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Strategies for Naming the Gods in Greek Hymns

Abstract: An essential ingredient of Greek hymnic poetics is the choice of divine names and epithets. With a general goal of achieving *charis* for both the gods and the mortals who compose and sing a hymn, various strategies are deployed to address the gods: names and epithets may underline a single dimension o*f* the god or emphasise his multidimensionality through *poluonumia*; they may be chosen to singularise the addressee or to relate a particular deity with other gods in the pantheon; they may express the self-confidence of the composer in choosing the right appellatives to please the god, or the lack of precision with which any name approaches the divine; they may imply benefits for the whole community or for specific people. Along these four axes, different strategies show the complexities involved in divine naming when composing any hymn in different contexts and genres in Greek antiquity.

1 Achieving *Charis*

As a conclusion to his treatise on how to compose hymns to the gods, Menander, the 3rd-century CE rhetor, demonstrates, by way of example, how a paradigmatic hymn might be composed, commenting on each section of an invented prose hymn to Apollo Smintheus, in what constitutes a unique example of an author describing his own work. He ends with this paragraph (2.16.31 = 445–446; trans W. H. Race adapted):

> When you are about to conclude your subject, employ epithets of the god (ἀνακλητικοῖς ὀνόμασι τοῦ θεοῦ) in the following way. "O Sminthian and Pythian, since my speech began with you and with you it will end, with what names shall I address you (ποίαις σὲ προσηγορίαις προσφθέγξομαι)? Some call you (σὲ λέγουσιν) Lycian, others Delian, others Ascraean, others Actian. The Lacedaemonians call you Amyclaean, the Athenians Patroos, the Milesians Branchiate. You rule over every city, every land, and every nation, and you govern the whole inhabited world, as you dance across the sky surrounded by choruses of stars. The Persians call you Mithras, the Egyptians Horus (for you bring round the seasons), the Thebans call you Dionysos; the Delphians honor you with two names, calling you Apollo and Dionysos (Δελφοὶ δὲ διπλῇ προσηγορίᾳ τιμῶσιν, Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ Διόνυσον λέγοντες), for around you are frenzied women, around you are Bacchants. From you the moon derives its splendour, while the Chaldeans call (λέγουσιν) you the leader of the stars. So, whether you delight in these appellations, or in some more favoured than these (εἴτε οὖν ταύταις χαίρεις ταῖς προσηγορίαις, εἴτε τούτων ἀμείνοσι), grant that this city may forever flourish in prosperity and that it may forever hold this festival in your honour. And grant grace to these words, for both these words and the city are gifts from you (νεῦσον δὲ καὶ χάριν τοῖς λόγοις· παρὰ σοῦ γὰρ καὶ οἱ λόγοι καὶ ἡ πόλις)."

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This self-exegetical hymn is a late antique rhetorical demonstration; however, it sheds precious light on the functions of god-naming in Greek hymns. There may be other elements in earlier and contemporary Greek hymns that Menander does not mention in his treatise, but those he comments on are easily derived from the extant evidence about hymns from all antiquity: the *charis* as the main goal of the hymn; the bilateral nature of this *charis*; and the essential placement of names and epithets in achieving it.

Greek *charis*, as is well known, is two-sided (unlike Christian one-sided divine grace), a bilateral act of mutual gift.[1] A hymn, like a work of art, is an *agalma*, an offering, that pleases the god or goddess (hereinafter generalised as "god" when gender is indistinct), and thus gives him content (*charis*). At the same time, the god grants favour (*charis*) to the poet/author (hereinafter "poet" in the sense of "composer", since most hymns covered here are in verse), both to compose the hymn in question and future ones, and also to the community (city, family, initiates) that are included in the hymn as a ritual act, either as co-singers or spectators. The hymn creates (and receives) *charis* for all the agents involved, however this *charis* may be conceived (the poetic pleasure that a Homeric god takes in a rhapsodic hymn may be seen differently from the incantatory power of a magical hymn that charms the deity). And as Menander says (and is well-known by modern scholars of hymnic poetry), naming the god appropriately is fundamental in this creation of *charis* (ταύταις χαίρεις ταῖς προσηγορίαις). In the following pages, the strategies deployed in Greek hymns for naming the gods will be systematised as different ways of achieving such a goal.

Taking, therefore, hymns as acts of communication between men and gods in which both are involved as givers and receivers of *charis*, we must consider that neither the god nor the author of the hymn are in isolation. In ancient Greece, the god is praised and invoked within a polytheistic system, in which different cults to different gods naturally coexist. This polytheistic context of classical Greek religion may become even more complex in later centuries, with cases like the hymns in the magical papyri in which divine names from different religions (e.g. Greek, Egyptian, Jewish) overlap with absolute fluidity. Even when the addressee of a hymn is invoked as "the" single god, we must always bear in mind that this monist mood is deployed within a polytheistic religious context that shapes the hymnic genre.

On the human side, the hymn is usually a collective act: even if the author is individuated, the favour of the gods will be extended to the cultic community to which he belongs (or to the collective customer who has hired a foreign poet), which is usually the *polis*, and possibly, when inscribed in stone, to future members of the community that will follow in later generations. However, there are also cases in which the community of singers is restricted to a chosen few, initiates of a mystery cult inaccessible to the profane, and only they will receive the *charis* of the god. The most extreme restric-

1 On Greek hymns and their striving for *charis*, cf. Race 1981, Furley/Bremer 2001, Calame 2011, Petrovic 2015.

tion of the *charis* appears in the magical papyri, in which the hymn becomes an individual private prayer and the favour of the god is limited to the singer of the hymn.[2]

All these different possibilities on both sides, human and divine, of the communication act that aims to achieve *charis* through a hymn, are reflected in the selection and ordering of the names and epithets of the god. This is not only an elevate poetic device, but also a very practical resource for attaining the god's favour: interest in adequate naming is common to literary, cultic and magical hymns. The topic of the following pages is how this adequacy is attained in each context.

We can therefore distinguish four different axes along which hymnic strategies for achieving such bilateral *charis* through god-naming may be deployed: A) Concerning the god individually, names may be focused on one dimension or on many dimensions of the god's identity. B) Concerning the god within a polytheistic system, names may tend to individuate some specific god in his singular particular identity, or to establish relations with other gods. C) Concerning the author as individual, he may reflect and justify his choices for achieving *charis* through names, and even express his doubts or self-confidence. D) Concerning the author within the human community, he may name the god in a restrictive way that particularises the appeal to divine *charis* for a specific community (or even for himself alone), or in a generalising way that may appeal to all potential singers of the hymn or even to all mankind. For the sake of clarity, let us dwell on each of these four polarities separately, though it is obvious that there will be overlaps and connexions between them.

Some preliminary clarifications are due. When we speak of strategies, the term does not refer to conventions that must be followed due to the rules of the hymnic genre, but to the different options from which the poet may choose his way to achieve *charis*. Granted, paeans, narrative hymns, or magical hymns have their own specific conventions within the broader genre of hymns, but at the same time, within the framework of the given sets of formal rules that poets follow, they have a set of choices allowing them to apply different possibilities. The tension between remaining faithful to generic conventions, which makes a composition recognisable to a human and divine audience, and a certain originality which makes it enjoyable for these same audiences, is resolved in each case by a specific strategy. This is true for most of Greek literature, and it can also be applied to names in hymns.[3] In this paper, I will treat names and epithets alike, since the strategies in the use of names and epithets do not normally differ (should this be the case in a specific context, it should be dealt with separately). I will take them generally as ways to address the god, appellatives or

2 Cf. Petrovic 2015 for the distinction between public hymns and private ones in magical papyri.

3 On names and epithets in specific hymnic corpora, after the fundamental Ausfeld 1903, 516–525: Jaillard 2021 on epithets in the *Homeric Hymns*. Hopman 2001, Morand 2015, Herrero 2015a, Gordon 2020, Macedo/Kölligan/Barbieri 2021 on the collection of *Orphic Hymns*. Petrovic 2015, Bortolani 2016, Blanco 2017, 2020 for magical hymns. For cultic hymns, Furley/Bremer 2001. In general, on god-naming, Belayche *et al.* 2005. Bonnet 2019 and the results of the MAP project also provide multiple examples.

prosēgoriai, to use Menander's term, whose etymology reflects (*agora*) the public dimension that is presupposed for hymns (at least in the rhetoric of the genre itself). I will leave out, however, those strategies that refer purely to formal aspects, such as alliterations, metrical or rhythmic plays, or enjambments, since they are indeed effective ways to achieve the *charis* of the divine addressees, but are not specific for names, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, are particular to each composition and hardly susceptible of generalisation for all Greek hymns.[4]

Scholarship has consecrated some distinctions that will not be primordial in this study: *er-Stil*, *du-Stil*, and *ich-Stil* hymns can be analysed within the four proposed polarities, just as narrative and non-narrative hymns. These formal distinctions are very helpful in understanding how the god is addressed, but they do not determine *per se* the strategies that are followed in choosing names. Likewise, contextual distinctions like cultic or literary, private or public, rhapsodic or ritual hymns, may obviously have an enormous influence on the poet's choices for god-naming, but the strategies may be different within each of these contexts (and the same could be said of the mythical parts in narrative hymns).

Finally, one cannot ignore that the most common dichotomy is "tradition and innovation" (or similar formulations), which aims to reflect the diachronic dimension that is inherent to any analysis of century-long phenomena, as is the case with Greek hymns. However, the centrality of god-naming to achieving divine *charis* is a constant feature in hymns from classical times to late antiquity, so there is a clear continuity in the strategies that are open to the poet. The panorama changed radically with Christianisation, for the monotheistic frame, the dense Jewish theology of divine names and the unilateral divine *charis* of the Biblical God profoundly modified the hymnic conventions. Therefore, Jewish and Christian hymns are excluded from this study since their conceptual framework is very different. Instead, Greek hymns, from archaic paeans to late antique syncretistic magic hymns, show a relatively homogeneous formal and conceptual background which allows an overall analysis which bridges all-too-comfortable gaps like literary vs. ritual, or public vs. private, with the help of the homogeneity brought by the hymnic form. In spite of such homogeneity, generic conventions evolve and religious contexts change in ways that obviously influence the choices of poets. This diachronic dimension must be carefully considered within each of the four proposed polarities, since literary, religious and historical contexts are a key factor in understanding which strategy is employed in each case.

4 Cf. Thomas 2021, a recent insightful study on the formal ordering techniques in the lists of epithets in attributive hymns, both literary and cultic.

2 Underlining Aspects of the God: Focusing vs. Breadth of Scope

When naming the god, the poet may focus on a single name, deploy many different names, or choose some middle ground. Each name and epithet carries a different set of connotations or sheds light on a particular aspect of the god. The comparison of the hymn with a dedicated piece of art is again illustrative. Sculptors or painters choose one particular representation of the god that aims to cause him pleasure (notwithstanding other factors that influence this decision, like audiences and customers), but it by no means claims to be the only possible form of the god. In hymns, the continuous nature of human language makes it possible to display more than one aspect of the god, but nevertheless singing a hymn entails an act of choosing and therefore renouncing. Even if a poet wanted to sing about all the aspects of the god, the ordination of events, where to begin and where to end, entails choosing aspects which will be given more importance. "Where to begin and where to end" is a typical question which a hymnic poet addresses himself. Just as in narrative parts, when it comes to choosing the order of names and epithets the same options appear. The different possibilities of the hymnic poet can be evaluated along this axis of describing one vs. many dimensions of the god.

On one side, we have those hymns which stick to just one dimension of the god. A precise name may be followed by a narrative, perhaps complemented by other names with equal value and epithets traditionally attached to this god.[5] The focus remains fixed as if through these appellatives only one dimension of the god is highlighted: e.g. Apollo, Phoibos, *hekebolos*, which appears in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. The poet may insist on a specific name and repeat it several times, like in the diverse variants of Orphic hymns to Zeus, or Cleanthes' hymn, where Zeus is invoked several times by his name. However, anaphoric emphasis is not strictly necessary in order to attain focus: it is rather the concentration in a single dimension, through the choice of a few distinctive appellatives. In fact, extreme focusing may shun the usual name of the addressee in favour of other, more specific ones: the Cretan hymn inscribed in Palaikastro is clearly addressed to Zeus, but calls him Kouros repeatedly and Kroneios only once, since it aims to recall the youth of the god who leaps energetically over those protected by him. While the name Zeus would bring to mind the mature king of Olympus, this hymn focuses on episodes and appellatives more suited to a younger god.[6] Such focusing may also result in a change of direct addressee: a magical hymn is addressed to "laurel/Daphne", as a ritual plant belonging to Apollo's sphere, which fo-

5 Some examples from literature and epigraphy in Bonnet 2019, 606–609.

6 Furley/Bremer 2001 (Hymn 1.1).

cuses the attention on the key role of this plant in the divinatory ritual and its mediating agency for granting Apollonian divinatory powers to the magician.[7]

On the other extreme, there are those hymns which attempt to underline the diversity of dimensions of the god. In the narrative parts, this would be reflected in several episodes, from birth to love affairs and battles. In the usage of names and epithets, this tendency is usually reflected in numerous and variegated names (*poluonumia* is a typical characteristic of important gods), and emphasis in the diversity of attributes and fields of action where the god exercises his power.[8] Picking up the case of Apollo again, in the *Orphic Hymns* and the magical hymns preserved in papyri (some of them are quoted below), he receives many names that evoke his links to poetic tradition, cultic places, solar aspects, mantic qualities, among his main *timai*.

Just as the ordination of mythical episodes has its relevance, the collocation of names also matters. The first and the last seem to point to those aspects that have more importance, and the flow of associations may suggest a certain logical order (e.g. *Orphic Hymn* 32, the epithets in which are skilfully ordered like building-blocks to reveal Athena's militarism, motherlessness and intellectualism in mutual connection).[9] In other cases, however, there is no apparent logical ordination, and this may be precisely the goal of the poet, in order to avoid the sensation that some dimensions of the god are more important than others. One way to delight in *poluonumia* may be precisely to avoid any hierarchy that might reduce the plurality of aspects, which constitutes precisely the feature that the hymn strives to highlight. Rather than covering all aspects of the deity exhaustively, an impossible task, this emphasis on *poluonumia* aims to show that a representative selection is just the tip of the iceberg and that many other hymns could – and will – be possible.

Any god can be honoured in a hymn through a unidimensional or multidimensional strategy. The traditional characterisation of the god, literary conventions, and other factors may influence the choice of the poet to tend towards one pole or the other. For instance, in several *Orphic Hymns* Dionysos is described using many names and epithets in a clearly multidimensional way: *Hymn 52* begins "I pray to you, oh blessed, many-named, maddened, Bacchos, / bull-horned, Lenaios, born from fire, Nysios, Liberator", and the rest of the hymn accumulates disparate appellatives (including Paean and shining-fire) in an apparently chaotic way that precisely creates the impres-

7 *PGM* VI, l. 6–21 = Hymn. 13 [Preisendanz] (= 2 Blanco = 8 Bortolani). Curiously, this oblique focus is similar to some Callimachean hymns, which instead of addressing the god decide to narrow the focus on the formal addressee: to Delos (where Apollo is born) or to Pallas' Bath (a moment that evokes ritual action and Teiresias' and Actaeon's myths).

8 Cf. Bonnet 2019, on *poluonumia*, who gives the example of a quasi-hymnic passage in pseudo-Aristotelean *De mundo* in which the list of Zeus' appellatives aims exceptionally to be all-encompassing, ending with "to say it all" (ὡς δὲ τὸ πᾶν εἰπεῖν) for the last names. Classical praises of *poluonumia* are Aristophanes' *Pluto* 1164 and Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis* 7.

9 Thomas 2021, 158–262.

sion of multidimensionality.[10] Instead, the poet of each of the three *Homeric Hymns to Dionysos* is much more self-contained: *Hymn* 1 insists on calling the god Eiraphiotes, to underline his filiation from Zeus;[11] *Hymn* 7 only says "son of Semele" at the start and twice at the end, avoiding dwelling on names until the god reveals himself as "I am Dionysos"; and *Hymn* 26, instead, is much shorter in its narrative, but presents a greater variety of epithets mostly regarding several sensorial aspects of the god: ivy-crowned, roarer, many-vined, much-hymned. They are complementary hymns in both form and naming strategies.[12]

As it may seem intuitively natural, in general terms, narrative hymns tend to focus on one or a few dimensions (which are often expressed by some names resulting from the narrative), while attributive hymns have more of a tendency to accumulate names and epithets which cover a greater variety of aspects. However, in narrative hymns there is also wide space for different strategies. For instance, in the collection of *Homeric Hymns*, the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* alternates two names, Demeter and Deo, and several epithets regarding her divine dignity (1: σεμνήν; 211: πολυπότνια; 374: αἰδοίῃ; 439: ἁγνῆς), her beauty (1, 297, 315: ἠΰκομον; 302: ξανθὴ; 453: καλλισφύρου), her ornaments (224, 307, 384, 470: εὐστέφανος; 295: καλλιστέφανος), her power over fertility (54, 492: ὡρηφόρε ἀγλαόδωρε) and her mourning for her daughter (319, 374, 442: κυανόπεπλον). Instead, in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* the theonyms are Phoibos and Apollo, and the epithets concentrate on a few spheres only in clear relation to the events narrated: Apollo as an archer (ἑκηβόλος), his shining appearance when he is born (123: χρυσάορος), his patronage over paean-song (500: Ἰηπαιήων); and two local cults, indicated by Δελφίνιος (495) and Τελφούσιος (387). All of them are closely related to the myths told in the hymn. In contrast, in the *Hymn to Hermes* there is a greater variety of names and epithets, some of which derive from the story about the theft of Apollo's flock and the reconciliation; however, there are others with no relation to this tale at all, like ἄγγελος ἀθανατῶν or Ἀργειφόντης. The poet uses multiple epithets to reflect the variety of Hermes' *timai*, and takes advantage of the contrast between the innocent infant and the slayer of Argos or the grown-up messenger.[13] Conversely, again, in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* the only epithet, used profusely, is φιλομειδής and the only two mentions of Kypris and Kytherea appear at the beginning and the end, for the sake of *Ringkomposition*.

What this swift review of the longer *Homeric Hymns* shows is that we should not automatically equate focusing on a single dimension of the god with the narrative hymns that recount one mythical episode. Hymnic poets may do so, but there are sev-

10 Cf. Herrero 2010, 92–93. The other hymns to Dionysos in the collection follow this trend: *Hymns* 29, 44, 45, 46, 53.

11 Bernabé 2013 on this epithet as expressing Dionysos' legitimacy; the only other epithet, γυναιμανής at the end of the hymn, is justified in relation to the trieteric cult established in honour of the god.

12 Herrero 2013.

13 Greene 2005.

eral degrees of focus, and they may choose to highlight the *poikilia* of the attributes and names of the gods. In his hymns, Callimachus characteristically strikes both chords, and has some hymns showing multifariousness of appellations (e.g. Artemis), while others concentrate on one single dimension (e.g. Demeter).

In the attributive hymns which consist mainly of chains of names, epithets and short relative orations, the general tendency certainly leans towards praising the most variegated aspects of the god, as we see in the *Orphic Hymns*.[14] *Hymn 34 to Apollo* accumulates the most diverse names and epithets (lines 1–7: Ἐλθέ, μάκαρ, Παιάν, Τιτυοκτόνε, Φοῖβε, Λυκωρεῦ, / Μεμφῖτ', ἀγλαότιμε, ἰήιε, ὀλβιοδῶτα, / χρυσολύρη, σπερμεῖε, ἀρότριε, Πύθιε, Τιτάν, / Γρύνειε, Σμινθεῦ, Πυθοκτόνε, Δελφικέ, μάντι, / ἄγριε, φωσφόρε δαῖμον, ἐράσμιε, κύδιμε κοῦρε, / μουσαγέτα, χοροποιέ, ἐκηβόλε, τοξοβέλεμνε, / Βράγχιε καὶ Διδυμεῦ, ἐκάεργε, Λοξία, ἀγνέ, / Δήλι' ἄναξ . . .): from Paean to Loxias, Tityos-killer, Python-killer, mantis, muse-leader, two-horned, among others, and several local denominations, aiming to cover as much of Apollo's *erga* and *timai* as possible. Curiously, Apollo appears only in the title, not in the hymn itself, as an example of purposefully avoiding any focus on a particular dimension of the god even through his name.

However, this delight in multifariousness is not always the case in attributive hymns: in several hymns addressed to Apollo in magical papyri, the epithets and names focus clearly on two dimensions, his prophetic / musical power, and his solar aspect, which are, for the composer, the keys to him acting according to the will of the practitioner.[15] This focus may even be attained through unusual appellatives, as we see in a 3rd/4th-century CE hymn to Apollo,[16] the (fragmentary) beginning of which is: μέλπω σέ, μάκαρ, ὦ Κολοφώνιε χρησμώδης τε / πάνσοφε Δήλιε . . . Πυθολετοκτυπε / Δωδώνεῦ. The epithet Δωδωνεύς recalls a sanctuary alien to Apollo's cult, and should strictly belong to Zeus, but, since Dodona is a divination sanctuary, it redirects the attention to Apollo's mantic dimension, already laid by more usual Apollinean epithets like Κολοφώνιος and χρησμώδης in the first line of the same hymn, which is repeated several times in the whole hymn along with others referring to his oracular qualities, like μάντις, Δελφικός or Πύθιος. The final lines of this hymn bring in three epithets, οὐροδρόμε, φώσφωρ, ἀεροδρόμε, which clearly refer to the god's solar dimension, bringing light and running through the air, but in combination with the previous oracular epithets and the urging verbs (ἐλθέ, σπεύσεις), have a more specific sense, bringing divine illumination quickly from above.

On the other hand, the strategy of focusing on a single aspect through epithets may be oriented towards a definite goal, such as achieving a contrast with another epithet or name that belongs to a markedly different sphere. Philodamos' paean, inscribed in

14 An interesting middle ground is the *Homeric Hymn to Zeus*, with only three lines of balanced invocation through epithets focusing on Zeus' all-encompassing power: cf. Bonnet 2019, 603–604.

15 Magical hymns are cited by their original edition in Preisendanz and their commented recent editions in Bortolani 2016 and Blanco 2017. Cf. also comments in Petrovic 2015, Blanco 2020.

16 *Hymn. Mag.* XII P. (= 10 Blanco, not edited by Bortolani).

Delphi in the 4th century BCE, is a clear example: it starts with a succession of typically Bacchic names, Διθύραμβε, Βάκχ', E[ΰιε, Ταῦρε κ]ισσοχαῖτα, Βρόμιε. Then, immediately afterwards, the god is invoked with a cultic epithet: εὐοῖ ὦ ἰὸ [Βάκχ, ὦ ἰὲ Παιά]ν. Throughout the hymn, the god is invoked with Dionysiac names, and also with a name, Paean, that traditionally belongs to the Apolline sphere. As the hymn itself says, Apollo led the Muses in singing a hymn in honour of his brother Dionysos, as a way of welcoming him to Delphi and inserting him into Delphic cult. Therefore, in Philodamos' hymn, being addressed first as Dithyramb and then as Paean puts the focus on this dual dimension of Delphic Dionysos.[17] This leads us to the second aspect to be examined: the relations of the god who receives the hymn with other gods.

3 Place of the God Within the Pantheons: Singularity vs. Integration

A hymn is always dedicated to a specific god as the individual addressee. However, other gods may be named, because in the ancient world the polytheistic language is the natural way of thinking about the gods and singing to them. Relating the god with other gods is a constant feature in narrative hymns through the participation of diverse deities in mythical episodes, and the choice of names and epithets is also relevant for celebrating this aspect of a god's personality.

On one pole, we can put those names that aim to single out the god as completely different from the other gods. A name that distinguishes him from other gods who cannot (*a priori*) share it obviously accomplishes such a goal effectively, and the more such names that are accumulated, the more this singularisation is achieved. Insisting on proper names such as Dionysos / Bacchos, Apollo / Phoibos, Athene / Pallas / Tritogeneia tends to reinforce the impression that the addressee of the hymn is unique among the gods and cannot be confused with any other. The same effect is achieved with epithets that are uniquely associated with the god that is being invoked (e.g. Apollon *argurotoxos*). But we should not forget that these names and epithets may occasionally be transferred: as we have seen, Philodamos' paean depicts Dionysos and Apollo with distinct personalities, but in Delphic context Dionysos receives (exceptionally) the Apollinean appellative of Paean.

Distinguishing a god from others does not mean isolating him from others: a god's relations to other gods is part of his personality and his ability to associate himself with other deities (in mythical episodes and as addressees of a hymn) is a principal dimension that can be praised in the search of mutual *charis*. Any hymnic poet may form pantheons *ad hoc:* e.g. Anacreon in his short but extremely refined hymn to

17 Furley/Bremer 2001 (2.5).

Dionysos (PMG 357 = 4.5 Furley / Bremer) omits the god's name from the outset, starting with an impersonal ὦναξ, and names instead three other gods with epithets suited to the festive occasion: conqueror (δαμάλης) Eros, blue-eyed (κυανώπιδες) Nymphs and purple (πορφυρῆ) Aphrodite, who "play with him" (συμπαίζουσιν). They conform a pantheon very suitable for the symposiastic and erotic purposes of this hymn, which Anacreon rounds off (we may imagine, raising his cup for a toast) with a petition to attain Cleobulos' love and unveils the name of the addressee, Dionysos. The gods are kept distinct (unlike in the later magical hymns which we shall examine below) but are associated in a temporary group that suits the poet's needs.

Even more so than poetic appellatives, cultic epithets are a very helpful way of both singling out particular gods and associating them in pantheons, be they local, ad hoc, or pan-Hellenic.[18] Alcaeus' hymn to Hera, initially addressed to her, is extended to Zeus and Dionysos, and the three of them together receive the final prayer: each of the three gods is invoked with their name and a specific epithet granted by the Lesbians (fr. 129 Voigt = 4.4 Furley / Bremer):

ὦ πότνια Ἥρα, τᾶι τόδε Λέσβιοι
ὄρος κὰτ] εὔδειλον τέμενος μέγα
ξῦνον κά[τε]σσαν ἐν δὲ βώμοις
ἀθανάτων μακάρων ἔθηκαν

κἀπωνύμασσαν ἀντίαον Δία
σὲ δ᾽ Αἰολήιαν [κ]υδαλίμαν θέον
πάντων γενέθλαν, τὸν δὲ τέρτον
τόνδε κεμήλιον ὠνύμασσ[α]ν

Ζόννυσσον ὠμήσταν. ἄ[γι]τ᾽ εὔνοον
θῦμον σκέθοντες ἀμμετέρα[ς] ἄρας
ἀκούσατ᾽, ἐκ δὲ τῶν[δ]ε μόχθων
ἀργαλέας τε φύγας ρ[ύεσθε·

O Mistress Hera, to whom the people of Lesbos,
on a conspicuous mountain, once set up
a large precinct, to be shared by all,
and placed therein altars for the immortal gods,

giving Zeus the title: "suppliants' god"
and you: "famous goddess of the Aeolians,
mother of all"; as for the third one here,
they called him: god of the deer,

18 Versnel 2011 has dealt with the problem of whether cult epithets address different deities or a single one under different avocations. However, this issue concerns inscriptions. In hymns, the addressees are unified through the hymn itself as an act of cult addressed to a specific deity. As an example, Versnel offers (p. 82) the case of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, 69–71: "O Apollo, many call you Boedromios, many call you Clarios, you have many names everywhere, but I call you Carneios, since this is an ancestral custom".

Dionysos, who devours them raw. We call upon you,
listen benevolently to our prayers,
save us from present hardship
and from the sadness of the exile.

The cultic titles of each of the three gods (as the poet states explicitly) reinforce their personality as specific local deities who should be prayed to for safety, and at the same time associate the three of them in a Lesbian pantheon, which is invoked and ordained by Alcaeus for the purposes of this hymn.[19]

In more common epithets that have no cultic association with a specific god, the distinction of one god in regard to the others may spring not from qualitative difference but rather from degree. The superlative (ὑπέρτατος, ὕψιστος) also creates this impression that the god being invoked is superior to others. Chaniotis labelled the theological feeling (rather than a consistent doctrine) implied in this hymnic proclamation of the greatest deity as "megatheism". Parker has recently coined the term "superlativism" from a more formal perspective: these epithets single out the addressee as radically different in degree, rather than in quality, from other deities.[20] In the previously quoted hymns from Anacreon and Alcaeus, a certain hierarchy emerged from ordination within the hymn, while in these cases it comes from the superlatives themselves.

On the other pole we should put the appellations that, instead of singling out a god from the others, tend to conflate him with part of the pantheon or even the totality of it. Firstly, let us name those epithets that underline the general divine features that all gods share with the hymned deity: e.g. "immortal", "mighty", *makar*, etc. These have been baptised as trans-divine epithets.[21] Even without a superlative to single him out within the hymn at least, no god would be adverse to receiving some of these epithets that abound in his divinity. But a long string of these epithets doubtlessly creates a sensation of homogeneity with any other god. They are, therefore, particularly suited to those gods whose divinity is not so evident: e.g. deified men.[22] A Hellenistic ruler undoubtedly takes special pleasure in being called *athanatos*, *soter*, or just or "divine" or "son of X" (X being any god), which might be banal for traditional gods.

Regarding proper names, the juxtaposition of several names and epithets characteristic of different deities may bring about precisely the opposite result to singularisation, i.e. the assimilation of distinct gods so that they seem fused in the same deity. Though this is a very complex phenomenon, we may restrict its hymnic expression to a simple label like "integration" for the sake of avoiding the confusions caused by "syncretism" and kindred terms.[23] Both the first and the most prominent instances are

19 Pirenne-Delforge/Pironti 2022, 194–201.

20 Chaniotis 2010, Parker 2016, 83. Bonnet 2019, 605.

21 Brulé 1998.

22 Greene 2021, 75–76, on these hymns, of which only epigraphic fragments survive apart from Theocritus' *Encomium of Ptolemy*.

23 Motte/Pirenne-Delforge 1994, Bonnet 2022.

found in the Orphic poetic tradition of conflating deities in hymnic invocations which juxtaposed different names. The line preserved in the Derveni Papyrus from an ancient lost collection of *Orphic Hymns* shows a conflating purpose: "Demeter Rhea Ge Meter and Hestia Deo" (Δημήτηρ Ῥέα Γῆ Μήτηρ Ἑστία [τε] Δηιώι).[24] This line equates, through juxtaposition and coordination, four different goddesses, who seem to be covered by the epiclesis Deo under one single title and thus made one and the same. In the 2nd-century (preserved) collection of *Orphic Hymns*, the abundance of Dionysiac epithets for many other gods contributes to the sensation that Dionysos is a god that conflates with many others (Phanes, Protogonos, etc.), and vice versa.[25] The variegated versions of an Orphic "hymn to the Sun" also equate different gods through the anaphoric repetition of the typically hymnic exclamation *heis* + divine name: "one is Zeus, one is Hades, one is Helios, one is Dionysos (εἷς Ζεύς, εἷς Ἀΐδης, εἷς Ἥλιος, εἷς Διόνυσος). Either through influence from Orphic poetry, or because Orphic poems inserted themselves into a wider "integrative" strand, similar lines were composed by the Emperor-philosopher Julian and appear in several Apollinean oracles from Claros.[26]

Hymnic integration of different deities through juxtaposition of names and epithets was not restricted to the speculative strand. Several hymns to Apollo preserved in magical papyri present traditional names and epithets of the god juxtaposed with others that are clearly alien, in order to expand Apollo's personality towards a solar omnipotent deity. In one of them, Chryses' invocation in *Iliad* 1, 37–41 is reused, but with three lines inserted in the middle that invoke him as "Iaoth, Sabaoth, Meliouchos, tyrant / Peuchre, night-wanderer, Sesengen Barpharages / Arbeth, multiform, friend of magi, Arbathiao".[27] These exotic non-Greek names expand the traditional Homeric Apollo to much further divine realms. Conversely, in another hymn, the first part is directed towards Helios, with solar, fiery and cosmological imagery mainly expressed through epithets (πυρὸς ταμία, τηλεσκόπε, παμφαές, ὑρανοφοῖτα, etc.), and the second part introduces Apollinean appellations (Μουσάων σκηπτοῦχε, Ἰήιε κισσεοχαίτα, Φοῖβε): as Miriam Blanco argues, it is most probably a conflation of two different hymns into one in order to invoke the Apollinean-Heliac deity that the author of the magical text wants to invoke to grant him divinatory powers.[28]

24 *Orph. Fragm*. 398 B, which extracts the line from col. XXII of the Derveni Papyrus, in which the commentator wants to prove that different goddesses are the same and quotes this line from "the Hymns" (ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς Ὕμνοις εἰρ[η]μένον) as proof.

25 Herrero 2010; Herrero 2015.

26 *Orph. Fragm.* 543, quoted by several sources; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.18, quoting the Orphic line and several Apollinean oracles; Julian, *Or*. 11.136. Cf. Herrero 2010, 93–95. Parker 2016, 81–87 for Aelius Aristides' henotheism in his prose hymns to Zeus and Sarapis.

27 *Hymn. Mag*. XIII = 8 Bortolani = 2 Blanco.

28 *Hymn. Mag.* XI = 7 Bortolani = 8 Blanco. Cf. Blanco 2017, 218–250: her hymns 7 and 8 are unified in Preisendanz's edition (and Bortolani's), but the papyrus shows a line of ritual instructions which separates the previous hymn addressed to Apollinean laurel (7) from this one (8).

Of course, we might distinguish degrees of integration between two or more deities, between akin gods or gods with different origins, and many other types of conflation from the religious point of view. However, in all these cases the hymnic strategies of god-naming are similar and straightforward: juxtaposition of names fosters identification.

As a particular case that escapes the polarity of singularisation vs. integration, we may mention the hymns to "all the gods": they may be hierarchised through an ordination of a long list, like in the initial invocation in the collection of *Orphic Hymns*; in Epidauros, a shorter list (Asclepios, Dioscuri, Graces, Muses, Moirai, Helios, Selene, "and all the heavenly bodies") is completed by the safeguard formulation "all the gods and all the goddesses who live for ever, rejoice and come over this temple of Epidauros" (6.7 Furley / Bremer). Instead of lists, the gods may simply be addressed all together, as in the first of Proclus' *Hymns* "to all the gods", which does not name any of them. This is an instance of absolute integration of all gods within the whole divine pantheon, precisely through anonymity of every single god. And it takes us to the next aspect, that is, the conscious self-reflection of the poet on the appropriateness of the god's name.

4 The Importance of Naming: Hesitant vs. Self-Confident Epithets

We now turn to the other side of the *charis*, i.e. from the god's delight to the poet's inspiration. Part of the *charis* from the god is reflected in the inspiration of the song itself. However, in order to obtain such grace, the god must first be pleased. The poet hopes to inaugurate this virtuous circle of mutual grace with the right choice of names. However, this is not an easy task, and the poet, conscious of this difficulty, may choose either to acknowledge this explicitly and declare his insufficiency in finding the right names, or to try to suppress it by justifying his decisions about naming.

The pinnacle of perfection would be a hymn which would aim to cover all the aspects of the god with its names. But to exhaust all the possibilities of names seems beyond the scope of any poet, no matter how inspired he might be, and choices and renunciations are inevitable. Sometimes this conscience is expressed through wide-ranging formulations that apologise for the shortcomings of human naming abilities. Ever since the chorus' famous words in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (160–162: "Zeus, whoever he may be—if by this name it pleases him to be invoked, by this name I call to him"), the conscience of the limits of any divine name became a constant possible element in Greek hymnic literature. Plato says in the *Cratylus* 400e: "of the gods we know nothing, neither of them nor of their names, whatever they may be, by which they call themselves, for it is clear that they use the true names. But there is a second kind of correctness, that we call them, as is customary in prayers, by whatever names and patronymics are pleasing to them (ὁπόθεν χαίρουσιν ὀνομαζόμενοι), since we know no other." In Euripides' *Trojans*, Hecabe's prayer seems to be influenced by

these ideas (884–886): "O you that do support the earth and rest thereupon, whoever you are, a riddle past our knowledge! Zeus, whether you are natural necessity, or man's intellect, to you I pray". And upon hearing her, Menelaos exclaims: "What is this? How innovative is the prayer you offer to the gods! (εὐχὰς ὡς ἐκαίνισας θεῶν)".

Perhaps due to the impact of this prestigious literary tradition, it became conventional to express doubts about the appropriateness of the chosen names, either through conditionals, or through clauses like "whatever name pleases you and however you want to be named" in Julian's *Hymn to Zeus*, or as Menander puts it in his exemplary hymn, "whether you delight in these appellations, or in some more favoured than these". However, the fact that this is not a purely literary convention is witnessed by inscriptions which attest the presence in cult of such expressions of doubt.[29] The fear of missing the right name is a powerful reason for such cautions, no matter how conventional they may have become. Besides, as Versnel pointed out, there is also good rhetorical ground for poets to abound on human inability to reach the correct divine name, since it allows them to accumulate lists of names and epithets that aim to compensate for their insufficiency by lengthening the praise.[30] Indeed, the use of such expressions as a conclusion to a long string of names is common, so that all possible ways of reaching *charis* are covered. The epithet *poluonumos* not only fulfils the function of expressing multidimensionality; it also reflects a self-consciousness by the poet of the plurality of divine names that, in this context, may also indicate the inadequacy of any of them to grasp the essence of the god.

To this pole that doubts the sufficiency of any specific name also belongs a completely different strategy that seems opposite to *poluonumia*: stressing the anonymity of the god. Some hymns purposefully avoid naming their divine addressee with any proper name other than *theos* or *daimon*. A hymn in a magical papyrus contrasts with the usual proliferation of names, addressing the god as "founder of all, god of gods, Lord" (παντὸς κτίστα, θεῶν θεέ, κοίρανε). Though the next verse utters the vocative "Pan", it is dubious that this is thought to be the name of the shepherd god, but rather as the abstract for "all".[31] The comparison with an Epidaurian hymn to Pan, full of epithets resounding with music and dance, shows that the shepherd Pan has very little to do with the abstract "All".[32]

Another example is an Orphic hymn, quoted by Clement of Alexandria as an intuition of the Biblical god, which praises an anonymous deity as the mightiest god with similar vocatives: τύραννε, ἄφθιτε, μητροπάτωρ, ἄφθιτον, ἀθάνατον, ῥητὸν μόνον ἀθανάτοισιν, μέγιστε θεῶν πάντων, φρικτός, ἀήττητος. All these epithets may qualify

29 Versnel 2011, 50–62.

30 Versnel 2011, 54, 59.

31 *Hymn. Mag.* II Pr = 2 Blanco = 4 Bortolani. Cf. Blanco 2017, 353–38; 2020, 276–278.

32 Furley/Bremer 2001 (hymn 6.5). Only the last sentence of the hymn, "you are the foundation of everything (πάντων), *ie*, Pan, Pan", shows a hint of the possibilities that the name of the shepherd god opens for cosmic speculations.

any supreme deity: the expression "utterable only to the immortals" may reflect the idea that only the gods know the deity's name.[33] This lack of personal name is exceptional but not completely unheard of.[34] It also finds correspondence in civic cult, as the famous Areopagus altar to the Unknown God (ἄγνωστος θεός) shows (*Act*. 17:23). Furthermore, the Jewish tradition of making the name of the god a taboo undoubtedly fostered this trend. A clear case is another magical hymn which starts with five lines of rhetorical questions about "who made . . .? Who created . . .?" and ends up answering them all with this line: "one is the immortal god, creator of all, you have generated everything" (εἷς θεὸς ἀθάνατος· πάντων γενέτωρ σὺ πέφυκας). The following lines name his powers, and address him only as "king of the Aeons and Lord" (Αἰώνων βασιλεῦ καὶ κύριε), and "Lord almighty, saint and ruler of all" (κύριε παντοκράτωρ, ἅγιε καὶ δέσποτα πάντων). The clearest parallels of this sort of praise of God as an answer to questions are found in the Old Testament (Job, Psalms), and also the anonymity of the god points to a Jewish influence in this strategy. Jewish pseudoepigraphic hymnic compositions like the so-called *Testament of Orpheus* (or hymnic passages in the *Sibilline Oracles*) also proclaim an anonymous *theos*.[35] However, parallels in the *Corpus Hermeticum* show that anonymity was not restricted to hymns with Jewish roots, but was also seen as a useful tool for apophatic theology in other spheres.[36]

In the exact opposite pole to acknowledging the inability to name the god correctly, several other strategies may be deployed by the poet in order to justify and reinforce his confidence in the choice of names and epithets made. These justifications can be of very different kinds: one of the commonest is an explanation of the name through stories or through (usually false) etymologies: e.g. in Menander's hymn, "Egyptians call you Horus (for you bring round the seasons, *horai*)". This sort of imaginative etymologies abounds in Orphic hymns (in the 2nd century collection and out of it), since this familiarity with the gods which provides knowledge of their true divine names is a characteristic trait of the Orphic tradition.[37] Likewise, the explicit grounding in local or general traditions of naming the god is also frequent, as we saw in Menander's paradigmatic hymn. Such resource is shared by cultic and literary hymns: much before Menander's pedantic example, Alcaeus grounded his epithets in the local sanctuary; Callimachus, as an erudite poet, is particularly fond of this strategy that allows him to

33 *Orph. Fragm*. 690 B. Clement (*Strom*. 5.14.125.1) does not necessarily quote the hymn fully, so we cannot rule out that he omits the lines in which some proper divine name was included.

34 Cf. Versnel 2011, 54, refuting previous statements that consider it impossible to pray to an anonymous god.

35 Herrero 2010, 85–90.

36 Blanco 2020, 274–279. For examples of Hermetic anonymous hymns, see *Corp.Herm.* I 31, starting with ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, repeated anaphorically three times. *Corp.Herm.* V, 10: this is god superior to any name (ὁ θεός ὀνόματος κρείττων), etc. *Corp.Herm*. XIII, 16–20. On *agnostoi theoi*, cf. Norden 1913, 115–124.

37 Cf. Bernabé 1992.

dig out obscure local names and epithets; and in Isiac hymns equivalences to other names that equate her to other Mediterranean female deities are ubiquitous.[38]

Odder ways of justifying a divine name may be attached to the sound or letters of the name itself in magical hymns, where we also find some numerological allusions to the syllables of the name, which is thus supposed to have enchanting proprieties: a mysterious theriomorphic god with solar attributes is invoked as δισύλλαβος after which the exclamation *AH* seems to be that mystifying dysillabic name;[39] and a hymn to Helios claims his name is equal in number to the Moirai (κλήζω δ' οὔνομα σὸν Μοίραις αὐταῖς ἰσάριθμον).[40] Again, Jewish influence may be traceable in such proto-Kabbalistic arithmetic speculation attached to divine names.[41] But alphabetical grounding is not restricted to Jewish-influenced hymns: the alphabetic ordination of epithets in two hymns of the *Palatine Anthology* (*AP* 9.524–525) justifies their choice in a formal criterion which offers a neat guidance to the selection and ordering of epithets.[42]

To this pole we must also ascribe two other different possibilities in which the author's confidence in his name choice is particularly emphasised. One is the hymn in the so-called *ich-Stil* in which the god himself says his name, which therefore has the incontestable authority of divine revelation. The author is a mere medium of such revelation: e.g. Isis' aretalogy in Cyme claims to be transcribed by Demetrius from a stele in Memphis (*I.Kyme* 41). Isis' self-presentation in Apuleius' *Metamorphosis* (9.5) also employs *ich-Stil* with a series of names from diverse lands (for Phrygians, Mother of the Gods; for Cypriots, Aphrodite, etc.) ending by saying that Egyptians call her by her true name, Isis. This is her answer to Lucius' previous oration, which had invoked her as *regina coeli*, who might be Demeter, Aphrodite, Artemis or Persephone, or "by whatever name, and by whatever rite, and in whatever form, it is permitted to invoke you". A direct revelation from the goddess is clearly the surest way to find out her truest name.

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38 E.g. Isidoros' *Hymn to Isis* (*SEG* 8, 548/51): "All mortals who live on the boundless earth, Thracians, Greeks and barbarians, express your fair name, a Name greatly honoured among all, but each speaks in his own language, in his own land. The Syrians call You: Astarte, Artemis, Nanaia;", etc.; cf. the invocation to Isis preserved in *P. Oxy*. 1380.

39 *Hymn. Mag*. III Pr. = 5 Bortolani = 15 Blanco. Cf. Calvo 2004, 276–277. As Blanco 2017, 396–398 says, the only theonym discernible is Κάνθαρος (beetle), a Greek rendering of the Egyptian Khephri, a name of the solar god Ra.

40 *Hymn. Mag*. IV Pr. = 1.30, 2.20A, 2.23B Bortolani = 14 Blanco. The hymn insists that the god should "not be angry over my sacred invocations" (μηδὲ σὺ μηνίςῃς ἐπ' ἐμαῖς ἱεραῖς ἐπαοιδαῖς), which shows both the dangers of naming wrongly and self-confidence over this particular prayer.

41 It also appears in the Sibylline Oracles: ἐννέα γράμματ' ἔχω, τετρασύλλαβός εἰμι· νόει με· (*Orac. Sib*. I, 137–146 Geffcken = *Theos. Tub*. III.112 Beatrice).

42 Thomas 2021, 155 insists that these hymns must not be seen as a frivolous linguistic game, but as the expression of a serious religious principle, i.e. the involvement of the audience in the construction of the god.

In a more attenuated form, invocations to the Muses asking for inspiration to sing to a specific god appropriately may also be applied to the choice of names: in an Epidaurian hymn to the Mother of the Gods (6.2 Furley/Bremer), a vocative repeated at strategic places begins with an invocation to some goddesses to "come here and sing together with me" (θεαί, δεῦρ᾽ ἔλθετε και μοι συναείσατε): the following accusative is precisely the right name (τὰν Ματέρα τῶν θεῶν), repeated insistently by the poet throughout the poem.

A different connotation is derived from another authorial device to mark the confidence in the appropriateness of a divine name, which is (with or without divine help) to "invent" or "discover" a new divine entity as the addressee of the hymn. They tend to be philosophical and speculative exercises, like Aristotle's "Hymn to Arete" or the Orphic-Pythagorean "Hymn to Number". The merit of such poems is precisely to deify, even allegorically, an abstract idea by way of a hymn, thus praising not only this "new" god but also the author's inventiveness. This intellectual strategy was popular among some Gnostic and Hermetic composers of hymns, who addressed the deity with proudly original names, the merit of which resides precisely in their novelty as ways of solving the problem of god-naming through self-reflection: e.g. the culminating prayer (for which the original Greek is lost) in the Hermetic treatise *Asclepius* is indeed a "hymn to Name" in which the addressee is the divine ὄνομα (41: *nomen sanctum et honorandum, nomen unum, quo solus deus est benedicendus religione paterna*).

To sum up: attachment to tradition is the most common strategy for justifying confidence in choosing an appropriate name for the god, but in some circles, this confidence may spring precisely from an explicit detachment from a tradition which is considered inadequate for naming the god appropriately.

5 Participants of the Divine *Charis*: Generalising vs. Particular Names

The fourth and final polarity also pays attention to the pole of human beings as givers and receivers of *charis*. As a magical hymn to Selene says, "be gracious / be delighted, goddess, and hearken to your names" (χαῖρε, θεά, καὶ σαῖσιν ἐπωνυμίαις ἐπάκουσον).[43] The names will result in the god's delight and in divine favour, both aspects implied in the *charis* provided by the hymn. We will now focus on the effects that the favour of the gods will have on those who give and receive the *charis*, be they larger or smaller collectives, or even individuals. This favouring *charis* of the gods towards men is reflected in divine names and epithets in several ways.

43 PGM IV 2786–2870 (4th cent) = 15 Bortolani. Cf. Thomas 2021, 155–158.

Let us form one first pole with the most general appellatives, names and epithets that do not generally singularise the action of the god in any particular community: names like Zeus, Apollo, or epithets like *pater*, *anax*, etc. can be shared by all Greek-speaking men. Those that show a kind disposition towards human beings are particularly frequent in final petitions for the beneficiaries of divine favour: *soter*, for instance, can be assigned to practically any god who is asked to protect in any circumstance against an imminent or potential danger.[44] Though generally restricted to the Apollinean sphere, Paean is also quite generalising in its potential application to any situation requiring divine protection. Other epithets seem more limited to specific situations: e.g. *euploios* for protection of sailing, or composites with *-technas* for patronage of practical skills (ὑψιτέχνης for Asclepios in an Epidaurian hymn makes him patron of medicine, ἀριστοτέχνης for Zeus in a Pindaric hymn makes him the supreme artist).[45] These are epithets that emphasise the argument *da quia dare tuum est*.[46] Though restrictive in regard to the mode of action, these epithets do not delimit the beneficiaries of the god's protection, which can be universal. They may be restricted through a dative (for this city, for the initiates) or a genitive (saviour/protector of this city): however, even in these cases, a hymn with such kinds of names and epithets can be easily transplanted into other contexts in the absence of particularising names.

In the other pole of this dichotomy are the names and epithets that restrict the sphere of the divine actuation towards a limited group of people: local appellations are related to the place of origin or the cult sanctuaries of the god, and may imply that the favour is solely directed at the local community. In some cases, invocations to the god using particular names which only have a full meaning for the local community have this restrictive sense. They may be names of local deities (e.g. Hipta in the *Orphic Hymns*, a minor deity from Asia Minor) or local *epikleseis* of deities (e.g. Apollo Smintheus). Local epithets in Homer are restricted to those occasions in which the prayer comes from someone who emphasises his local affinity as a means to obtain favour, and this Homeric tendency undoubtedly reflects a usual hymnic strategy.[47] Such restriction of *charis* need not always be local, but may also be aimed at a trans-local group. Mystery cults typically fostered distinctions between the sacred and the profane that transcend local boundaries. Correspondingly, in hymns there may be names and epithets which only make sense for the group of initiates who understand their full meaning: e.g. the god Protogonos, or the epithet τρίγονος for Dionysos in the *Orphic Hymns* are only comprehensible for those who know the complicated episodes

44 Jim 2022.

45 Furley/Bremer 2001, 6.7. Pind. Fr. 57 S-M (on this epithet, cf. Herrero 2015b).

46 Hopman 2001, 43 referring to the *Orphic Hymns* with some examples.

47 Cf. Herrero 2021. However, sometimes this local restriction is ambiguous: for instance, πάντων γενέθλαν in the aforementioned Alcaeus' hymn may refer to all men, all things, or all Aeolians (Furley/Bremer 2001, 173, hymn 4.4).

of the Orphic theogonies.[48] Even beyond the mysteries, names with a liturgical or cultic connotation will be particularly meaningful for those who participate in the cult.

The most extreme restriction of *charis* comes from those names that only one person, the author of the hymn, can understand, and hence can solely profit from the benefits of divine *charis*. This is the function of many mysterious names in the magical hymns, as the aforementioned hymn to an Egyptian solar theriomorphic deity states explicitly: "come for me, I beseech you, because I pronounce your secret symbols (νεῦσον ἐμοί, λίτομαι, ὅτι σύμβολα μυστικὰ φράζω)". This line is self-explanatory in terms of the obscure names in the previous lines, which address a deity with solar attributes and animal forms: only the poet-magician knows exactly what he means, for he is the only true initiate.[49] Another hymn insistently conjures several gods (with initial anaphora of ὁρκίζω) with several names of Biblical and Greek origin, ending with these lines: "I conjure these sacred and divine names (ὁρκίζω τὰ ἅγια καὶ θεῖα ὀνόματα ταῦτα), for they send me the divine spirit (ὅπως ἂν πέμψωσί μοι τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα) and what I have in my mind and soul may be accomplished (καὶ τελέσῃ † ἃ ἔχω † κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν)".[50] In these hymns, invocations aim to generate a completely privatised *charis*, and the abundance of incomprehensible names is due to that restriction imposed by the magical practitioner. However, let us not forget that this privileged understanding of the magician is also a rhetorical device typical of magical literature: the fact that it was written down in papyri may suggest that these meanings were explained to other magicians orally, but it also seems likely that these "sacred names" were often repeated mechanically without full comprehension of their supposedly intended meaning.

6 Conclusions

After this necessarily selective overview, we can draw some conclusions. Firstly, the composer of a hymn had some rhetorical choices at his disposal when deciding how to name the god in order to achieve *charis*. He might choose to focus or to generalise, to mention one god or several, to show inspired self-confidence or humble inability, and to use transparent or mysterious appellatives. He could also opt for intermediate possibilities and combinations between all these poles. Although contexts and generic traditions may push in one direction or other, the variety of hymns in each of these possibilities shows that there was no mechanical obligation to follow conventions and that any composer of a hymn is forced to take stands when it comes to god-naming.

48 Cf. Herrero 2015a.

49 Cf. notes 39–40 above.

50 *Hymn. Mag.* 1.18–19 Bortolani = 1c Blanco. Cf. Petrovic 2015, Blanco 2017, 65–90.

L'embarras du choix, to use Versnel's expression, is particularly vivid in the selection and combinations of god-naming and it cannot be avoided.

Secondly, the panorama that has been depicted is common to all sorts of hymns, from the most literary, abstract and philosophical hymns to the most obscure, practical and magical ones, and including all the possibilities of cultic hymns, be they narrative or descriptive. Granted, there may be many relevant differences between them due to the many types of hymns, the diversity of regions and religious traditions, or the diachronic variations among them, which have not been taken into account here; but the previous pages demonstrate that, as Menander said, the choice of a strategy for god-naming is one of the essential features of the hymnic genre throughout Greek antiquity.

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