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Fiction and Pragmatics in Ancient Greek Lyric

The Case of Sappho

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LYRIC POETRY AND THE 'OCCASION'

In the literary and cultural imagination of post-Romantic readers, Greek lyric is often seen as the conceptual place where poetic communication finds its natural origin and *telos*, embedded, as it is assumed to be, in its link to occasion and performance. Poets and audiences, critics, and scholars not infrequently look back with a certain nostalgia to the lost Golden Age of the 'lyric' wor(l)d, with its spontaneous social sense and its practical effectiveness. The formulation of F. W. Schelling stands out as particularly representative of this idea:

The spirit of the modern age . . . introduces the restriction of modern lyric poetry as regards the objects themselves. The lyric poetry in modern states could no longer be the image and accompanist of a *public and communal life*, a life within an *organic whole*. For it, there remained no other objects than either the completely subjective, individual,

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momentary emotions in which lyric poetry lost itself even in the most beautiful gushings of the later world, emotions from which a *whole life* emanates only very indirectly, or enduring emotions directed toward objects themselves, as in the poems of Petrarch, where *the whole* itself becomes a kind of romantic or dramatic unity.¹

This same vision of the crucial link between ‘occasion’ and poetry emerges, with characteristic sharpness, in a section of Walter Benjamin’s essay on Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*, centred on a reading of Hölderlin’s poem ‘Blödigkeit’ (‘Timidity’, composed after 1802 and published in 1804).² Benjamin argues that the notion of ‘poetry of occasion’ (*Gelegenheitsdichtung*), common in interpretations of Goethe, should be re-conceived to dispel a widespread confusion between the concepts of ‘occasion’ (*Gelegenheit*) and ‘lived experience’ (*Erlebnis*): ‘For the occasion provides the content, and the lived experience leaves only a feeling behind.’ He goes on to cite the opening of ‘Blödigkeit’, ending with the line *Was geschieht, es sei alles gelegen dir*, which the poet addresses to himself (‘Whatever happens, let it all for you be “occasion”’, as we might, somewhat experimentally, translate).³ ‘This is precisely’, Benjamin comments, ‘the ancient vocation of the poet, who from Pindar to Meleager, from the Isthmian Games to an hour of love, found only higher or lower (but as such always worthy) occasions (*Gelegenheiten*) for his song, which he therefore never thought to base on experience.’⁴

‘Whole life’, ‘communal’, ‘occasion’ (in opposition to ‘private’, ‘outpouring of emotion’, and ‘(subjective) experience’) are keywords that link the Romantic approach to ancient lyric poetry to contemporary

¹ Schelling (1985) 211, my italics (translation slightly modified). The German original was written in 1802–3 and published posthumously in 1859. Cf. Szondi (1974) 270–1 = his (1986) 293–4, who also discusses Schelling’s debt to the vision of Greek lyric as the fruit of Greece’s political freedom, which Friedrich Schlegel had developed in the 1790s. The development of these concepts was also affected by the reaction to French republicanism.

² For the important links between Schelling’s theory of literary genres (and his thinking about lyric poetry in particular) and Hölderlin, see Szondi (1974) 257–8 = his (1986) 288–92.

³ The term *gelegen* (literally ‘laid out’), is clearly related to the term *Gelegenheit* (‘occasion’: literally, the state of being *gelegen*), and replaces the term *gesegnet* (‘blessed’), which Hölderlin had used in previous drafts. The differences between the various versions of this poem had been analysed in great detail by Benjamin in an earlier essay (1914–15), ‘On two poems of Hölderlin, *Dichtermut* and *Blödigkeit*’: cf. Hanssen (1997).

⁴ Benjamin (1996) 328–9, translating Benjamin (1924–5): translation slightly modified.

‘ritualistic’ interpretations.⁵ It is as an echo of these concepts that we can (and arguably ought to) read more recent scholarly formulations regarding the opposition between ancient and modern lyric poetry. A good example, which may illustrate the assumptions underlying some of the critical positions examined in this chapter, is the following statement from Reinhold Merkelbach’s influential 1957 article about Sappho’s circle: ‘Now, ancient Greek lyric poets hardly ever composed a poem without an external occasion (*Anlaß*); book-poetry was not yet known, and even more unknown were the sentimental outpourings of single misunderstood individuals. All poems are meant for a community, an audience: they are firmly anchored to the here and now.’⁶

What we do have of Greek lyric, however, is the mirage of a lost occasion, and the words: words that were, or might have been, designed to ‘work’ vividly in the performance context, but that survive because they are, or have become, a text independent from the original occasion. The tension between these words and the lost context has exercised interpreters of Greek lyric poetry like hardly any other issue.

My intention in this paper is to have a closer look at the case of the poetry of Sappho. Several considerations suggest that this may be a fruitful exercise. The first is that, of all archaic lyric poets, Sappho poses the greatest obstacles to determining the intended performance contexts: this is partly because very few poems survive from other female poets, and partly because reliable external evidence about the performance culture of early sixth-century Lesbos is very scarce. Secondly, textual evidence has increased substantially in recent years, with two important papyrus publications: the anthology from

⁵ These underlying assumptions are of course not limited to ‘ritualistic’ approaches (on which I focus here): see, for example, Silk (2009), who, in an article that engages mainly with British definitions of ‘lyric’, attributes to ‘the Romantic revolution of sensibility and usage’ (374) the practical and theoretical shift towards poetry as ‘identified with its creative source, in the shape of the individual poet’s personal-emotional response to experience’ (375–6, with reference to Wordsworth), without noting the very origin of the oppositional distinction exactly in German Romantic theories (in his brief survey, Silk considers Hölderlin’s position as ‘exceptional’ (381)): compare, for example, Silk (2009) 375: ‘within the world of modern lyric poetry, particular individuals are answerable, primarily, to themselves, because any wider community is either absent or problematic’ (i.e., as opposed to the situation in ancient Greek lyric), and the passage from Schelling quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

⁶ Merkelbach (1957) 5–6 = (1996) 91, my translation. For a critique of this position, cf. also Parker (1993): 337–8, with previous bibliography.

the Hellenistic period preserved in the Cologne papyrus published little more than a decade ago, and the very recent publication of substantial fragments (divided between private collections in the USA and the UK) of a copy of Book 1 of the canonical edition of Sappho.⁷ The third consideration is that a systematic study of the deictic, and more generally pragmatic, features of Sappho's texts is yet to be undertaken.⁸

I will not attempt such a systematic analysis here. Rather, I will concentrate on a set of interesting and relatively neglected texts relevant to these issues (most of them from Book 1, and thus constituting a *corpus* that is arguably to some degree homogenous). This survey emphatically does not aim to reconstruct any actual performance context: that has too often been a tendency in recent criticism, especially of the newest fragments, with scholars taking for granted what are mostly *a priori* assumptions about performance scenarios, without sufficient discussion of the methodological issues involved. My focus will instead be on the way in which words are used to evoke deictic coordinates which may or may not be meant to coincide (historically) with any sort of 'external reality'.⁹ The texts of Sappho abound with deictic spatial, temporal, and personal elements (personal pronouns and/or references to named individuals), as well as entailing potential pragmatic interactions with various sorts of interlocutors.

⁷ See Lardinois and Bierl (2016), with previous bibliography.

⁸ Stehle (2009) focuses on time-markers in Sappho. A wide-ranging survey is provided by Calame (2012). Unlike Calame, however, I question the assumption that the descriptive coordinates of these texts were necessarily designed to work in correspondence with an actual performance context. Indeed, I raise the possibility that the two levels (textual pointers and performance contexts) might, in principle and in practice, have not been designed necessarily to coincide: cf. Yatromanolakis (2004) 65–6, who correctly points out the potential fallacy of identifying 'descriptive context' with 'performative context'.

It is important to stress that I am in this essay using the term 'pragmatics' in a linguistic sense: by 'pragmatics' I mean the way in which certain linguistic elements (mainly deictics in the broader meaning of the term, which includes, for example, also verbal persons, modes, and tenses) work in relation to an (actual or imaginary) external context (cf. D'Alessio (2004) and (2009) with earlier bibliography). I therefore do *not* intend the term in its more general sense (influentially established in the field of Greek lyric by the work of Bruno Gentili and his school from the 1970s on, and the object of criticism, for example, of Schmitz (2002), with further bibliography; cf. the Introduction to this volume, pp. 6–9), which focuses mostly on the pertinence of literary works to a social and religious context and function, and which is adopted, for example, in most of the essays collected in Lardinois and Bierl (2016).

⁹ Given the broad remit of the chapter, the bibliography I refer to is unavoidably selective (and selected mainly for its relevance to my main focus).

A. ADDRESSES TO GODS, PRAYERS

Fr. 1: Defining the Persona

Fr. 1 is one of Sappho's best known texts. The addressee is the goddess Aphrodite, called upon to interact with a first-person speaker 'here' (line 5) and 'now' (25). Embedded in this 'here-and-now' frame is a narrative containing reported speech that merges into direct speech (15–24), in which the first-person speaker becomes the second-person addressee (19) and is identified as 'Sappho' (20). The 'now' of the frame is thus mirrored in the past through temporal adverbs, projecting the current event to 'some other time' (5) and a 'yet again' (15, 16, 18). The deictic spatial and temporal references are 'moveable', in that no identifying link to a defined context is provided. The deictic *personal* references, on the other hand, are to named individuals (Aphrodite, Sappho). This example is particularly important since it is generally acknowledged that fr. 1 is not in fact a 'fragment', but a complete poem. Its dialogical situation does not present itself as part of, or as compatible with, a ritual,¹⁰ nor indeed does it have a song-performance frame. It implies, on the other hand, the identification of the speaker (the first person of the frame) with an individual named Sappho. The prayer involves a third party too, the beloved, but this third 'person' is treated in purely abstract terms: her role is explicitly presented as capable of being filled by an indeterminate subject. There is no implication that this third party is to be imagined present in any potential performance context. Indeed, her absence seems required for the scenario to make sense. No further audience is implied in the text. The notional situation of the utterance is not presented as part of a song performance (which, of course, does not imply that the poem could not be performed as a song), and the dialogue is not framed in a formally cultic context.¹¹

¹⁰ In this article I use the term 'ritual' as a way to refer to communal performances situated in a formalized cultic and/or public frame.

¹¹ Bowie (2016) 154 offers a reading of this poem as a 'symptotic prayer': this is based entirely on extratextual hypotheses, as are readings that assume choral performance in a ritual context involving a fictional persona (as, for example, in Lardinois (1996) 164). For bibliography on 'choral' readings of this and other poems, see nn. 17, 39, 66 and 67.

Fr. 2: Defining the Place

δεῦρό μ' ἐκ Κρήτας π[υ -] ναυγον
ἄγνον ὄππ[αι δῆ] χάριεν μὲν ἄλκος
μαλι[αν], βῶμοι δέ τεθυμιάμε-
νοι [λι]βανώτω<ι>·

ἐν δ' ὕδωρ ψύχρον κελάδει δι' ὕδων 5
μαλίνων, βρόδοισι δὲ παῖς ὁ χώρος
ἐσκίαστ', αἰθυσομένων δὲ φύλλων
κῶμα κατέρρει·

ἐν δὲ λείμων ἰππόβοτος τέθαλε 10
ἡρίνοις<ιν> ἄνθειν, αἰ δ' ἄηται
μέλλιχα πνέοισιν <υ - - υ - >
<- υ υ - >

ἐνθα δῆ × - υ ἔλοισα Κύπρι 15
χρυσίαι<ειν> ἐν κυλίκεσσιν ἄβρω
ὄμ<με>μείχμενον θαλίαισι νέκταρ
οἰνοχόαισιν.

Here to me from Crete (. . .) sacred, where is a (/your?) beautiful grove of apple-trees, and altars perfumed with incense: in it cold water resounds through branches of apple-trees, and the whole place is shadowed by roses, and from the quivering leaves deep sleep descends; in it a meadow, grazed by horses, blossoms with spring flowers, and the breezes blow sweet as honey (. . .). Here/there, indeed, Cypris, taking (. . .) pour in golden cups with grace the nectar mixed with festivities.

This ode, much less complete, and highly uncertain from a textual point of view, is again addressed to Aphrodite.¹² Here, too, the utterance evokes an extratextual reality through deictic elements: 'here' (1),¹³ picked up by 'there' (13), 'me' (1, probably; final stanza, again textually dubious). In this case, the 'identity' of the first-person speaker (if a first person was present at all in the text) is not in any way specified.¹⁴ On the other hand, the 'here' is the object of an

¹² For a recent treatment of some of the main textual problems, see Caciagli (2015), with previous bibliography.

¹³ A proximal deictic pronoun has been restored by most scholars in the gap in line 1, but the reconstruction of Ferrari (2011) 449–50 (cf. also Caciagli (2015)) shows that this approach should not be considered inevitable.

¹⁴ On this point, cf. Ferrari (2011) 461.

abundantly detailed description.¹⁵ The place is not firmly linked to any named location. The effect of the evocation of the poetic setting, however, will have depended greatly on whether or not this setting corresponded to an actual performance context. The place evoked by the text might, theoretically, be envisaged as the faithful verbal representation of the poem's intended original performance setting. Yet the pragmatic import of the address to the goddess in lines 13–16 (textually uncertain as these lines are) cautions against a literal interpretation of the text's pragmatic implications. According to the most widely accepted interpretation, the goddess is invited to pour into golden cups 'wine mixed with festivities' (reading imperative *οἶνοχόαιcov* at the end of the preserved text).¹⁶ This, in turn, can be seen either as a transposition of a psychological/religious experience of divine epiphany, as a poetic fiction that may be built upon an otherwise non-fictional performative context, or as part of a situation whose reality resides entirely in the words of the text itself.¹⁷

As in fr. 1, no audience is *explicitly* present, unless we understand Athenaeus' mention of *hetairoi* after his quotation of part of the poem

¹⁵ The hypothesis that the elaborate description in 2–11 refers not to the 'here' of line 1 but to the location from which Aphrodite comes (probably Crete, on most reconstructions of line 1), elaborated (and rejected as unlikely) by Caciagli (2015) 47, seems close to impossible to me. The last preserved stanza with its address to Aphrodite, inviting her to interact with the speaker, is introduced by the local adverb *ἐνθα*, which can work as both relative and demonstrative. When demonstrative, it is anaphoric ('in *this* place', pointing to something that has already been described, not straightforwardly 'here') and cannot stand by itself: Caciagli's translation 'qui' ('here') cannot be taken as introducing *deixis ad oculos* (or even *am Phantasma*). It is hardly conceivable that *ἐνθα* is capable of referring back to the 'here' of line 1 while being kept distinct from the location described in the eleven intervening lines.

¹⁶ This is indeed the meaning suggested also by the way in which Athenaeus quotes the text of the last stanza, and is adopted (with different reconstructions of the text) by practically all interpreters apart from Ferrari (2011).

¹⁷ On the other hand, a reconstruction such as that of Ferrari (2000) 41–4, who reads *ὄc μe θέλοικα (...)* *οἶνοχόαικαι*, implies that it is the speaker who asks Aphrodite for permission to act as wine-pourer, allowing, at least in theory, a more straightforward projection of the text against a possible performative situation. Note, however, that even in this case the conclusion that the pragmatic address describes a real cultic act is far from unavoidable. Ferrari (2003) 67 argues that nectar here stands for Sappho's poetic production (a metaphor particularly dear to Pindar); so already Theander (1937) 466 n. 3.

For a list of proponents of the interpretation of fr. 2 as a choral poem, see Burzacchini (2007) 97; Aloni (1997) LI is more nuanced; on the other hand, cf. *ibid.*, LIX: 'addirittura, potremmo pensare che, all'interno di un gruppo solidale e unanime come quello saffico, l'io corale sia il tratto non marcato nell'opposizione con l'io solistico, e che spetti a questo (...) attestare la propria presenza'. I disagree with both the premise and the conclusion.

as referring to a lost portion of the poem itself (which would in that case have featured female *hetairai*),¹⁸ but the ritual setting, with its 'altars' and 'cups', does at least imply a human presence. Here too the notional situation of the utterance is not formulated as part of a song performance. The address to Aphrodite is indeed framed in a formally ritual context (mention of a sacred space and of ritual activities that go beyond the utterance of the words themselves). The nature of the ritual evoked, however, is far from clear, as is the possibility that this textual scenario actually matched a 'real-life' situation. There is no mention of a sacrifice, and the whole focus seems to be on communal drinking, not of wine, though, but of 'nectar' (15) in *golden cups* (14).¹⁹ Both are more appropriate to divine beings than to a group of human cultic performers,²⁰ and are presented in a frame that comes close to that of a symposium, without overlapping it in a 'literal' and straightforward way.²¹

Fr. 5: Defining Interpersonal Relations

This poem also opens with an address to divine beings, the Nereids, and closes with one to Aphrodite.²²

πότνια Νηρήιδες ἀβλάβη[ν μοι]
τὸν κασίγνητον δ[ό]τε τιῖδ' ἕκεθα[ι]
κῶπτι φῶϊ θύμωι κε θέληι γένεσθαι
κῆνο τελέσθην,

¹⁸ Burzacchini (2007) 92–3, with references to earlier discussions.

¹⁹ Commentators compare the fragmentary description (in the past tense) of the activity of Aphrodite and Peitho in fr. 96.26–8.

²⁰ Drinking nectar in golden cups: divine context, e.g. *Il.* 4.1–3, *H.Ap.* 10, *H.Aph.* 206; mythical context, Pind. *Isthm.* 6.37–40; hyperbolic realistic context, Philox. 836d *PMG*. Note that in the two last cases, where the agents are not gods, we find *not* the noun *νέκταρ* but a cognate adjective modifying a noun that generically indicates libations or drinks.

²¹ A sympotic performance context has been envisaged by, e.g., Parker (1993) 344–5, Bowie (2016) 154–5, and Schlesier (2016) 372 and n. 16. More to the point is Yatromanolakis (2004) 63–7, who observes (introducing a reading of this poem, but also with wider implications) that 'the merger of diverse ritual discourses, that is, allusions to ritual contexts, in Sappho's poetry makes the identification of *specific* ritual occasions more difficult than most often assumed' (66–7). This is an important issue, to which I hope this paper can contribute from a different perspective.

²² For a new text (still problematic), cf. Obbink (2016a) 22–3; for the reconstruction of the last stanza, see D'Alessio (forthcoming).

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ὄσσα δὲ πρόσθ' ἄμβροτε πάντα λῦσα[ι]	5
καὶ φίλοισι φοῖσι χάραν γένεσθαι	
κῶνίαν ἔχθροισι, γένοιτο δ' ἄμμι	
μηδάμα μηδ' εἶς	
τὰν κασιγνήταν δὲ θέλοι πόνησθαι	9
(...)	
(...) ἐν[δ]ὲ Κύπ[ρ]ις ἐ[μ]να	18
θῦμον ἐ[ῦ]νοον] θεμένα κάκαν[×	
[.] . [.] . . [.] ι. [⊗?]	20

Sovereign daughters of Nereus, grant that the brother may arrive to me here unharmed, and that whatever he wishes in his mind may be accomplished, and that he may undo all his past mistakes, and become (a cause of) joy for his own friends, and sorrow for his enemies, and may to us in no way [text uncertain]; and may he wish to increase the sister's standing (...) And you, venerable Cypris, with benevolent mind, may you (...) bad/evil.

Here too spatial coordinates are provided by the deictic adverb 'here' (2), but as in fr. 1 this place is not 'filled' by descriptive elements (the reader may be tempted to supplement this by means of the reference to the sanctuary of the Nereids and Poseidon at Pyrrha in Myrsilus 477 *FGrHist* 14, but this is not required by the text: compare and contrast Alcaeus fr. 129). Here too the addressees interact with a first-person speaker (singular, 1, supplemented). The prayer, though, involves a third party, 'the brother' (unnamed, 2),²³ who in his turn is (the speaker hopes) to interact with 'us' (7), and with 'the sister' (9). The parties involved make 'pragmatic' sense only if we imagine the text uttered by a speaker whose brother fits within a network of relationships identifiable with that described within the prayer. The use of the article rather than the possessive pronoun in lines 2 and 9 is intriguing. It may have deictic force, but with a vaguer reference, and could thus imply 'my/our brother', 'his sister'; 'my/our brother', 'our sister'; 'your brother', 'his/our/your sister', depending on several factors. For the first occurrence (τόν, 2), equivalence with a second-person possessive ('your') is the least likely as such equivalence would be most naturally activated by the presence of an address, but the only addressees in the poem are the Nereids at the beginning, and Aphrodite in what seems to be the last stanza. Equivalence with a third-

²³ Burris, Fish, Obbink (2014) 24 note a possible word-play between *Χάραξος* and *χάρα* ('joy') in line 6.

person possessive is also unlikely, since the behaviour of ‘the brother’ affects the individual(s) speaking in the first person. In the absence of further indications, and because τὸν κακίγνητον immediately follows the first-person pronoun μοι, the implication is that ‘the brother’ is the speaker’s brother.²⁴ In any case, the characters are left unnamed and their identification depends on the context, be it any set of (extratextual) circumstances in the light of which the poem may have been composed (but which would of course have obtained only in the very first performances), or those dictated by the fact that this poem is part of a *series* (familiarity with related *texts* would affect the way in which it can be understood).²⁵

As noted, no explicit audience appears in the text. The mention of ‘citizens’, possibly as originators of criticism directed at ‘the brother’ (14), does not imply their actual presence. Again, the notional situation of the utterance is not formulated as part of the setting of a song performance, and the dialogue is not framed in a formally ritual context (there is no explicit mention of ritual space or of cultic activities). The poem closes with a prayer addressed to Aphrodite at 18–20. The use of the aorist participle may suggest that Aphrodite is not asked to persist in her attitude but rather asked to move from her previous hostility to benevolence. This is significant if this text were to be read (or performed) *after* fr. 15, which is closely related to fr. 5, and also included a prayer to Aphrodite, apparently again regarding the brother.²⁶

Only three stanzas are (very fragmentarily) preserved of fr. 15 and only the last two can be reconstructed to any extent.

[ὄσσα δὲ πρ]όσθ' [ἄμ]βροτε κῆ[να λῦσαι	5
[.]αταις(.)νεμ[~ - ~ - ×	
[cὸν] τύχαι λίμενος κλ[~ - ×	
[- ~ ~ - ×]	

²⁴ The defence of an alternative interpretation in Lidov (2016a) 69 is unconvincing.

²⁵ This is an important point, which will have affected both the form of the textual circulation of these poems (oral and written) and the development of a biographically oriented exegesis. For good remarks on this aspect, see Peponi (2016) 233–7 (focusing on the ‘Brothers Poem’).

²⁶ We now know that fr. 15 *preceded* fr. 5 in the edition represented by our papyri (presumably the standard edition in circulation). This would obviously affect the way the two poems were read.

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[Κύ]πρι, κα[ί] c]ε πι[κροτ'..]αν ἐπεύρ[- ×
[μῆ]δὲ καυχάc[α]ιτο τόδ' ἐννέ[ποιcα 10
[Δ]ωρίχα τὸ δεύ[τ]ερον ὡc ποθε[×
[. . .]ερον ἦλθε.

may (he) undo those past mistakes (. . .) (with) fortune (. . .) of the harbour (. . .) Cypris, and (may) she (?) find you (. . .) nor may she boast saying this (. . .) Doricha the second time that (. . .) came.

Line 5, as usually supplemented (after Fraenkel), repeats fr. 5.5 almost verbatim.²⁷ More generally, the remnants of lines 1–8 are compatible with the hypothesis that this was a prayer similar to that for ‘the brother’ in fr. 5. The last stanza is addressed to Aphrodite (as in fr. 5), and mentions another third party, a character named [D]oricha (it is unclear whether she appeared also in fr. 5).²⁸ In tone, however, this wish resembles a curse more than an ordinary prayer: ‘may she find you very harsh’, or ‘harsher’,²⁹ ‘nor may she boast saying this, that he/she came a second time . . .’ This utterance makes sense only from the point of view of a speaker related to both ‘the brother’ (by implication)

²⁷ The doubts about this reconstruction expressed in the edition of Lobel and Page, and echoed in Voigt’s edition, as well as by later scholars, have been effectively dispelled by Franco Ferrari (and Daniela Colomo) in Ferrari (2014) 11.

²⁸ Lidov (2002) maintains that the first trace is not compatible with an omega. The trace is very uncertain but Yatromanolakis (2007) 330–2, based on inspection of the papyrus, has confirmed omega as a possible reading, and, based on the plate published with the *editio princeps*, I cannot see anything incompatible with an omega. There is no other word that fits traces, metre, and context. And the name of Doricha is independently attested as that of a mistress of Sappho’s brother. On current evidence I have no serious doubt that [D]oricha is the right supplement here. Lidov’s lengthy renewed defence of his previous interpretation of this and other related texts in Lidov (2016a) 78–80 does not, in my view, alter the balance.

²⁹ The subject of the first sentence (if we accept a reconstruction with an optative form and supplement a form of *πικρός*, ‘harsh’, as predicative of Aphrodite) could be either ‘the brother’ or Doricha, whose name appears at line 11. For ‘the brother’ as the subject, cf. Lardinois (2016) 171, who follows Ferrari (2010) 159: the Italian version in Ferrari (2007a) 150 leaves both options open, while his translation in Ferrari and Di Benedetto (1987) 107 takes Doricha as the subject of both sentences, as most interpreters do (including Rayor and Lardinois (2014) 32). Schubart (1948) 314 thought of a form of *πιστός* (‘trustworthy’) but in the context of a reconstruction that supplemented a first-person form (*ἐπεύρο*, ‘I found’) at the end of the line. A form of *πιστός* would be compatible also with a wish/prayer having Charaxos (but not Doricha) as subject of *ἐπεύροι*, which would not affect the interpretation of the following sentence as a wish that Doricha may not boast about something. The discussion of the issue in Lidov (2016a), defending the interpretation of Lidov (2002), does not in my view add convincing new arguments.

and Doricha. This poem is too fragmentary to draw any certain conclusion about its pragmatics.

Fr. 17: Setting Up the Context

πλάσιον δη μ[.] οἰς α[. . . .] ω
πότνι' Ἥρα, καὶ χ[.]ς. ἔορπ[] .
τὰν ἀράταν Ἄτρ[είδα]ι πόηcάν
τοι βαcίλῃς,
ἐκτελέccαντες μ[εγά]λοις ἀέθλοἰς. 5
πρῶτα μὲν πέρ Ἰ[λιον], ἄψερον δέ
τυῖδ' ἀπορμάθην[τες· ὃ]δον γὰρ εὖρη[v]
οὐκ ἐδ[ύναντο,]
πρὶν cὲ καὶ Δί' ἀντ[ίαιον] πεδέλθῃν
καὶ Θυῶνας ἱμε[ρόεντα] παῖδα. 10
νῦν δὲ κ[c.12 missing letters] . . . πόημεν
κάτ τὸ πάλ[αιον]
ἄγνα καὶ κα[c.12 missing letters ὄ]χλος
παρθέ[νων c.12 missing letters γ]υναίκων
ἀμφις, [15
μέτρ' ολ[]
πας[]
·[·]· νιλ[]
ἔμμενα[]
[^σH]ρ' ἀπίκε[cθαι.] 20

Near indeed (. . .) Lady Hera, your (. . .) festival (. . .) which the Atreid kings established for you as a vow, having accomplished great tasks, first around Ilium, and then having sailed back here, for they could not find the way, before approaching you and Zeus Antaios, and the charming son of Thyona. And now we do, as in days past, pure and (. . .) crowd (of) girls (. . .) of women (. . .) measures/metres (. . .) be (. . .), Hera, to come.

This poem, the first three stanzas of which are framed as an address to Hera, is too fragmentary to draw any firm conclusion. The recent additions yielded by the Green papyrus raise as many issues as they solve. The first word evokes a form of proximity (πλάσιον, 'near'), though the state of the text does not allow one to decide what is described as being close to what: the presence of a first-person pronoun here is not certain. The particle δῆ in πλάσιον δῆ was

presumably meant to make the reference more vivid.³⁰ The new papyrus has shown that the focus of the address was quite specific, mentioning the ‘festival’ of the goddess: the reconstruction $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\chi[α\rho\acute{\epsilon}]cc'$ $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{o}\rho\tau\alpha$ (‘your graceful festival’) appears very probably in line 2.³¹ It follows that a main verb is lost in line 1, with $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{o}\rho\tau\alpha$ as its subject. The solution envisaged in the *editio princeps*, with a middle/passive imperative, seems the most reasonable choice, and the editors’ $\acute{\alpha}[\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\theta]\omega$ (‘let (your festival) be performed’) is certainly the best proposal offered so far. Lines 3–10 provide the historical/mythical background for the festival, which was originally established by the Greeks during their Trojan expedition. The narrative was probably linked to the deictic frame of the present through a second-person personal pronoun, in line 4 (‘to you’), referring to the goddess addressed in the first lines.³²

With line 11 we move back to a ‘now’ ($\nu\acute{\nu}\theta\alpha\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\ \kappa\alpha\iota$) that is presented as being in continuity with the past ($\kappa\acute{\alpha}\tau\ \tau\acute{o}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha[ι\omicron\nu], 12$), with an action expressed with a first-person plural verbal form ($\pi\acute{o}\eta\mu\epsilon\nu$), which echoes, in the same metrical position, the $\pi\acute{o}\eta\kappa\alpha\nu$ of line 3.

³⁰ Cf. also fr. 2.13 $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\theta\alpha\ \delta\eta\ \kappa\acute{\upsilon}$, ‘where you indeed’, in the invocation of Aphrodite.

³¹ For a detailed treatment of the difficulties posed by the reconstruction of this passage I refer to D’Alessio (forthcoming).

³² In spite of the acute accent in the Green papyrus (no accent in the other papyri), West (2014) 4 interprets $\tau\omicron\iota$ (4) as the enclitic form of the second-person pronoun rather than the article (as in the *editio princeps*). This interpretation has been rejected because of the late position in the clause of the enclitic pronoun (most fully by Lidov (2016b) 421–2). But such forms (and other enclitics) occur not only after the first constituent of the clause but also after the main verb, or in even later positions: cf. e.g., Sa. fr. 95.11, Alc. fr. 50.1 and fr. 336 (text conjectural but widely accepted), Alc. fr. 130.15 (variant reading), and several Pindaric cases (e.g. *Ol.* 3.4, 10.1, *Pyth.* 9.55, *Nem.* 4.72, *Isthm.* 5.47). Even in Homer, later positions (following the verb) are attested: e.g. *Il.* 24.53 $\mu\eta\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\omega}\nu\ \pi\epsilon\rho\ \acute{\epsilon}\acute{o}\nu\tau\iota\ \nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\sigma\sigma\eta\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \omicron\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\eta}\mu\acute{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma$, and *H.Ap.* 75 $\acute{\eta}\ \kappa\epsilon\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\delta\eta\iota\ \omicron\acute{\iota}$. In fact, some of the authorities quoted by Lidov formulate the issue in quite different terms (e.g. Dik (2007) 21: ‘it was probably prosodic peaks more generally, rather than only first words of clauses, that attracted postpositives’). The position can be explained as the result of the foregrounding of the predicate $\acute{\alpha}\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\nu$. Nagy (2016) 464–70 interprets the pronoun as orthotonic. There is a consensus, however, based on consistent evidence, that in epic poetry, Aeolic, and Ionic the orthophonic form was $\kappa\omicron\acute{\iota}$, and the enclitic $\tau\omicron\iota$ (cf. e.g., Obbink (2016a) 21 and Lidov (2016b) 421). As for the alternative articulation $\pi\acute{o}\eta\kappa\alpha\nu\ \omicron\acute{\iota}\ \beta\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\lambda\eta\epsilon\varsigma$ (*editio princeps*, Neri (2014) and Obbink (2016a) 20–1), one would expect at least one of the three available papyri to indicate the elision mark, as this interpretation would have been potentially problematic already for ancient readers (note that the accent in the Green papyrus would not per se imply word division, as suggested by Neri (2014) 15); the middle, furthermore, would affect the potential impact of the echo at 11.

The two forms require two different translations in English—‘we do’ and ‘they established’—but this is very much the same verb, and *πόημεν* presents the speaker as part of a wider community. (In passing, it is worth noting that lines 11–12 describe ritual continuity with the past but do not imply that the celebration is taking place during the song.) The following lines seem to have included a description of the crowd of girls and women, and perhaps also a performance (if that is the implication of *μέτρ’* at 17).

The setting can be usefully compared to that of Alcaeus frs 129 and 130b, which make reference to the same sanctuary and the same festival.³³ The text of those two poems is rather better preserved, and pragmatic articulation more clearly discernible. In Alc. fr. 129 the temple is straightforwardly referred to with the proximal deictic (*τόδε*, 1), used also to indicate the god Dionysus (*τόνδε*, 8), and again Hera is addressed. The deictic pronouns also serve to formulate a complex curse (proximal: *τῶνδε*, 11; distal, with debated interpretation, *κήνων*, 14 and 21), with the whole discourse making pragmatic sense only if imagined as uttered within the sacred space. Fr. 130b has been widely misunderstood as a message from the distance, sent to Alcaeus’ comrades from afar for a performance in the speaker’s absence.³⁴ But the articulation of the deictic elements points to a situation in which the poet who laments his exile from his *polis* is, or imagines himself as being, physically present in the sanctuary before the citizens gathered for the festival.³⁵ This would chime with the fact that in the first part of the poem the fellow citizens from whom Alcaeus has been driven away (6) are referred to with the proximal deictic (‘these, here’): the poem makes much better sense if the citizens are imagined as actually present at the festival itself, rather than evoked through a vivid fictional deixis (*Deixis am Phantasma*), as is usually assumed.³⁶ In the case of Alcaeus, the poems project

³³ Cf. Caciagli (2016) 425–34, 443–4, and Nagy (2016) (both with copious previous bibliography). For a survey of the deixis in the two Alcaic fragments, cf. Edmunds (2012).

³⁴ Cf. Ferrari (2016) 480–3, with bibliography, starting with Rösler (1980) 272–85.

³⁵ The presence and exact nature of a demonstrative adjective referring to the ‘gatherings’ at 15 is complicated by a textual problem and a variant reading. For Alcaeus’ songs located in the context of festive gatherings (*πανήγυρις*), cf. Alc. fr. 448. This is not to say that this issue has necessary implications regarding *actual* performance contexts, but that the texts make best pragmatic sense assuming an utterance in this deictic form.

³⁶ So, for example, Edmunds (2012) (‘it is clearly imaginary deixis’) and Ferrari (2016) 481 (with bibliography). Note, however, that immediately after describing the citizens with the proximal deictic (‘my father and my father’s father have grown old

themselves against a very concrete communicative situation, evoking a well-defined speaking persona, a sociopolitical setting, an audience and/or one or more human addressees, and a clear pragmatic function. Interestingly, though, they clearly present themselves as part of a political discourse rather than as performed songs.

The situation in Sappho's poem is more difficult to define (partly due to its lacunose state). There is certainly nothing in the text that even *implies* that the poem presents itself as part of a song performance, let alone a choral performance, as taken for granted by Burris, Fish, and Obbink.³⁷ Such an interpretation derives, more than from the text itself, from our extratextual information and/or expectations regarding the contexts of Sapphic poetry.³⁸ In fact, the emphatic opening with a word meaning 'close' might actually be suggestive of a discourse that locates itself not quite at the centre of the performance itself, but at its margins. The fragmentary state of the text of course leaves many other alternatives open, and I would not press this point. Looking at cultic performance from the margin, as we are going to see in greater detail, though, is a characteristic feature of Sappho's poetry in other texts.

To sum up, none of the prayers examined so far presents a pragmatic articulation of the text that evokes, let alone establishes, performance *as a song* within a cultic context. Such an interpretation is certainly *compatible* with the formulation of frs 2 and 17 in particular, but no more than that. In linguistic terms, the texts all present themselves as speech acts addressed to divine addressees. The function of the speaker varies considerably, ranging from the most generic (fr. 2), to the most specific (fr. 1, where the identity of the speaker is fixed as 'Sappho'), including the case of frs 5 and 15, where the

among these citizens (who are here), 6) Alcaeus adds 'from these (citizens/institutions) I have been driven away': a sequence that considerably weakens, it seems to me, the rhetorical point of the alleged *Deixis am Phantasma*.

³⁷ Burris, Fish, Obbink (2014) 5: 'the poem is not "personal" in theme but is (or at least is presented as being) a choral song intended for cultic performance, as has already been suggested by Calame', with reference to Calame (2011a) 518–19 (but cf. already, for example, Calame (2009a) 4–5). Cf. (though more cautiously) Lardinois (1994) 66. The use of the first-person plural in line 12 implies that the rite described involves not only the speaker as a single individual but the larger community, and of course has no implication for the (actual or evoked) circumstances of the performance of the song (cf. e.g. Anacr. fr. 410).

³⁸ Cf., in the very first place, AP 9.189, with its description of a choral performance in the sanctuary of Hera led by Sappho.

speaker is defined as part of a familial network marked by precise relationships ('the brother', 'the sister') and a proper name (Doricha). The context ranges from the most definite (fr. 17, indicating a precise location and its significance for the community) to the most abstract (fr. 1), again, passing through the intermediate case of fr. 5 (and fr. 15). The sheer variety of these communicative strategies embedded in the texts should dissuade modern interpreters from looking for a univocal reading of the intended 'original' occasion (and 'original' mode of performance) of these prayers, and from assuming that all were necessarily intended as cultic songs, let alone *choral* cultic songs: that reading is intrinsically improbable for fr. 1 (where any larger community is purposefully elided), and potentially problematic in the case of the prayers for 'the brother' (and the associated 'curse' against Doricha). The texts themselves avoid establishing any verbal link to their modes of performance, whatever those may have been, and attempts at filling the gap between texts and (alleged) performances have not always been productive. In the case of fr. 1, to take one example, the hypothesis of an original performance 'accompanied by a group of dancers' has been advocated by Lardinois,³⁹ even if the text stands out exactly for its almost abstract 'context'. Eva Stehle, on the other hand, felt that such a text would be possible only as part of written communication, envisaging this (and other poems) as 'written for a woman to sing to herself', 'poetry detached from performance, that is, poetry as written text'.⁴⁰ I wonder what makes this poem a 'written' poem any more than, say, Anacreon fr. 358 or fr. 413. The issue seems to be that it is apparently easier to imagine a female poet composing for performance only within a *ritual* frame, while in the case of male poets modern readers (at least) seem to be ready to resort to the catch-all label of 'symptotic' poetry, which makes almost everything acceptable.

B. STAGE DIRECTIONS?

To be sure, there exist (in many cases very fragmentary) texts in the Sapphic corpus which seem to include what look like self-referential instructions for (or descriptions of) the performers' movements. This

³⁹ Lardinois (1996) 164.

⁴⁰ Stehle (1997) 295, 311.

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group of poems includes fr. 6; frs 21, 22, and 27 (for which see also section C); frs 30, 43, 58, 81 (not necessarily self-referential in relation to the performance of the text itself: note the instructions about how to prepare the crown), and 111 (blending pragmatic illocution with hyperbolic imaginary projection). Yet the way in which pragmatic self-referentiality is configured in all of these poems is far from straightforward.

Reference to movements pertaining to the first person, by way of a present indicative, occurs in fr. 27; reference to movements pertaining to the second person, by way of imperatives, occurs in frs 6, 27 (ἄπ[π]εμπε, 10), and 30. Frs 6.7 ff. (the opening lines of a poem from Book 1, very fragmentary) and 30 (the end of the last poem of Book 1) present remarkable similarities, as follows.

Fr. 6.7–14:

στειχ[
 ὠς ἰδω[
 τὰς ετ.[
 ποτνια.[10
 χρυσοπ[
 κάππο[
 .ανμ[
 κᾶρα.]

move (...) so that (I/we) may see (...) lady (...) gold- (...) fate (...).

Fr. 30:

νύκτ[. . .] . [
 πάρθενοι δ[
 παννυχιδο. [.] α. [
 càn αείδοι. (.)ν φιλότατα καὶ νύμ-
 φας ἰοκόλπω. 5
 ἀλλ' ἐγέρθεις, ἦϊθ[ε
 στεῖχε σοὶς ὑμάλικ[αc
 ἥπερ ὄσσον ἂ λιγύφω[νος
 ὑπνον [ῖ]δωμεν

night (...) girls celebrating all night long (...) sing/may they sing of the love between you and the violet-bosomed bride. (...). But you wake up, young (...), and go (to?) your age-mates (...) so we may see (less) sleep than the shrill-voiced one.

The first poem opens with an invitation to ‘move’ (στειχ[ε]), addressed to an individual whose identity cannot be recovered because of the

very lacunose state of the text. It is apparently followed by a final clause in the first person ('so that I/we may see'), and, just possibly, by a mention of a female divinity, perhaps Dawn. Fr. 30, on the other hand, in its penultimate stanza mentions girls who sing/may sing something related to a male addressee and his bride.⁴¹ This is followed by a request to the addressee to 'wake up' and 'go' (στειίχε, 7) to his age-mates in order that the first-person speakers of this sentence may see (plural: [ἴ]δωμεν, 9) as little sleep as 'the shrill-voiced one/bird' (presumably the nightingale). In order to make sense from a pragmatic point of view, the two texts must be imagined as uttered in the presence of an interlocutor thought capable of reacting to the illocution. The movement that the (apparently male) addressee is invited to perform in fr. 30 does not seem to have a self-referential dimension,⁴² in the sense that there is no expectation that the movement should involve also the speakers themselves (contrast Pind. fr. 94b.66–7, νῦν μοι ποδὶ στείχων ἀγέο, 'now lead my way stepping with (. . .) foot'). The speakers might be identified with the group of girls whose performance in a night ritual is described in the previous strophe, but the fact that in that case the third person is used does not make this a necessary implication. The preserved portion of the text presents itself as a prompt for a sort of performance (movement, but not necessarily song), that does not include, at least prima facie, the text itself. The situation might have been different, from this point of view, in fr. 43 (from Book 2, the first text we are examining that is *not* from Book 1). This text, once again very fragmentary, closes with a rather vague address (8 ἄγιτ') to a group of female friends and a reference to approaching daybreak, thus suggesting a context similar to that of frs 6 and 30. Too little is preserved to permit the inference that these friends are (members of) the chorus performing this song itself, rather than (members of) the audience and involved in some other aspects of the performance.

A similar, but more complex, situation seems to be involved in the better preserved fr. 27.

⁴¹ Lobel, in the *editio princeps*, expressed a preference for a form of the optative here, since the indicative would involve the use of movable *ny* in a verbal form, which he found alien to the Lesbian vernacular, and, therefore, to the diction of Sappho, but cf. Voigt *ad loc.*

⁴² Fr. 6 is too lacunose for the gender of the addressee and the possibility of self-referentiality to be judged.

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Fr. 27.4–13:

...] . καὶ γὰρ δὴ ἐν πάσι ποτ[
...] ἴλης μέλπεται, ἄγι ταῦτα[5
..] ζάλεξαι, κᾶμμ' ἀπὸ τωδεκ[
] δὲ χάρισαι·
c] τείχομεν γὰρ ἐς γάμον· εἶ δε[
κα] ἰ ἐν τούτ', ἀλλ' ὅττι τάχιστα[
πα] ρ[θ]ένοις ἄπ[π]εμπε, θέοι[10
] ἐν ἔχοιεν
] ὄδος μ[ε] γαν εἰς Ὀλ[υμπον
ἀ] νθρω[π] αἰκ[

For you too (were?) once a child (and loved?) to sing and dance, come, these (...) consider, and us from (this?) grant us (generous?) favours. For we are going to a wedding, and you too (know?) this well. Come, let the maidens go as quickly as possible, gods (...) may have (...) road to great Olympus (...) humans.

Here we have a plural first-person subject (κᾶμμ', 'and us', 6, and c]τείχομεν, 'we are going', 8) and a singular addressee. The speakers describe themselves as 'going to a wedding' (present indicative). The focus of the preserved stanza is not, however, on their performance, but on the attempt to persuade their interlocutor to 'converse' or 'consider' (ζάλεξαι, 6), to 'grant' them something (χάρισαι, 7), and to 'let the maidens go (or: send the maidens away) as soon as possible' (9–10).⁴³ The interlocutor is of a mature age, and in the context it is reasonable to infer that she is a woman (though the gender is not unambiguously confirmed by the text). In the past, when she was younger, she used to 'love to sing and dance' (4–5, with Di Benedetto's κᾶφ[ί]λης).⁴⁴ The address as a whole does have an illocutionary import (10 ἄπ[π]εμπε), but the emphasis is on the (perlocutory) process of persuading the interlocutor rather more than on the possible 'stage directions', and thus directs the audience's attention away from the action of the speakers as an actual performance. What the speakers

⁴³ Cf. the request to πέμπην ('send', probably the speaker) in the 'Brothers Poem', line 5, discussed in section C. The point of the compound verb here is not entirely clear. Its most common meaning is to 'dismiss, send away', but it can occasionally have a ritual meaning, as for example when referring to the sending of offerings to Delphi. The only occurrence I know of that involves some sort of song-and-dance performance is in the peculiar Lydian story of the chorus of the reeds and their king as reported by the paradoxographer Isigonus (fr. 13 Giannini).

⁴⁴ Di Benedetto (1986) 20.

describe themselves as performing in this text is a *preliminary* activity, the prelude to the performance that will be made possible by the persuasion of their interlocutor. Aloni has argued that the interlocutor is the bride, who is asked to send away her companions.⁴⁵ Ferrari has rightly remarked that neither her age nor what she is asked to do (send away her companions) is consistent with this hypothesis.⁴⁶ Following Di Benedetto (who compares *Il.* 18.491–6, where the women standing in their porches marvel at the performance of wedding songs),⁴⁷ Ferrari imagines that the song is performed by a choral group; this choral group is inviting (mockingly, one would assume) a further group, attempting to persuade their leader, whom Ferrari tentatively identifies with one of Sappho's rivals.⁴⁸ If we look at the relationship between speakers and interlocutor in a potential performance, the fragment is perhaps more usefully compared to the 'Brothers Poem', which will be discussed in the next section. In both cases, the interlocutor is a person who has the authority to make a proper performance happen, and the speakers urge her to do so. To different degrees, the focus seems to be more (indeed in the case of the 'Brothers Poem', exclusively) on the possibility of the *future* performance than on the one implied in the text itself.

A similar tension between the text itself and an envisaged performance emerges from two further fragmentary poems, frs 21 and 22, both belonging to Book 1.

Fr. 22.9–13:

.] . . . ε . [. . . .] . [. . . . κ] ἐλομαι σ . [. . . .]
 . . .] γυλα [. . . .] ἀνθι λάβοισα . α . [. . . .] 10
 . . .] κτιν, ἄς σε δηῖτε πόθος τ . [. . . .]
 ἀμφοτόταται
 τὰν κάλαν·

I order (you to sing?) having taken (. . .) the *paktis* (. . .), while desire now again flutters around you, the beautiful one (. . .).

⁴⁵ Aloni (1997) 57. So, again, Caciagli (2009); Tognazzi (2009) argues that the addressee is the mother of the bride.

⁴⁶ Ferrari (2007a) 39–40, and already *idem* (2003) 52.

⁴⁷ In Ferrari and Di Benedetto (1987) 51.

⁴⁸ For a critique of all these positions see Benelli (2013) 85–103. Benelli himself argues that Sappho addresses another member of her group (Mika), who behaves as if she were in control of the whole group. While I do not find this reconstruction more persuasive than the others, it would further strengthen my point.

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In this fragment (lines 1–8 belong to a different poem),⁴⁹ the speaker orders (κ]έλομαι, 9) an interlocutor⁵⁰ (the reading ‘Abanthis’ at line 10 is disputed) to perform an action, having taken a musical stringed instrument (πᾶ]κτιν, 11, Lobel, after Castiglioni):⁵¹ the action, therefore, is almost certainly that of singing (ς’ ᾶ]εῖδην, 9, West).⁵² Various aspects of the poem’s content are uncertain and debated, but the text clearly invites an addressee to perform a song, which is presented as not *this* song.⁵³ Once again, the text locates itself on the margins of a performance, rather than at its centre.

The other text, fr. 21, is rather poorly preserved, and it is not even possible to determine whether its three extremely lacunose stanzas belong to one or two different poems.

] επαβολης[]ανδ’ ὄλοφυν[. . .]ε.] τρομέροις π.[. . .]αλλα]	5
] χρόα γῆρας ἦδη]ν ἀμφιβάσκει]ς πέταται διώκων]	10
]τας ἀγάσας]ξα, λάβουσα] ἰᾶειον ἄμμι τὰν ἰόκολπον.]]ρων μάλιστα]ας π[λ]άναται	15

meeting/receiving (?) (. . .) pity/lament (. . .) trembling (. . .) skin old age already (. . .) goes around (. . .) flies in pursuit (. . .) splendid ones (. . .) taking (. . .) sing to us the violet-bosomed one (. . .) most of all (. . .) wanders.

⁴⁹ Cf. Yatromanolakis (1999).

⁵⁰ For another case of first-person κέλομαι, cf. Alc. fr. 368; in the ‘Brothers Poem’ (5), discussed in section C, it is the speaker’s interlocutor who is the subject of the verb, which, again, has the purpose of triggering a ritual performance.

⁵¹ If the reading is confirmed, the supplement looks unavoidable; I have not been able myself to inspect the original or any reproduction of the papyrus.

⁵² West (1970) 319 = (2011–13) ii.40.

⁵³ Note the contrast with the usual self-addresses that identify the present song as the object of the performance. Stehle (1997) 302–5 thinks that the poem was written to be performed by Abanthis: a case of ‘split subjectivity’ within the performed utterance that is even more difficult to envisage.

The second preserved stanza focuses on the effects of old age, a theme most prominently developed in fr. 58.11–12. The third stanza includes an address to an unidentifiable female interlocutor, inviting her to ‘sing to us of the violet-bosomed one’ (ἄεισον ἄμμι τὰν ἰόκολπον, 12–13) after having ‘taken’ (λάβοις, 11) something, presumably a musical instrument. The sequence ‘sing, having taken’ is the same as in fr. 22. What in this case is the pragmatic force of the first-person plural pronoun, and of the illocutive address at line 12? Here, too, the performer of the song is distinct from the speakers of the text, who seem to present themselves as her audience. If the second and third stanzas belong to the same poem (as is usually assumed), the sequence could suggest that the speaker invited somebody else to sing, adducing her own inability because of the effects of old age (in this case the plural would include a singular speaker, ‘Sappho’, and the wider audience). If the third strophe was the opening of a new poem, on the other hand, the request to sing could conceivably be addressed to a Muse (for the plural ἄμμι cf., e.g., *Od.* 1.10). For what it is worth, this form of the imperative aorist of ἀείδω is attested in addresses both to human performers (cf. *Od.* 8.492, Aristoph. fr. 223) and to the Muse (Eur. *Tr.* 513), though the participle λάβοις, inviting the interlocutor to take up her musical instrument, is perhaps easier to envisage in an address to a human interlocutor. Further supporting the first option is the similarity to the situation in fr. 21, which we have already examined, and, at least to a certain extent, to that in fr. 58.

Fr. 58 (now integrated by the ‘new’ Cologne papyrus as the ‘Tithonus Poem’) opens with an address to the παῖδες, followed in the next line by a mention of the lyre (in the accusative in line 2), and then by an elaborate description of the effects of old age on the speaker (first person singular), who laments that she is no longer able to dance.⁵⁴

‘Tithonus Poem’, 1–4:

ἰ]οκ[ό]λων κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες,
τὰ]ν φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύναν·
] ποτ’ [ἔ]οντα χροά γῆρας ἦδη
ἐγ]έροντο τρήχες ἐκ μελαίναν·

(. . .) the beautiful gifts of the violet-bosomed ones, girls, (. . .) the song-loving shrill tortoise. (. . .) (my) skin once (smooth) old age already (. . .) and my hair turned (white) from black (. . .).

⁵⁴ The details of the reconstruction and the interpretation of this text do not require elaboration here. See in general Greene and Skinner (2009).

It is not clear what action the girls addressed in line 1 were invited to perform, and several alternative reconstructions have been proposed. Most scholars accept that the girls were asked to pay attention to the song, or to dance to the accompaniment of the lyre (the ‘tortoise’), rather than to sing themselves. In this case, the pragmatic situation would be far more straightforward than that in fr. 21 (if all its stanzas belonged to the same poem). Even, however, if we accept the idea that in the first two lines the speaker invites the girls to perform a song, rather than for example describing what they usually do, there is (at least with the present state of the text) nothing to suggest that the girls are meant to perform *this* text. The text in fact emphasizes the speaker’s exclusion from the performance (or at least from some of its features).

The same sequence of ‘singing having taken up the lyre’ that we noted in some of the texts we have discussed appears at the end of the new poem preceding fr. 58 in the Cologne papyrus, where it is now applied to the speaker.

] . ου[
] ἔῤυχομ[
] . νῦν θαλία γξ[
] . γέρθε δὲ γὰς γξ[νοίμα]ν.
] . . ν ἔχοικαν γέρας ὡς [ἔ]οικεν
] ζοίεν, ὡς νῦν ἐπὶ γὰς ἔοικαν
] λιγύραν [α]ῖ κεν ἔλοικα πᾶκτιν
 χε]λύγναν . αλαμοις ἀείδω.

(...) pray(-) (...) now, festivity (...) (may I?) be under the earth (...) having the privilege as befits (me) (...) as now that I am above the earth (...) shrill, if taking the *paktis* (...) the tortoise (?) (...) I sing.

This reference to music-making seems to describe a situation that recurred frequently during the speaker’s life and which she hopes will continue recurring after her death. From a strictly pragmatic point of view, the first-person statement here (introduced as part of a potential sentence, [α]ῖ κεν ἔλοικα πᾶκτιν... ἀείδω) does not necessarily point to a self-referential description of the performance of the song itself. That the idea is expressed in a potential construction, with all the caveats deriving from the fragmentary state of the text, would seem to tell against any straightforward pragmatic implications.

C. ON THE MARGINS OF A RITUAL FRAME?

The majority of the examples I examined in the last section show that even in the case of what seem *prima facie* to be self-referential performance directions, the text of Sappho's songs locates itself on the margins of, if not entirely outside, the ritual performance that is its pragmatic focus (frs 21, 22, and 27). This feature emerges even more clearly in the recently published so-called 'Brothers Poem'.⁵⁵ The papyrus preserves, almost without gaps, the text of the last five stanzas of the poem. For our purpose only the first section is relevant.

'Brothers Poem', 1–10:

ἀλλ' αἴ θρύλησθα Χάραξον ἔλθην
νᾶϊ σὺν πλήγαι. τὰ μὲν οἴομαι Ζεῦς
οἶδε κύμπαντές τε θεοί· σέ δ' οὐ χρῆ
ταῦτα νόησθαι,
ἀλλὰ καὶ πέμπην ἔμε καὶ κέλεσθαι
πόλλα λίσσεσθαι βασίλῃαν Ἥραν
ἐξίκεσθαι τυίδε σάν ἄγοντα
νᾶα Χάραξον
κᾶμμ' ἐπέυρην ἀρτεμέας.

5

The speaker addresses a not clearly identifiable interlocutor, reproaching him or her for blabbering about the return of Charaxos (the 'brother') with a full ship. This is considered inappropriate: 'you must not entertain such thoughts, but you must send *me* and also command to beseech Queen Hera repeatedly that Charaxos may arrive here with a safe ship, and find us unharmed' (3–9). Subsequently, the discourse shifts to a wish-mode, involving the gods, 'us', and a further male character, Larichos, who from other sources can be identified as a further, younger brother of Sappho. The speaker is not pragmatically identified through verbal deixis in the preserved text, but analogy with other texts (e.g. fr. 5) and the indirect evidence suggest identification with 'Sappho', Charaxos's sister. The exact import of the *χρή*-sentence at 3–6 is not entirely clear, and different solutions have been proposed. Emphasis and word order very strongly suggest that, as in the translation given, the emphatic *σέ* placed at the head of the sentence should

⁵⁵ First published in Obbink (2014); a revised text now in Obbink (2016a) 25–6. The literature on this new poem is already quite substantial. A whole section of Lardinois and Bierl (2016), 165–336, is dedicated to this poem, with full bibliography.

be considered the subject of the three infinitives *νόησθαι*, *πέμπεην*, and *κέλεσθαι*.⁵⁶ A change of subject (advocated by Lidov) seems very unlikely: one would expect the new subject to be placed prominently at the head of the new syntactic segment (after *ἀλλά*), and the change of subject would leave the two verbs without an expressed object.⁵⁷ The speaker therefore addresses an interlocutor who has the authority to ‘send’ *her* (marked by the choice of the emphatic form of the pronoun), and to order her to pray to Hera. Such a mission could involve the performance of choral songs in honour of the goddess, but does not necessarily imply it.⁵⁸

The identity of the addressee is a matter of debate: this must have been a male or older female member of the family, and the most natural assumption is that the speaker is addressing her mother.⁵⁹ A ‘mother’ is addressed in fr. 102, where it is far from certain that the young speaker should be identified with ‘Sappho’. Fr. 98a mentions the mother of a speaker identifying herself as the mother of Kleis, viz. (on the strength of the biographical tradition) ‘Sappho’. More importantly though, it is very likely that fr. 9, as now supplemented by the new Green Collection papyrus, might have included an address to the ‘mother’ in the (textual) context of a religious festival.⁶⁰ It now appears that line 3 of the fragment (the final line of a stanza) should be supplemented as *μ]ατερ ἐόρταν*.⁶¹ Bierl and, more cautiously, Lardinois suggest that the ‘mother’ in question here could in fact be

⁵⁶ On *κέλεσθαι* see n. 50, on *πέμπεην* see also n. 43.

⁵⁷ So Lidov (2016a) 57–9. For criticism of this position (and other less convincing alternatives), see also Lardinois (2016) 175–6.

⁵⁸ Cf. also *ἀπ[πεμπε* in fr. 27.10, discussed in section B.

⁵⁹ For a survey of the various hypotheses see Lardinois (2016) 182–4, with previous bibliography (I do not find his tentative identification of the addressee with yet another brother of Sappho, E(u)rigyios, persuasive). Stehle (2016) 266–92 argues that the addressee is Larichos, with a shift to his presentation in the third person in the last stanza; an abrupt change Stehle argues for, unconvincingly in my opinion, by comparing fr. 96. In that text the move from the second to the third person (which is in any case far from certain: cf. e.g. Hutchinson (2001) *ad loc.*) would have a plausible rhetorical *raison d'être* in the shift in focalization from the point of view of the absent girl ‘then and here’ (when and where she rejoiced in ‘you’) to that ‘now and there’ (when and where she remembers ‘Atthis’).

⁶⁰ I address the reconstruction of this text in greater detail in D’Alessio (forthcoming).

⁶¹ On the whole, the presence of a double accusative, *μάτερα* and *ἐόρταν*, looks rather less likely than that of a vocative followed by an accusative (‘mother, the festival’): cf. D’Alessio (forthcoming).

the goddess Hera.⁶² But as noted by Bierl himself, quoting an important remark of Walter Burkert,⁶³ Hera is not elsewhere addressed as 'Mother', and if these lines deal with the problems related to the preparation of the festival, as seems likely (at least provisionally), Sappho's own mother would appear to be a more obvious addressee.⁶⁴

This parallel with fr. 9, which features an address to (or mention of) the 'mother' in a context dealing with ritual celebrations, strengthens the hypothesis that the speaker's 'mother' was addressed in the 'Brothers Poem', too.⁶⁵ The address to a senior member of a community, who is to be persuaded to send someone to take part in a ritual activity, is paralleled also by the address in fr. 27 already discussed. The difference is that in fr. 27 the speakers seem not to coincide with the individuals under the authority of the interlocutor.

Even though the 'Brothers Poem' is relatively well preserved, the loss of the opening stanzas leaves its interpretation from a pragmatic point of view somewhat uncertain. Whatever option we prefer, though, it is clear that, while the speaker hopes that a ritual performance will come about, this performance is evidently projected into the future, and (depending on the interpretation of the syntax of lines 5–6, discussed earlier in this section) is probably presented as in the gift of the addressee rather than the speaker. By contrast, the dialogical situation in which the speaker and her interlocutors are situated here and now (the poem itself) does not bear the traits of any cultic or sympotic circumstances of song performance. The 'Brothers Poem' locates itself not only on the margin, but altogether outside the frame of the ritual performance that the addressees of the interlocutor themselves are attempting to trigger.⁶⁶

⁶² Bierl (2016a) 324 and n. 57, and Lardinois (2016) 173.

⁶³ Burkert (1985) 133.

⁶⁴ I agree with Lardinois, however, that the second part of the preserved fragment might indeed have mentioned Charaxos.

⁶⁵ A similar point, from a different perspective, was made by Kurke (2016). Kurke (2016) 246–8 (cf. also 238) speaks of 'a "behind-the-scenes" vignette of the preparation for a festival': I hope that my study will help place this feature in a wider interpretative frame. Unlike Kurke, however, I would distinguish these cases from the use of futures in cases such as Alcman's Astymeloisa *partheneion* (247 n. 30), for which I refer to D'Alessio (2004). Cf. also the implications of one of the possible, tentative reconstructions of fr. 17.1, $\mu[\acute{\alpha}\tau\rho\iota] \mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\iota\varsigma(\alpha)$ ('a concern for the mother') referred to $\acute{\epsilon}\delta\omicron\rho\tau\alpha$ ('the festival') in D'Alessio (forthcoming).

⁶⁶ According to Nagy (2016) 489, '[t]he whole song is staged as a choral performance, which is public, and the speaker will be speaking as a choral personality in the precinct of Hera', but this depends entirely on the interpolation of Nagy's own

D. AN ABSTRACT FRAME (FR. 31), AND SOME
PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

The discussion so far has shown that the texts of Sappho's poems very rarely use indexical markers to embed themselves pragmatically within their own contexts of performance. The majority of cases in which such indexical markers can be identified locate the texts on the margins of, or clearly outside, a ritual performance context. This, of course, does not directly say anything about the *actual* way in which these poems were originally performed, and subsequently re-performed. That is a *historical* question to which, for most of these cases, it is intrinsically impossible to find an answer based on the texts alone. It is nevertheless a question that interpreters will continue to ask, as they look for a provisional hermeneutic model against which to respond to the fragments, in their need to provide a context for 'Sappho'. It is a question that reflects our knowledge (or rather our lack of knowledge) of the historical circumstances, as well as revealing our prior assumptions. The hypothetical answers to this question put forward by different scholarly theories indeed often tell us more about the perspectives and cultural context of modern interpreters than about available historical and textual data. This is arguably the case for two interpretative paradigms that have been much debated recently: the theory that Sappho was a public chorus leader,⁶⁷ and the idea that she was expressing a female private perspective that transcends (perhaps even rejects) any performance context, or at least any male-dominated public performance frame (e.g. Stehle (1997)).

interpretative frame in a text where these elements are not present, but projected onto a future occasion, and quite clearly a distinct one.

The shift towards a fictional reading of the situation may, somewhat paradoxically, help to make a 'ritualistic' construal of the poem easier to accept—along the lines followed for other poems by Nagy (1996) 97: 'a merger of the performer's identity with an identity patterned on an archetype—a merger repeated every time *the ritual occasion occurs*' (italics mine); and now, for the 'Brothers Poem', also by Lardinois (2016), Obbink (2016b), and Bierl (2016a). Yet this approach involves, in this as in other cases, the creation from scratch of a whole system of fictitious characters. Such ad hoc attempts are destined to be multiplied with the increase of any new texts.

⁶⁷ For an interpretation of Sappho's songs (including fr. 1) in terms of choral performance see, for example, various papers by Nagy (ranging from (1990) 371, to (2016) 489, where Nagy integrates the song within an interpretative frame developed by means of a comparative perspective, but without any actual basis in the text itself); Lardinois (1996), and several contributions by Bierl, the latest of which are Bierl (2016a) and (2016b) 302–36 and 339–52. For a critique of this position see also n. 66.

and her behaviour are vividly described, as is the presence of a male character sitting in front of her. Even more remarkable for their *enargeia* are the details of the physical and psychological reaction of the narrator. The shift of focus toward the symptoms is marked first by an aorist indicative (6), implying an anchoring in (what is presented as) an actual event. In the following lines (7–16), however, the phrasing presents the symptoms as a repeated occurrence,⁶⁹ and the verb forms used to describe them are either in the perfect or in the present tense. The fact that this description is framed by references to subjective appearance (*φαίνεται μοι κῆνος*, 1, ‘that man appears to me’, and *φαίνομ’ ἔμ’ αὔ[ται]*, 16, ‘I appear to myself’) does not imply per se that the situation is *described* by the speaker as an *imaginary* one.⁷⁰ And yet, it seems difficult to envisage an occasion on which all these deictic elements would work felicitously together as part of an extratextual pragmatic context. The physical situation of the speaker would be incompatible with her actually performing the song while describing herself as incapable of communicating.⁷¹ The third party (the male character) does not make sense as a recipient of the message. If the situation described implies that the addressee and the third party are a married couple,⁷² it has been argued, it would be awkward to envisage a communicative situation in which the speaker could address the girl as she does in these lines.⁷³ The closest parallels have therefore been found in Sappho’s so-called *Trennungsgedichte*, although these poems naturally imply a physical *separation* (*Trennung*) between ‘Sappho’ and the girls on whom the song focuses. And this would be at odds with the fact that our text implies the *presence* of the addressee. In order to envisage a performance situation compatible with this, Latacz resorts to the extreme assumption that the present/perfect tenses used in the section 3–16 should be understood as ‘prophetic’ futures.⁷⁴ The

point in the poem. Wilamowitz, followed by many other scholars, had supplied the name of the interlocutor at the end of line 16, but this was famously proved wrong by *PSI* 1470.

⁶⁹ Cf. 7 ὦς . . . ἴδω, ‘when I see (you)’, with the subjunctive implying potentiality.

⁷⁰ A point too often stressed: see Race (1983) 94–5, Latacz (1985), Rösler (1990a) 281–2.

⁷¹ Good points on the gap between text and context in Rudolph (2009) 343–7.

⁷² The best argument in this sense was formulated by Latacz (1985).

⁷³ The implication would be the same even if we suppose that the couple is represented as merely in intimate conversation.

⁷⁴ Latacz (1985) 91–2 n. 31 does not seem to me to provide any satisfactory parallel for this.

performed poem would address the girl *before* the actual separation, presenting its consequences as vividly present. Rösler, on the other hand, argued that the poem was meant not for the person actually addressed in the text, but for the other members of the circle, who were likely to suffer symptoms similar to those of the speaker.⁷⁵ The fact that the addressee is anonymous would make the poem easier to perform repeatedly on several similar occasions.⁷⁶ Through her example, and through the consolatory *gnome* that closed the poem, Sappho would teach them how to overcome their grief.

This is a potentially attractive interpretative approach. It is telling, however, that the reconstruction of its alleged performance frame is based on elements conspicuously absent from the text itself, where there is no mention at all of a circle of other female companions. This reading transforms one of the ancient lyric texts most impressively centred around an almost abstract description of the subjective experience of the individual into a work concerning a wider 'social' group. But it does so by interpolating this wider concern into a text from which it is, at least on the surface, glaringly absent, and establishes a definite communicative frame based on a conjectural performance context that is at odds with the pragmatic elements present in the text itself. Rösler finds justification for this interpretative manoeuvre in the fact that this poem is situated at the intersection between an oral and a literate culture. Moving further in this direction, Stehle argued that this poem 'had no specific performance context because it was *written* for a woman to sing to herself' (my italics, but the written communication of this poem is crucial for Stehle too).⁷⁷ The idea here is that any divorce between the communicative situation inscribed in the text and its actual performative context must depend on an alteration of the 'natural' identity between

⁷⁵ Cf. already Burnett (1983) 230–43.

⁷⁶ On this aspect see already also West (1970) 315 = (2011–13) ii.36–7.

⁷⁷ Stehle (1997) 288–96 (quotation from 295), cf. also 311: 'it is poetry detached from performance, that is, poetry as written text'. Most (1996) 34 mentions both the possibility of a 'transition from a first performance within a small group, where all the allusions would presumably have been immediately understood by those who needed to, to a wider form of publication among later, unknowing audiences, for whom the text would have become ambiguous and less determined (and not for that reason any less attractive)', and the 'emancipation of a written mode from originally oral circumstances'.

the two in orally communicated and performed poetry. At the other end of the spectrum, Lardinois considered this poem the equivalent of a 'praise poem', an *enkomion*, and argued for choral performance during the wedding itself.⁷⁸ Once again, however, the performance context depends entirely on the reader's (in this case Lardinois') own assumptions on the poem's function, and not on any textual element provided by the poem itself.⁷⁹

Most of these positions are based on what I would consider an over-simplified view of how 'oral' poetry historically behaves. Sappho's texts are fully immersed in a performance context, to which they often refer. This was part of the culture and of the everyday life to which they belonged. In very few cases, however, do these texts present themselves as straightforward scripts of ritual performances, to be staged. They rather *evoke* such performances, or look at them sideways. Or they create their own communicative context, which was not meant to match the *actual* context in which they might have been performed. For the poems to be able to do this, they do not need to be conceived as transmitted through writing, and, eventually, as being privately *read*. There is no reason to think that performance

⁷⁸ Lardinois (1996) 168–9. In considering this as a praise poem, Lardinois follows, e.g. Race (1983) in comparing fr. 31 to Pindar's fr. 123. The rhetorical balance (and, one would presume, the purpose too) of the two poems is clearly different, and the (by far) most frequently accepted interpretation/reconstruction of the fragmentary last stanza as a self-consolatory reflection, with which the speaker urges herself to bear her suffering (e.g. West, Rösler, Ferrari: cf., more recently, D'Angour (2006) and Livrea (2016)), would be difficult to reconcile with the hypothesis of a praise poem. Note also that Ferrari (2007a) 159–66 (and in previous publications) has argued that the symptoms described in fr. 31 are not those of erotic passion per se, but those of a panic attack, caused by the expectation that an erotic relationship is coming to an end.

⁷⁹ These remarks are relevant also to the recent discussion by Caciagli (2016), in particular 446–7. Caciagli criticizes the position of Burnett (1983) 6, who (correctly in my opinion) warned against naïve readings of Sappho's poems as straightforward reflections of poetic occasions. While accepting 'fictional elements in archaic Greek poetry' (quoting the cases of frs 1 and 31), Caciagli maintains that 'their link to the concrete context of the performance has to be *postulated*, even if the content is fictional' (emphasis mine). Yet the problems involved in this approach become obvious as soon as we accept that the nature of many, if not most, of Sappho's preserved texts is (from a pragmatic point of view) not at all straightforwardly performative, as I have strongly argued in this paper. One of the most popular consequences of this 'postulate' (based on historical verisimilitude though it may claim to be), the reconstruction of the poems' *actual* communication contexts, therefore becomes more the object of historical speculation (and the result of projections of more or less a priori assumptions) than the result of the reading of the texts themselves.

poetry commands substantially less freedom to manipulate the pragmatic features of language than poems intended for reading.⁸⁰ As we saw, scholars seem to find it far less difficult to acknowledge this liberty in so-called 'symptotic' poems, allowing male poets to address distant interlocutors, to evoke fictional situations (impending waves, keeping the guard on a ship) and to express their feelings in abstract terms. In the case of Sappho, the options have been polarized between two extremes (not always necessarily represented by different scholars): Sappho the chorus-leader, fully immersed in the ritual life of her community, and/or the inward-looking author, producing poems meant for written dissemination. We should allow for the possibility that many, if not perhaps most, of Sappho's poems were intended to be performed *outside* the ritual performance proper, on which their words provided a very much needed (and obviously valued) commentary and interpretation. It was, it would seem, not their embeddedness within a ritually formalized communicative occasion, but their ability to look at this occasion from the margin, also providing models of response, that guaranteed their diffusion and survival beyond their original context.

⁸⁰ See D'Alessio (2004) for an exploration of this issue from a comparative and linguistic point of view, focusing mainly on Pindar and time-deixis (with several examples), and D'Alessio (2009) for a brief, more general survey. The materials collected in Finnegan (1977) and her considerations on this matter are still fundamental to the appreciation of the full range of orally performed poetry, but are too often overlooked in theoretical (and also in practical) discussions on the relationship between orality and written culture in ancient Greece.