Sappho's Parachoral Monody

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Choral Sappho

Scholars have long been open to the possibility that Sappho composed some of her songs, above all certain epithalamia, for female (or in some cases mixed) choruses to sing on more or less public occasions, though the tendency has been to view any such songs as the exception to the primarily monodic output of this “supreme artist of the individual song to the lyre.”¹ It is only over the past two decades or so that a more expansive “choralist” assessment of Sappho’s poetry has emerged. It has now become increasingly accepted among contemporary students of archaic Greek poetry that the composition and performance of choral melic were integral to Sappho’s musico-poetic activity, just as much, if not more so than her production of monody, and that a respectable number of the extant fragments, perhaps considerably more than previously thought, may derive from originally choral rather than solo songs.² The once-canonical image of Sappho as a solo performer in a private setting has not been entirely discarded, but it has been fundamentally complicated.³

The choral reassessment of Sappho owes much to Malcolm Davies’ 1988 article “Monody, Choral Lyric, and the Tyranny of the Handbook,” in which he assails the misleading division between those poets deemed exclusively choral and those deemed exclusively monodic that has since the nineteenth century been a persistent feature of histories of Greek literature. As Davies

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- 1 Lesky 1966: 141–142; cf. Page 1955: 119. An early, proto-choralist exception to the “exceptionalist” view of Sappho’s choral activity is Latte 1953.
- 2 See e.g. Lardinois 1994, 1996 (discussed below), and 2001; Aloni 1997; Nagy 2007, 2016; Calame 2009c; Ferrari 2010; Caciagli 2011; Bierl 2016a, 2016c; Ladianou 2016. The solo *reperformance* of Sappho’s songs is generally agreed to have been the rule, at least in the archaic and classical periods. Gell. *NA* 19.9.4 attests to choral *reperformances* of Sappho (and Anacreon) at dinner parties in the second century CE. See Ladianou 2016: 359.
- 3 Schlesier 2013 and Bowie 2016, however, in presenting arguments for a “sympotic Sappho” have revived the view of a dedicatedly monodic Sappho.

shows, our identification of the performance genre of fragments of archaic lyric has been unfairly prejudiced by our too-rigid categorizations of their poets as either choral or monodic, when in fact most worked in both media, and by the not-always-definitive criteria of form and content that have long been used to differentiate monody from choral lyric: length of poems and strophes; meter and dialect; first-person statements; intimate and personal versus “communal” expression.

Davies was primarily concerned to show that many extant fragments of Stesichorus and Ibycus that have usually been deemed choral may rather derive from monodic songs. Although he cites in passing K.O. Müller's observation that “it is probable that the Aeolic poets sometimes composed poems for choral exhibition, for choruses were undoubtedly performed in Lesbos, as well as in other parts of Greece,” Davies does not make the case for a choral Sappho; in fact, he seems content to keep her securely in the monodic camp with Alcaeus and Anacreon.⁴

Eight years after Davies, however, André Lardinois took up this case with vigor in his “Who Sang Sappho's Songs,” which remains the most sustained and detailed argument for Sappho's activity as a choral poet.⁵ Taking his cue from Davies' critique of the totalizing segregation of “monodic” from “choral” poets and building on Claude Calame's study of the pervasive role of *choreia* in the lives of women and girls in early Greece, Lardinois fundamentally challenged the monodic construction of Sappho—the solo singer performing for her exclusive group—on philological, historical, and anthropological grounds.⁶ He demonstrated that many of the elements of form and content in Sapphic texts that scholars had long reflexively taken to be generic markers of monody are hardly definitive indices of solo performance, and find clear parallels in choral texts (or texts generally believed to be choral). Brief strophes? Choral songs (if such they are) of Alcman had those, too (e.g. 14a), as they did the seemingly “personal” expressions of erotic desire that would seem to mark so many of Sappho's songs as monodic. While not denying that Sappho did compose monody—fragment 1, with its persistent assertions of Sappho's own “I,” is difficult for all but the most extreme “choralist” to read as anything but monody, for instance (though, as Lardinois argues, we cannot rule out the pos-

4 Müller 1840: 165 (quoted by Davies 1988: 59). For Davies' monodic bias, see Cingano 2003: 32–33.

5 Lardinois 1996, anticipated by Lardinois 1994.

6 Calame had already made strong arguments for Sappho's role as chorus leader in his *Les Choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque* (1977a: 1.127, 369–370 [cf. 1997a: 65, 212]).

sibility that a mute chorus danced as Sappho sang this or other apparently solo songs)—Lardinois shows that much of what has been assumed to be monodic may well have been choral, and may in fact more likely have been choral than solo, at least in initial performance.

Furthermore, Lardinois argues compellingly from a comparative angle that, given what we know about the prominence of female choruses in the societies of early Sparta and elsewhere in Greece, it would be hard to believe that choral melic did not in some significant way inform Sappho's activity as composer and performer. While it is true that in the earliest stage of reception that we can observe, Attic iconography of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, Sappho is depicted as a monodic lyre-singer, that depiction is as likely to be a reflection of the mode in which her songs were reperformed in the Athenian contexts of the male symposium and perhaps too the aristocratic *gynaeceum* as any authentic indication of how they were first delivered on Lesbos.⁷ Learned Hellenistic and Imperial readers of Sappho, who knew her corpus far better than we do, certainly had no problem imagining her as a chorus leader with a public profile. A prime example is an anonymous epigram that depicts Sappho leading a female chorus on her lyre at Hera's "shining temenos," presumably the same sanctuary precinct that appears to be the setting for Sappho's fragment 17, which I shall discuss below.⁸

Whether or not we are sold on the specifics of their arguments, we must recognize the importance of the essential contribution made by Davies and Lardinois, which is to disrupt the largely unexamined orthodoxies and inherited assumptions about archaic lyric poets and poetic genres that often determine our assessments of original performance modality and occasion. The crucial takeaway from reading both is the recognition, now itself something of an orthodoxy, that we—those of us who believe in the interpretive value of attempting to reconstruct as best we can the reality of a given fragment's initial performance, even when such attempts necessarily remain fraught with uncertainty—should deal with each archaic lyric text on its own basis, regardless of the "baggage" its author or (when known) its poetic genre brings along, trying to remain simultaneously as skeptical and open-minded as possible in

7 Something similar would hold for what may be a still earlier point of reception: Anacr. fr. 358. Chamaeleon fr. 10 Koepke (*ap.* Ath. 13.599c) claimed that the Lesbian woman who is Anacreon's elusive object of desire in this song is meant to be Sappho. But this symptotic, monodic reception of Sappho, if that is what fr. 358 represents, tells us nothing definite about the original performance of Sappho's own songs.

8 *Anth. Pal.* 9.189. Cf. Lardinois 1994: 75; Ladianou 2016: 359–361.

our use of both text-internal and external factors to form hypotheses about its original conditions of performance.⁹

This, of course, is easier said than done. Methodological purity is impossible. Assumptions will persist, both inherited and personal. Arguments will tend inevitably toward circularity as testimonia about performance, when rhetorically advantageous, are brandished as evidence to support reconstructions or, when inconvenient, written off as late, unreliable, or both. And what will seem to one reader an indubitable sign of monodic or choral execution will seem eminently ambiguous to another. Thus Davies' own critique of received assumptions about monodic and choral performance itself begins with and builds on a counter-assumption—a “growing perception,” as Davies puts it—about the performance of Stesichorus, that “in the light of his epic-style and immensely long narrative poems he is unlikely to have been a choral lyric [poet].”¹⁰ Others, however, will perceive (and have perceived) these criteria to be hardly decisive for monody, and indeed quite consistent with choral song. Others too will question the selective treatment by Davies, and Stesichorean “monodists” more generally, of the testimonia: notices that associate Stesichorus with Homer and the *kithara* are enlisted to confirm the belief that his triadic songs must have been monodic (or specifically solo kitharodic), while those that reasonably enough associate triadic structure with choral execution are dismissed as irrelevant.¹¹

Lardinois' opposite tack of choralizing a monodic Sappho also builds on the sort of received assumptions against which he cogently warns. First and foremost is that long-held belief that Sappho did compose *some* choral songs, which for Lardinois forms a sort of given baseline for his more expansive choralist arguments. Yet it must be emphasized that we can hardly be sure she did.¹² A case in point is fragment 140, which Lardinois, following Page, who is gen-

9 While I agree that we should not necessarily want to privilege “one ‘primary’ performance over all the others” (Agócs: 2012: 192), I think we should also not want to pretend that a fragment's original performance medium bears no essential relationship to its textual identity and “literary” distinctiveness.

10 Davies 1988: 53. The perception's initial growth spurt dates to West 1971, which presented the theretofore most concerted arguments for a monodic Stesichorus. See now also West 2015. Willi 2008: 76–82 remains a convenient summary of the debate over Stesichorean performance.

11 See West 1971: 312–313 and Lefkowitz 1991: 193–194, in the context of a monodist argument for the solo performance of Pindar's epinicia.

12 See Stehle 1997: 274, and now D'Alessio 2018, whose critique of choralist assumptions, though differently oriented—and more radically skeptical—complements the one offered in this chapter.

erally a staunch monodist, adduces as a near-unassailable example of “genuine choral song.” In his view, the fragment, which presents us with two verses of a dialogic lament sung by a group of *korai* and Aphrodite, is likely to come from a cultic Adonis song performed by “a person (or group) impersonating the goddess Aphrodite” and a chorus of girls impersonating the mythical *korai*.¹³

κατθνάσκει, Κυθήρη, ἄβρος Ἀδωνις· τί κε θεῖμεν;
καττύπτεσθε, κόραι, καὶ κατερείκεσθε χίτωνας.

Delicate Adonis is dying, Cythera. What should we do?
Beat your breasts, girls, and rend your garments.

But pieces of Sappho’s (very probably) monodic poetry could involve dramatic mimesis, simulated voices, and imaginary situations, such as we see in fragments 1 (Aphrodite makes an epiphany and converses with Sappho), 65 (Sappho addressed, probably by Aphrodite), 94 (stylized dialogue between Sappho and friend), 95 (apparently another epiphanic situation, with Sappho addressing a divinity, probably Hermes), 133 (Sappho addressed, perhaps by Aphrodite), and 137 (dramatic dialogue). It is just as likely, then, that fragment 140 derives from a monodic song, in which a solo singer voiced both sides of the exchange.¹⁴ Or we could even imagine a solo singer “quoting” the exchange in a mythical narrative such as we see in fragment 44.

Lardinois also accepts the consensus that certain of the epithalamia grouped together in the Alexandrian edition of Sappho (in the ninth book, or, more probably, the eighth)¹⁵ were chorally performed. Since there can be no doubt that both the literary and iconographical evidence proves choruses routinely sang at weddings, the inference that the Sapphic epithalamia were mostly choral is reasonable and probably correct in the main. But other scenarios consistent with monodic performance are imaginable, and the “clear indications of choral performance” Lardinois finds in the textual remains of these wedding

13 Lardinois 1996: 152. Cf. Page 1955: 119 n. 1; Lardinois 2001: 77.

14 See Lidov 2016: 100–109 on the mimetic adaptability of the singing *ego* in Sapphic poetry and Yatromanolakis 2004: 59 on Sappho’s “polyphony” and “diverse poetic personae.” Dramatic mimesis and imaginary situations are recurring features of archaic lyric monody in general. Alc. fr. 10 and Anacr. 385 and 432, for example, present female speaking characters. Fictive encounters are of course stock in trade for composers of iambic poetry, e.g. Archil. fr. 122 (a father speaking to his daughter) or the Cologne Epode. See Albert 1988: 51–54; Slings 1990; D’Alessio 2009: 115–117 and 2018: 62.

15 See Dale 2011: 55–67, building on Yatromanolakis 1999: 193–194.

songs may not be so clear to others.¹⁶ For instance, while the “dialogue-form” of fragment 114, an exchange between a bride and her personified (lost) virginity, may well support a choral reading, its decontextualized two lines may, as with fragment 140a, equally well represent a monodic dramatization or quotation.¹⁷ Lardinois himself acknowledges that Sappho may have composed (very probably) solo songs such as fragment 44 for performance at the wedding banquet. Fragment 114 could conceivably have been part of such a song. Or perhaps the song was not at all a “functional” epithalamium meant to be performed during the course of a wedding event, but merely treated matrimonial matters for some other narrative or rhetorical purpose, on some other occasion.

This last suspicion could of course be aroused by any of Sappho's (apparent) epithalamia, but especially by the two songs (fragments 27 and 30) with nuptial imagery and references that are included, apart from the epithalamia, in Book 1 of the Alexandrian edition. As Dale observes of fragment 30, “The language and imagery here are not incompatible with wedding songs, but it does not follow that the fragment must then be from an epithalamium.”¹⁸ For Lardinois, however, these were pragmatic wedding songs, separated from the other epithalamia only because of their meter (Sapphic stanzas, which they share with other songs in Book 1), not their function, and, as such, are very likely to have been chorally executed. This line of argumentation has important “choralizing” ramifications for the rest of the Sapphic corpus: if accepted, it proves that “there can be no question of any clear, metrical division between Sappho's choral and monodic poetry, since we possess wedding songs (fragments 27, 30) as well as supposedly monodic songs (fragment 1), in the same Sapphic stanza.”¹⁹

Lardinois finds in the two fragments features that are “very hard to explain” as anything other than signs of choral performance: the first-person plurals at fragments 27.8 and 30.9, which would seem to indicate choral performers, and the fact that fragment 30 seems to conform to the genre of “*διεγερτικόν*,” a song traditionally sung the morning after the wedding night by friends of the bride and groom.²⁰ But it must be noted that in neither fragment do we

16 Lardinois 1996: 151 n. 4.

17 Cf. West 1970: 327.

18 Dale 2011: 57. Cf. Lasserre 1989: 36–38.

19 Lardinois 1996: 157; cf. Tognazzi 2009: 55 n. 1. A similar argumentative logic dissociating performance mode and metrical/structural form is at work in the monodists' reduction of triadic structure to a “purely musical principle of composition” (West 2015: 79, restating West 1971: 313), indiscriminate of performance mode (so already Crusius 1888: 9–14; cf. Cingano 2003: 23–24).

20 Lardinois 1996: 158 n. 39. Ferrari 2010: 113–114 imagines a different scenario: fr. 30 is not a

find a first-person plural performative statement that outright clinches the choral performance of the song itself. Choruses seem to be present in both, but in neither—and this is true of all the Sapphic fragments in which indices of chorality are present—can a choral group be confidently identified as the actual performer.²¹ Fragment 30 runs as follows (with the supplement of Lobel in line 6):

νύκτ[. . .] . [

πάρθενοι δ[
 παννυχίσδοι[σ]αί[
 σὰν αἰδοῖσ[ι]ν φ[ιλότατα καὶ νύμ-
 5 φας ἰοκόλπω.

ἀλλ' ἐγέρθεις ἡϊῶ[έοις
 στεῖχε σοῖς ὑμάλιχ[ας
 ἥπερ ὅσσον ἄ λιγύφω[νος
 ὕπνον [ῖ]δωμεν.

night ... maidens ... celebrating through the night ... they sing your love and your violet-robed bride's.

But wake up and go (get?) the young men who are your age, so that we may see (as little) sleep as the bright-voiced (bird).

The speaker who in the second stanza calls upon (probably) the groom to fetch his peers, presumably in order to form a mixed chorus with the maidens (*parthenoi*) who are mentioned in the first stanza, is difficult to identify with those maidens. The maidens are singing at a *pannuchis*, as parthenaic wedding choruses were indeed wont to do, but their choral singing is described by the

"waking song," but meant to be performed after the wedding banquet; the groom is to be roused (ἐγέρθεις) from the party to join his friends in the wedding procession. Cf. Aloni 1997: 61.

21 Cf. Ladianou 2016: 343; D'Alessio 2018: 57, "Sappho's poems very rarely use indexical markers to embed themselves pragmatically within their own contexts of performance." But of course such vagueness is not inconsistent with choral lyric. Pindar's choral epinicia, for example, demonstrate ambiguity in their performative self-presentation, for a range of possible reasons, including the prospect of their own monodic reperformance. See Morrison 2012; Currie 2017.

third-person plural verb ἀείδοις[ι]ν, not a first-person plural.²² Self-reference is thus unlikely. It seems preferable to postulate scenarios made possible by monodic performance. One is that the *persona loquens* throughout is the song's solo singer, who both describes the scene and plays the role of a master of ceremonies or chorus leader within it, arranging the performance of the διεγερτικόν, whether in actuality (if we think this a functional hymeneal song), or, as I think more probable, merely in the song's imaginary.²³ The first-person plural ἴδωμεν in line 9 would accordingly represent not the parthenaic chorus alone, but the entire cast of characters assembled for the διεγερτικόν, the mixed chorus, the married couple, and the speaker.²⁴

Another possibility is that in the first preserved stanza we hear the voice of the solo singer *qua* narrator, while in the second we hear a simulated choral voice. That is, the second stanza might represent a quotation, embedded within the monodic song, of the choral song performed by the *parthenoi* who are evoked in the first stanza.²⁵ It would thus be the "singing" maiden chorus, given voice by the soloist, that commands the groom to rise and muster his own choral contingent. Such stylized injunctions to perform, delivered in the course of a musical performance itself, are not uncommon in choral lyric (see e.g. the female chorus' song at Ar. *Thesm.* 953–958). To the monodic simulation would accordingly have been added a touch of choral verisimilitude.²⁶

Fragment 27 is slightly better preserved than fragment 30, but the implied setting and speech situation are still frustratingly hazy:

...] . καὶ γάρ θῆ σὺ πάις ποτ[
 5 ...] ικῆς μέλπεσθ' ἄγι ταῦτα[
 ..] ζάλεξαι, κάμμ' ἀπὺ τωδεκ[
 ἄ]δρα χάρισσαι

22 Some prefer to read the third-person plural optative ἀείδοιεν instead of indicative ἀείδοις[ι]ν: Page 1955: 125–126; Lasserre 1989: 38. But see Ferrari 2010: 112 n. 6.

23 Dale 2011: 57 suggests a related possibility: the fragment belongs to "a mythological narrative with direct speech," in which the speaker would be an embedded character impersonated by, but not identical to, the narrating performer. Lasserre 1989: 38 believes Sappho herself sang fr. 30 on an actual wedding occasion.

24 Ferrari 2010: 114 offers a similar reading.

25 As fr. 1.18–24 indicates, Sappho did not always feel the need to put introductory (and closing) formulae around quoted speech. See also frs. 114, 137, and 140, with Führer 1967: 2–3. But conceivably the verb ἀείδοις[ι]ν might serve to introduce the quoted song.

26 For choral song's textualized projection of its present performance into the future, see D'Alessio 2004.

σ]τείχομεν γάρ ἐς γάμον· εὖ δε[
 κα]ἰ σὺ τοῦτ', ἀλλ' ὅττι τάχιστα[
 10 πα]ρ[θ]ένοις ἄπ[π]εμπε, θέοι[
 ]εν ἔχοιεν

] ὁδὸς μ[έ]γαν εἰς "Ολ[υμπον
 ἄ]νθρωπ[ω]ν αἰκ[α].

for you too were once a child ... to sing and dance, come, these things ...
 converse ... and grant us from ... (generous?) favors.

For we are going to a wedding; and you also (know?) this well; but as
 quickly as possible send off (the) maidens, gods ... may they have ...

... road to great Olympus ... mortals ...

As with fragment 30, much depends on whether we can identify the voice uttering the first-person plural in the phrase σ]τείχομεν γάρ ἐς γάμον (as well as the first-person-plural dative pronoun ἄμμι in line 6) with the *parthenoi* mentioned in line 10. On one reading, there is no identification: the speaker is an individual voiced in performance by a solo singer, and the “we” encompasses both her and the *parthenoi* to whom she refers. But self-reference does seem less problematic than in fragment 30, and it must remain a distinct possibility that the “we” belongs to the maidens themselves, and that it is they who command the addressee to send them on their way (ἄπ[π]εμπε, 10), emphatically specifying their own maiden status as they do so (i.e. [us] *parthenoi*). The addressee may well be the bride, who in her younger days “sang and danced” (μέλπεσθ', 5) in a chorus, but has now aged out of the group.²⁷ Choral song and dance is exactly what we imagine the *parthenoi* intend to perform when they arrive at the wedding ceremony (γάμον), and what indeed they are currently performing on some ritual occasion immediately prior to it, perhaps during the wedding procession itself. Fragment 27, then, would be the choral song Sappho composed for performance on such an occasion.²⁸

But again, keeping in mind the mimetic and imaginary capacities of monody, we must remain open to the possibility that the choral voice need not be

27 Aloni 1997: 57. Tognazzi 2009 argues that the bride's mother is the addressee; Ferrari 2010: 32 proposes one of Sappho's rivals.

28 Cf. Aloni 1997: 56–57; Tognazzi 2009: 54–55. Caciagli 2009 admits the possibility of a choral speaker, but remains agnostic.

“real,” but rather simulated by a monodic singer, and the performance occasion entirely imagined. Such a simulation may have been part of a stand-alone narrative situation related in the song. (We are missing the first stanza, which could have provided the set up.) But we might entertain a further possibility, that the monodically represented choral song may have been an episode in a larger narrative cycle of songs concerning a girl's marriage, in which the chorus itself was a “character.”²⁹ Page thought that fragment 27 was likely placed immediately before fragment 30 at the end of the first book of the Alexandrian collection.³⁰ Might we be tempted to see in this (possible) late editorial ordering some recognition of Sappho's own narrative sequencing of these two songs, one involving a parthenaic chorus singing for the bride before the wedding ceremony, the other, the night and the morning after?

At any rate, we should want to let go of the certainty that fragments 27 and 30 are transcripts of songs that were actually performed, whether by a chorus or a soloist, on a specific wedding occasion. Yes, they might represent generic templates that Sappho designed to be performed and reperformed at *any* wedding celebration. But the real possibility that these were monodic songs *about* weddings rather than “wedding songs” proper, and were performed probably in some connection to a wedding event—as preparation or commemoration—but not actually as an occasional and functional part of one, offers, I think, a compelling alternative scenario.³¹

Parachoral Sappho

Despite the impression the previous pages may have given (and the following pages may give), I am not interested in mounting a monodist counter-critique of the choralist critique of monodist complacency. In subjecting certain appar-

29 That Sappho composed sets of thematically and narratively related songs seems now more probable after the discovery of the Brothers Song and the fragments from the Green Collection, which together point to a cycle of songs, all in Sapphic stanzas, devoted to matters relating to Charaxos' (mis)adventures. See Lardinois 2014: 192, 194 and 2016; Neri 2015: 67–68; Obbink 2016c: 211; Peponi 2016: 234; Boedeker 2016b: 194. Archilochus' cycle of iambic poems concerning the Lycambids has been discussed as a parallel: Lardinois 2016: 184.

30 Page 1955: 126. See now too Obbink 2016a: 44–45 for the placement of these songs (probably out of alphabetical order) at the end of Book 1.

31 Lasserre 1989: 134 comes to a similar conclusion in respect to fr. 27; cf. too Caciagli 2009 for 27's intermediary status between public and private. D'Alessio 2018: 46–50 discusses “the way in which pragmatic self-referentiality” in frs. 27 and 30 is “far from straightforward” (47).

ently choral fragments to a monodist rereading, my intentions are much in the spirit of the choralist project: to explore viable (if inevitably conjectural) alternatives to established interpretive assumptions.³² In fact, I find myself in sympathy with both Lardinois' general outlook—not only his rejection of truisms, but his recognition of the liberating potential inherent in our very lack of certainty about Sapphic performance, which allows, or rather compels us to read the poetry with a view to alternative performance modes and representational possibilities—as well as his specific arguments for the choral execution of certain Sapphic compositions.

Even for those who remain immune to some or all of those arguments, they are nonetheless a salutary reminder of how thoroughly steeped in choral culture Sappho and her audience must have been, and how much of her poetry that choral skeptics would still consider monody engages with that culture. For if Sappho's poetry was not in fact as choral as Lardinois and other choralists would have it, it is still the case that much of it is marked by discursive and conceptual tendencies we might call "parachoral." By this I mean that Sappho's (probable) monodies routinely position themselves in meaningful relation to *choreia*, integrating, through allusion, descriptive reference, and mnemonic evocation, or indeed through outright simulation, the language, imagery, tropes, and postures of choral performance and occasion, and, by extension, their broader cultural contexts and connotations.³³ The debate over a choral versus monodic Sappho remains important to our understanding of the poetry. It can, however, have the undesirable side effect of overshadowing the emotional, symbolic, and rhetorical work choral song-and-dance does as an expressive and ideational resource, a discourse, within Sappho's poetics.

32 In this respect, I would agree with Caciagli 2016: 446 that "the point is not actually to divine the one correct context for a poem, but simply to raise the question about the context." Cf. Yatromanolakis 2009a: 218; Budelmann and Phillips 2018: 14.

33 See Bierl's remarks on what he calls the "virtual chorus" in Sappho: "Sappho thus assumes a living choral culture for the reception of her poetry, even when the songs are performed by an individual singer. I designate this phenomenon as the 'virtual chorus': although her songs may not have been sung by a chorus, Sappho nonetheless notionally employs the girls' chorus of her circle as a cultural and visual reference point" (2016a: 311; cf. Bierl 2008). Relevant too are the remarks on Sappho's choral themes and imagery in Nagy 1990: 370–371 and Ladianou 2016, and, more generally, Yatromanolakis' characterization of her poetry as a "communicative, performative event that could absorb elements of diverse ritual discourses" (2004: 63). See also the approach taken by D'Alessio, who emphasizes the occasional "marginality" of Sappho's texts, which rarely "present themselves as straightforward scripts of ritual performances, to be staged. They rather evoke such performances, or look at them sideways" (2018: 61).

In fragments 27 and 30, we saw, representations of choral performance play an important structural and atmospheric role in the hymeneal *mise-en-scène* while not reflecting the performance of the songs themselves, which was probably monodic. There are notable parachoral moments too in fragments 16 (remembrance of Anactoria's "lovely step and the brilliant sparkle of her face," 17–18), 94 (shared memories of participating in a *choros*, 27–28, perhaps in a sacred grove), and 96 (recollections of delight taken in Atthis' song and dance in the chorus [*molpa*, 5]; cf. the reference to bygone *melpesthai* in fragment 27.5). These are songs in which choral performance serves as a flashpoint of memory and desire, and an enduring testament to the bonds that continue to tie now-distant friends.³⁴

The recently restored fragment 58 presents a still more vivid case of parachorality: the singer addresses her younger companions, *paides*, in the persona of an Alcman-like *kitharistes* or chorus leader addressing a parthenaic chorus, both lamenting that she is now too old to dance along with her friends and accepting that transition as an inevitability.³⁵ Sappho may well have taken on the role of *kitharistes* in actual choral performances on Lesbos, as we see her doing in the epigram mentioned earlier, but in the monodic fragment 58 *chor-eia* is treated as a figure of thought, a situational metaphor for the social and affective dynamics of Sappho's group (or any analogous group), not to mention for the human condition itself.

Fragment 17: A Parachoral Monody

I would like to propose that in another song, fragment 17, Sappho offers us a particularly rich example of "parachoral monody." This reading admittedly goes against the grain. Fragment 17 is a text that even decided monodists have long taken to be a contender for choral performance on a public ceremonial occasion.³⁶ With the expanded reconstruction of the fragment afforded by

34 The parachoral reading of fr. 94.27–28 depends on Lobel's supplement $\chi\lambda\acute{o}\rho\omicron\varsigma$, which gains support from $\psi\acute{o}\phi\omicron\varsigma$ 'sound' in the next line. One would like to have a better sense of the context in which $\chi\acute{o}\rho\omicron\varsigma$ appears, alongside the musical terms $\acute{\alpha}\rho\mu\omicron\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ and $\lambda\acute{\iota}\gamma\eta\alpha$, at fr. 70.9–11. On Ferrari's reconstruction, an exiled Sappho envisions an idealized scene of choral music-making such as she and her companions used to enjoy (2010: 19–22). Music and memory are more certainly entwined in fr. 71.5–6, but choral language, if it was there, leaves no traces in this lacunose fragment.

35 Cf. Alcman fr. 26, with Lardinois 1996: 169 and Bierl 2016a: 323–324. On the representation of performance in fr. 58, see also Boehringer 2013.

36 E.g. West 1970: 327; Fränkel 1975: 181; Williamson 1995: 136; Stehle 1997: 275.

the recently published papyrus from the Green Collection, the case for performance by a chorus on a festival occasion seems even stronger. Here is the latest version of the text as edited by Dirk Obbink (along with Obbink's translation, which includes some minor supplements not presented in the Greek text; I have left out those in the first and second-to-last stanza):³⁷

πλάσιον δὴ μ[. . . .] . . . οἱ α[. . .] ὦ
 πότνι' Ἥρα, καὶ χ[. . . .] εἰ . ἔορτ[ ] .
 τὰν ἀράταν Ἀτρ[εΐδα]ῖ πύησαν-
 τ' οἱ βασιλῆες,

5 ἐκτελέσσαντες μ[εγά]λοις ἀέθλοις
 πρῶτα μὲν πέρ' Ἰ[λίων]· ἄψερον δέ
 τυίδ' ἀπορμάθεν[τες, ὃ]δ' ὦν γὰρ εὖρη[ν]
 οὐκ ἐδ[ύναντο,]

πρὶν δὲ καὶ Δι' ἀντ[ίον] πεδέλθῃ
 10 καὶ Θυῶνας ἱμε[ρόεντα] παῖδα·
 νῦν δὲ κ[c.12] . . . πόημεν
 κατὰ τὸ πάλ[αιον],

ἄγνα καὶ κα[c.12 ὃ]χλος
 παρθέ[νων c.12 γ]υναίκων
 15 ἀμφις . [
 μέτρ' ὅλ[

πας[
 .[.] . νιλ[
 ἔμμενα[ι
 20 [Ἥ]ρ' ἀπίκε[χθαι.]

Near here, indeed, [ ]
 your [ ] festival, revered Hera,
 which the Kings, the Atreidai, established
 on a vow,

37 Obbink 2016a: 19–20, 29–30.

- 5   since they had accomplished heroic exploits
        in the beginning at Troy, but later on
        putting in just here: for they could not
        find their way
- before they had approached you, and Suppliant
- 10   Zeus and Thyone's soothing child.
        Now we, too, [continue] to perform [these things]
        just like of o[ld]
- that are pure and [   ] throng
        of unmarried women [   ] wives
- 15   around [   ]
        measures[.]
- Each [...
        [...
        to be [...
- 20   [He]ra, to come back.

We now have explicit mention of a festival (ἐόρτ[ ], 2), one presumably devoted to Hera, who is also invoked in line 2, and celebrated at a shared sanctuary of Hera, Zeus, and Dionysus (cf. 9–10) that would appear to be the one located at Messon.³⁸ We have too the first-person plural πόημεν (11), which may be appealingly interpreted as a performative verb linking a singing chorus' present (νῦν δὲ κ[αί, 11) ritual-cultic performance with performance in the foundational mythical past (κατὰ τὸ πάλ[αιον, 12), when the Atreid kings made sacrifice at the sanctuary.³⁹ Such aetiological grounding in myth of here-and-now cult and ritual, including choral song itself, is a recurring feature of archaic choral poetry.⁴⁰

Furthermore, we can now read ὃ]χλος | παρθέ[νων ... γ]υναίκων in lines 13–14, as well as μέτρα in line 16, a word with musical and orchestric connotations, and perhaps also another such word, the infinitive ἔλ[ολύεδην “to raise

38   Full discussion in Caciagli 2016. For the pan-Lesbian sanctuary at Messon, see also Caciagli 2010 and Boedeker 2016b.

39   Calame 2009c: 4–5 already argued for the choral execution of fr. 17 along these lines, working with a far more exiguous text.

40   E.g. Bacchyl. 20.1–6, with D'Alessio 2013: 124–125. On the aetiological habit in early choral lyric, see Kowalzig 2007b. Calame 2009c: 5 comments on the “cultic effectiveness” of the mythical episode in fr. 17.

the *ololuge* cry,” immediately after it.⁴¹ All this is tempting to take as a performing chorus’ self-descriptions, whether explicitly *hic et nunc*, or perhaps, if the text again looked back in time, via the indirect self-reference afforded by “choral projection” into the past.⁴² In the latter case, Sappho’s chorus would be aligning its own performance with, and suggesting its ritualized reenactment of, the mythically paradigmatic female choruses that danced and sang on the originary occasion of the Atreids’ visit, much like the “throng” of Trojan women and girls (ὄχλος | γυναικῶν τ’ ἄμα παρθενικά[ν], 14–15) singing at the wedding of Hector and Andromache in fragment 44, who are conceivably meant to represent a glorious prototype for wedding choruses on Sappho’s Lesbos.⁴³

Obviously, we are still missing critical parts of the first and last stanza, which might point us toward or further away from the idea that the song was intended for actual choral execution. Scholars have offered various reconstructions of the song’s first two lines that would push our understanding of the text in a more choral direction; these are ingenious, yet entirely speculative, and so best left out of this discussion.⁴⁴ As they stand, it is impossible to know what to make of the adverb πλάσιον “nearby,” but, if it does refer deictically to the spatial relation of *persona cantans* to festival site, then we might be looking at the text of a *prosodion*: the chorus sings either as it approaches the sanctuary of Hera, anticipating the festivities to come, or as it moves in a procession toward the altar within the sanctuary itself.

The final stanza demands even greater feats of speculation, but the presence of ἀπρίκε[σθαί in line 20 could indicate that it included a prayer to Hera to secure a homecoming for Sappho’s brother Charaxos, echoing the prayer for *nostos* offered up by the Atreids. But even such a personal touch in an other-

41 The presence of μέτρα will be of interest to students of ancient music, if indeed it does have its musico-poetic meaning of “meters, measures,” which is otherwise securely attested only in the fifth century. Cf. Ford 2002: 18. (If ἀρμονίας at fr. 70.9 has a technical musical sense, it would likewise be the earliest attestation of that musical term; see Franklin 2003: 302 n. 11.)

42 See Henrichs 1996a for “choral projection.”

43 This performance resembles in other details too the one adumbrated in fr. 17. The Trojan women also ululate (γύναικες δ’ ἐλέλυσδον, 44.31); the Trojan maidens sing a “holy song” (ἅειδον μέλος ἄγν[ον, 44.26), while in fr. 17 we find ἄγνα in close proximity to the παρθένων (13–14). Both frs. 17 and 44 in turn recall the evocation of women’s choral performance at Messon in Alc. fr. 130b.17–20 (discussed below). Intertextual engagement between two or more of these texts is possible, but all three might draw independently upon a common mythopoetic language of *choreia*, reflective of epichoric choral practice on Lesbos. Cf. Gentili 1988: 219–220.

44 See the apparatus criticus at Obbink 2016a: 20.

wise publically oriented song would not drastically compromise a hypothesis of choral delivery before a festival audience.

In their commentary on the augmented text of fragment 17, Burris, Fish, and Obbink conclude that 17 “is (or at least is presented as) a choral song intended for cultic performance.” They propose that the most likely performance site would be Messon, perhaps during the Kallisteia festival for Hera.⁴⁵ While there is indeed much to recommend reading fragment 17 as the choral “real thing,” I would like to expand upon that parenthetical note of caution, “(or at least is presented as).” As Burris, Fish, and Obbink realize, just as nothing in fragment 17 seems to dictate *against* a choral reading, so nothing guarantees it.⁴⁶ We should remain receptive to the possibility that the song is a monodic simulation of choral performance, and that its cultic-festive setting and choral indices are purely imaginary textual effects, fictions conjured up by the solo singer in collusion with her audience, presumably a more private than communal and festive one.⁴⁷ On this reading, fragment 17 would represent an extreme example of parachorality, a complete *parodia*, so to speak, of a cultic choral song, in the performance of which Sappho, or indeed any singer of fragment 17, fully assumed the role of a chorus.

A monodic “choral fiction” of this extent—and there would seem to be no nonmimetic frame around the fiction, as far as we can tell—is not, to my knowledge, elsewhere attested.⁴⁸ But, as we have seen, relevant instances of situational mimeticism and dramatic impersonation are well attested for archaic monody, including Sappho’s own poetry, so it is far from being out of the question. Solon, performing his “Salamis Elegy” at the symposium—as he very likely

45 Burris, Fish, and Obbink 2014: 5. But a variety of festivals must have been held in Hera’s sanctuary at Messon; see Caciagli 2016: 428–429.

46 On this last point, see Neri 2014: 21. D’Alessio 2018: 45 presses it further: on his cautious reading, nothing in 17 even *implies* its choral performance.

47 I hesitate to speculate any further about the nature of that audience, or the site where such a monodic performance would have taken place. At home in Mytilene? At a festival-related gathering at or near Messon itself? Bowie 2016: 153, 156 thinks of a solo performance of fr. 17 by Sappho at a Mytilenean symposium. Caciagli 2016: 447–448 thinks of a semi-public first performance at Messon (though it is unclear to me whether he believes the song was performed by a chorus). Obbink 2016c: 212 proposes a recurring ritual performance occasion for the Charaxos songs. For D’Alessio 2018: 45, the most that can be said regarding context is that 17 “look[s] at cultic performance from the margin.”

48 As D’Alessio 2009: 116 notes, we have fragments of songs that seem to have been “entirely constructed as speeches by fictional or typical characters,” and so lack (as far as we can tell) introductory and/or closing formulae. In Alc. fr. 10b, a woman’s voice commences the poem, as perhaps too in Anacr. 385. Theognidean elegy offers further instances: 257–260; 579–582; 861–864. On this last elegiac poem, see Martin 2001.

did, despite the anecdotal traditions that have him singing the poem in the agora⁴⁹—could play from the very beginning of his song the role of a herald, just arrived from Salamis to impart an urgent message to his audience (fr. 1.1–2). A solo singer giving voice to an imaginary chorus might require more of her audience's *phantasia*, but the impersonation would surely not create undue confusion. If we look beyond archaic lyric to Attic drama, we find a comparable text in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*: Agathon's bravura monodic rendition of an antiphonal choral hymn, in which he sings the parts of both chorus leader and female chorus (101–129). Indeed, fragment 140a, if it was monodic rather than choral, would seem to give us already in Sappho an analogous example of a chorus in dialogue with a chorus leader, with both parts played by the solo singer. As I argued in the previous section, fragments 27 and 30 may have involved monodic quotations of choral song.

But, if this scenario passes the probability test, the next question we must ask is: what motivates this parachoral posturing? If we believe fragment 17 to be monodic and we do not try to answer this question, then we default to a tacit assumption about its composition that essentially resembles Page's assessment of the non-political hymns of Alcaeus (fragments 307, 308, and 34), according to which they were mere "literary exercises, designed for the entertainment of an audience ... [rather] than devotional cult-songs."⁵⁰ On a monodic reading, fragment 17 would conform in part to Page's characterization of the Alcaean hymns, in that it only pretends to be a public cult song. (It should be noted, however, that none of these hymns includes indications of chorality, real or imagined; their model seems rather to be solo citharodic or rhapsodic hymns.) It seems unlikely, however, that Sappho intended fragment 17 to be a freestanding literary exercise or divertissement. Such categories seem hardly applicable to archaic poetry, which, though pleasurable, typically served as a pragmatic medium of communication responsive to specific social occasions, situations, and concerns. Page in fact concluded that fragment 17 did address a particular issue that was a concern to Sappho: "The theme of this poem ... was probably some personal matter, to which the allusion to the Atreidae was subsidiary. Sappho needs the help of Hera, as the Atreidae needed it in the famous story .... The last two stanzas explained the cause of Sappho's anxiety."⁵¹ "Last two stanzas" aside—we now know that the second-to-last stanza of fragment 17 probably did not refer to any personal matters—Page's conclusion remains compelling.

49 Bowie 1986: 18–19.

50 Page 1955: 244.

51 Page 1955: 61–62.

Any number of “personal matters” could have motivated Sappho’s hymn to Hera.⁵² But there is reason to believe that the final stanza of fragment 17 included a prayer to Hera for her brother’s arrival on Lesbos, or, even if Charaxos was not named, that the song was nevertheless intended to be an implicit expression of Sappho’s hopes for her brother’s safety.⁵³ Although fragment 17 was apparently not placed alongside the other poems concerning Charaxos beginning with the letter Π in the first book of the Alexandrian Sappho edition, it nevertheless seems reasonable to read the song, which tells a myth concerned with homecoming from sea, in the context of prayers for his safe return that are expressed in other songs: the Brothers Song (ἀπίκε[σθαι at 17.20 recalls ἐξίκεσθαι τυίδε in the prayer to Hera at line 11), fragment 5 (τυίδ’ ἔκεσθα[ι, 2), fragment 15 (prayer to Aphrodite that Charaxos reach harbor), and perhaps fragment 9 as well.⁵⁴ In fragment 9, Sappho possibly evokes Hera as “Mother” in line 3—a cult title akin to πάντων γενέθλαν “Generator of all,” as Alcaeus calls her (fr. 129.7)—in the context of a prayer for Charaxos.⁵⁵

If Charaxos was in fact a real person, and fragment 17 represents a genuine attempt to win for him divine protection, then perhaps what Sappho was doing with this parachoral monody was to lay claim for her solo song to what Leslie Kurke calls “choral value,” that privileged ideology of religious and social efficacy attributed to choruses in early Greek culture, and thus to lend the impression of such religious efficacy and social moment to her solo prayer to Hera.⁵⁶ (A.E. Peponi has suggested to me the apt metaphor of “amplification” to describe the intended effect.) The imagined site and occasion of performance, a potently sacred and storied festival at the geographical and sociopolitical centerpoint of Lesbos, Messon, would complement this virtual transfer of genre and value.

Much the same interpretation applies, I would argue, if Charaxos is a construct of Sappho’s poetic imagination, a character in a fictive family drama that played out over a cycle of interlinked poems and that had some paradigmatic

52 See the review of proposals in Neri 2014: 13.

53 So already Caciagli 2011: 155–157. See now Caciagli 2016; cf. Boedeker 2016b; Bierl 2016a: 324. As Lidov 2016: 67 notes, “It is improbable that this [final stanza] is a cletic prayer, asking for Hera’s arrival, because final prayers are usually imperative.”

54 For the separation of fr. 17 from the other Charaxos songs beginning with Π, see Lardinois 2016: 173. It may have been kept apart for reasons we cannot grasp; see Neri 2014: 22 n. 76.

55 See Lardinois 2016: 172–173, who notes too that ἀβλα[β at fr. 9.9 is “reminiscent of ἀβλάβην (‘unharmd’) in the opening line of fragment 5.” Cf. Dale 2015: 20. West 2014: 7–8, however, reconstructs a domestic scenario for fr. 9, in which Sappho addresses her own mother. See now D’Alessio 2018: 55–56.

56 Kurke 2012.

value for her Mytilenean audience.⁵⁷ In this case, of course, fragment 17's choral fiction is not a response to real events, but rather a "naturalistic" response to demands in Sappho's imaginary world. In other words, since the social value and cultural significance of chorality and the Messon sanctuary would be as self-evident on a fictionalized Lesbos as the real one, the mobilization of a (fictional) chorus to beseech Hera for a brother's safe return would be a logical development in the story.⁵⁸

It is unclear how the Charaxos story, whatever its relation to reality, was articulated across the various poems concerned with it. An appealing argument has been made for its presentation in vignettes that were "meant to operate as distinct and self-standing facets of a narrative that was never explicitly organized as such."⁵⁹ If we do assume a place for Charaxos in fragment 17, however, we will not want to discount a close narrative connection between fragment 17 and the Brothers Song. The parachoral orientation of the latter is arguably clear enough: its opening exchange, in which the *persona loquens* tells the addressee to "send me and bid me to beseech Queen Hera over and over again that Charaxos may arrive here" (ἀλλὰ καὶ πέμπην ἔμε καὶ κέλεσθαι | πόλλα λίσσεσθαι βασιλῶν Ἥραν | ἐξίκεσθαι τυίδε, 9–11), turns on the planning of a ritual action that is implicitly choral.⁶⁰ As Gregory Nagy has shown, πέμπην "send" is ritually and performatively marked: the speaker refers to a *pompe*, a formal procession to Hera's sanctuary, presumably at Messon, where the prayer for Charaxos will be delivered with a kind of concentrated intensity (πόλλα).⁶¹ We can assume that this heightened supplication of the goddess, at a site known for its choruses, is intended to take the form of choral song; *pempein* is in fact used precisely for the ritual dispatch of choruses (Xen. *Mem.* 3.3.12; Eur. *El.* 432–434).⁶² Might this

57 For Charaxos as fictional and the Charaxos songs as socially relevant fictions, see Lardinois 2016; Lidov 2016; Obbink 2016c: 213. On the "cycle," see n. 29 above.

58 I should add that, even if Charaxos (whether real or imaginary) played no role at all in fr. 17, but some other "personal matter" motivated the song—for instance, Sappho's own imminent departure into exile (thus Tsomis 2001: 45)—the rhetoric of parachorality would have the same purpose, the enrichment of a monodic prayer.

59 Peponi 2016: 234.

60 Kurke 2016: 249 observes how the Brothers Song itself takes on a choral guise, its solo *persona loquens* blending into a collective *persona cantans* as the song proceeds from the first-person singular in line 9 to consistent first-person plurals in and after the prayer at 11–13: "[I]f we read the quoted prayer as extending through the whole poem, we must imagine its words doubled and voiced simultaneously by *ego* and *su*, the two voices fusing as a kind of chorus."

61 Nagy 2016: 459–460; cf. Kurke 2016: 242. For Messon as the probable destination, see Boedeker 2016b; Obbink 2016c. For πόλλα, see Bierl 2016a: 366.

62 See Nagy 2016: 460: "the procession is in fact already a chorus in the making." I would also

projected choral prayer find its realization, as it were, in the cult hymn to Hera evoked in fragment 17? The texts permit no certain answer, but a parachoral “sequencing” between these two Sapphic monodies remains an intriguing possibility.⁶³

Parachoral Alcaeus?

It is instructive to compare Sappho fragment 17 with Alcaeus fragment 129, which, through vivid deixis, locates its performer (and, by extension, its audience) at a cult site most scholars now agree is Messon:⁶⁴

-] . . ρά . α τόδε Λέσβιοι
 . . .] . . . . εὔδειλον τέμενος μέγα
 ξῦνον κά[τε]σσαν, ἐν δὲ βώμοις
 ἀθανάτων μακάρων ἔθηκαν
- 5   κάπωνύμασσαν ἀντίαν Δία
       σέ δ' Αἰολήϊαν [κ]υδαλίμαν θεόν
       πάντων γενέθλαν, τὸν δὲ τέρτον
       τόνδε κεμήλιον ὠνύμασσ[α]ν
- Ζόννυσσον ὠμήσταν. ἄ[γι]τ' εὖνοον
 10   θῦμον σκέθοντες ἀμμετέρα[ς] ἄρας
       ἀκούσατ', ἐκ δὲ τῶν[δ]ε μόχθων
       ἀργαλέας τε φύγας ῥ[ύ]εσθε·
- τὸν Ὑρραον δὲ πα[ῖδ]α πεδελθέτω
       κήνων Ἐ[ρίννυ]ς ὥς ποτ' ἀπώμνυμεν
 15   τόμοντες ἄ . . [' .] ν . .
       μηδάμα μηδ' ἓνα τῶν ἐταίρων
- ἀλλ' ἢ θάνοντες γὰρ ἐπιέμμενοι
       κείσεσθ' ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν οἳ τότε ἐπικ . ' ἔην

draw attention to Sappho fr. 27, in which *apopempein* (10) probably does not mean “dismiss” the girls, but rather “send them off” by way of a wedding procession. Cf. D'Alessio 2018: 49 n. 43.

63 Cf. Neri 2015: 56; Caciagli 2016: 435.

64 See Robert 1960: 300; Nagy 1993.

ἤπειτα κακκτάνοντες αὐτοῖς
 20 δᾶμον ὑπέξ ἀχέων ῥύεσθαι.
 κήνων ὁ φύσκων οὐ διελέξατο
 πρὸς θυμόν, ἀλλὰ βραϊδίως πόσιν
 ἔ]μβαις ἐπ' ὀρκίοισι δάπτει
 τὰν πόλιν ἄμμι δέδ[.] . . [.] . ἰ . αῖς

25 οὐ κᾶν νόμον [.]οῦ . . [.] . [.]
 γλαύκας ἀ[.] . . [.] . . [.]
 γεγρά . [.]
 Μύρσιλ[ο]

... the Lesbians established this great and conspicuous sanctuary
 precinct as a common one and in it they put altars of the blessed
 immortals,

and they gave Zeus the title God of Suppliants and you [Hera], the Aeolian, Glorious Goddess, Generator of all, and the third, this one, they named Kemelios,

Dionysus, Eater of Raw Flesh. Come, having a favorable spirit hear our prayer, and from these troubles and from difficult exile rescue us.

The son of Hyrrhas [Pittacus] let their Erinys pursue, since once we swore an oath, cutting ... at no point any one of our companions (to abandon?),

but either to lie clothed in earth, killed by men who at that time ...
 or else having killed them to rescue the people from their woes.

Pot Belly did not speak to the heart of those men, but casually stepping upon the oaths he devours our city ...

not according to law ... gray ... written (?) ... Myrsilus ...

The setting at Messon, "this great and conspicuous sanctuary" (τόδε ... εὐδαιλον τέμενος μέγα, 1–2), lends an immediacy to and suggests the efficacy of Alcaeus' prayer to Hera (and by association Zeus and Dionysus) for the political salvation of his faction and the punishment of his enemy Pittacus. This setting was,

in my view, purely imaginary even on first performance, as I am inclined to believe about Sappho fragment 17 as well.⁶⁵

Others take the descriptive setting as the actual performance context, arguing that the song was composed for a gathering of Alcaeus and his companions in the sanctuary precinct itself, where they sought asylum.⁶⁶ This is certainly possible; as often in archaic lyric, there is no way for us to distinguish with certainty deixis *am Phantasma* from *ad oculos*. Yet the thickly laid-on deixis in fragment 129, especially the τόνδε in line 8, would seem to exceed the requirements of a pragmatic communicative situation within the sanctuary itself. We are, I think, dealing with “imaginary deictic over-determination,” which aims to produce a reality effect rather than to delineate a visible reality.⁶⁷ The intention behind this was arguably to ensure that whenever and wherever fragment 129 was reperformed, Alcaeus’ Messon would be vividly conjured up. But Alcaeus could just as well have been intent on creating the illusion of a “real” Messon in the song’s primary performance, in Mytilene or wherever else. Of course, even on a first performance at Messon, the emphatic deictic gestures of fragment 129 would conceivably have rendered the visible shrine already hyper-real, a fiction in the making.

The deictic ἐν δέ “and in it” at line 3 also contributes to the fictivization of the shrine. This phrase belongs to the ecphrastic register of archaic poetry, appearing in vivid descriptions of imaginary artifacts, places, or scenes.⁶⁸ It recurs throughout the ecphrasis of Achilles’ shield in *Iliad* 18 (e.g. 18.561, ἐν δ’ ἐτίθει); in Pindar fragment 70b.10, 12, and 15, it draws the mind’s eye to elements of the divine choral dance imagined by the poet. Sappho’s description of the sacred grove that is the setting for the hymnic fragment 2 recalls fragment 129 in its ecphrastic use of ἐν δέ (βῶμοι δ’ ἔ(ν)ι ... ἐν δ’ ὕδωρ ... ἐν δὲ λείμων, 3, 5, 9) and its emphatic deixis (1, 13). Sappho sets a scene that is, if not outright imaginary—and the dreamlike tenor of the song as a whole does suggest fantasy rather than reality—then at least heavily aestheticized and mediated.⁶⁹

65 Cf. Burnett 1983: 159–161 and Gagné 2013: 219. On gaps between performative and descriptive setting in the Lesbian poets, see Yatromanolakis 2004 and D’Alessio 2018.

66 Rösler 1980: 195–196 and Vetta 1981: 495; see too Caciagli 2016: 444.

67 “Deictic over-determination”: Edmunds 2012 (who applies the phrase to deictic elements in fr. 130b); “reality effect”: Barthes 1989: 141–148. On the “superfluous” τόνδε, see Hutchinson 2001: 198. D’Alessio 2009: 115–118 discusses imaginary deixis.

68 See Furley and Bremer 2001b: 145.

69 See Bowie 2016: 154–155, who notes how the final stanza of fr. 2, in which Aphrodite is requested to serve wine to the celebrants in the grove, “undermines any literalist interpretation” of the performance context described in the song. Cf. Burnett 1983: 264; D’Alessio 2018: 36–38.

Whatever the original performance setting of fragment 129, Messon's status as a rhetorical and symbolic resource within the song stands apart; that status indeed transcends any performance occasion, even one at Messon itself. The same could be said for Sappho fragment 17. Both songs capitalize on the religious potency of Messon to enhance their appeal to the gods (whether real or virtual). In both songs, too, episodes from the illustrious myth-history of the site provide a backdrop against which their messages resonate, taking on a mythically enriched dimension. In fragment 17, the Atreids' prayer for *nostos* may be the model for a choral prayer at Messon for Charaxos. Alcaeus looks even further back, imbricating the deictic evocation of the present-day shrine at Messon with an account of its foundation by a distant generation of Lesbian ancestors (fr. 129.1–9). The history lesson is pointed: the political cooperation and piety symbolized by the establishment of this commonly held (ξῖνον, 3) precinct, where now the song is notionally performed, stand in sharp contrast to the transgressions of Alcaeus' enemies.⁷⁰

There may be another parallel between the two songs: parachorality. Alcaeus has not invited the same choralist scrutiny Sappho has. Choral language and imagery are all but absent from the fragments, while a number of them clearly point to sympotic contexts of performance. Two exceptional cases are fragment 130b.17–20 (discussed below) and fragment 249.2, which mentions a χ[ό]ρον, in an obscure context. There is accordingly little cause to challenge the consensus view that fragment 129 was a sympotic monody; the fragment lacks the festive, musical, and performative references that in Sappho fragment 17 suggest “actual” choral performance. Fragment 129 might nevertheless send more muted parachoral signals. While its consistent use of first-person plural forms is not unparalleled in Alcaeus (see fragment 6), in the context of a monody that integrates formal and generic elements of cult hymn—in the archaic period a choral genre above all—and that situates its performance at a traditional site of choral performance, these forms arguably create the subtle impression of a choral song.⁷¹ Such notional “amplification” of the monodic voice would, as in fragment 17, have added heft to the prayer delivered in the song, while also

70 Cf. Edmunds 2012 on “the irony that [Alcaeus] and his comrades find themselves outcasts in a *temenos* that ... stands for the Lesbians as a people.” Could Messon's mythic associations with homecoming, foregrounded in Sappho fr. 17, also have influenced Alcaeus' choice to situate this and other exile songs there? The remarks in Lidov 2016: 62 are germane.

71 On the choral norm of archaic cult songs, see Furley and Bremer 2001a: 25–26. If Hera was directly invoked in the first or second line of fr. 129 (see Rösler 1980: 196–197; Hutchinson 2001: 195), its hymnic character would have been communicated from the start, and listeners might thereby have been made more sensitive to parachoral cues as the song pro-

affirming the ties that bind Alcaeus' sympotic group. It would be as if its members, through the representative voice of the solo performer, sing together as a chorus. (One could imagine a scenario in which Alcaeus' companions actually sang fragment 129 in unison at a sympotic gathering, rendering it a de facto choral song. But the "choralized" reperformance at symposia of lengthier lyric monodies such as fragment 129 does not seem to have been common practice.)⁷² In a song that ostensibly aims to reverse the political violence and marginalization endured by Alcaeus' *hetaireia*, the implicit casting of the *hetaireia* in the role of a chorus, a perennial symbol of collective harmony, singing at the "common" shrine at Messon would be especially appropriate.

Parachorality plays a more explicit part in the companion piece to fragment 129, fragment 130b. This song is a monody probably intended for sympotic performance first in Mytilene: it is addressed to one Agesilaïdas (4), presumably a member of Alcaeus' *hetaireia*, and it refers to the citizens of Mytilene with a proximal deictic (τωνδέων, 6).⁷³ It is set, however, in a sacred precinct (μακάρων τέμενος θέων, 13; cf. fragment 129.2) that appears to be the one at Messon.⁷⁴ Like fragment 129, fragment 130b treats the theme of exile, but in the case of this song it seems even harder to defend the view that it emerged during an actual period of exile at Messon; it reads rather as a dramatized representation of the experience of exile, its scenario imaginary. The monodic singer takes the part of a "wretched *ego*" (1) lamenting his absence from Mytilene. He depicts his life in the environs of the temenos, where he has taken up residence (1, 10, 16), as one of loneliness and desolation (9–10). Yet he is a witness to "gatherings" (συνόδοισι, 15) at the sanctuary; the second to last stanza describes one. "I dwell," he says, "keeping my feet away from troubles" (16),

ὄππαι Λ[εσβί]αδες κριννόμεναι φύαν
πώλεντ' ἔλκεσίπεπλοι, περὶ δὲ βρέμει

gressed. Nagy 1993: 223 comments on the choral ambience of fr. 129's dramatic setting at Messon.

72 The unison singing of a paean to mark the commencement of the symposium is attested (e.g. Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 615b), but such pieces were surely simple and short.

73 D'Alessio 2018: 44 takes a different view of this deictic, arguing that it implies a situation in which the citizens are present at the same festival as the speaker. This view is not necessarily inconsistent, however, with the reading of fr. 130b offered here.

74 Frs. 129–131, preserved on the same papyrus (*POxy.* 2165), all seem to deal with exile from Mytilene; frs. 129 and 130b, and probably the lacunose fr. 130a, at least, are set at Messon. An Alexandrian editor presumably grouped together the songs because of their shared theme and setting (Hutchinson 2001: 193); before that they may already have been performed in sequence by symposiasts (Edmunds 2012).

ἄχῳ θεσπεσία γυναικῶν
ἱρα[ς ὁ]λολύγας ἐνιαυσίας

where the Lesbian women, judged for their beauty,
go about in their trailing robes, and around resonates
the marvelous sound of women's
sacred yearly cry (*ololuga*).

Alc. 130b.17–20

This “beauty contest” may well be the festival for Hera called the Kallisteia, which has been thought a possible context for Sappho fragment 17. Regardless of whether we want to make a specific connection between the two fragments, however, it is important to stress that the women's ritual performance described by Alcaeus in all likelihood took the form, like that in fragment 17, of *choreia*. “The marvelous sound of women's sacred yearly cry” may refer specifically to some extraordinary ululation that was characteristic of the festival. But it can also be understood as a metonymy for annually recurring songs performed at the festival by female choruses. In Sappho fragment 44.25–31, similar language appears in a scene that is clearly choral: at the arrival of Hector and Andromache, Trojan maidens “sang a holy song, and the marvelous sound reached heaven” (ἄειδον μέλος ἄγν[ον, ἵκα]νε δ' ἐς αἴθ[ερα | ἄχῳ θεσπεσία, 26–27), while older women ululated (γύναικες δ' ἐλέλυσθον ὅσαι προγενέστερα[ι, 31) and men sang a choral paean.⁷⁵

We have, then, in fragment 130b choral performance embedded in monodic song. The text in fact presents us with a situation that is parachoral in an almost literal sense: the speaker stands by as the women conduct their festival. This situation is often read as emblematic of the speaker's alienation from Mytilenean political life and from human society more generally. Anne Carson, for instance, detects a contrast between the men's soundscape of the city recalled at the beginning of the song—the speaker “longs to hear the assembly called by the herald, and the council” (3–5)—and the “otherworldly echo of women shrieking” described in the penultimate stanza. The speaker's “exposure” to the *ololuga*—a ritual cry uttered only by women—is a “condition of his political nakedness” as an exile.⁷⁶

Carson's interpretation, though insightful, risks overestimating Alcaeus' “othering” of the women's song. Hutchinson by contrast emphasizes the “attrac-

75 For the similarities between the performances described in fr. 130b and Sappho frs. 17 and 44, see n. 43 above. For choruses at the Kallisteia, see Nagy 1993, 2007, 2016.

76 Carson 1995: 125.

tiveness" of the festival described by Alcaeus: the speaker delights in the spectacle before him, even as its very beauty underscores the misery of his exile. What is more, the festival represents a poignant "image of the community" that is denied to him.⁷⁷ Edmunds notes how the specifically choral dimension of the festival highlights the speaker's social exclusion: "The picture of the annual women's festival, with the 'sacred ululation,' which is choral and communal, contrasts with the self-representation of Alcaeus, who is isolated, a *vox clamantis in deserto*."⁷⁸ Edmunds' remark suggests a possible "meta-performative" aspect to the parachoral scene, a tension that emerges between the monodic song's own solo performance—isomorphic with the speaker's *vox clamantis*—and the collective voice of the women's chorus it evokes.

Might the very evocation of that choral voice, however, also offer a resolution to this formal tension, and point toward a closing of the gap between isolation and community even as it dramatizes it? In other words, while it is natural to interpret the parachoral situation in fragment 130b as reinforcing a sense of alienation, it is also possible to read it as marking an optimistic turn. On this reading, the festive *choreia* performed in concert by all the Lesbian women at Messon—with its "sacred yearly cry," indicative of order, piety, and institutional stability—prompts hope for the speaker's reintegration into Mytilenean society, and indeed offers to Mytilene itself, now consumed by stasiotic violence (6–9), a vision of a more harmonious politics in which such reintegration would be stable and lasting.⁷⁹ It is as if the women's constitutive exclusion from civic life grants their choral ritual a transcendence of the political that is in turn exemplary for men's inclusion in civic life.

The final stanza is largely lost, but it clearly began with a prayer to the gods for deliverance "from the many" present woes (21–22).⁸⁰ The prayer is voiced against the backdrop of the just-described women's festival, with its cry that fills the entire sanctuary. Rather than assuming that Alcaeus meant only to contrast the two vocalizations, we might better hear them as blended or continuous: the solo prayer emerges from the resonance of the choral cry, drawing upon its sublime and sacred energy. Once again, it is a matter of a monodic song, within its textual imaginary, availing itself of choral value.

77 Hutchinson 2001: 213.

78 Edmunds 2012; see also Nagy 1993: 222–223.

79 Cf. Power 2018: 28–29.

80 Cf. Hutchinson 2001: 213: "an abrupt call for delivery."

Conclusion

There can be no question that choralist readings of Sappho have productively upended quaint and complacent images of Sappho singing “feminine monody for a feminine audience” in the *gynaeceum* or the schoolroom, and have opened up new avenues for reconstructing Sappho’s performance contexts and the interpretation of her songs.⁸¹ Yet we should nevertheless be willing to take a page from the choralists’ own challenge to reflexive assumptions about Sapphic performance and regard anew, from a post-choralist vantage point, as it were, Sappho the monodist, considering the possibility of whether apparently choral songs of hers were not chorally performed, but rather represent sophisticated products of her monodic artistry.

In the first section of this paper, I proposed that some of the “wedding songs” commonly regarded as choral may in fact have been monodic, involving choruses as “characters” represented or quoted within a solo song rather than as actual performers. In the second, I introduced the concept of parachorality to describe such representations, and Sappho’s more general tendency to engage with *choreia*, a musical performance practice charged with profound social and cultural meaning and value, to create emotional, thematic, rhetorical, and narrative effects within her monodic poetry. In section three, I explored the possibility that fragment 17, a song generally regarded as an authentic choral cult hymn to Hera delivered at the goddess’ sanctuary at Messon, was actually a parachoral production, a monodic simulation of public choral performance. The goal of this simulation, I argued, would have been to add rhetorical and religious bolster to Sappho’s solo, probably private prayer for the return of her brother Charaxos. In the final section, I turned to Alcaeus fragments 129 and 130b, which also represent themselves as being performed at Messon. As in Sappho fragment 17, that performance setting is likely to be imaginary, a fiction intended to serve the communicative agenda of the songs. Furthermore, I proposed that fragment 129 wears the mask of a choral song, though in a less mimetically committed fashion than fragment 17. Parachorality informs fragment 130b in a more obvious way: its evocation of women’s *choreia* at Messon—an outside take on the sort of performance Sappho represents from the inside—involves a complex semiotics, at once emblemizing the speaker’s social alienation and offering a model of political accord.

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81 Vetta 1992: 208.