Andrew Ford (Princeton)

# THE GENRE OF GENRES
## Paeans and *Paian* in Early Greek Poetry

> *The paean is a lyric genre that nowadays composers direct to all gods but which in ancient times was properly reserved for Apollo and Artemis and performed in order to stop plague and disease. It is also used improperly by some who call processional-songs paeans.*
>
> *Proclus*[1]

The paean remains one of the most stubbornly undefinable forms of Greek lyric despite having attracted a remarkable amount of scholarly attention, including three substantial monographs in the past fifteen years. When Lutz Käppel published his *Paian: Studien zur Geschichte einer Gattung* in 1992,[2] it was the first book-length study of the genre since Arthur Fairbanks' in 1900.[3] Käppel had been inspired to take a new look at the subject by A.E. Harvey's important article on the "Classification of Greek Lyric Poetry"; Harvey pointed out that most of our ideas about Greek lyric genre go no further back than the Alexandrians, and usually express the needs of scholarly taxonomy rather than the expectations and experiences of the poems'

---

1 Proclus *ap. Bibl. Phot.* 320a20-24 Bekker: "Ὁ δὲ παιάν ἐστιν εἶδος ᾠδῆς εἰς πάντας νῦν γραφόμενος θεούς, τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν ἰδίως ἀπενέμετο τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι ἐπὶ καταπαύσει λοιμῶν καὶ νόσων ᾀδόμενος. Καταχρηστικῶς δὲ καὶ τὰ προσόδιά τινες παιᾶνας λέγουσιν".

2 Lutz Käppel, *Paian: Studien zur Geschichte einer Gattung*, Berlin/ New York 1992.

3 Arthur Fairbanks, *A Study of the Greek Paean*, New York 1900. Important intervening contributions include Ludwig Deubner, "Paian", in: *Neue Jahrbücher für das Klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur* 22/1919, vol. 43, p. 385-406, Albrecht von Blumenthal, "Paian", in: *Paulys Realencyclopädie*, vol 18 (1949) cols. 2340-2362, and Stefan Lorenz Radt, *Pindars zweiter und sechster Paian: Text, Scholien und Kommentar*, Amsterdam 1958.

original audiences.[4] Käppel accordingly proposed a reception-oriented account of paeans; but it was his dismissal of traditional definitions of the genre – the sort of thing epitomized in my epigraph from Proclus and long repeated in handbooks[5] – that provoked Stephan Schröder to defend Hellenistic criticism and its terms in 1999.[6] In the following year Giovan Battista D'Alessio – himself the author of several key articles on the subject – no sooner remarked on the renewed interest in paeans[7] than another major contribution appeared – Ian Rutherford's thoughtful *Pindar's Paeans. A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre*, published in 2001.[8]

Over and above the many contributions it makes to our understanding of paeans, this body of work is remarkable because it points to a wider renewal of interest in genre in lyric criticism over the past 30 years. I propose, then, not to review these books – which the principals themselves have reviewed productively and with a high level of scholarship on all sides[9] – but to keep them in focus while considering the reemergence of genre and what it means for historical approaches to Greek lyric. I will only touch upon their main findings to highlight the striking fact that, among all archaic genres, paeans have proven the most resistant to definition and categorization. Despite the great contributions of these books – both in the additions to our epigraphical and papyrological evidence and in the subtlety with which this evidence is scrutinized – we are no more able than Fairbanks was to say what made a paean a paean: no set of formal features has been uncovered that all paean texts share, and the occasions on which they could be perfor-

---

4 A.E. Harvey, "The Classification of Greek Lyric Poetry", in: *Classical Quaterly* 49/1955, p. 157-175.

5 For grammarians on the paean, see Hans Färber, *Die Lyrik in der Kunsttheorie der Antike*, Munich 1936, Pt. I, p. 31-32, 49-51; Pt. II, p. 31-33. Such definitions inform Herbert Weir Smyth's influential *Greek Melic Poets*, London 1906, p. xxiii-cxxiv (p. xxxvi-xlii on paeans).

6 Stephan Schröder, *Geschichte und Theorie der Gattung Paian*, Stuttgart/Leipzig 1999.

7 Giovan Battista D'Alessio, review of Schröder in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 1,24/2000 (http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2000/2000-01-24.html).

8 Ian Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans. A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre*, Oxford 2001. Pindar's paeans had been studied by Radt, *Pindars zweiter und sechster Paian* (n. 3 above) and Giacomo Bona, *Pindaro, I peani: Testo, traduzione, scoli e commento*, Cuneo 1988.

9 Noteworthy reviews of Käppel include D'Alessio in *Classical Review* 44/1994, p. 62-67 and M.W. Dickie in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2,5/2004 (see n. 7 above). Schröder has been reviewed by D'Alessio (n. 7 above) and by Rutherford in *Classical Review* 51/2001, p. 377-378. Rutherford is reviewed by Käppel in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 10,38/2002 and with rich detail by Glenn T. Patten in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 10,41/2002.

med vary so greatly in mood and purpose that we remain unable to give a coherent account of the song's functions. Paradoxically, the advances made in recent work on paeans seems only to confirm the gloomy prospect for lyric study prophesied by Amy M. Dale: "To determine accurately the special characteristics of the various lyric types is an impossible task for us, and the more our store of fragments is added to the more irretrievably mixed the categories appear."[10] In view of these results, it would be foolhardy to expect that a new and completely satisfying definition of paean is just around the corner. But the paean's very undefinability can be helpful in thinking about the workings of genre in early Greek poetry, and about current attempts to come to terms with this history. In that light I will attempt to show that we can better understand the elusive paean if put aside the quest for a timeless, ideal pattern and notice instead certain religious and rhetorical dynamics of the *paian*-cry itself.

## Defining Lyric Genres

Looking back on *Paian*, Käppel explained his decision to write a history of a genre as a way of escaping the "purely aesthetic approaches which had dominated Greek literary studies in the second third of the 20th century".[11] As a breakthrough work he identified Claude Calame's 1977 *Les Choeurs des jeunes filles*,[12] which threw a flood of light on the archaic genre of "maidens' songs" (*partheneia*) by reading its obscure texts in light of symbolic codes extracted from Greek initiatory practices. Calame's subtitle indicated that his focus – on "morphologie, fonction religieuse et sociale" – was influenced by structuralist views of literary texts as systematically related to other means of social formation and communication. The structuralist revolution affected all branches of literary study in the 1960's and 1970's, but was particularly important for archaic lyric because these fragmented, often authorless scraps frequently could not be interpreted at all without being integrated into some other signifying system. Other notable works soon supported this tendency to read lyric in connection with larger,

---

[10] Amy M. Dale, "Stasimon and Hypochreme from *Eranos* XLVIII" (1950), in: Dale, *Collected Papers*, eds. T.B.L. Webster and E.G. Turner, Cambridge 1969, pp. 34-40, here p. 38.

[11] Käppel, review of Rutherford (n. 9 above).

[12] Claude Calame, *Les Choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaique*, 2 vols., Rome 1977 (Eng. trans. of vol. 1 by Derek Collins and Jane Orion, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Functions*, Lanham 1997).

especially social structures. Wolfgang Rösler's 1980 *Dichter und Gruppe* construed Alcaeus' songs not as autobiography but as the expression of themes and values appropriate to the sympotic gatherings at which they were performed;[13] Bruno Gentili' s 1984 *Poesia e pubblico* highlighted the function of Greek lyric to integrate local and occasional audiences into the ideologies of their societies.[14] Such works also pointed ahead to cultural studies and the analysis of literary texts as cultural products, inextricable from social structures and interacting with non-verbal as well as verbal symbolic systems.

The less that lyric poems were read for personal revelation, the more genre reemerged as a tool that could help bring into focus a text's other messages. And so Calame's study of *partheneia* has been followed by synoptic accounts of other lyric forms, not only major ones like dithyramb[15] and hymn,[16] but also less well documented kinds, such as the *thrênos*,[17] the hyporcheme,[18] the wedding song.[19] The trend gives every sign of expanding under the current regime of cultural studies: recent works have widened the focus from genres to modes of performance, such as kitharody and aulody, or have turned to non-literary cultural practices that impinged on poetic production, such as the Athenian *khorêgeia*.[20]

---

[13] Wolfgang Rösler, *Dichter und Gruppe: eine Untersuchung zu den Bedingungen und zur historischen Funktionen früher griechischer Lyrik am Beispiel Alkaios*, Munich 1980, p. 40: "ohne Hetairie kein Lyriker Alkaios".

[14] Bruno Gentili, *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica da Omero al V secolo*, Rome 1984. Cited from the Eng. translation by A. T. Cole, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century*, Baltimore 1988.

[15] I confine myself to monographs: Dana Ferrin Sutton, *Dithyrambographi Graeci*, Hildesheim 1989; Maria J. H. van der Weiden, *The Dithyrambs of Pindar*, Amsterdam 1991; Bernhard Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos, Geschichte einer Gattung*, Göttingen 1992; Giorgio Ieranó, *Il Ditirambo di Dioniso*, Pisa/ Rome 1997.

[16] Michael Lattke, *Hymnus: Materialen zu einer Geschichte der antiken Hymnologie*, Freiburg (Schweiz) 1991; AION, *L'inno tra rituale e letteratura nel mondo antico*, Atti del Colloquio (Napoli, 21-24 ottobre 1991), Rome 1993; W. D. Furley/Jan M. Bremer, *Greek Hymns: Selected cult songs from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period*, 2 vols., Tübingen 2001; Maria Vamvouri Ruffi, *La Fabrique du divin: Les hymnes de Callimaque à la lumière des hymnes Homériques et des hymnes épigraphiques*, Liège 2004.

[17] Maria Cannatà Fera, *Pindaro. Trenodie*, Rome 1970, p. 7-46.

[18] Massimo Di Marco, "Osservazioni sull'iporchema", in: *Helikon* 13-14/1973-1974, p. 326-348.

[19] Eleni Contiades-Tsitsoni, *Hymenaios und Epithalamion. Das Hochzeitslied in der frühgriechischen Lyrik*, Stuttgart 1990.

[20] Timothy Power, *The Culture of Kitharodia*, Cambridge, Mass. 2006; Peter Wilson, "The Aulos in Athens", in: Simon Goldhill/Robin Osborne (eds.), *Performance*

These works can hardly be said to share a single methodology, but all have had to reflect on how is it that a song belongs to a particular genre, and what is the significance of the obvious fact that this may change over time. Harvey's question about whether the study of archaic lyric is helped or hindered by Hellenistic terms has now become a more general debate about continuity in Greek literary history.[21] I side with those scholars who, like Käppel and Rutherford, see significant discontinuities between the musical culture of the archaic and early classical ages – when kinds of poetry were distinguished mainly by the social contexts in which they were found and the occasions they accompanied – and the scholarly reception of texts in the Hellenistic age – when genre became a set of demonstrable, usually formal properties that a set of texts exhibited (or ought to).[22] The other view, taken by Schröder and supported by D'Alessio, denies that there was a fundamental change from descriptive to prescriptive genres, and stresses the many long-term continuities in musical practice and tradition. Schröder rightly points out that Hellenistic scholars were neither uninformed about nor indifferent to non-formal properties of poems. But there are nevertheless reasons to be cautious in using their terminology. As a practical matter, when texts like Sappho's came to Alexandria without information on their performative contexts, formal properties by default played a major role in organizing lyric *œuvres*. Moreover, we know that in some cases ancient grammarians papered over their own taxonomic confusion by fabricating convenient but historically empty generic categories. For example, grammarians who found it convenient to distinguish songs meant to be sung while dancing (*huporkhêmata*) from those sung in procession (*prosodia*) sometimes had trouble knowing how to label paeans, which could be performed both ways. As a result differences of opinion could arise (to Proclus' dismay) about whether a song was a paean, a *prosodion* or a hyporcheme.[23] In

---

*Culture and Athenian Democracy*, Cambridge 1999, p. 58-95; idem, *The Athenian Institution of the "Khoregia": The Chorus, the City and the Stage*, Cambridge 2000.

[21] L. E. Rossi "I generi letterari e le loro leggi scritte e non scritte nelle letterature classiche", in: *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 18/1971, p. 69-94 attempts to stress continuity between the early ("unwritten") and later "laws"; for a critique, Claude Calame, "Réfléxions sur les genres littéraires en Grèce ancienne", in: *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 17/1974, p. 113-128 and "La poésie lyrique grecque, un genre inexistant?", in: *Litterature* 111/1998, pp. 87-110, here p. 101.

[22] For a history stressing the fourth century BC as transformative, see Andrew Ford, *The Origins of Criticism. Literary culture and poetic theory in classical Greece*, Princeton 2002.

[23] See Färber, *Kunsttheorie* (n. 5 above), Pt. 1, p. 32; the most pressing and difficult case is a scholium labeling the third triad of Pindar *Paean* 6 (D6 Rutherford) a *prosodion*: on which see Giovan Battista D'Alessio, "Pindar's Prosodia and the Classification of

such cases scholars assuming a continuous literary tradition will be obliged to consider whether a (real) "line of demarcation" between genres has been "blurred".[24] The other approach, taken by Käppel, would begin by noting that the only pre-Hellenistic occurrence of *prosodion* (sc. *melos*) is in Aristophanes – where it may be the poet's fanciful coinage – and that *huporkhêma* is a vague catch-all not found before Plato;[25] from such terminological clues it might be inferred that the generic system of the archaic and early classical period had less interest in grouping together songs with similar performative modes than in keeping paeans distinct from, for example, dithyrambs (a genre attested in Archilochus). A comparable "adjustment" of archaic song classes is known to have happened to the songs that were called *skolia* (roughly "drinking-songs") from Pindar through the fourth century; when, in the Hellenistic age, singing fashions changed and such *skolia* became obsolete, Pindar's texts had to be assigned to the newly redefined lyric genre of *enkômion*.[26] For such reasons I strongly agree with Käppel that we cannot assume that generic terms not found earlier than the late classical age (the great majority of our terms) reflect earlier "realities". But it remains to ask how this fact about literary history should affect our criticism.

Harvey wanted to recover the generic rules prevailing at the time when early poems were composed in order to have a standard for evaluating them. But doing away with what he called the Alexandrian "filters" proved easier than discovering more authentic "criteria" in the early texts; of paeans he expostulated impatiently, "there seem, indeed, to have been practically no rules at all".[27] Recent reflection on genre suggests that Harvey's real problem was not that early paeans were insufficiently regulated, but that they were regulated in ways and for reasons he could not appreciate. He could not understand that genres could entail few formal requirements, and even these could be negotiable, and nevertheless perform an important role in fa-

---

Pindaric Papyrus Fragments", in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 118/1997, p. 23-60, Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 323-332, 336-338 and Leslie Kurke, "Choral Lyric as 'Ritualization': Poetic Sacrifice and Poetic *Ego* in Pindar's Sixth Pythian", in: *Classical Antiquity* 24/2005, p. 81-130.

24 So Rutherford *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 107, critiqued by Käppel in his review (n. 9 above).

25 Aristoph. *Birds* 853, with Nan Dunbar, *Aristophanes Birds*, Oxford 1995, *ad loc.*; on *huporkhêma*, first in Plat. *Ion* 534c, a grab-bag of current genre terms, see Dale (n. 10 above), p. 38-40.

26 See Harvey, "Classification" (n. 4 above), p. 160-164.

27 P. 173, cf. p. 153. Critiqued by Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 1-7.

cilitating communication.[28] Against idealized conceptions of genre like Harvey's, Käppel adduced the strongly historical analysis of Hans Robert Jauss: genre is not a norm that precedes and determines the text (*ante rem*), nor even a restrospective synthesis useful in classifying texts (*post rem*); genre arises in the work (*in re*) as a dialectic between its relation to tradition (as embodied in the participants' *Erwartungshorizont*) and its function in context (*Sitz im Leben*).[29] This cannot be taken to mean, however, that genres are virtually re-made with each new work and are so fluid that they may be ignored. The precision and normative force of pre-Hellenistic genre names may have been more on the order of "rock and roll" than of "sonnet", but those songs did fall into well-marked groups: just to be comprehensible, lyrics needed to manifest affiliations with other songs, synchronically and diachronically.[30] Recovering the generic system of an earlier age in order to hold its poets accountable would be sensible if poetry were target practice. As things stand, a better reason to try to come to terms with earlier generic systems is that learning how a culture recognized distinct poetic and non-poetic discourses and how these forms were thought to be interrelated (and how disjunct) increases our sensitivity to the full range of lyric's expressive powers. On this basis, it may prove rewarding to ask how paeans fitted in to the song culture of archaic Greece.

## Defining Paeans

---

[28] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, Cambridge Mass. 1982 remains a valuable account of genre in these terms.

[29] Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 13, 11, quoting Hans Robert Jauss, "Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft", in: Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, Frankfurt a.M. 1970, p. 144–207. (English trans. by Timothy Bahti, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory", in: Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Minneapolis 1982, p. 3-45.)

[30] For an excellent conspectus of archaic lyric genres, see Robert Fowler, *The nature of Early Greek Lyric*, Toronto 1987, p. 86-103; also valuable is Martin L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus*, Berlin/New York 1974. Clearly Panhellenic genres obey different dynamics. On tragedy, see Glenn Most, "Generating Genres: The Idea of the Tragic", in: Mary Depew/Dirk Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre. Authors, Canons, and Society*, Cambridge, Mass. 2000, p. 15-35; on epic, Andrew Ford, "Epic as Genre", in: Barry Powell/Ian Morris (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer*, Leiden 1997, p. 398-416.

Fairbanks overturned the prevalent 19th-century conception of the paean as a jubilant hymn of thanksgiving.[31] Connecting it with the healer Paian-Apollo (without the benefit of Linear B), he declared its core function to be a petition for relief. This was a return to the main ancient tradition in method as well as theme: Fairbanks followed ancient scholars (again, as instanced in Proclus) in first boiling the paean down to an essence – usually discovered in some early-attested function (cf. the plague-averting paean of *Il.* 1, 471 ff.) – and then devising "just-so" stories to explain other evidence. The bulk of his book is devoted to noting the many non-supplicatory uses of paeans – at sacrifices, as a battle cry, in cult, with libations, weddings, opening assemblies, after victory, as a hymn of praise, beginning and ending symposia – and explaining each as a logical and historical extension of the song's primary function.[32] As a structuralist, Käppel eschewed substantive definitions and proposed instead a "Funktionsmodell der Gattung": paeans were designed to open a dialogue-relation with the god; whether the mood was jubilant or desperate depended on the *Sitz im Leben*.[33] But this effectively makes community psychology the determinant of genre, and indeed the obscure determinant of everything. Rutherford, accordingly, is willing to venture a definition in revising Fairbanks: he argues that there is no reason to assume that the healing function of paeans is any older than their appearance in celebratory contexts (Homer also attests to a victory paean at *Il.* 22,389 ff.), and formulates a definition in social terms that incorporates both: paeans are "the assertion of the strength of the community" through "the organization and exhibition of the collective strength of the adult males".[34] Among the attractions of Rutherford's hypothesis that the paean originated as a soldiers' song is that it explains why paeans were (almost?) always sung by men. But we need not assume that all uses of the paean can be logically derived from a single "original" function: as Rutherford points out, the syncretism between Paian and Apollo ongoing in Homer

---

[31] Esp. Karl Schwalbe, *Uber die Bedeutung des Päans als Gesang im Apollinischen Kultus*, diss. Magdeburg 1847.

[32] Fairbanks, *The Greek Paean* (n. 3 above), p. 68, with a schematic summary on, p. 69. Finding "logical developments" is made easier by the fact that Apollo at times shows antithetical aspects as destroyer/healer.

[33] Käppel *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 13, cf. p. 62-64. Critiqued by Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 84.

[34] Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 86, cf. p. 16. Martin L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford 1992, p. 15 also sees a common strand in soldiers' paeans, but allows for a messier development: "Paeans uttered before, in or after battle may, accordingly, have had a life and meaning of their own, which bore little relationship to paeans sung at weddings or symposia, let alone the ceremonial paeans composed by Pindar and Bacchylides for religious festivals".

raises the possibility that the song as well is a generic hybrid already by the time we first hear of it.[35] And the Greeks themselves seem to have felt that paeans were to be found in rather antithetical contexts: etymologies for *paian* divide between taking it from παύειν, suggesting a song of supplication (cf. Proclus' "ἐπὶ καταπαύσει λοιμῶν καὶ νόσων"), and from παίειν, suggesting a song of aggressive confidence.[36]

The attempt to define the paean in terms of its addressees rather than its functions has also long occupied scholars. Schröder supports an approach attested in Proclus when he argues that the evidence, if properly sifted, shows that "correct" paeans were first confined to Apollo/Paian before being extended to successor healers like Asclepius and then more distant associates. It is only in the fifth century, Schröder holds, that we find paeans to the likes of Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Athena, and Dionysius; but this is part of an intelligible expansion which culminated in the first paeans addressed to mortals at the end of the century (e. g. Plutarch *Lysander* 18). Conversely, Käppel takes these examples of non-Apolline paeans to show that being adaptable as to addressee is not a "late" falling off from the paean's original purity, but is inherent to the genre, structural underdeterminacy enabling the song to respond to more of life's urgent occasions.[37]

On the formal level as well, it is hard to be more specific than saying that paeans are songs – they are not composed in recited meters until post-classical times – with at best "family resemblances" among them.[38] We hear of paeans accompanied by the *kithara*, the *aulos*, and by neither or both together; they appear as choral songs, antiphonal songs and kitharodic solos; they could be performed in procession or in a dance around an altar.[39] One possibly universal feature is that paeans were sung by men, sometimes with

---

[35] Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 16-17. For possible further connections with an Indo-European victory song, see Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon. Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*, New York/Oxford 1995, p. 510-515.

[36] On *paian*'s etymologies, Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 14, 37 n. 1 and von Blumenthal, "Paian" (n. 3 above) col. 2344. Apollo's epithet *hekaergos* was also explained by antithetical *etyma*: εἴργειν ("ward off") and ἐργάζεσθαι ("effect"): cf. Apollodorus of Athens 244 in: *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, ed. Felix Jacoby and Guido Schepens, F 97.

[37] Schröder, *Geschichte der Paian* (n. 6 above), p. 22-31; Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 341-349; cf. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 11 n. 3.

[38] Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 10-13 and 84-85 and Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 68-83.

[39] Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 7, 27; cf. Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 80.

a ritual *ololugê* added by women.[40] This preponderant tendency might be raised to the level of a (religious, social, poetic) law if we could be sure that references in tragedy to paeans sung by women were only poetic fancy.[41] Here again undoubted exceptions to the rule (e. g. maidens singing paeans in Catullus 34, Horace *Carm.* 1,21) could be seen either as a realization of the genre's inherent adaptability or set aside as late degeneration.

We come finally to the one feature that comes nearest to being a hallmark of the genre – the refrain, what Athenaeus calls (697a) "τὸ παιανικὸν ἐπίφθεγμα". Here again "compliance" is less than 100%, and the question of whether some form of *iê paian* is either necessary or sufficient to make a song into a paean has been debated since early Hellenistic times. It was said by some that Aristotle's short song to Arete was in fact a paean to Hermeias, but others countered that it was a *skolion*, pointing to the lack of a "παιανικὸν ἐπίρρημα".[42] A scrappy Oxyrhyncus scholion suggests that Callimachus took Bacchylides' *Cassandra* for a paean because it had the refrain. The papyrus is missing a word at precisely the crucial spot, but the most prevalent reconstruction suggests that Aristarchus disputed Callimachus on this point because he believed the "epithegma" (Lobel's restoration) was to be found in dithyrambs as well.[43] In Callimachus' camp, Schröder maintains that some form of the *paian* cry is a universal feature of the genre, or very nearly so if we recognize it in abbreviated forms like *iê*.[44] Käppel finds the refrain so variable in form (charted on p. 66-67) as to be optional, and cites as an example Ariphron's refrainless "paean" (so Athenaeus 701f) to Hygieia.[45] Rutherford adds, like Aristarchus, that other genres seem to be able to incorporate or "quote" the refrain.[46] Now Kappel

---

[40] See Calame, *Les Choeurs de jeunes filles* (n. 12 above), p. 147-152 (= p. 76-79 of the English translation).

[41] When Euripidean choruses mention paeans sung by the *Dêliades* (in *HF* 689 ff.; cf. *IA* 1466 ff.), Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 114-115 (cf. p. 59, 110-111) sees the chorus projecting a mythical image of their own song; Fairbanks, *The Greek Paean* (n. 3 above), p. 31 a literary allusion.

[42] Hermippus Fr. 48 Wehrli (*apud* Athenaeus 696a-697b). Cf. [Plut.] *De Musica* 1134d-e, with Harvey, "Classification" (n. 4 above), p. 172-173.

[43] P.Oxy. 2368 (= *Bacchylides*, p. 120 Sn.-M.; Callimachus Fr. 293 *SH* Lloyd-Jones/Parsons). Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 97-98 gives the most updated text; cf. Käppel *Paian*, p. 38 ff., Schröder, *Geschichte der Paian* (n. 6 above), p. 110-119.

[44] Schröder, *Geschichte der Paian* (n. 6 above), p. 49-61. Cf. D'Alessio, "Pindar's Prosodia" (n. 23 above), p. 37.

[45] Ariphron 813 *PMG*; Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 68.

[46] Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 19-23. On the "quotation" (Timotheos' *Persae*), see below.

and Rutherford seem to be right in claiming that the paean cry could be at times only implicit in a paean song, and paeanic language could appear in other kinds of song without making them paeans. But I think the role of the refrain can not be gauged by "counting noses". It was perhaps reasonable for Athenaeus to call Ariphron's song a paean since it prays for health; but Käppel should suppose that *Sitz im Leben* was the real determinant of its genre: in contexts where a paean was wanted, an epithegma could have been appended to the 10 lines as an *extra metrum* "amen".[47] In other contexts, the text as recorded could have functioned perfectly well as a sententious *skolion*, like Aristotle's refrainless paean/*skolion*.

Without claiming that some form of the word *paian* was present in all paeans and only in paeans, I suggest that attending to the old vocable can tell us something about the genre it came to name. I do not suppose that the word signified some enduring "essence" of the song, for *paian* came to have so little semantic content that it could be productive of jokes and misunderstandings.[48] Indeed, it is not clear that the syllables meant anything much to begin with. Many scholars assume the god came first – *Paiêôn* is a divine healer in Homer (*Il.* 5,401f. etc.) and a theonymn in the Knossos tablets.[49] But some hold with Deubner that the god is only a personification of what was originally an apotropaic rhythmical cry, *iê iê paian*.[50] On our current evidence, Deubner's learnedly argued view must remain only a hypothesis, but it helpfully foregrounds the importance of right naming in paeans, an importance reflected in the ambiguity of the word itself, simultaneously a name for a particular kind of song, what one says in that song to evoke the god, and the proper name of the god the song invites to appear. Considered as an element in a magico-religious speech act, *paian* is all three things at once, it is each of these things *because* it is the other. So too any song made

---

[47] As at Aristophanes *Wasps* 874. For *paian* as an add-on "amen" (in the usual wide range of contexts), see Andreas Willi, *The Languages of Aristophanes*, Oxford 2003, p. 45-47.

[48] Aristophanes *Acharn*. 1211-1212; *Peace* 453-455; Herodotus 5,1 (the Illyrian tribe the Paeonians mistaking their enemy's paean as an invitation to attack). Cf. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 19.

[49] So Fairbanks, *The Greek Paean* (n. 3 above), p. 7; Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 11, 13; G. S. Kirk et al., *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 1, Cambridge 1985, on *Il.* 1,473, 474; Joachim Latacz et al., *Homers Ilias Gesamtkommentar*, Munich/Leipzig, on 1,473.

[50] Deubner, "Paian" (n. 3 above), comparing the Eleusinian *Iakh' o Iakhe* or the Dionysiac *euoi*; so too Schröder, *Geschichte der Paian* (n. 6 above) p. 1-21 and Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trad. John Raffan, Cambridge Mass. 1985 (originally, *Griechischen Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart 1977), p. 43, 74, 376 n. 14. Cf. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 12 with nn. 7-8.

out of *paian* will attach importance to naming, for saying *paian* entails the "Du-Stil" in which getting the deity's name and epithets right (*euphêmia*) was crucial for success.[51] Accordingly I propose that considering paeans as structures designed to pronounce *paian* – or its functional equivalent – may shed some light on the elusive nature of the song, especially in the obscure period between Homer and the professional performance paeans of Pindar and Bacchylides.

The importance of rightly bestowing the word *paian* is clearly illustrated in what is admittedly a rather baroque example, a fragment from Timotheos syncretizing Apollo/Paian with Helios (800 *PMG*):

σύ τ' ὦ τὸν ἀεὶ πόλον οὐράνιον
λαμπραῖς ἀκτῖσ' Ἥλιε βάλλων,
πέμψον ἑκαβόλον ἐχθροῖς<ι> βέλος
σᾶς ἀπὸ νευρᾶς, ὦ ἴε Παιάν.

You who always strike heaven's pole with your bright rays, Sun, send the far-darting shaft against our enemies from your bowstring, O hail *Paian*.

As commonly in paeans, the crucial word is withheld until the end as a kind of climactic accomplishment of the paeanic act. The space between this and the initial vocative is filled with justification for bestowing the potent name on the sun. Timotheos figures the sun as "striking" (βάλλων) to invite the epithet *paian* interpreted as *paiein* (cf. "ἴε"); this version of the etymology is supported by evoking Apollo's traditional image as archer (cf. "πέμψον ... βέλος").[52] Because its shafts reach the heavenly pole, the sun can also be called *hekêbolos*, if this debated epithet be taken as "striking from afar".[53] Any anxiety about Helios' appropriation of Apolline titles is assuaged by phrasing that preserve the old name in the new form: "ἀεὶ πόλον ... βάλλων".[54]

In various ways most of our early references to paean songs suggest a heightened attentiveness to naming. In some cases we will see that the focus on naming brought with it a certain rhetoric, in particular an emphasis on the act of predication that aims to convert, grammatically, *paian* as the name of song-form into *Paian* as the name of the god evoked by the song. Ex-

---

[51] Cf. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 6, 53-55; Käppel *Paian*, p. 65-70.

[52] As in Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo* 97-104.

[53] See Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue Grec*, Paris 1968-1977, s.v. and Wilhelm Beck, s.v., in: Bruno Snell et al. (eds.), *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*, vol. 2, Göttingen 1982.

[54] Punning similarly reinforces syncretism in Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1372-1375: "μέθετέ με τάλανα,/ καί μοι Θάνατος Παιὰν ἔλθοι./ προσαπόλλυτέ μ' ὄλλυτε τὸν δυσδαίμονα". Cf. *Phaethon* Fr. 781,11-13 *TGF*.

amples from Homer and Sappho will show this ambiguity strategically reenacting the prayer's naming function, transforming a traditional epithet/refrain into the presence of the deity.[55] This is not to claim that the word *paian* is a universal marker of the genre paean – for it may in some cases be present only in the zero degree, as Apollo's name is present in Timotheos. But observing such dynamics of the sacred word may help explain why the genre proves so hard to pin down.

## Reading *paian*'s

In one of our earliest preserved descriptions of a paean, Odysseus has led a party to Chryse to return Chryseis to her father and appease Apollo in *Iliad* 1. After the old man prays and sacrifices, there is a meal, and then *kouroi* put on crowns and take up wine (*Iliad* 1,472-4 West):

> οἳ δὲ πανημέριοι μολπῇ θεὸν ἱλάσκοντο
> καλὸν ἀείδοντες παιήονα κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν
> μέλποντες Ἑκάεργον· ὁ δὲ φρένα τέρπετ᾽ ἀκούων.
>
> All day they supplicated the god with song and dance, the young men of Achaea, finely singing the paean-song, singing and dancing for *Hekaergos*, and the god rejoiced as he listened.

Those who stress continuities in literary history could remark that Homer is Hellenistic enough to describe the paean formally as a dance song (μολπῇ), functionally as a song of appeasement (ἱλάσκοντο), and socially as a Greek song, performed by young men under a leader (κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν). A textbook paean, then, sung to Paian/Apollo to ward off plague (cf. 1,456). On the other hand, those who stress the power of *Sitz im Leben* to determine poetic genre could note that in formal terms there is very little to distinguish this act of supplication from paeans in a quite different spirit, such as those sung at symposia or festivals: this collective singing goes on for hours, and comes after a (sacrificial) meal as a separate service, after *kouroi* have come in bearing crowns (471) and filled up the cups of the celebrants (471).[56]

---

[55] Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 115-126 has noticed what he calls "paeanic ambiguity" in a number of representations of the song, citing (p. 121) the end of Pindar *Paean* D2 (*Paean* 2 Sn.-M.) and Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* 184.

[56] On the sympotic paean, see Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 50-55.

But the crucial task of paeanic naming is also reflected I suggest in Homer's diction, which thickens noticeably when he paraphrases the song.[57] Repeating the root *m(e/o)lp-* within three verses (472 and 474) has been blamed as "awkward" and defended as "typically Homeric cumulation".[58] But Homer is describing a song that was itself a repetitive affair, and framing his description with a word for "music" produces an acoustic echo that is something like a refrain.[59] The semantic level as well shows a certain over-fullness of expression. The first half of 474 momentarily suggests an extra meaning for *paiêona* in 473, which the ancients sensibly took as "paean-song", governed by *aeidein*.[60] But when 474 introduces *melpontes*, *paiêona* becomes available as its proleptic object (with *aeidein* taken absolutely). By this ambiguity, the word *paian* briefly ceases being the common noun that names the song (as at *Il.* 22,389) and becomes the proper name belonging to the god (*Paiêona*). The text's grammar, like the ritual prayer, manages to bring the god forth out of the phrase.

With the addition of *hekaergon* as the object of *melpontes* in 474a, we are put back on track, so to speak. But here again the divine appellation is hyper-charged, wavering between epithet and substantive: with the number of parallels on his side, West capitalizes *Hekaergon* as a proper name used by Homer to identify the god being feted; but there is nothing to prevent printing it in lower case, as in Allen's OCT, so that Homer is quoting the magic formula the Greeks used to summon Paian/Apollo. On either reading, the word, withheld to the end of the description and capping a triad of names – θεὸν/ παιήονα/ □Εκάεργον – demands and rewards special emphasis. [61] For the narrator seems to take a stand here in the debate about

---

[57] An analogous "thickening" is *Il.* 22,393: Achilles' language calling for a paean upon the death of Hector has seemed (e. g. to Eustathius) to quote the refrain at the same time as he justifies singing the song.

[58] See Kirk, *Iliad* (n. 49 above), p. 103. Apollonius imitates the redundancy in *Arg.* 2, 702-703: "καλὸν Ἰηπαιήον' Ἰηπαιήονα Φοῖβον / μελπόμενοι"; so Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo* 21.

[59] Cf. Watkins, *Kill a Dragon* (n. 35 above), p. 515 on the "phonic…closure" setting off the first stanza of the paean at Sophocles, *Philoctetes* at 827 and 831.

[60] With *kalon* as adverb. Cf. Scholl. ad 1,472, 473 and Burkert, *Greek Religion* (n. 50 above), p. 405 n. 20; cf., p. 267. For the syntax of common-noun(?)/ adverb "sing", cf. 18, 570: "ἱμερόεν κιθάριζε, *λίνον* (Λίνον ?) δ' ὑπὸ *καλὸν* ἄειδε". Aristarchus' exegesis here adduced the similarly ambiguous *paian* (sch. AbT ad loc.: "εἶδος ᾠδῆς τὸ <λίνον> ὡς παιᾶνα ἤ τι τοιοῦτον"). Cf. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 13-14.

[61] Fairbanks, *The Greek Paean* (n. 3 above), p. 75 quotes the opening of an antiphonal hymn to ward off pestilence preserved in Clement (5,8,48): "μέλπετε, ὦ παῖδες, ἑκάεργον καὶ ἑκαέργαν".

whether *hekargos*, already archaic for the *Iliad* poet, meant "working from afar" or "keeping far away".[62] The latter sense is pointedly in evidence if we contrast *hekêbolos*. Up to this point in the text, *hekêbolos,* understood as "striking from afar", has been the most common epithet for Apollo (and the one favored by Chryses: 21, 96, 147, 370, 438; cf. 75), whereas the only earlier use of *hekaergos* had been when Agamemnon organized the delegation (1.147). Hence, when *hekaergos* comes up in 474, it does more than provide an object to *melpontes*; as Leaf remarks: "this opposite function of the god [sc. "keeping far away"] is fitly mentioned now that his anger as *hekêbolos* is appeased".[63] By these ambiguities, Homer's narrative language, like the song it describes, contrives to fix a name on the god, and indeed it is one that works. For Apollo takes pleasure at what he hears (474b), and it is as "Apollo *hekaergos*" (479) that he sends the Greeks a favoring wind.

A description of a festive paean in Sappho produces similar effects. On the occasion of Andromache's wedding to Hector, the Trojans turn out for series of age- and sex-grouped choirs: first maidens (*parthenoi*) perform, singing an appropriately "holy song" (44,25-26 Voigt); next, men and women sing, apparently together (44,31-34):[64]

[γύναικες δ' ἐλέλυσδο]ν ὅσαι προγενέστερα[ι
[πάντες δ' ἄνδρες ἐπ]ήρατον ἴαχον ὄρθιον
[πάον' ὀνκαλέοντες] Ἐκάβολον εὐλύραν,
[ὔμνην δ' Ἔκτορα κἀ]νδρομάχαν θεοεικέλο[ις.

All the elder women cried an *ololugmos*, and all the men were shouting out the high-pitched paean-song beautifully, summoning the Far-darter with his lovely lyre. And they hymned Hector and Andromache as like unto the gods.

Some have claimed an ironic allusion to the Iliadic paean here, but there is nothing in the language to recall that passage specifically. The resemblances are more general and derive, I maintain, from the paeanic language coloring each. As in Homer, the paean is described with a surplus of direct objects that creates slippage between the name of the god used by the narrator and the sacred epithet bestowed on the god by the singers. We can translate 32-33 either (with Voigt's "πάον'/Εκάβολον") "the men were shouting the high-pitched paean-song beautifully, invoking the Far-darter with the fine

---

[62] Homer etymolygizes at *Il*. 21,599-600: "αὐτὰρ ὁ [Apollo] Πηλεΐωνα δόλῳ ἀποέργαθε λαοῦ· / αὐτῷ γὰρ ἑκάεργος Ἀγήνορι πάντα ἐοικὼς ἕστη πρόσθε ποδῶν".

[63] Walter Leaf, *The Iliad*, vol. 1, London [2]1902 ([1]1886), on 1,474; similarly Carl Friedrich Ameis/ Carl Hentze, *Homers Ilias*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1884, p. 35 on 1,474.

[64] On the ritual performances here, cf. Gentili, *Poesia e pubblico* (n. 14 above), p. 306 notes 28-30.

lyre", or (with Lobel-Page's "Πάον'/ ἐκάβολον") "were shouting the high-pitched song (*orthion* sc. *nomon*) beautifully, repeatedly calling the name of Paian, the far-darter with the fine lyre". In both Sappho and Homer, lexical ambiguities make the narrator's task of naming the song approximate the hymnist's task of finding the words that, when performed, will bring the god near.

In these cases, I suggest, poets mimic paeanic rhetoric in order to execute one of its functions within their own songs. Our first reference to paeans as a genre affords another example: when Pindar begins a *thrênos* with a priamel of song types, the first item he lists is paeans, and quite appropriately since the song was used to inaugurate important ventures. Pindar's phrasing is also notably ceremonious, withholding the name until the end when it appears in an unexpected adjectival form: "Ἔν[τι μὲν χρυσαλακάτου τεκέων Λατοῦς ἀοιδαί/ ὤ[ρ][ιαι παιάνιδες" (Fr. 128c,1-2 Sn.-M.). The slight variation in the venerable old name exemplifies the line's concern with "seasonableness": as cult hymns, paeans had in principle to repeat exactly forms that had been ritually pronounced from time immemorial (hence the survival of the vocable *paian* since the Bronze age); but as prayers they had to draw the god's attention to the specific occasion that brought them forth and shaped their requests. Pindar's slight "defamiliarization" – preserving the old proper name in the new epithet – encapsulates the paean writer's double obligation to deploy tried and true words but in a song newly made to fit the present.[65]

The *paian*'s attachability to new occasions made it easy for other genres to adopt paeanic coloring, in some cases so strongly as to produce generic uncertainty. Bacchylides 17, a choral song for Ceans to perform at Delos, is traditionally assigned to his dithyrambs but ends on a paeanic note. It recounts, with some direct speech, the story of Theseus' agon with Minos and the rescue of young Athenian hostages. The poet tells how, at Theseus' climactic return from the sea, the Athenian maidens greeted him with an *ololugmos* while the young men (*êitheoi neoi*) "sang a paean with a lovely voice" (vv. 127-129). So far, then, an appropriate "thanksgiving" or victory paean. But the poet then seems to turn from narrating a paean to executing one, for he immediately appends a final prayer in behalf of the Ceans to "the Delian god" (130-132). For Servius (*ad* Verg. *Aen.* 6,21) the song was a dithyramb, probably because, like Bacchylides' *Cassandra*, it featured a prominent narrative. (So much is suggested by one of its manuscript titles,

[65] On newness, cf. Aristophanes, *Wasps* 876, Timotheos 791,202-205 *PMG* (quoted below). More on this passage in Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 34-36 and Ford, *Origins of Criticism* (n. 21 above), p. 15-16.

*Theseus*.) But the idea that dithyrambs had to have a narrative component is dubious and seems to have no better foundation than two very tentative remarks by Plato as to how one might classify Greek songs.[66] Faced with a fifth-century ode to Delian Apollo, our paean scholars have seen Bacchylides 17 as rather a paean, and have argued that the narrated paean toward the end may be regarded as a "generic signature" of the form, standing in place of the *epithegma*.[67]

Such cases[68] pose a dilemma only for scholars who assume that Hellenistic shibboleths had force in earlier centuries; those who think that archaic genres were not defined by detailed formal prescriptions assume that context would have provided whatever disambiguation was wanted, as it did, for example, in the admired paean to Dionysus by Philodamus of Scarpheia in 340-339 BC.[69] In some cases, however, the poetry seems to court generic confusion. One such is Timotheos' *Persae*. This is taken to be a kitharodic nome (so Paus. 8,50,3), but it brings in the god Paian very strikingly toward its close. Its main narrative ends with the victorious Greeks setting up trophies on the battlefield and then "shouting out the name of their lord Paian of the *iê* cry, striking the ground in response in a resounding chorus" (791,197-201 *PMG*). An unobjectionable victory paean, the eidographers

---

[66] At *Rep*. 394c Plato needs dithyramb to exemplify the category of pure narrative song, a class he has arrived at by logical division and which he "supposes" is best illustrated by dithyramb: "ἡ δὲ δι' ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ – εὕροις δ' ἂν αὐτὴν μάλιστά που ἐν διθυράμβοις". *Laws* 700d gives a list of lyric genres, identifying dithyramb as a form which "I believe has to do with the *genesis* of Dionysus": "ἄλλο [sc. εἶδος ᾠδῆς], Διονύσου γένεσις οἶμαι, διθύραμβος λεγόμενος". Cf. Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 40.

[67] Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 98-99; Schröder, *Geschichte der Paian* (n. 6 above), p. 49-61; R. Fowler, *The nature of Early Greek Lyric* (n. 30 above), p. 92; Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 156-189 proposes an elaborate contextualization that has the Ceans gratifying Athens for having saved them from Persia. Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos* (n. 15 above), p. 91-93 makes the poem a dithyramb; Herwig Maehler (ed.), *Bacchylides: A Selection*, Cambridge 2004, p. 172-173 keeps it among Bacchylides' dithyrambs but leaves the question open; cf. Bruno Snell/Herwig Maehler (eds.), *Bacchylides, carmina cum fragmentis*, Leipzig $^{10}$1970 ($^{1}$1898, ed. Friedrich Blass), p. xlviii-xlix.

[68] Pindar's *Pythian* 5 contains a passage so rich in paeanic themes (vv. 63-69) that it is taken as a paean for the Cyrenian Karneia by Evelin Krummen, *Pyrsos Hymnon: Gegenwart und mythisch-rituelle Tradition als Voraussetzung einer Pindarinterpretation*, Berlin/New York 1990, p. 139-140. Cf. Giovan Battista D'Alessio, "First-Person Problems in Pindar", in: *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 39/1994, p. 123-124 and Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 171 on *Isthmian* 6.

[69] Richly explicated by Käppel, *Paian*, Ch. 5; cf. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 131-136.

may observe. But with this image ringing in our ears, the poet immediately begins his *sphrêgis* with a paean in his own voice, asking the god to help defend his "new-styled Muse": "ἀλλ' ὦ χρυσεοκίθαριν ἀέξων μοῦσαν νεοτευχῆ, ἐμοῖς ἔλθ' ἐπίκουρος ὕμνοις ἰήιε Παιάν".[70] Once again, a "correct" paean, this time of the pre-battle sort since Timotheos needs an "ally" (204) in his forthcoming musical polemic (vv. 206-236); but the attention-getting, transferred epithet "golden-kithara" (a stylish augmentation of *euluron* that is found only here) underscores the joke in asking this god for musical rather than military assistance, summoning Paian with the lyre instead of the bow. Timotheos concludes his *Persae* with another prayer, a cletic appeal in behalf of Athens: "come, far-darter, Pythian, to this holy land".[71] The Apolline epithets do not cancel the two earlier appeals to Paian, and that god's apotropaic powers are summoned in the final request for blessings on a people "free from pains" (ἀπήμονι λαῶι).

The richest body of evidence for how paeans could be incorporated into other genres is tragedy, not only in its occasional stylization of odes as paeans – whether directly, as in the paean to sleep in *Philoctetes* 827 ff. or implicitly, as in the parodos to the *Oedipus Tyrannus* 157 ff.– but in its many allusions to *paian* as a cry mixing with other songs, not infrequently causing generic anomalies.[72] An example is the common tragic topos of identifying *Paian* with *Thanatos* because both bring an end to ills. The paradox is not only in the bold syncretism but in the implicit mixing of genres, for inexorable Death is the one deity that "allows for no paean-singing".[73] In a similar way, tragedy likes to remark when paeans, as songs of hopefulness before great enterprises, recoiled upon themselves and were revealed as preludes to disaster.[74] The idea seems to be implicit in Sappho's account of the paeans for Hector and Andromache, but is powerfully explicit in Thetis' bitter recollection of the wedding paean Apollo once sang to her in Aeschylus (Fr. 350 Radt, quoted by Plato *Rep*. 383a). So prevalent was the topos of the "corrupted paean" that it colors Thucydides' account of the Sicilian expedition: after Syracuse, he remarks that the prayer and paeans with

---

70 791,202-205 *PMG*. Cf. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 122.

71 791,237-40: "ἀλλ' ἑκαταβόλε Πύθι' ἁγνὰν/ ἔλθοις τάνδε πόλιν σὺν ὄλβωι,/ πέμπων ἀπήμονι λαῶι/ τῶιδ' εἰρήναν θάλλουσαν εὐνομίαι".

72 On the rich tragic literature, see Käppel, *Paian* (n. 2 above), p. 310-315, Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 48-50, Fairbanks, *The Greek Paean* (n. 3 above), p. 88-89.

73 Aesch. *Niobe* F 161 Radt: "μόνος θεῶν γὰρ Θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἐρᾶ [...] οὐδὲ παιωνίζεται". Cf. Euripides' *Hippolytus* 1372-1375 (n. 54 above).

74 E. g. Aeschylus, *Choephoroi*. 342. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 123-126.

which the Athenians had set out were replaced by cries of "quite opposite" omen (7,75,6: "ἀντὶ δ' εὐχῆς τε καὶ παιάνων, μεθ' ὧν ἐξέπλεον, πάλιν τούτων τοῖς ἐναντίοις ἐπιφημίσμασιν ἀφορμᾶσθαι").[75]

As I have not been seeking compositional rules that will apply to all paeans, enough texts have perhaps been examined to indicate the powers of the epiclesis *paian* as well as its tendency to enter other texts and imbue them with paeanic force. The scholarship I have summarized suggests that the persistent undefinability of paeans is not due to an insufficiency of evidence, and I submit that our inability to identify a "correct", uninflected, unadapted, unalloyed form of the paean is, or has been since the Alexandrians, constitutive of the genre. To the extent that it mimics the dynamics of the *paian* cry, the paean can perhaps be most proximately described as a song that masters a new situation by reaffirming, vocally, adherence to traditional forms, including the most ancient names of all. It is true of course that other cult hymns, such as the dithyramb, were also concerned with getting the god's name right. But *paian*, for reasons that are not clear, could be detached from its deity and used as a self-contained utterance to a far greater degree than these other old epithets. Mixing the old and the new, the as-it-always-was and the never-before-now, makes the task of the paean singer like that of the eidographer: each seeks simultaneously to apply the name that is "proper", that past usage has sanctioned, while executing a new predication, capturing in the right word the fresh reality presented for naming. The paean can be called the genre of genres not because it is an aboriginal or archetypal lyric form, but because it embodies so compactly and acutely the antithetical forces of repetition and difference that the notion of genre also puts in play.

If descriptions or quotations of paeans could bring along something of the power in the word, Rutherford is right to notice that the dinner in [Plutarch] *De Musica* ends with a paean (1147a), and that the host of the deipnosophists ends their party by performing Ariphron's paean (Athen. 701f-702b).[76] These texts, then, do not simply mention paeans out of a desire to represent sympotic practices faithfully, but by introducing the refrain invoke its power to bring their proceedings to a close. I can therefore conclude by suggesting that citations of texts about paeans could also function as little paeans: note that the item that leads off the conversation in *De Musica* is an

---

[75] Cf. 6,32,2. The same Athenian paeans perhaps resound in Euripides' *Troades* 122-127 of 415 BC ("πρῶιραι ναῶν, ὠκείαις/ Ἰλιον ἱερὰν αἳ κώπαις/ δι' ἅλα πορφυροειδῆ ... αὐλῶν παιᾶνι στυγνῶι/ συρίγγων τ' εὐφθόγγων φωνᾶι").

[76] Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (n. 8 above), p. 50.

* Warm thanks to Glenn Most for enabling me to get going on this project.

exegesis of Homer's first-book paean (1131d), and that this inaugural reference is reprised toward the end, in order to provide "closure" to the discussion of poetry ("κολοφῶνα τῶν περὶ τῆς μουσικῆς", 1146b).