

## Σύγκριση

Τόμ. 19 (2008)



### Ειδολογικές κατηγορίες και διασυστηματικότητα στον Αλκαίο και την αρχαϊκή Ελλάδα

*Dimitrios Yatromanolakis*

doi: [10.12681/comparison.10379](https://doi.org/10.12681/comparison.10379)

Copyright © 2016, Dimitrios Yatromanolakis



Άδεια χρήσης [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

Yatromanolakis, D. (2017). Ειδολογικές κατηγορίες και διασυστηματικότητα στον Αλκαίο και την αρχαϊκή Ελλάδα. *Σύγκριση*, 19, 169–187. <https://doi.org/10.12681/comparison.10379>

DIMITRIOS YATROMANOLAKIS

## Genre Categories and Interdiscursivity in Alkaios and Archaic Greece\*

*For Alexandra*

**F**or purposes of this paper, all will start with the possible origins of ancient Greek democracy. Origins, democracy, and *the Greeks*, as some classicists conveniently call the ancient Greeks (thus contributing to the creation of an essentializing construct, removed from time and space), can all too easily become vague and problematic concepts. As opposed to significant methodological concerns about “writing culture” in the field of social and cultural anthropology, practitioners in the discipline of Classics, in analyses of ancient systems of aesthetic communication and cultural practices, often reflect insufficiently on a number of crucial elements. These include the concepts they employ,<sup>1</sup> their methodological strategies, and especially their *marked* involvement in the whole enterprise of analysis through the use of language—a medium of representation that constructs actualities, idealities, or the phenomena we attempt to *describe*.

In searching for evolutionist paradigms for the origins of ancient Greek democracy in the archaic period, some classical historians have recently seen in archaic written sources an emergence of an ideological bifurcation in the seventh and sixth centuries BC: on the one hand, elitist political discourses related to aristocratic conceptions of social order; on the other hand, oppositional ideologies, or—to use Walt Whitman’s term “middling” men as adapted by Ian Morris<sup>2</sup>—middling ideologies. As the reasoning goes, these archaic written sources corresponded to a polar social dynamic: thus, archaic performance genres, which constitute our written sources, are embedded in two distinct ideological traditions, which the modern analyst can trace in broad genre categories. In other words, the two traditions “partly correspond to formal distinctions”: the lyric poetry expressing the elitist political body, and the elegy and iambus representing an oppositional discourse, with the Homeric epics “in some regards standing at the head of the elitist tradition, and Hesiod of the middling”.<sup>3</sup> The boundaries should not be seen as fixed.<sup>4</sup> But “aristocratic” and “non-aristocratic” archaic poetry more or less articulates, according to a proponent of a similar approach, two different ideologies, suggesting “a highly politicized contest of paradigms”.<sup>5</sup>

Alkaios or Anakreon clearly reflect the elitist tradition, while Arkhilokhos, Hipponax, Semonides of Amorgos, and Xenophanes the middling ideologies and values, the “general acceptance” of which “made democracy a real possibility” in the late sixth century.<sup>6</sup> Although “both traditions were ‘elite’ in the sense that most poems were produced by and for elites of birth, wealth, and education”, “the hostility between the extant traditions was primarily a conflict within the highest social circles over what constituted legitimate culture”.<sup>7</sup> Such a division of archaic song-making traditions is not new according to its more recent advocates; rather, it reflects, to some extent, ideas proposed earlier by Santo Mazzarino and Marilyn Arthur.<sup>8</sup> As I shall suggest below, this polarity is related to a marked tendency to analyze archaic compositions and genres in a taxonomic manner.

In this context, my aim is not to defend or question the aforementioned reconstruction of archaic ideologies and the possible origins of ancient Greek democracy. Rather, the objective of this paper concerns an influential paradigm in the research on archaic Greek performance cultures. The main questions on which I focus here can be formulated as follows: How can we approach archaic melic compositions<sup>9</sup> from the perspective of their social-interactive contexts? Do genre taxonomies—especially the existence of genre “constraints” and “laws” very often postulated implicitly or explicitly in older and current scholarship on archaic Greece—correspond to indigenous frames of reference as they are reflected in the preserved fragments? I shall explore one particular case—the songs of Alkaios—and focus on specific methodological concerns. For Alkaios I shall consider a long-established scholarly paradigm related to the concept of genre in archaic Greece and argue that it can contribute to a schematic understanding of the otherwise fluid and, as I shall propose, *interdiscursive* dynamics of archaic melic compositions.

In early twentieth-century China, a traditional song was referred to with different names by local singers and their audiences while Chinese literary scholars placed the song within the *marked* category of *ming’e* or *geyao* (terms conventionally translated in English as “folksong”).<sup>10</sup> In similar fashion, contemporary classicists often employ terms chosen for taxonomic systems of the Hellenistic or later periods to describe and classify archaic song-making traditions. The problem of applying later genre classifications—or even early, synchronic terms—to archaic compositions does not lie so much in the conventional use of genre labels but in the additional, culturally marked associations that such labels carry—associations that can influence the way scholars eventually reconstruct and define the formal, thematic, and performative features of an archaic melic

composition. Among the methodological approaches to the verbal art of the archaic song-makers, clearcut classification occupies a central place. Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic general genre taxonomies, as well as scholarly suggestions (and debates) about the *actual* genre category of archaic compositions, have been adopted to analyze archaic songs.<sup>11</sup> We are accustomed to thinking of early Greek genres as having “matured very quickly, in most cases in fact” as having “sprung in life fully formed”.<sup>12</sup> Indications of such frames of analysis are evident even in recent discussions of formal features of archaic melic genres. These ideas have gradually become part of our epistemological axioms, along with concomitant adoption of clearly demarcated genre taxonomies. Although early genre terms appear already in the Homeric epics and in Arkhilokhos,<sup>13</sup> the desire to categorize and label archaic fragmentary compositions has led to generalized reconstructions of mutually exclusive thematic, ideological, and performative elements (usually attributed by scholars to long centuries of tradition) for each genre or group of genres.<sup>14</sup> Such attempts sometimes result in an anachronistic schematization of the whole spectrum of the verbal art of the traditional societies of archaic Greece.

More important, scholarly analyses often refer to, or take for granted, the so-called adherence of archaic melic songs to “constraints of genres”. In the context of this paper, I place special emphasis on this approach, since it can easily shape further schemata about archaic melic song-making. Numerous studies have adopted the position that archaic genres were conditioned by more or less clearly definable constraints or that they followed genre laws.<sup>15</sup> This approach has been proposed most fully in a study by L. E. Rossi: according to his formulation, during the archaic period, in contrast to the Hellenistic period, literary genres followed laws that were unwritten, but respected.<sup>16</sup> Although concerns about this idea of genre laws and constraints have occasionally been expressed,<sup>17</sup> the concept of unwritten genre laws or even of *fixed* genre expectations often lies behind current historical and literary frames of analysis.

The whole history behind these epistemological schemata in the study of ancient Greek poetry is quite complex and has to do with a number of other scholarly paradigms established throughout the twentieth century and often inherited from the nineteenth. Evolutionism as a theory for approaching culture and aesthetic phenomena is pervasive in the field, and the scholarly desire to reconstruct and formulate neat evolutionary correspondences or antitheses between the “archaic” and the “classical” is pronounced. Concerning archaic Greek aesthetic cultures, a tendency persists for what has been appositely called “painful squeezing of maximum certainty from minimum evidence”.<sup>18</sup> Further, emphasis

on the inherent traditionality and prehistory of archaic non-epic genres—concepts rightly seen in broad cultural terms—has often led to the view that the individuality, however this is defined, of an early archaic poet/composer must be effaced in view of her or his expected adherence to what we have reconstructed as traditional horizons of expectations of archaic audiences.

However, if considered not in terms of constraining unwritten laws or reconstructed, generalized ideological schemata but, rather, in the context of what has actually survived, as well as from the perspective of anthropological explorations of genres,<sup>19</sup> early archaic Greek melic genres may retrieve some significant elements of the wider social-interactive dynamics that indigenous genres often display in traditional, relatively small-scale societies and communities predominantly reliant on oral communication systems. It is fruitless, I argue, to attempt to provide, or to assume *a priori*, a single and fixed definition of poetic genre for the archaic period. Equally problematic is the assumption that lyric/melic poetry might have represented an ideologically distinct group. Instead of compartmentalizing early archaic fragments and assigning to *groups of them* generalized and more or less homogeneous ideological functions, it is methodologically preferable to adapt our interpretive strategies to explore the specificities of each melic discourse as shaped by a particular archaic poet.

Numerous fragments of early archaic compositions defy inclusion within genre categories: the so-called boundaries among genres seem fluid and porous rather than distinct or fixed. As far as the available sources allow us to see, genres in the archaic period often represented *discursive tendencies*. I suggest that what we can discern in the preserved fragments of a number of archaic Greek lyricists is genre fluidity and, more specifically, *interdiscursivity* of genre markers and discourses.<sup>20</sup> Archaic genres were linked to and shaped by context-specific communicative practices. Indigenous genre discourses did not form immutable matrices but were shaped by the actualities of verbal art events. It is the actualities of a broader context and, especially, of a more particular focal event<sup>21</sup> that can shape and reshape a genre discourse. Archaic genres should be viewed as modes of communicative exchange enacted in specific performative contexts.<sup>22</sup> Further, these specific contexts were not static, but were “defined” to some extent by genre discourses. Viewed as having distinct boundaries, early archaic, non-epic genres may risk becoming scholarly interpretive categories.

This approach does not aim to question the existence of conspicuous, distinct discursive features of archaic genres like wedding songs, victory odes, laments, or maiden-songs; such features, or *marked* genre markers, were easily identifiable by

archaic audiences in the context of performances. And there were certainly archaic, “experience-near” terms that described specific kinds of songs.<sup>23</sup> However, one needs to place emphasis on the fluid boundaries of even distinct discursive practices. Further, I question the concept of genre laws in the case of early archaic compositions, since such an apparently “innocent” concept can often lead to the construction of further schemata that define the broader framework of scholarly analyses. Although genres can be distinguished on the basis of thematic, structural, and contextual features, one must be attentive to the dynamics of the shaping of particular performative discourses, which often may not be easily classified. Viewed not as an analytic scholarly category, the concept of genre forms a framework within which we locate verbally artistic discourses, the performative contexts of which often invest them with a fluidity that defies the constraining laws that have been attributed to them by modern literary historians.

As I have implied, the methodological premises lying behind reconstructions of the alleged laws of poetic genres in archaic Greece are often “circular”, in the sense that they shape questions that map current approaches to broader ancient cultural phenomena. Such approaches tacitly activate narrative devices comparable to the operation of *emplotment* in modern historiographic accounts.<sup>24</sup> The classification of archaic non-epic compositions into distinct groups of genre—each adhering to unwritten laws—contributes to this kind of emplotment.<sup>25</sup> Hayden White’s concept of emplotment as a discursive mechanism in modern historical writing may help us understand how the “tailoring” of a series of fragments of archaic Greek songs and later historical and biographical sources produces conveniently neat interpretive narratives.<sup>26</sup> Older and current analyses of the poetry of Alkaios constitute a case in point: they often bespeak a desire to fill in the substantial gaps in the fragmentary sources and create linear hermeneutic narratives whose basic components resemble literary narratives.

I shall first provide a brief consideration of the broader social dynamics of the archaic community I focus on.<sup>27</sup> In the late seventh and early sixth centuries a highly competitive system of *hetaireiai*—political clubs—flourished in the society of Mytilene. The central aims of a *hetaireia* of nobles in Mytilene seem to have been the consolidation of the political and economic interests of a particular male group and the promotion of loyalty and solidarity among its members. During that period, Mytilene was both a cosmopolitan and a most turbulent, unsettled city in which different clans of nobles struggled to gain power and control of the state. A series of rulers, such as Melanchros and Myrsilos, were

overthrown and became the subject of numerous discussions and songs in the meetings of the *hetaireia* of which Alkaios was a member. Some years after the death of Myrsilos, Pittakos became *aisymnetes* (elective arbitrator and ruler). Among others, Myrsilos and especially Pittakos were treated harshly in Alkaios' songs, which often represented responses to political plans and action, as well as to related frustration, in the context of his *hetaireia*.

A number of Alkaios' songs focused on allegorical images of the unstable state and its rulers, political alliances, breaches in alliances, exiles of members of his *hetaireia*, imagined symposia of political opponents, and violations of old sanctioned ideologies. In the context of meetings and deliberations over political losses and betrayals by former allies, members of Alkaios' group had formed their own sociolect, in the sense of language "both as grammar and repository of the myths, traditions, ideological and esthetic stereotypes, commonplaces and themes" constructed by a social group.<sup>28</sup> Many of Alkaios' compositions, I suggest, exploited the "ideological and esthetic stereotypes" of the group and contributed further to the shaping of a performative discourse attuned to the often-changing, turbulent circumstances of their political (eventually unsuccessful) plans. In constant dialogue with the groups' sociolect, Alkaios' poetic idiolect assimilated diverse genre discourses. For the nobles of the *hetaireia* to which Alkaios belonged the different speech-genre registers they employed in their meetings were part of their political rhetoric.

A central element in this political rhetoric seems to have been its emphasis on the ancestors of the group and the old sociopolitical traditions and ideological structures these ancestors represented. In the fragmentary corpus of Alkaios' poetry, references are made to the nobility of "our fathers"<sup>29</sup> and the stories they have transmitted to members of the group.<sup>30</sup> The lineage of the members of the *hetaireia*—their fathers who lie beneath the earth of Lesbos—is implicitly contrasted with the political manoeuvres of Pittakos and the *κακοπάτριδες* ("base-born") who wreak havoc on the old institutions of the city.<sup>31</sup> In fragment 129.1-4 V, the brief narrative about the great *temenos* ("precinct") established in the past by the Lesbians functions as a metaphor of ancestral tradition that stands in opposition to the breaking of oaths and the devouring of the city by Pittakos. This appeal to traditionality and ancestry was emphasized through another discursive element, that of harsh criticism against those who, according to the group, represented the opposite of those ideals. Invective, a practice that can easily adopt different forms and shades in diverse social contexts, was a significant speech-genre embedded in the political rhetoric of Alkaios' group. In the context

of intense and often violent competition among different groups of nobles who struggled to gain power and rule the city, diverse shades of abusive language must have been a flexible discursive mechanism in the sociolect of a political group.

These and other discursive elements of the political rhetoric of the *hetaireia* to which Alkaios belonged constitute, I suggest, central aspects for an investigation of “genre” in many of his songs. I should therefore introduce here some earlier and more recent scholarly approaches to genre and style in Alkaios.

The central premise of one of the more recent interpreters of Alkaios’ poetry is that “in composing for the closed aristocratic *hetairie*, Alkaios, like Sappho, appears generally to have adhered to the strict rules of decorum which informed ancient Greek poetic production from Homer to the fifth century BCE”.<sup>32</sup> For “the strict adherence of archaic and classical Greek poetry to ‘unwritten’ laws of genre and decorum”, reference is made to Rossi’s definitions of genre laws, according to which during the archaic period literary genres followed laws that were unwritten but respected. “Within the constraints of genre and occasion”, the argument continues, “melic poetry (both monodic and choral) maintained a level of style that differentiated it from everyday speech, on the one hand, and from the vulgar and abusive style of iambus, on the other”. For these reasons, ruptures of decorum have been detected in Alkaios’ political poems—a crisis in the rules of decorum that the aristocratic poems of Alkaios should have, in principle, followed. As is evident, the concept of laws of genre and decorum is crucial in the case of this otherwise interesting analysis. The *melic* poetry of Alkaios is classified as *aristocratic* and, on this basis, his poetic style is expected to be, in theory, conditioned by rules of decorum that are opposed to the “low-class” diction of “conventional” invective. Behind this interpretive reasoning lies a broader taxonomy: as described at the outset of this paper, according to some historians, archaic lyric/melic poetry expresses aristocratic or elite discourses, whereas elegiac and iambic poetry articulates “middling” or “non-aristocratic” discourses. A melic discourse must adhere to rules of decorum closely associated with the aristocratic ideologies it reflects.

The sources adduced to substantiate this kind of understanding of style, genre, and aristocratic culture in the case of Alkaios include Diogenes Laertios’ third-century CE biography of the archaic *aisymnetes* of Mytilene, Pittakos,<sup>33</sup> as well as some fragments of Alkaios—more specifically, fragments 70, 129, 130b, and 348 V.<sup>34</sup> In these texts, words like φιλώνων ἀλεμ[άτων] (tentatively translated as “idle/vain braggarts”; fragment 70.4 V),<sup>35</sup> φύσγων or φύσκων (translated in modern English as “pot-belly”; fragment 129.21 V),<sup>36</sup> [ἀ]λλαλοκάκων πολίτην



(“citizens who harm each other”; fragment 130b.7V), and πόλιος τὰς ἀχόλω και βαρυδαίμονος (“[*turannos*] of the spiritless [?]”<sup>37</sup> and ill-starred city”; fragment 348.2V) have been viewed as “significant violations of decorum”.<sup>38</sup> Especially the use of the word “pot-belly” in fragment 129.21 V has been called “a shocking anomaly in context” since it “functions as a verbal firecracker” that is “intended to shock and draw attention to its own inappropriateness”.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, such “low-style” or “low-class” expressions embedded in a “high-style” poem indicate, according to this analysis, a rupture of decorum in the aristocratic discourse of Alkaios.<sup>40</sup>

Let us consider fragment 129 V,<sup>41</sup> since it is in this fragment that the most problematic “incongruity of style” has been traced:

],ρα.α τόδε Λέσβιοι ι  
 ...]... εὐ] δει ]λον τέμενο]ς μέγα  
 ξὺ ]νον κἀ[τε] ]σσο ]ν, ἐν δὲ βώ]μοις  
 ἀθανάτων ] μακά ]ρων ἔθηξαν 4

κἀ ]πωνύ]μασσα ]ν ἀντί]αον ] Δ]ία ]  
 σὲ δ' Α]ϊολήϊαν ] [κ]υδα ]λίμα]ν θ ]έο]ν  
 π]λά ]ντων γενέθλαν, τὸν δὲ ] τέρ ]το]ν  
 τόνδε κειμήλιον ] ὠ]ν]ύμα ]σσο[α]ν 8

Ζόννουσον ὀμήσ]ταν. ἄ[γ ]ι]τ' εὔνοο]ν  
 θῦμον σκέθοντε]ς ἀμμετ ]έρα[ς] ἄρας  
 ἀκούσατ', ἐκ δὲ τῶ]ν [δ]ε μὲ ]χθ]ων  
 ἀργαλέας τε φύγας ῥ]ύεσθε· 12

τὸν Ὕρραον δὲ πα[ιδ]α ] πεδελοθ ]έτ]ω  
 κήνων Ὑ[ρίν]ν]υ]ς ὡς πο]λ τ' ἀπόμ ]νυ]μ]εν  
 τόμοντες ἄ..[ ]γ. ]ν ]  
 μηδάμα μηδ' ἕνα τὼν ἑταίρων 16

ἀλλ' ἢ θάνοντες γὰν ἐπιέμμενοι  
 κείσεσθ' ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν οἳ τότε' ἐπικ'. ]ην  
 ἦπειτα κακκτάνοντες αὐτοῖς  
 δᾶμον ὑπέξ ἀχέων ῥύεσθε. 20

κήνων ὁ φύσκων οὐ διελέξατο  
 πρὸς θῦμον, ἀλλὰ βραϊδίως πόσιν  
 ἔ]μβαις ἐπ' ὀργίοισι δάπτει  
 τὰν πόλιν ἄμμι δέδ[.]...]. ]ι. ]αις 24

οὐ κὰν νόμον [.]ογ..[ ]' [ ]

<p>γλαύκας ἀ[.]..[.]  γεγά[            Μύρσιλ[ο</p>	28
<p>...].[  [                    ]  [                    ]            ].[                    *                    </p>	32
<p>... the Lesbians  founded this great conspicuous precinct,<sup>42</sup>  to be shared by all, and in it they set  altars of the blessed immortals,</p>	4
<p>and Zeus they named God of suppliants,  and you, the Aeolian, Glorious goddess,  Mother of all, and this third  they named Kemelios,</p>	8
<p>Dionysos, eater of raw flesh. Come,  with friendly spirit hear our prayer  and save us from these toils  and from grievous exile;</p>	12
<p>but let the Erinys (Avenger) of those<sup>43</sup> pursue  the son of Hyrrhas, since once we swore,  cutting [...],  never [to ...] any of our comrades,</p>	16
<p>but either to lie dead and clothed in earth,  conquered by men who at that time [...],  or else to kill them and  save the people from their woes.</p>	20
<p>And the pot-belly [Pittakos] did not speak  about these things to his heart (?), but trod  the oaths underfoot readily (?), and devours  the city...</p>	24
<p>against the law...  grey...  Myrsil[os]  [ ]</p>	28

The final stanza of the composition is missing and the text after lines 21-24 (where φύσκων occurs) is very fragmentary. The interpretation of φύσκων as a shocking anomaly in context is partly based on previous analyses of the poem—analyses that pose questions closely associated with how modern readers judge the literary merit and stylistic cohesion of an archaic composition. More specifically, some critics have remarked that in this fragment, as well as in fragment 130b V, a variation of tone and moods occurs. This is what Geoffrey Kirkwood has written about fragment 129 V:

The abuse of Pittacus after the solemn oath is somewhat unfortunate in emotional effect. There is power in the steady movement from the description of the sanctuary to the prayer to the curse; but in the climactic expression Alcaeus gives to his anger there is more violence than power. Violence of statement is not necessarily bad, but here it damages the impression of the passage as a whole. A deeply serious, religious atmosphere has been created; with the abusive and not particularly relevant word φύσκων (“pot-belly”) the tone changes at once. The image created is comic, we are suddenly in the realm of satire, and Alcaeus’ anger runs the risk of appearing to have more personal animus than political idealism.<sup>44</sup>

This literary analysis is in accordance with other approaches to Alkaios that view him as a not particularly sophisticated poet. Even such a sensitive and wide-ranging critic as Cecil Bowra sometimes passed unflattering judgment on Alkaios’ song-making:

As a poet, he was an amateur, as the Homeric rhapsodes before him were not, and as many poets after him were equally not [...]. Alcaeus sang not for money but because he wished to, and if he had any ulterior purpose, it was to make his views known to his contemporaries and to win adherents for his cause or to comfort his companions in their troubles. Sometimes he seems to write in a hurry without undue care, as when he repeats the same word within a few lines; at other times he is so carried away by controversy that he may not rise to a high level of poetry and deserves what Dionysius [of Halicarnassus] says of him: “Often if you were to remove the metre, you would find political rhetoric” [*Imit.* 421]. He has not the imagination of Alcman or the concentrated power of Sappho. His gifts are circumscribed by his outlook, and at times his prejudices and his spleen make him unsympathetic.<sup>45</sup>

Such an approach to the aesthetics of an archaic (highly fragmentary) poet may shed some light on why literary critics have elsewhere traced instances of stylistic *inconsistency* and “unexpected” variation of moods in Alkaios. According

to Kirkwood, the transition from prayer to abuse and the creation of a comic image in fragment 129 V are not subtle. Taking into account some of Kirkwood's observations, one can conclude that "the problem of incongruity of style" is real.<sup>46</sup> In the case of fragment 129 V, what is problematic, it has been argued, is the occurrence of φύσκων in a poem characterized by high style. The incongruity introduced by this word cannot be accounted for by assigning the poem to the category of conventional invective since, according to the same argument, "it has neither the formal metrical characteristics nor those of diction to qualify for this category". Since Alkaios' poetic discourse is aristocratic, discursive elements of "conventional" invective do not appear consistent with the category "melic". In Alkaios' melic poetry, low-class words are allowed to creep in and "explode" in the context of otherwise consistently high-style compositions.

However, instead of postulating or tacitly accepting such distinctions with regard to archaic performative discourses—distinctions that inevitably lead to questions about stylistic "anomalies" that, in turn, need to be accounted for—we should focus on how a poetic discourse is shaped, as well as on how diverse genre markers can coexist in the same song. The concept of stylistic decorum seems hardly applicable to the political rhetoric of the *hetaireia* to which Alkaios belonged. I suggest that Alkaios' political songs should be viewed in terms of the sociolect of his *hetaireia*. Words like φύσκων and ἀλέματος φίλων were an integral part of that sociolect.<sup>47</sup> Their use in compositions by Alkaios could not have seemed stylistically dissonant to the members of the *hetaireia*. More important, iambic elements of this sort embedded in the political poetic discourse of Alkaios contributed to the affirmation of the special bond that united the members of the group by sharply differentiating the "we" from the "other".

In fragment 129 V, the "we" appropriates all those elements that represent "ancestral tradition" and "sacredness" in the first two stanzas. This first section of the fragmentary song might have been preceded by at least another stanza.<sup>48</sup> It contains discursive elements of a prayer, which is constructed as an imprecation. Genre markers are blurred; the discursive boundaries between prayer and curse become most fluid. It would be misleading to trace a startling, abrupt transition from the "august" and "serious" character of the prayer to the abusive tone of lines 21-24 since the fervent imprecation that Pittakos be pursued by an Erinys ("Avenger") provides significant indication about the tone and escalation of the song. The imprecation adumbrates the use of φύσκων and the entire description of the treacherous acts of Pittakos. As it stands, the fragment defies genre labels of

“prayer” or “curse” often assigned to it. It is neither simply a prayer nor a curse: another element, that of political castigation, defines the intensely interdiscursive dynamics of the song.

The description of the sacred precinct, founded by the Lesbians “for all to share”, is essential in the construction of the scathing criticism against Pittakos. The treacherous “other”—Pittakos, the “rotund” betrayer who is represented as devouring the city not only in this fragment but also in fragment 70 V<sup>49</sup>—is juxtaposed to ancestral tradition lying behind the description of the sacred precinct. The song develops as a climactic valorization of the authority of the speaking subject and his comrades in contradistinction to and at the expense of the “other”.

Political unity within the *hetaireia* is reasserted by means of an interdiscursive rhetoric of power that articulates the poet’s and his comrades’ superiority in the hierarchy of traditional, sanctioned sociopolitical values. This rhetoric appropriates genre markers from a number of different but ultimately complementary discourses: prayer, curse, abusive political propaganda, oath. The latter is analeptically reenacted through reference to the past. The binding performative efficacy of the oath is invoked in the song to corroborate the *hetairoi*’s claim to political bonding. The abusive nickname *φύσζων*, part of the sociolect of the *hetaireia*, functions as a confirmation of the allegiance among its members and, in combination with the image of Pittakos “devouring the city”, foregrounds the legitimacy of their own discourse.

This complex interdiscursivity is activated in Alkaios’ song in order to articulate a politically effective rhetoric. Anthropologists have investigated analogous genre discourses in terms of the production of power hierarchies in traditional societies. A case in point is the function of blessings, oaths, and curses among the Okiek in Kenya.<sup>50</sup> The performance of these genres on several occasions of Okiek sociocultural interaction reaffirms or establishes relations of power among the performers, the individuals involved in the specific speech-genres, and the broader community. Oaths, for example, activate “hierarchies of righteousness”, while curses similarly communicate associations of power between the performer and the denounced targets of the curse. The performance of these “genres of power”<sup>51</sup> is expected to affect the life of an individual or a group. To establish comparable dynamics in Alkaios’ song, the “we” seeks to legitimize its authority through the appropriation of the performative power of different traditional discursive markers. The pivotal, but by no means marginal, role in the articulation of this rhetoric is undertaken by abusive discursive elements, which

contribute to the shaping of the overall antagonistic political discourse of Alkaios and his *hetaireia*, even in the context of hardship and exile.

#### NOTES

\* I am grateful to a number of participants in the “Anthropology and Classics” International Conference at The Johns Hopkins University (October 2005) for valuable discussion before and after the delivery of this paper, especially Veena Das, Marcel Detienne, Bruce Lincoln, Charles Malamoud, Paola Marrati, Gregory Nagy, James Redfield, Elaine Scarry, and H. Alan Shapiro. I am also indebted to Michael Herzfeld, Eleni Politou-Marmarinou, and Panagiotis Roilos for incisive insights. The paper published here retains aspects of its oral version.

1 See, from a different perspective, Osborne’s arguments about the problems involved in the use of the term “colony” and the model of “colonization” in current research on early archaic Greek history (eighth and seventh centuries; Osborne 1998). Among numerous cases of over-critical analysis of fragments of archaic Greek poets (analysis based on what the modern interpreter expects or does not expect in regard to the “literary merit” or “stylistic refinement” of an archaic Greek composition), see Page 1951 (an article influential in most of later analyses).

2 Whitman 1949, p. 24 (in *Democratic Vistas*, first published in 1871; see Whitman 1949, p. viii). Whitman uses the term “middling property owners.”

3 Morris 1996, p. 27.

4 Morris 1996, p. 27.

5 Kurke 1992, p. 96 (cf. Morris 1996, p. 27). For example, Kurke believes that a line in Sappho fr. 58. 25 V, the “declar-

ation ‘I love *habrosunê*’”, “is a programmatically political statement” (1992, p. 96)—that is, “her [Sappho’s] way of endorsing a particular style of aristocratic luxury”. According to the same reconstruction, “the world of ἄβροσύνη may be what provides her with her *thiasos* and the leisure time to pursue love and the composition of love poetry” (Kurke 1992, p. 99). For the text of “Sappho fr. 58 V” in the light of P. Köln inv. 21351 and 21376, see Gronewald and Daniel 2004a and 2004b.

6 Morris 1996, p. 28. He does not suggest that those who endorsed the middling tradition in the seventh and sixth centuries aimed at creating democracy.

7 Morris 1996, p. 27; cf. Kurke 1999, pp. 19-21.

8 Kurke 1992, p. 96; Morris 1996, pp. 27 and 44, n. 34. Kurke holds: “the claim could be made that this is not a class issue so much as a generic one: lyric vs. elegy and iambic. But this is precisely to ignore the central fact of poetic performance in archaic Greece: in this period, generic difference entails social differences, since different genres of poetry are constituted by the different occasions of performance and audiences they address” (1992, p. 96, n. 18). For all that, the problem lies in how one can trace (even relative) social differences in “groups of genres” like “lyric” and “elegy” on the basis of the compositions of archaic melic, iambic, and elegiac poets, who might have well used different registers for different occasions or for the same occasion.

**9** The use of the terms “melic” and “non-epic” in this paper does not imply a rigid compartmentalization of genre discourses in early archaic Greece (see, for example, Sappho fr. 44 V, a poem composed in glyconics internally expanded by two dactyls [xx — uu — uu — uu — ux], an intriguing example of epically colored narrative). Furthermore, from a comparative ethnographic point of view, it would be hard to provide a clear-cut definition of “epic poetry” (if we take into account as diverse epic compositions as the Homeric, Hesiod’s *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, or Indian and other traditional epics).

**10** Tuohy 1999, where she discusses Chen Kaige’s *Huangtudi* (*Yellow Earth*) and further, more marked and complex historical cases of genre classification.

**11** On the problems of such classifications see, among other studies, Harvey 1955.

**12** Fowler 1987, p. 108, n. 25. This is one of the alternative views that Fowler refers to with regard to the “genres of elegy and iambus” and the compositions of Arkhilokhos. More broadly, Fowler believes that “the first step toward a high literary style for the elegists and iambographers was taken under the influence of epic” (1987, p. 108, n. 20).

**13** General terms for genres appear already in the Homeric epics. In *Iliad* 1.473 there is a reference to the singing of a paean to Apollo (for the performance of a paean, see also *Iliad* 22. 391); again in the *Iliad*, we hear of the singing of *threnoi* (laments; 24.720-24.721), of *hymenaios* (wedding song; 18.493), and of the Linos-song (18.570-18.571). Arkhilokhos refers to the Lesbian paean (fr. 121 *IEG*) and to the singing of a *dithyrambos* (fr. 120 *IEG*). Cf. also Pindar fr. 128c Maehler.

**14** For features of style postulated for different poets, see the insightful discussion of Parsons 2001, pp. 61-62.

**15** See, among many scholars, Kurke 1994, p. 68 (citing Rossi 1971, Kurke refers to the “the strict adherence” of archaic poetry to unwritten laws of “genre and decorum”).

**16** Rossi 1971, pp. 75-77. Rossi suggested that in the Classical period genre laws were written and respected, while in the Hellenistic period genre laws were written but not respected.

**17** See, more recently, Barchiesi 2001, p. 152 and especially 153 (with reference to the Classical and the Hellenistic periods).

**18** Parsons 2001, p. 62.

**19** For an incisive approach (with references to earlier discussions), see Briggs and Bauman 1992. Among the extensive bibliography, see also Flueckiger 1996; Tuohy 1999; and Katz 1989.

**20** For this approach, see Yatromanolakis 2003. For the proposed concept of interdiscursivity, see further Yatromanolakis and Roilos 2003; Roilos and Yatromanolakis forth.

**21** For “focal events” and the *context* within which each focal event is embedded, see Goodwin and Duranti 1992, pp. 2-3, 9-11.

**22** Cf. also Day 2000, pp. 38-39.

**23** Calame 1977 surveys most of the early terms. Nagy 1999 [1979], pp. 282-288 discusses the traditional themes/antithetical concepts of praise and blame in archaic Greek poetry.

**24** For the operation of *emplotment* in historical writing, see White 1978, pp. 66-67, 83.

**25** Cf. Yatromanolakis 2003.

**26** White 1978, p. 91.

**27** Parts of this section are based on arguments explored in Yatromanolakis, forthcoming.

**28** I here employ Riffaterre's definition of "sociolect" (1990, pp. 130 and *passim*). By "idiolect" I mean the way Alkaios responds to and exploits the sociolect of the group of which he was a member.

**29** See Alkaios fragments 6.12-14 (and cf. 6.17), 72.13, 130b.5-6, 394 ("of our fathers"), and cf. Favorinus *περὶ φυγῆς* col. IX 1ff. (= Alkaios test. 452 V). Cf. also Alkaios fr. 140.14-15 V and Burnett's analysis: "Alcaeus here characterizes the Lesbian weapons as... heroic and in imagination assimilable to the arms that were carried by Homeric men", and "[h]e appends an implied 'Let us remember what we are!' but his central statement is indicative and filled with conscious pride: 'What we are is men in whose hands epic weapons fit—in whose deeds past and present meet'" (Burnett 1983, pp. 125, n. 11, and 126, respectively).

**30** See Alkaios fr. 339 and cf. fr. 371 ("learning from our fathers"). Note that in the context of the performance of Alkaios' songs before the members of the *hetaireia*, the poetic "I" and the "we" of the group often merged.

**31** Note that in Alkaios fr. 67. 4 V the plural *τις τῶν κ[α]κοπατρίδαν* ("one of the base-born...") occurs. Pittakos is called *κ[α]κοπατρίδαις* in Alkaios fr. 348.1 V. Given the fragmentariness and inadequacy of related evidence, the precise meaning and connotations of the word are hard to determine (they have been extensively debated: see, among other scholars, Page 1955, pp. 170-171; Bowra 1961, p. 151; Rösler 1980, pp. 186-191; Davies 1985, pp. 33-34; Kurke 1994, p. 81).

**32** Kurke 1994, p. 68. The following

quotations are from the same page, where the general methodological premises of the study are spelled out.

**33** Diogenes Laertios 1.81 Marcovich provides a list of epithets that Alkaios used to vilify Pittakos. For these epithets as part of the sociolect of the *hetaireia*, see below.

**34** Fragments 167.3 and 306i V are very fragmentary and present a number of problems (on fr. 167 V, see Barner 1967, pp. 62-73 and cf. Liberman 1999, p. 75). Fragment 332 V does not seem relevant to the question of "incongruity of style".

**35** The meaning of *φύλων* is difficult to reconstruct with any precision. Critics usually follow Page 1955, pp. 235-236 (and Edgar Lobel's tentative suggestion mentioned there; Page's rendering is "silly charlatans"); cf. Campbell 1982, p. 275: "empty braggarts." On *φύλων*, see also Hamm 1957, p. 84, Voigt's apparatus criticus, Broger 1996, pp. 167-168, and, more recently, Rodríguez Somolinos 1998, p. 132.

**36** The form *φύσκων* is the one transmitted in Diogenes Laertios 1.81 Marcovich (= Alkaios test. 429 V), along with other epithets that Alkaios used for Pittakos (for other sources, see Alkaios test. 429 V and cf. Alkaios 429 Liberman, with bibliography). *φύσγων* is the form preserved in P. Oxy. 2165 fr. 1 col. 1. 21. Voigt (1971) and Liberman (1999) have printed *φύσκων* (see Voigt's and Liberman's apparatus criticus; in their edition [1955], Lobel and Page opted for *φύσγων*; on *φύσγων*, cf. Degani and Burzacchini 2005, p. 205).

**37** Page 1955, p. 239 translates *ἄχολος* as "spiritless"; the word is here used metaphorically (LSJ provides no rendering of its metaphorical meaning). Campbell 1982, p. 383, renders it as "gutless". However,



the connotations of Campbell's rendering cannot be confirmed by the available evidence, which is late and/or technical (except for the case of *Odyssey* 4.221 where the meaning seems to be "allaying bile or anger"; see LSJ, s.v.). See, further, Broger 1996, p. 227 and Rodríguez Somolinos 1998, p. 257.

**38** Kurke 1994, p. 80.

**39** Kurke 1994, pp. 72 and 85.

**40** "High-style", "low-class word", "high-class context" are terms used in Kurke 1994.

**41** On fragment 129 V, see the discussions of Rösler (1980, pp. 191-204) and Andrisano (1994). MacLachlan 1997, p. 149 provides a brief consideration.

**42** The precise meaning of a number of expressions and words in the text (see, e.g., note 43 below and εὐδειλον in line 2, an adjective that might refer to a missing noun) eludes us; therefore, any translation of the fragment is tentative or based on certain reconstructions. The hypotheses that have been proposed are numerous. See, among other commentators, Page 1955, pp. 163-167, and Hutchinson 2001, pp. 195-204 (with references to earlier studies). There is still no scholarly consensus on various crucial issues.

**43** κήνων is often taken as a reference to those comrades who died because of the disloyalty of Pittakos. On κήνων, see, among others, Page 1955, p. 165, who has argued that κήνων refers to "those comrades whom Pittacus betrayed", and Hutchinson 2001, p. 200, who, instead, adopts S. Mazzarino's view that κήνων is a "genitive of the crime to be punished" (according to Hutchinson, κήνων does not allude to "dead comrades (not previously referred to, and probably not referred to later)" nor to "the gods").

**44** Kirkwood 1974, pp. 69-70. Among other scholars, Rösler (1980, pp. 203-204) does not find any incongruity of style in fr. 129 V.

**45** Bowra 1961, p. 174. Bowra's style is often ambiguous: elsewhere in the same discussion he offers more positive remarks (1961, p. 157): "The strength of Alcaeus' poetry of action lies in his immediate and powerful response to events. He is not subtle, nor even very imaginative, but he has a gift for saying firmly and impressively certain things which have always belonged to a masculine outlook and concern all who feel the call of adventure and risk and struggle". Concerning fragment 129 V, Bowra finds "nothing inappropriate or inartistic" in the changing "moods" of the poem (1961, p. 145). Among other critics, Hutchinson (2001, p. 192) rightly calls Alkaios "an undervalued poet" (cf. Hutchinson 2001, p. 227).

**46** Kurke 1994, pp. 72 (who calls Kirkwood's remarks "the classic formulation" about the incongruity of style in this fragment) and 76. The quotation below is from p. 72.

**47** Concerning fragments 130b and 348 V, it is difficult to see how ἀλλαλόκαλοι (130b.7) or ἄχολος πόλις (348.2) violate "rules of decorum" in the context of Alkaios' political rhetoric.

**48** There is no reason to assume (especially by adopting speculative supplements) that line 1 constituted the beginning of the song. This hypothesis has found many defenders (see, e.g., Gerber 1970, p. 191: "[t]he poem consisted of eight stanzas").

**49** See the emphatic κήνος... διαπτέτω πόλιν in lines 6-7 of fr. 70 V.

**50** Kratz 1989.

**51** Kratz 1989.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrisano, A. 1994. "Alcae. fr. 129, 21ss. V.". *Museum Criticum* 29, pp. 59-73.
- Barchiesi, A. 2001. "The Crossing", in S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Texts, Ideas, and the Classics: Scholarship, Theory, and Classical Literature*, Oxford, pp. 142-163.
- Barner, W. 1967. *Neuere Alkaios-Papyri aus Oxyrhynchos*, Hildesheim.
- Bowra, C. M. 1961. *Greek Lyric Poetry: From Alcman to Simonides*, second revised ed., Oxford.
- Briggs, C. L. and R. Bauman 1992. "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power", *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2, pp. 131-172.
- Broger, A. 1996. *Das Epitheton bei Sappho und Alkaios: Eine sprachwissenschaftliche Untersuchung*, Innsbruck.
- Burnett, A. P. 1983. *Three Archaic Poets: Archilochus, Alcaeus, Sappho*, London.
- Calame, C. 1974. "Réflexions sur les genres littéraires en Grèce archaïque", *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 17, pp. 113-128.
- Campbell, D. A. 1982. *Greek Lyric I*, Cambridge, Mass.
- Davies, M. 1985. "Conventional Topics of Invective in Alcaeus", *Prometheus* 11, pp. 31-39.
- Day, J. W. 2000. "Epigram and Reader: Generic Force as (Re-)Activation of Ritual", in *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society*, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 37-57.
- Degani, E. and G. Burzacchini 2005. *Lirici greci*, with new bibliography edited by M. Magnani, Bologna.
- Duranti, A. and C. Goodwin (eds) 1992. *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, Cambridge.
- Flueckiger, J. B. 1996. *Gender and Genre in the Folklore of Middle India*, Ithaca, NY.
- Fowler, R. L. 1987. *The Nature of Early Greek Lyric: Three Preliminary Studies*, Toronto.
- Gerber, D. E. 1970. *Euterpe*, Amsterdam.
- Goodwin, C. and A. Duranti 1992. "Rethinking Context: An Introduction", in Duranti and Goodwin 1992, pp. 1-42.
- Gronewald, M. and R. W. Daniel 2004a. "Ein neuer Sappho-Papyrus", *ZPE* 147, pp. 1-8.
- Gronewald, M. and R. W. Daniel 2004b. "Nachtrag zum neuen Sappho-Papyrus", *ZPE* 149, pp. 1-4.
- Hamm, E.-M. [= E.-M. Voigt] 1957. *Grammatik zu Sappho und Alkaios*, Berlin.
- Hanks, W. F. 1987. "Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice", *American Ethnologist* 14, pp. 668-692.
- Harvey, A. E. 1955. "The Classification of Greek Lyric Poetry", *Classical Quarterly* 5, pp. 157-175.
- Hutchinson, G. O. 2001. *Greek Lyric Poetry: A Commentary on Selected Larger Pieces*, Oxford.
- Kirkwood, G. M. 1974. *Early Greek Monody: The History of a Poetic Type*, Ithaca, NY.
- Kratz, C. A. 1989. "Genres of Power: A Comparative Analysis of Okiek Blessings, Curses and Oaths", *Man* n.s. 24, pp. 636-656.
- Kurke, L. 1992. "The Politics of ἀποσώ-νη in Archaic Greece", *Classical Antiquity* 11, pp. 91-10.
- Kurke, L. 1994. "Crisis and Decorum in Sixth-Century Lesbos: Reading Alkaios Otherwise", *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* n.s. 47, pp. 67-92.

- Kurke, L. 1999. *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold: The Politics of Meaning in Archaic Greece*, Princeton, NJ.
- Liberman, G. 1999. *Alcée. Fragments*, 2 vols, Paris.
- MacLachlan, B. C. 1997. "Alcaeus", in D. E. Gerber (ed.), *A Companion to the Greek Lyric Poets*, Leiden.
- Morris, I. 1996. "The Strong Principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy", in J. Ober and C. Hedrick (eds), *Dēmokratia: A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ, pp. 19-48
- Nagy, G. 1999. *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*, revised ed., Baltimore [first ed. Baltimore 1979].
- Osborne, R. 1998. "Early Greek Colonization? The Nature of Greek Settlement in the West", in N. Fisher and H. van Wees (eds), *Archaic Greece: New Approaches and New Evidence*, London, pp. 251-269.
- Page, D. L. 1951. "Ibycus' Poem in Honour of Polycrates", *Aegyptus* 31, pp. 158-172.
- Page, D. L. 1955. *Sappho and Alcaeus: An Introduction to the Study of Ancient Lesbian Poetry*, Oxford.
- Parsons, P. J. 2001. "'These Fragments We Have Shored against Our Ruin'", in D. Boedeker and D. Sider (eds), *The New Simonides: Contexts of Praise and Desire*, New York / Oxford, pp. 55-64.
- Riffaterre, M. 1990. *Fictional Truth*, Baltimore.
- Rodríguez Somolinos, H. 1998. *El léxico de los poetas lesbios*, Madrid.
- Rösler, W. 1980. *Dichter und Gruppe: Eine Untersuchung zu den Bedingungen und zur historischen Funktion früher griechischer Lyrik am Beispiel Alkaios*, Munich.
- Roilos, P. and D. Yatromanolakis forth. *Interdiscursivity and Ritual: Explorations in Patterns of Signification in Greek Literature and Societies*, Munich.
- Rossi, L. E. 1971. "I generi letterari e le loro leggi scritte e non scritte nelle letterature classiche", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 18, pp. 69-94.
- Sherzer, J. 1989. "Namakke, sunmakke, kormakke: Three Types of Cuna Speech Event", in R. Bauman and J. Sherzer (eds), *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, second ed., Cambridge, pp. 263-282 [orig. publ. 1974].
- Tuohy, S. 1999. "The Social Life of Genre: The Dynamics of Folksong in China". *Asian Music* 30.2, pp. 39-86.
- White, H. 1978. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore.
- Whitman, W. 1949. *Democratic Vistas*, with an introduction by J. Valente, New York.
- Yatromanolakis, D. 2003. "Ritual Poetics in Archaic Lesbos: Contextualizing Genre in Sappho", in D. Yatromanolakis and P. Roilos 2003, pp. 43-59.
- Yatromanolakis, D. forthcoming. "Alcaeus and Sappho", in F. Budelmann (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric*, forth.
- Yatromanolakis, D. and P. Roilos 2003. *Towards a Ritual Poetics*, Athens.

**Π Ε Ρ Ι Λ Η Ψ Η**

ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΣ ΓΙΑΤΡΟΜΑΝΩΛΑΚΗΣ: Ειδολογικές κατηγορίες και διασυστηματικότητα στον Αλκαίο και την αρχαϊκή Ελλάδα

Η μεθοδολογική και θεωρητική προσέγγιση που προτείνεται σε αυτό το άρθρο στοχεύει σε μια συστηματική και συγχρονική διερεύνηση των ειδολογικών κατηγοριών στις μελικές ποιητικές συνθέσεις της αρχαϊκής περιόδου μέσα στα εκάστοτε κοινωνικοπολιτικά και τελεστικά τους πλαίσια, καθώς και υπό το φως συγκριτικών ανθρωπολογικών μελετών. Έμφαση δίδεται στην πολιτική ρητορική και στη διαλεκτική ειδολογικών συστημάτων λόγου στα αποσπάσματα του Αλκαίου.