.3 Prayer

Having secured the correct god’s attention by meticulous invocation and having praised him adequately in the central part, the worshipper turns his attention at the close of the hymn to the precise formulation of his immediate wish or cry of distress. This final element of the hymn, the prayer (εὐχή), points up the formal connection with plain prayers as a means of securing divine aid.¹⁷⁹ In its most routine form the final prayer calls on the godhead to confer protection, well-being, prosperity, peace etc. on the worshipping community. Thus Limenios’ paian (no. 2.6.2) prays for well-being for Athens (the town he represents at this sacred embassy), and military success for Rome (the governing power of both Athens and Delphi, where the prayer is made). Similarly Callimachus in his *Hymn to Demeter* prays at the end of the narrative section to Demeter that she provide the peaceful conditions necessary for the cultivation of the fields, her particular area of divine patronage. An interesting appendage to one surviving version of the *Paean Erythraeus* prays that health and wealth should be granted the Nile region, whence this version originated (no. 6.1.2).

The prayer is the climax, the point of the hymn as a whole: the two previous sections have been leading up to it, securing divine good-will and preparing the ground for this final appeal to the divinity as meticulously as possible. On a formal level the prayer closing a hymn might be compared to the orator’s *gnōmē*, the precise formulation of the policy he advises, at the close of his speech, or the forensic orator’s call for a specific judgement

¹⁷⁷Cf. S.C. Shelmerdine, ‘Hermes and the Tortoise: A Prelude to the Cult’, *GRBS* 25, 1984, 201-8.

¹⁷⁸For the phenomenon in tragic choruses see Henrichs (1995).

¹⁷⁹Note Aristides’ reference to the general practice among hymn-writers to conclude their compositions with a prayer: “the best thing is – in the manner of the authors of dithyrambs and paians – to wind up one’s speech with a concluding prayer” (χράτιστον οὖν, ὡσπερ οἱ τῶν τε διθυράμβων καὶ παιάνων ποιηταί, εὐχὴν τινα προσθέντα, οὕτω κατακλεῖσαι τὸν λόγον I.369). On prayer see the studies mentioned above on p. 3 n. 2.

(conviction, acquittal etc.) as the exhortatory conclusion to his previous arguments. Singing hymns is a special case of 'how to do things with words': it is almost always not only a declarative utterance (praise of the god etc.), but also a performative one. This observation is particularly true of hymns composed with a certain purpose in mind, against a particular background of distress and need; less true, perhaps, of those hymns performed on a regular calendrical basis or those composed primarily for the entertainment and enlightenment of the listeners (e.g. the *Homeric Hymns*).

One aspect of the prayer deserves special mention. In the final section of many hymns, imperative expressions like '(come) here!', 'come!', 'appear!' (δεῦρο, ἐλθέ, μόλε, φάνηθι) are found: these hymns are termed *clitic*.¹⁸⁰ They evidently served the function of summoning the deity to come and appear at the celebration in his honour; the presence of the god is required to secure a measure of his power. Two of Callimachus' hymns (the opening of the second, to Apollo, and the close of the fifth, to Athena) illustrate well the mood of anticipatory suspense generated by the hymn prior to the epiphany of the god. The fifth hymn, 'Athena's bath', leads right up to the moment of epiphany, so to speak, and utters the final prayer at precisely that moment when it is felt that the god has succumbed to the previous entreaties to lend a sympathetic ear. Comparison with the magical hymns is helpful here: they show how the magician utters long sequences of invocatory formulæ in the hope that at their close the divinity will be present to perform the required magic.¹⁸¹

Finally, we should consider what is perhaps *the* central concept underlying all elements of the hymnodist's art. As we have seen, the general strategy was to please the deity addressed by choice of words, themes, melody and dance steps performed by the chorus if there was one (see Furlley, 1995a). The key concept here is *charis*, a word with a double meaning corresponding to the two sides of the relationship involved in worship. For on the one hand *charis* expresses that attitude of grateful adoration which ideally characterizes the worshipper; but it also denotes the god's grace and favour gained by that adoration. The two sides are complementary: by worshipping a deity with words of thanksgiving and praise, the worshipper hopes the recipient will be minded to reciprocate by granting

¹⁸⁰Menander Rhetor coined the term ὕμνος κλητικός and discussed some features of it: cf. Russell & Wilson (1981, 333-5).

¹⁸¹For examples see the hymns collected at the end of Preisendanz *et al.* (1973-1974, vol. II).

his/her favour. Or conversely, as Menander Rhetor puts it, human worship is intended to thank the gods for the good things they have given.¹⁸² As Race (1982, 8) writes: “No other word epitomizes so well the relationship which the hymnist tries to establish with the god – one of reciprocal pleasure and good will.”¹⁸³ Χάρις, χαίρω, χαρίζομαι are basic vocabulary of the hymnodist in expressing this mood of reciprocal pleasure. In particular the perfect participle of χαρίζομαι, κεχαρισμένος and its related adverb, κεχαρισμένως become almost technical terms for the ‘pleasing’ or ‘proper’ despatch of religious duties.¹⁸⁴

Not only do hymns often begin or end with a χαίρε addressed to the god, the worshippers also χαίρουσιν.¹⁸⁵ Three instances will suffice:

- in the *paean Erythraeus* 19-22 (our no. 6.1): “I salute you: visit my country of wide dancing-floors and grant that we may see the light of day in joyous gratitude,” (χαῖρέ μοι, Ἰλαος δ’ ἐπινίσειο τὰν ἀμὰν πόλιν εὐρύχορον, ἰὲ Παιάν, δὸς δ’ ἡμᾶς χαίροντας ὄρᾶν φάος).
- at the end of the Adonis-song in Theocritus’ fifteenth idyll (149): “I salute you, beloved Adonis: come to us who offer (you) joyous thanks,” (χαίρε, Ἄδων ἀγαπατέ, καὶ ἐς χαίροντας ἀφικνεῖ).
- the closing formula of a *Homeric hymn* (no. 26, 11-12): “So I salute you, Dionysos, rich in grapes: grant that we in our joyous gratitude may return hither in due season,” (καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαίρε, πολυστάφυλ’ ὦ Διόνυσε. / δὸς δ’ ἡμᾶς χαίροντας ἐς ὥρας αὖτις ἰκέσθαι).

¹⁸²Περὶ Σμινθιακοῦ Russell & Wilson (1981, vol. II, 441): χάριτας ἐκτινύντες ἀνθ’ ὧν εὖ πάσχομεν.

¹⁸³See further the papers by Bremer and Parker in Gill & Seaford (1998, 105-125, 127-39 respectively), Pulleyn (1997, esp. 16-38).

¹⁸⁴Thus in Plato’s *Euthyphro* we find the seer and prophet Euthyphro defining piety as the ‘pleasing’ performance of worship. As early as the *Iliad* a mortal can be said to be κεχαρισμένος to a deity, ‘dear to his or her heart’, because of a relationship of favour which the human has established with the god: e.g. at *Il* 5.826, Athena calls Diomedes κεχαρισμένε θυμῶι.

¹⁸⁵Wachter (1998) suggests that the original sense of χαίρε at both meeting and parting was concrete: “be happy (sc. with something, viz. a present or offering of some sort)”. In the case of hymns (he analyzes only the *Homeric Hymns*), Wachter suggests that the offering which the deity is asked to ‘delight in’ is the hymn itself; this tallies with one half of the reciprocal *charis* relationship we perceive in Greek hymns: the god is asked to χαίρειν at the worship offered him/her; in return the worshippers wish to delight (χαίρειν) in his goodwill (χάρις).

The singers express their gratitude, *χάρις*, toward the god through worshipful address; in return they hope the god will be pleased, *χαίρει*, and grant them his supportive grace, *χάρις* again, so that they may enjoy life, *χαίροντες*. To quote Race (1982, 10) again: “The rhetorical τέλος of a hymn is, then, to secure the god’s pleasure by a ‘pleasing’ choice of names and titles. . . and by the ‘proper’ narration of his powers and exploits. And after finding a fitting ἀρχή and giving a ‘pleasing’ account of the god’s powers, the hymnist is prepared to make his petition.” In an interesting passage of the *Suppliants* Euripides has Adrastus characterize the necessary internal attitude and sentiment of the hymn-writer if he is to achieve this overall object of ‘pleasing’ through his work: “the hymn-writer must compose his works in a spirit of rejoicing; if he does not have this feeling he will not, in his personal dejection, be able to lift the spirits of others. For he is not in a position to do so.”¹⁸⁶

3.4 An example

To round off these remarks on form let us consider a complete example, a hymnic prayer, possibly by Simonides, to the Fates (Moirai) (see Bowra, 1961, app. II). The text has been pieced together from separate quotations in Stobaeus, but it clearly constitutes a unity with detailed invocation of the Moirai, delineation of their powers through various forms of predication, a central ‘pivot’ (line 6), followed by a prayer of approximately balancing length which makes it clear that the song is written on behalf of a community facing serious danger.¹⁸⁷ Through this simple structure the hymnodist wove his art using descriptive epithets defining the relevant attributes of the divinities addressed, their powers, what they should provide, and what preclude.

¹⁸⁶180-83 τόν θ' ὕμνοποιόν αὐτὸς ἂν τίχτηι μέλη / χαίροντα τίχτειν· ἦν δὲ μὴ πάσχηι τόδε, / οὔτοι δύναιτ' ἂν οἴκοθεν γ' ἀτώμενος / τέρπειν ἂν ἄλλους· οὐδὲ γὰρ δίκην ἔχει.

¹⁸⁷Only the element of *charis* is conspicuously absent from these surviving lines.

{	I	<p>Κλῦτε, Μοῖραι, Διὸς αἴ τε¹ παρὰ θρόνον ἀγχοτάτω θεῶν “Listen, Moirai, who of gods sit closest beside the throne of Zeus ἐζόμεναι² περιώσι’ ἄφυκτά τε μήδεα and weave with adamantine shuttles countless, inescapable παντοδαπᾶν βουλᾶν ἀδαμαντίναισιν ὑφαίνετε κερκίσιν, plans for all manner of designs Αἴσα καὶ Κλωθὼ Λάχεσις τ’ εὐώλενοι³ Aisa, Klotho, and Lachesis, fair-armed Νυκτὸς κόραι, daughters of Night,</p>
	II	<p><u>εὐγομένων</u> ἐπακούσατ’, οὐράνιαι χθόνιαί τε listen to our prayer, heavenly and chthonic δαίμονες ὧ πανδείματοι, fear-inducing divinities, πέμπετ’ ἄμμιν ῥοδόκολπον send us rose-bodied <u>Εὐνομίαν</u>³ λιπαροθρόνους τ’ ἀδελφάς, <u>Δίκαν</u> Good Government and her sisters on gleaming thrones, Justice καὶ στεφανηφόρον <u>Εἰρήναν</u>, <u>πόλιν τε τάνδε βαρυφρόνων</u> and crown-bearing Peace, and rid this our town λελάθοιτε συντυχιᾶν. of down-heartening disasters.”</p>
	III	

Key:

I: invocation II: pivot III: prayer

αβγδ: imperative request (prayer)

αβγδ: name of addressee

αβγδ: mythological conceptualization of deity

αβγδ: descriptive or ornamental epithet

αβγδ: desirable personified abstraction (object of prayer)

αβγδ: identification of petitioner (‘us’, ‘our city’)αἴ τε... ὑφαίνετε¹...: relative predicationἐζόμεναι²...: participial predication³ εὐ-words, eulogizing deity.

