

Text as Paratext: Pindar, Sappho, and Alexandrian Editions

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WHAT LITTLE SURVIVES of the archaic Greek lyricists has come down to us as bare text, shorn of music, dance, location, ambience, occasion, ceremony.¹ Our texts ultimately go back to Alexandria and the late third century B.C., when the scholars of the Museum compiled what were to become the canonical editions of those poets; and what those editions preserved and enabled to circulate anew throughout the Greek-speaking world were written words alone. But that from sung spectacle to written text, from body and voice to papyrus and ink, was not the only change of state to which lyric poetry was subjected between the archaic and the Hellenistic age. Another, equally momentous transformation took place: individual compositions which were originally independent of, and unrelated to, one another became joined together in a fixed sequence as constituents of a larger unit, the book.²

Lyric was not the only kind of poetry that was affected by this

¹ Fragments of Pindar are cited from Snell-Maehler, fragments of Sappho and Alcaeus from Voigt. All translations are my own.

² G. O. Hutchinson, "Doing Things with Books," *Talking Books: Readings in Hellenistic and Roman Books of Poetry* (Oxford 2008) 1–2, cf. 4–15. On ancient poetry books see also J. van Sickle, "The Book-Roll and Some Conventions of the Poetic Book," *Arethusa* 13 (1980) 5–42. The interrelation between Pindaric song and the materiality of the book is now the subject of T. Phillips, *Pindar's Library: Performance Poetry and Material Texts* (Oxford 2016), a volume I was regrettably unable to consult until rather late in the composition of the present article.

process. A case in point are epigrams, which about the same time were being gathered in purposeful, artistically arranged collections that became one of the main vehicles—or indeed the main vehicle—for their transmission.³ One recently published example is *P.Vindob.* G 40611 (late third century B.C.), a list of opening lines of epigrams which may have been preliminary to the compilation of such a collection.⁴ The Posidippus papyrus too, *P.Mil.Vogl.* 309 (also late third century B.C.), although seemingly representing the work of a single author,⁵ brings together epigrams that must have been written at different times and is arranged according to principles that resemble those operative in multi-author collections—and in the editions of the lyricists.⁶ Ptolemaic papyri also preserve a great deal of non-epigrammatic anthologies.⁷ Indeed, as Luigi Enrico Rossi

³ See A. Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford 1991), esp. 3–12, 19–33; K. J. Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands: Hellenistic Epigrams in Context* (Berkeley 1998); L. Argentieri, “Epigramma e libro. Morfologia delle raccolte epigrammatiche premeleagree,” *ZPE* 121 (1998) 1–20.

⁴ P. J. Parsons, H. Maehler, and F. Maltomini, *CPR XXXIII* (2015), esp. pp.10–12, including a discussion of previously published similar lists.

⁵ Dissenting voices are H. Lloyd-Jones, “All by Posidippus?” in *The Further Academic Papers of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones* (Oxford 2005) 246–249, first published in D. Accorinti and P. Chuvin (eds.), *Des géants à Dionysos: Mélanges de mythologie et poésie grecques offerts à Francis Vian* (Alessandria 2003) 277–280; S. Schröder, “Skeptische Überlegungen zum Mailänder Epigrammpapyrus,” *ZPE* 148 (2004) 29–73; F. Ferrari, “Posidippo, il papiro di Milano e l’enigma del *soros*,” in J. Frösén et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 24th Congress of Papyrology* (Helsinki 2007) 331–339.

⁶ Posidippus papyrus as a poetry book: K. J. Gutzwiller, “A New Hellenistic Poetry Book: *P.Mil.Vogl.* VIII 309,” in B. Acosta-Hughes et al. (eds.), *Labored in Papyrus Leaves: Perspectives on an Epigram Collection Attributed to Posidippus* (Washington 2004) 84–93, and “The Literariness of the Milan Papyrus or, ‘What Difference a Book?’” in *The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book* (Oxford 2005) 287–319. Organization of Hellenistic collections of earlier lyric: A. Dale, “The Green Papyrus of Sappho and the Order of Poems in the Alexandrian Edition,” *ZPE* 196 (2015) 26–30.

⁷ Now collected and re-edited by F. Pordomingo, *Antologías griegas de época helenística en papiro* (Florence 2013).

suggested, in the Hellenistic period “the anthology” (or, better, “the collection”) should be recognised as a genre in its own right.⁸ These collections ranged from informal, private compilations to works that were evidently meant to enter the book market and circulate, with a clear identity of their own, sometimes under the compiler’s name.⁹ The canonical Alexandrian editions of the lyricists are evidently closer to the latter pole, but they have nonetheless a clearly distinct status. They were intended as authoritative, definitive, and—crucially—complete texts of the authors whose poetry they contained. They do not seem to have circulated under their editor’s name: of the nine ‘canonical’ lyricist, only one is explicitly associated with an editor in the ancient sources—Pindar, with Aristophanes of Byzantium—and in few sources at that.¹⁰ The organising principles of many of them seem to have been mechanical rather than artistic. *Et cetera*. The intriguing common ground of Hellenistic collection-making should not obscure the variety of the phenomenon.

The present article focuses on one consequence of the combination of several lyric poems into one book: the role that the opening poem has to play in the economy of the book that it opens. We are all used to finding an introductory poem of some kind at the opening of a poetry book: perhaps a dedication, a more or less overt self-presentation, a declaration of the contents of the book, or an anticipation of one or more key

⁸ *Letteratura greca* (Florence 1995) 635–636.

⁹ A case in point is Meleager’s *Garland*, which the introductory elegy calls a *πάγκαρπον ᾠοιδόν*, 1.1 Gow-Page (*Anth.Gr.* 4.1.1). “The singular noun indicates that the *Garland* was conceived not as a mere anthology ... but rather as an aesthetic whole, a poetry book”: M. S. Santirocco, “Horace’s *Odes* and the Ancient Poetry Book,” *Arethusa* 13 (1980) 48.

¹⁰ *Vita Vaticana* (I 7 Drachmann), *P.Oxy.* 2438 col. ii.35–36 (partly restored but certain). Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 22.17, 26.14 (II 102, 140 Usener-Radermacher) does not explicitly attribute the edition to Aristophanes but shows that his name was the first that came to mind when thinking about Pindar as an edited text.

themes within it, whether it be Meleager's *Garland* or Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, Petrarch's *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*—or Heaney's *Death of a Naturalist*; something that leads the reader into the book at the same time as it tells, in some way, about the book; a preface to the text embedded within the text itself; simultaneously text and, in Gérard Genette's terminology, "paratext."¹¹ Of course no archaic Greek lyricist really wrote anything of the kind; partly because, with all likelihood, they never envisaged a reading public being presented with a set of their poems in a fixed sequence at all.¹² However, some books of ancient lyric opened with poems that can be seen to be invested with a similar paratextual function. After all, Hellenistic and Roman readers were used to seeing poetry books of their own time begin with such introductory poems, just as they were used to seeing longer poems begin with a proem fulfilling a similar function.¹³ It may have come naturally to expect prooemial overtones in the first poem in a book, and therefore to read them into it regardless of the poem's original purpose.

In the case of the archaic lyricists, any such prooemial overtones arose from a later, non-authorial arrangement. Any in-

¹¹ G. Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge 1997). In his definition, the paratext consists of "a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations" which "surround [the text] and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book ... the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers" (1).

¹² Compare how the arguable paratextual overtones in the first poem of Corinna's *ῥεπόϊα* (*PMG* 655) have been taken as evidence of a Hellenistic date: M. L. West, "Corinna," *CQ* 20 (1970) 203–204; "Dating Corinna," *CQ* 40 (1990) 553–554. The case of the ostensibly paratextual "seal elegy" that (almost) opens the *corpus Theognideum*—which accordingly R. Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion* (Giessen 1893) 267, judged to be "das älteste nachweisbar vom Autor selbst edierte Buch"—is too different, and too complex, to be dealt with properly here.

¹³ Gutzwiller, *Garlands* 10; see also J. van Sickle, "Poetics of Opening and Closure in Meleager, Catullus, and Gallus," *CW* 75 (1981) 65–75.

troductory function was bestowed on the opening poem *ex post facto* by the editor who opted to place it before the others. When there are grounds for taking a poem's position as a specific choice on the editor's part, such choice implies a statement that this particular poem is a fitting opening to the book—good to think about the book with, as it were. Thus an editor's reasons for choosing a given poem as a preface for the respective book invite exploration. So does the very act of extrapolating one poem to introduce the collection to which it belongs, repurposing and paratextualizing one of the author's own poems retrospectively. This act is an implicit editorial statement both on the book and on the opening poem. Like all editorial activity, it both responds to the text and intervenes in it, seeking to orient subsequent responses to it. Readings of the book will be variously influenced by the suggestions that resonate from the opening poem; in turn, the opening poem will find itself charged with implications broader and more complex than it would have otherwise.

There are two poets for whom we are well placed to attempt an inquiry along these lines: Sappho and Pindar. *Olympian* 1 and Sappho fr.1 are well studied in their own right, but a reading of these poems from the vantage point of the book has much to give.¹⁴ In the case of *Olympian* 1, we are aided by the complete survival of the *Olympians* as a book and of (most of) the rest of the *Epinicians*, of which the *Olympians* constituted the first book. We are not equally lucky with Sappho, but we have enough fragments of Book 1 to be able to form of an idea of its contents and of its internal organization. These two poems will therefore take up the first and last sections of the present article. Much less is known about the fragmentary books in the Pindaric corpus, but we have some information about the opening poems of some of them (the *Hymns* and, to a much lesser degree, the *Dithyramb*s and the *Partheneia*), and speculation

¹⁴ Phillips, *Library* 122–142, offers a reading of *Ol.* 1 in its editorial context which usefully complements the one given here.

based on this information will be the subject of the middle sections.¹⁵

All of our enquiry will inevitably be speculative. We cannot read the mind of Pindar's ancient readers or Sappho's ancient editor. We do have one detailed ancient reading of Sappho fr. 1 in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *On the Arrangement of Words* 23.12–17 (II 116–117 Usener-Radermacher), but its concerns are only style and sound, and thus it is of no great help to our undertaking. We likewise have a corpus of scholia to Pindar, of which some use will be made in the section on *Olympian* 1, but they are mostly silent on the topic that concerns us.

Another difficulty is the very crux of the issue, namely the superposition in our material of several layers of agency—the poet's, the editor's, the reader's—the combination of which produces the effect we are seeking to investigate. On the one hand, these layers are clearly distinct. The composition of the individual poems and their being gathered together into books are separate acts performed by different people at very much different times; contrast the poet-editors of the Hellenistic and Roman era, who not only collect and arrange their poems themselves but often compose them with an eye to the resulting collection from the start.¹⁶ On the other hand, these layers of agency cannot be cleanly separated. An editor constructs hierarchies, adds emphases, shifts perspectives, builds (and severs) connections, but can do all this only to the extent that the text permits. Likewise, a reader can take up these hierarchies, perspectives, meanings, etc.—in a way that is, of course, not necessarily subordinated to the author's or the editor's directions—only to the extent that they can be inferred from, or mapped onto, the authored-edited text.

But reading can be complicated by countless factors: social

¹⁵ On the division of Pindar's poetry into books and their respective organization see S. Schröder, *Geschichte und Theorie der Gattung Paian* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1999) 136–149.

¹⁶ G. O. Hutchinson, "Propertius and the Unity of the Book," *JRS* 74 (1984) 99.

and cultural priming, preconceptions or existing knowledge about the author, guidance by a teacher or commentator... Nor was the reading of such editions the only kind of reception that is relevant to our subject: the editions compiled in third-century Alexandria were preceded by centuries of multifarious transmission, in both oral and written form, about which we know very little indeed, but which may have influenced the editorial choices that produced the editions we do know.¹⁷ The best one can offer, then, is judicious (hopefully) speculation on what the editor *may* have meant, what a reader *may* have understood.

Pindar: the Olympians

The significance of *Olympian* 1 being the first of the *Olympians* was already noted by the anonymous author of the *Vita Vaticana*, or *Thomana* (I 7 D.):¹⁸

ὁ δὲ ἐπινίκιος οὗ ἡ ἀρχή· Ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ προτέτακται ὑπὸ Ἄριστοφάνους τοῦ συντάξαντος τὰ Πινδαρικά διὰ τὸ περιέχειν τοῦ ἀγῶνος ἐγκώμιον καὶ τὰ περὶ τοῦ Πέλοπος, ὃς πρῶτος ἐν Ἥλιδι ἠγωνίσασατο.

The victory ode that begins “Best is water” has been placed first by Aristophanes, who arranged Pindar’s works, because it contains a panegyric of the games and the tale of Pelops, who was the first to compete in Elis.

Like so much in ancient Pindaric scholarship, this statement frames the matter in terms of causation rather than of effect; the focus is on the agent—Aristophanes of Byzantium—rather

¹⁷ Pindar before Alexandria: J. Irigoin, *Histoire du texte de Pindare* (Paris 1952) 8–28. Sappho before Alexandria: D. Yatromanolakis, *Sappho in the Making: The Early Reception* (Washington 2007). As concerns Pindar, there is no particular evidence that such traditions did influence the Alexandrian edition: *Ol.* 1 does not loom large in the pre-Alexandrian record at all, and neither does the first *Hymn* if one excepts the fictional and quite possibly post-Alexandrian story of Pindar’s encounter with Corinna (Plut. *De glor. Ath.* 4, 347F–348A). As for Sappho, see 572 ff. below.

¹⁸ Commentary in C. Daude, S. David, M. Fartzoff, and C. Muckensturm-Pouille, *Scholies à Pindare I* (Besançon 2013) 135–150.

than the recipient—the reader. But in this case its assertion of agency is to the point, as a further element shows.

As Jean Irigoïn remarks, each book of the *Epinicians* is organised following a recognisable order which is consistent across the four books.¹⁹ The criterion is a hierarchy of the disciplines in which the respective victories were achieved, from the chariot race and other equestrian competitions (*keles*, *apene*) to contact sports (*pankration*, wrestling, boxing), *pentathlon*, and finally foot races (race in armour, *dolichos*, *diaulos*, *stadion*).²⁰ The only surviving victory ode that celebrates a victory in a musical contest, *Pythian* 12, was placed at the very end of its book. True, the order is not impeccable. Sometimes similar disciplines are mixed up a little: the *Olympians* have a sequence boxing (7)/wrestling (8–9)/boxing (10–11), the *Nemeans* even *pankration* (2–3)/wrestling (4)/*pankration* (5)/wrestling (6). Special circumstances can also be accommodated: *Pythian* 3 interrupts a sequence of odes for chariot victories in order to keep the three odes for Hieron of Syracuse together.²¹ Lastly, at the end of both *Nemeans* and *Isthmians* there are a few poems, respectively three and at least two (the *Isthmians* after the eighth are fragmentary), that are not actually Nemean or Isthmian odes: for the the Pythia in Sicyon (*Nem.* 9), the Heraia in Argos (10), and the election of a town official in Tenedos (11),²² for the

¹⁹ *Histoire* 43–44.

²⁰ The single book of Bacchylides' *Epinicians* was arranged in a similar way, with the bulk of the odes organised by a combined hierarchy of disciplines and games (victories in the crown games first, ordered by discipline and then by games, then victories in local games), with the first pair of poems out of sequence: J. Irigoïn, *Bacchylide: Dithyrambes, épinicies, fragments* (Paris 1993) xxiv–xxv. There is an interesting difference in the order of disciplines, however—foot races (6–7, 10) come before contact sports (11–13)—and an ode for a pentathlete interrupts the sequence for runners (9).

²¹ Irigoïn, *Histoire* 44.

²² Inscr. *Nem.* 9 (III 150 D.), cf. inscr. a *Nem.* 11 (III 184–185 D.) = Didymus fr.62 Braswell. Incidentally, the common notion (starting from Irigoïn, *Histoire* 40–41) that these extra poems were added here because the *Nemeans* were the last book of the *Epinicians* is severely problematized by the

Hellotia in Corinth (*Isthm.* fr.6a(i)–(l)), and the Oschophoria in Athens (fr.6c).²³ That they should be grouped at the back of the book is understandable: the primary ordering criterion is the games in which the victory was achieved, so poems commemorating victories in other games must be placed out of sequence regardless of the discipline. And among these extra odes the normal order is respected: the last three *Nemeans* celebrate a chariot victory, then a wrestling victory, and lastly a political event with no direct link to sports. The ordering criterion is sometimes circumvented but never fatally undermined.

Olympian 1, therefore, stands out conspicuously. It celebrates a victory with the *keles* although three odes for victories in the chariot race come next. Following the normal order it should come fourth or even as late as sixth (depending on where one places the *apene* [*Ol.* 4–6] relative to the *keles*), certainly not first. Despite not acknowledging this fact explicitly, the author of the *Vita Vaticana* (or his source) did recognise the position of *Olympian* 1 as significant. He represents this position as the result of a positive choice on Aristophanes' part, a choice he takes to have been made on account of a positive reason—or indeed two: the panegyric of the games and the aetiological tale of Pelops. For us too the contravention of the normal order that governs the body of the book highlights the significance of the choice. Evidently, *Olympian* 1 is there not because an overarching ordering principle resulted in its being there, but because it was specifically meant to be there.

This prompts the double question of cause and effect. What may have prompted Aristophanes' choice to place *Olympian* 1 first, and what may *Olympian* 1 tell the reader when so placed? The matter has been excellently explored by Monica Negri.²⁴

fact that there were extra poems at the end of the *Isthmians* too.

²³ M. Negri, "L'oschophorikon di POxy 2451 B fr. 17.6 e la sua posizione nell'edizione di Pindaro," *ZPE* 138 (2002) 35–36; G. B. D'Alessio, "The Lost *Isthmian* Odes of Pindar," in P. Agócs et al. (eds.), *Reading the Victory Ode* (Cambridge 2012) 28–57.

²⁴ M. Negri, *Pindaro ad Alessandria: Le edizioni e gli editori* (Brescia 2004).

A first answer lies in the ode's celebrated opening (1–7):

Ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ, ὃ δὲ χρυσὸς αἰθόμενον πῦρ
 ἄτε διαπρέπει νυκτὶ μέγανορος ἔξοχα πλούτου·
 εἰ δ' ἄεθλα γαρύεν
 ἔλδεαι, φίλον ἦτορ,
 μηκέτ' ἀελίου σκόπει
 ἄλλο θαλπνότερον ἐν ἀμέρᾳ φαεινὸν ἄστρον ἐρήμας
 δι' αἰθέρος,

μηδ' Ὀλυμπίας ἀγῶνα φέρτερον ἀνδάσομεν

Best is water; gold like fire that blazes
 in the night outshines wealth that makes men great;
 but if you wish to voice
 the games, my heart,
 look no further for another
 star warmer than the sun shining in the day across the empty sky,
 nor let us call a contest greater than Olympia.

With its emphatic exaltation of the Olympic games above all others, this proem proclaims the hierarchy of the four Panhellenic games just as it is embodied in the four books of Pindar's victory odes, with the *Olympians* at the start.²⁵ Pindar's own words are used to justify the architecture of the collection and the position of the *Olympians* within it. By placing the ode here, Aristophanes of Byzantium foregrounds an alleged Pindaric rationale for his own editorial activity. He thus appears as the faithful but artful executor of Pindar's will, the editor who understands the requirements of his material and presents the evidence for his decision up front while thereby signalling his own scholarship and editorial craft. Aristophanes' skill is thus brought to the fore at the same time as it ostensibly recedes into the background by deferring to the higher authority represented by the poet.

To an extent, this confirms the first claim made by the *Vita Vaticana*, that *Olympian* 1 contains the praise (ἐγκώμιον) of the games; but it also qualifies it. What we have in *Olympian* 1 is an ἐγκώμιον of a very specific kind. Other odes too exalt the

²⁵ Negri, *Pindaro* 37–38, 125–126.

Olympic games, indeed at much greater length than *Olympian* 1: *Olympian* 3 narrates Heracles' foundation of Zeus' cult at Olympia and of the games together with the aetiology of the use of the olive tree for the crowns awarded to victors; *Olympian* 10 narrates the backstory of the foundation and goes on to describe the first Olympic games, complete with the list of victors discipline by discipline. What is more, *Olympian* 3 celebrates a victory in the chariot race: unlike *Olympian* 1, it could have opened the book with no breach of the overall order. But neither *Olympian* 3 nor *Olympian* 10 has the explicitly comparative, indeed superlative angle which opens *Olympian* 1.²⁶ These other odes exalt the Olympic *agon* on its own terms; the paratextual point noticed by Negri can only be made by *Olympian* 1. Moreover, in *Olympian* 1 the praise of the games is not only to be found in the myth, as it is in the other two odes, but also in the very opening, which is one of the densest and most memorable in the whole Pindaric corpus. As well as driving the point home straightaway and with the greatest possible clarity, the incipitary placement of *Olympian* 1 is also a comment on beginnings.

Now for the *Vita Vaticana's* second point, that *Olympian* 1 contains the story of Pelops. Ostensibly the link between the myth and the *agon* is more tenuous than in *Olympians* 3 and 10, where the foundation of the games and its circumstances are narrated in great detail. The myth of *Olympian* 1 concerns Pelops' victory against Oenomaus in the deadly chariot race the latter had devised. While the aetiological connotations of the episode are clear upon reflection, the hero is linked to the actual games much less strongly than Heracles is in the other two odes: he is the founder of Olympia ("the colony of Lydian Pelops inhabited by noble men," 24–25) and is worshipped during the games (90–95); his connection to the games as such ends there. However, Negri puts her finger on one crucial element in this

²⁶ Negri, *Pindaro* 36–37.

myth: its specific focus on the chariot race.²⁷ Just as the opening validates the hierarchy of the games with the Olympics at the top as embodied in the collection of Pindar's *Epinicians*, this focus on the chariot race sanctions the hierarchy of disciplines within each book, with the chariot race at the beginning. And unlike the hierarchy of the games, where the pre-eminence of the Olympics was never really in question, the hierarchy of the disciplines was very much contested. In fact, that chosen by Aristophanes subverted a more common one which had the foot race, the *stadion*, at the top, and equestrian disciplines (the *tethrippon* and then the *keles*) ranking last. Such is the order which is presented by *P.Oxy.* 222 + 2082 and 2381, the only two Olympic victor lists that survive on papyrus, and which is also implied by the custom—attested for instance by Eusebius in his *Chronography*, but certainly earlier than him—of using the *stadion* victor as the eponym of each Olympics.²⁸

What the mythical section suggests implicitly, Pindar states more explicitly upon returning to the present near the end of the ode (108–111):

εἰ δὲ μὴ ταχὺ λίποι,
 ἔτι γλυκυτέραν κεν ἔλπομαι
 σὺν ἄρματι θεῶ κλείξειν ἐπίκουρον εὐρῶν ὁδὸν λόγων
 παρ' εὐδείελον ἔλθων Κρόνιον.

If (your guardian god) does not leave you too soon,
 I hope to celebrate an even sweeter (victory)
 with the swift chariot finding a road of words to my aid
 when I come beside the sunny Hill of Cronos.

As well as providing a smooth transition to the next poems in the book—where indeed Pindar celebrates the chariot victories of *Olympians* 2, 3, and perhaps 4²⁹—this passage validates the

²⁷ Negri, *Pindaro* 152–156.

²⁸ Negri, *Pindaro* 136–151.

²⁹ The title, headnote, and schol. In to *Ol.* 4 (I 128–130 D.) attribute it to Psaumis of Camarina's victories in the chariot race of 452, but it has been argued convincingly that it pertains to a victory with the mule cart instead, like *Ol.* 5 (written for the same individual, perhaps for the same victory,

hierarchy of athletic competitions which has the chariot race at the top. Just as when celebrating an Isthmian victory he can express his hope for an Olympic one,³⁰ when celebrating a victory in one Olympic discipline Pindar wishes for a further victory in another, which he explicitly compares with it in positive terms. And in the context of the *Olympians* he does all this from a liminal position, from an opening poem which falls outside the order that its very position makes it endorse.³¹ From the editor's vantage point, the position of *Olympian* 1 is the outcome and instrument of the chosen organization of the book; from that of a reader's linear trajectory from the beginning of the book inwards—a trajectory which is even more inescapable in an ancient papyrus roll than it is in today's books, which can be opened at any point and leafed through in either direction—it is the rest of the *Olympians*, and of the *Epinicians*, that conform to the hierarchies proclaimed by the poet himself in the very first poem. Once the primacy of *Olympian* 1 is asserted, everything else falls into place.

A final paratextually relevant element comes at the very end of the ode (115–116):

εἴη σέ τε τοῦτον ὑψοῦ χρόνον πατεῖν,
 ἐμέ τε τοσσάδε νικαφόροις
 ὀμιλεῖν πρόφαντον σοφία καθ' Ἑλλαντας ἐόντα παντᾶ.

May you walk aloft for the time of your life,
 and may I converse with victors
 for as long a time, conspicuous for my skill among the
 Greeks everywhere.

A programmatic statement of epinician purpose as well as authorial self-aggrandizement, this conclusion can easily be taken as depicting Pindar in action beyond the narrow limits of the individual poem. It opens the door towards the rest of the

probably not by Pindar): W. S. Barrett, "Pindar and Psaumis: *Olympians* 4 and 5," in *Greek Lyric, Tragedy, and Textual Criticism* (Oxford 2007) 41–42.

³⁰ *Isth.* 6.7–9, cf. 1.64–67 (a Pythian and an Olympic victory).

³¹ Negri, *Pindaro* 153–154.

Epinicians—Pindar, still “conspicuous for his skill among the Greeks everywhere,” will indeed “converse with victors” for four whole books—and orients the reader’s expectations of what to find there by declaring the attitude of his poetic persona towards his epinician work. The form—a wish for the future—is nicely suited to an opening poem, its placement at the head of a book overlaying the historical situatedness of this otherwise general statement with a meta-textual resonance.

Pindar: the Hymns

Thanks to the *Praise of Demosthenes* (mis)attributed to Lucian and its anonymous scholiast, we know how the *Hymns* began, and a scholion to Pindar confirms that this first poem was composed for the poet’s homeland, Thebes.³² Only fragments of it survive, but enough to intimate a work of remarkable scope and (probably) scale.³³ One of the many things we do not know about the *Hymns* as a book is their internal ordering criterion; accordingly, we cannot tell whether the position of the first *Hymn* was as special as it looks, or this impressive poem just happened to open the book by a lucky coincidence. Its position feels too *ben trovato* to be fortuitous, but the effect of its proemial position would remain intact even if it were indeed the product of chance: the hymn to the power of music that opens the *Pythians* is no less effective because the position of *Pythian* 1 obeys an overarching order.

The opening pulls out all the stops in its roll-call of Theban mythical figures (fr.29):

³² Luc. 58.19 with schol. (225 Rabe), cf. 24.27; schol. *Nem.* 10.1a (III 165 D.).

³³ This section relies heavily on the three standard treatments of the *Hymn*: B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Oxford 1953) 71–89 (first in *A&A* 2 [1946] 180–192); A. Hardie, “Pindar’s ‘Theban’ Cosmogony (the First Hymn),” *BICS* 44 (2000) 19–40; G. B. D’Alessio, “Il primo *Inno* di Pindaro,” in S. Grandolini (ed.), *Lirica e teatro in Grecia* (Napoli 2005) 113–149. The point about scale is D’Alessio’s: the poem must have contained at least six triads, with a minimum length similar to that of *Pyth.* 9, at 125 lines the second-longest *Epinician* after *Pyth.* 4.

Ἴσμηνὸν ἢ χρυσαλάκατον Μελίαν
 ἢ Κάδμον ἢ Σπαρτῶν ἱερὸν γένος ἀνδρῶν
 ἢ τὰν κυανάμπυκα Θήβαν
 ἢ τὸ πάντολμον σθένος Ἡρακλέος
 ἢ τὰν Διωνύσου πολυγαθέα τιμὰν
 ἢ γάμον λευκωλένου Ἀρμονίας
 ὑμνήσομεν;

Is it Ismenos or Melia of the golden distaff
 or Cadmus or the holy clan of the Men who were Sown
 or Thebe of the dark frontlet
 or the strength of Heracles that dared all
 or the honour of Dionysus that brings much mirth
 or the wedding of white-armed Harmonia
 that we shall sing?

Much as the opening of *Nemean* 10 does with Argos (a comparison already made by the scholiast),³⁴ fr.29 praises Thebes on the mythological plane by feigning indecision among the great variety of themes for song that the city provides.³⁵ Thebes being the poet's own fatherland, and given also the foregrounding of the act of singing, this fragment's potential to be taken as an indirect self-vaunt is clear. The introductory priamel structure, the first person hesitating on the threshold of song with a pretence of uncertainty as to what to sing of, a mystifying compound of trepidation and grandeur, is as well-suited to opening a book as it is to opening a poem—all the more so because the characters he mentions briefly here will in fact return again and again, in greater detail, throughout his works. It is no longer commonly thought that the *Hymns* were the first book in the Pindaric corpus,³⁶ but this does not forbid an open-

³⁴ Schol. *Nem.* 10.1a (III 165 D.).

³⁵ On the significance of the characters chosen by Pindar see Hardie, *BICS* 44 (2000) 19–20.

³⁶ The *Vita Ambrosiana* (I 3 D.) has the *Hymns* in first place, but W. H. Race, "P. Oxy. 2438 and the Order of Pindar's Works," *RhM* 130 (1987) 407–410, shows that the order of books within the Pindaric corpus was not fixed (unlike that of volumes within such books, which yields e.g. a Book 1 and a Book 2 of the *Dithyrambs*).

ing ode—least of all this one—from being read with as corpus-wide a resonance as can apply.

What the poem does go on to narrate is the last item in the introductory catalogue, the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia. On that occasion, Aelius Aristides reports, Cadmus heard Apollo “making a display of upright music” (fr.32). As argued by Bruno Snell, the best way to make sense of (some of) the remaining fragments of this poem is to hypothesize that they form part of a song sung by the Muses at the wedding.³⁷ We have what may have been the opening of their song (fr.30), narrating how “first of all” (1) the Fates led Themis to Olympus to be Zeus’ “ancient wife” (5). As has been pointed out, the wedding of Zeus and Themis—“Right”—is nothing short of the foundational event of the cosmic order.³⁸ It is sanctioned by the Fates; its outcome is “the truthful Seasons who bear splendid fruit” (6–7); Zeus is σωτήρ, “Saviour” (5). The Muses—and Pindar with them—start from the very beginning of the cosmos as such. Their song must have gone on to become a theogony of sorts: the birth of Athena was mentioned (fr.34) as well as that of Apollo (fr.33b). And indeed Pindar shows sustained engagement with the *Theogony*, from the very notion of a song of the Muses to the pointed reformulation of the Themis episode narrated by Hesiod at 901–906.³⁹ But the most extraordinary

³⁷ *Discovery* 73–74, 77–80. As noted by D’Alessio, in *Lirica e teatro* 122–123, evidence that the Muses’ song was embedded in the *Hymn* is provided by Antip. Sid. 18 Gow-Page (*Anth.Gr.* 7.34). Pindar refers to the Muses’ performance of song and dance (μελομενῶν) at Cadmus and Harmonia’s wedding also at *Pyth.* 3.88–92. More similarly to our *Hymn*, at *Nem.* 5.25–39 he relates the content of the song they sang at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, and there too Apollo is playing (23–25). That the two occasions are parallel is shown by the passage in *Pyth.* 3, which explicitly puts them side by side.

³⁸ D’Alessio, in *Lirica e teatro* 118, cf. 121. On the cosmogonic implications of the *Hymn* see also Hardie, *BICS* 44 (2000) 23–26.

³⁹ Snell, *Discovery* 74–76; D’Alessio, in *Lirica e teatro* 117–119. As Snell remarks, the parallel between *Theog.* and the *Hymn* was noticed by Lucian, who described the Muses performing both poems at a heavenly banquet

part of the Muses' song may have come near its end (fr.31). We do not have a verbatim quotation, but Aelius Aristides *Or.* 45 (II 142 Dindorf, I 277 Lenz-Behr) and Choricus of Gaza 13.1 (175 Foerster-Richtsteig) offer us summaries:⁴⁰

Πίνδαρος δὲ τοςάτην ὑπερβολὴν ἐποίησατο ὥστε ἐν Διὸς γάμφῳ καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς αὐτοὺς φησιν ἐρομένου τοῦ Διὸς εἶ του δέοιντο αἰτῆσαι ποιήσασθαί τινας αὐτῷ θεοὺς, οἵτινες τὰ μεγάλα ταῦτ' ἔργα καὶ πᾶσάν γε δὴ τὴν ἐκείνου κατασκευὴν κατακοσμήσουσι λόγοις καὶ μουσικῇ.

In the Wedding of Zeus Pindar went so far as to say that even the gods themselves, when Zeus asked them if they needed anything, asked him to create for himself some deities who would adorn with words and music those great deeds and all of his arrangements.

ἐποίησε Πίνδαρος καὶ θεοὺς ὀκνοῦντας ὑμῆσαι τὰς τοῦ Διὸς εἰς ἀνθρώπους φιλοτιμίας. ἐδόκει γάρ, οἶμαι, τῷ ποιητῇ τοῦτο εἶναι μέγιστον ἐγκώμιον τοῦ Διός, εἰ μηδεὶς τῶν Ὀλυμπίων αὐτὸν ἐγκωμιάσαι τολμήσει. τοιγαροῦν καθῆστο μὲν ὁ Ζεὺς τῷ Πινδάρῳ τὸ πᾶν ἄρτι κοσμήσας, παρήσαν δὲ οἱ θεοὶ σιωπῇ τεθηπότες τὴν ἀγλαίαν τῶν ὀρωμένων, ἐρομένου δὲ τοῦ Διός, εἶπερ ἄλλου του δέοιντο, ἐν ἔφασαν οἱ θεοὶ τοῖς ἐκείνου δημιουργήμασι λείπειν, ὅτι μηδένα προήγαγεν ἀναβαίνοντα ταῖς εὐφημίαις ἄχρι τοῦ μέτρου τῶν τελουμένων.

Pindar portrayed even the gods as reluctant to sing in praise of Zeus' benefactions towards humankind. I think it seemed to the poet that it would be the greatest praise of Zeus if none of the Olympians dared to praise him. So, for Pindar, Zeus sat, having just created order in the universe, and the gods stood before him in silence, amazed at the splendour of what was before their eyes. And when Zeus asked if they needed anything more, the

(24.27).

⁴⁰ As recognized by Hardie, *BICS* 44 (2000) 33–34, a further passage is likely to go back to our fragment, directly or otherwise: Philo *De plant. Noe* 127–129 (II 158–159 C.-W.). Philo's account seems more heavily re-elaborated than Aristides' and Choricus', however, and he does not mention Pindar by name, referring instead to an "old tale" which is "sung" (παλαιὸς ... ἄδεται λόγος).

gods said that one thing was lacking from his works of creation: he had not brought forth anybody who could step up to the measure of his accomplishments with words of devotion and praise.

The divinities that the assembled gods ask Zeus to bring into existence in order to praise his *μεγάλα ἔργα* are without a doubt the Muses.⁴¹ So at the wedding at Cadmus and Harmonia the Muses represent themselves and their song as the divinely sanctioned zenith of creation in what becomes an evidently metapoetic setting: their song in praise of Zeus and his creation—culminating in his creation of them—is precisely what they had been created to sing. Twice metapoetic, indeed, if we consider that their song is itself part of Pindar’s song. As Snell remarks: “The Muses deal with the birth of the gods, and they finish their song with an account of how they themselves were born; that is their way of justifying their existence—or should we say the existence of Pindar and his art?”⁴²

The first *Hymn* glorifies the power of poetry through the words of the very goddesses of poetry, who once sang that very song in the very place—Thebes—where now it rings out once more through Pindar’s art and that of his chorus. The poem highlights the crucial function of song in the cosmic order and thematizes human audience of divine *mousike* (cf. fr.32) while going back to the very beginnings of Thebes and of the cosmos. The foundational wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia—“Harmony”—mirrors on earth that of Zeus and Themis in heaven,⁴³ and the Muses complete and memorialize both alike by bridging with their song the gap between the two. Thebes is thus posited as a key locus for the interaction between the

⁴¹ Philo joins Aristides and Choricus in not naming these new deities, but states that they are the daughters of Memory (Μνήμη), “whom the many ... call Mnemosyne”—that is, unmistakably, the Muses.

⁴² *Discovery* 81.

⁴³ Snell, *Discovery* 81, 85, although Snell persistently assumes—on no obvious evidence—that the song of the Muses culminated in Zeus’ wedding with Hera.

human and the divine, for music and the understanding of its significance, and for the establishment of a divinely appointed order both among humankind and in the universe at large. In turn, this geographical anchor further validates the song and its author—and, by implication, the book in which both are found—as mouthpieces of the divine truth made known by the Muses.

If Snell was correct to identify fr.33c and 33d as part of that poem, given their apparent identity of metre,⁴⁴ the *Hymn* also included an invocation of Delos, Apollo's birthplace. The invocation was expanded with a brief narrative of how the previously wandering isle became fixed to the bottom of the sea when Leto stepped on it and gave birth to Apollo and Artemis. *P.Oxy.* 2442 fr.1 reveals that the narrative in fr.33d—and probably also the invocation in 33c, which must have preceded it by a short interval—were preceded by another narrative, relating Heracles' punitive expedition against the Meropes, the mythical inhabitants of Cos (fr.33a). This has one important implication: the use of the past tense in this narrative indicates that the passage—and, by implication, the Delian section that followed—was situated outside the song of the Muses at Cadmus' wedding, since the wedding happened several generations before Heracles' lifetime.⁴⁵ So the song of the Muses took up only a part of the poem; the Delian section was not subordinated to it, but was a mythical narrative in its own right, the second or indeed the third of the poem.

Accordingly, Giovan Battista D'Alessio has argued that the poem was not a hymn to Zeus, as had been commonly thought

⁴⁴ *Discovery* 79–80, and in his editions of Pindar. The identification has been called into question by S. Mingarelli, "Eracle a Cos: una lettura del fr. 33a Sn.-M. di Pindaro," in R. Nicolai (ed.), *Ῥυσμός. Studi di poesia, metrica e musica greca offerti dagli allievi a Luigi Enrico Rossi* (Rome 2003) 125–130, who argues for a separate "hymn to Delos" composed for an Ionian polis; but see D'Alessio, in *Lirica e teatro* 148–149.

⁴⁵ D'Alessio, in *Lirica e teatro* 131–132.

since at least Wilamowitz, but to Apollo.⁴⁶ How things really stood is unknown; the evidence—assuming that we are indeed dealing with one poem—is inconclusive.⁴⁷ On one interpretation, it may have been a hymn to Zeus in which Heracles' exploit as the hammer of the unrighteous, the grounding of Delos, and the birth of Apollo and Artemis were recounted as instances of Zeus' providence.⁴⁸ On the other, it may have been a hymn to Apollo in which the long theogony sung by the Muses was ultimately functional to praising him as the patron god of poetry and music, and Heracles' role was to establish a cult of Apollo, as indeed he does elsewhere.⁴⁹ In either case a prooemial position is quite natural. "Beginning from Zeus" was a well-known conceit, which Pindar employs at the opening of *Nemean* 2 and depicts in the Muses' embedded song in *Nemean* 5 ("first of all beginning from Zeus they sang in praise of august Thetis," 25); Callimachus' *Hymns* also open with the one to Zeus.⁵⁰ But Apollo is also sometimes said to fulfil a similar

⁴⁶ "Re-constructing Pindar's First Hymn: The Theban 'Theogony' and the Birth of Apollo," in L. Athanassaki et al. (eds.), *Apolline Politics and Poetics* (Athens 2009) 129–147. A Delian destination and an equal status of Zeus and Apollo in the ode had already been conjectured by C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford 1964) 281 n.3; Apollo's prominence is emphasized also by Hardie, *BICS* 44 (2000) 35–37, who suggests performance at the Ismenion.

⁴⁷ The hypothesis of a hymn to Zeus has recently been restated by P. Angeli Bernardini, "L'*Inno* primo di Pindaro e la sua destinazione culturale," *Paideia* 64 (2009) 73–89.

⁴⁸ Cf. Hardie, *BICS* 44 (2000) 26.

⁴⁹ Pind. fr.140a (Paros), Bacchyl. fr.4 Maehler (Asine). In both cases he functions as a vehicle of divine punishment of evildoers: D'Alessio, in *Apolline Politics* 137–139. A similar pattern, though with Zeus instead of Apollo, is found in *Ol.* 10.

⁵⁰ However, it is the *Hymn to Delos*, not the *Hymn to Zeus*, that engages most closely with ours: see P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse: Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* (Göttingen 1988) 99–103; M. Giuseppetti, *L'isola esile. Studi sull'Inno a Delo di Callimaco* (Rome 2013) 89–95. What the opening of the *Hymn to Zeus* does engage with, however, is the opening of a Pindaric prosodion which, intriguingly, thematizes beginning (fr.89a); see R. Hunter and T. Fuhrer, "Imaginary Gods? Poetic Theology in the *Hymns* of

role;⁵¹ he of all the pantheon would constitute a fitting introduction to a book of one of Greece's foremost poets—one who was thought in antiquity to have been especially honoured by him.⁵²

Pindar's *Hymns*, then, opened with a catalogue of the mythic subjects which Pindar's home city could provide to the poet—and which his corpus did provide to the reader. The poem described the very foundation of the order that governs the world and then moved on to describe the creation of the patron goddesses of poetry, whose task it was to celebrate this cosmic order—as indeed they did in that very poem. Whether it was a hymn to Zeus containing an extensive section in praise of Apollo or a hymn to Apollo containing an extensive section in praise of Zeus, the poem celebrates both the supreme god and the patron god of Pindar's art, both, moreover, with a direct link to poetry and music (fr.31, 32). Much like Pindar's poetry as a whole, the *Hymn* dexterously balances the epichoric and the Panhellenic, firmly anchoring the latter to the former. We start from an avalanche of programmatically Theban elements, but through the last of them we are catapulted back in time to the most universal possible level, that of cosmogony and theogony; yet that narrative too is tied to an obviously Theban occasion, though one whose import is much broader than Thebes alone. Locality is simultaneously affirmed and transcended; for her native Panhellenic poet, the rich storehouse of myth that is Thebes is a springboard, not a cage. Pindar's engagement with Hesiod—a fellow Boeotian and Panhellenic poet *par excellence*—can be read along similar lines.

Callimachus," in F. Montanari and L. Lehnus (eds.), *Callimaque* (Vandœuvres/Geneva 2001) 170–171.

⁵¹ See e.g. *Hymn.Hom.* 21.3–4, Thgn. 1–4.

⁵² Paus. 9.23.3, cf. 10.24.5; *Vita Ambrosiana* (I 2 D.); *Vita Vaticana* (I 5 D.); *Vita metrica* 16–18 (I 9 D.); Eustath. *Praef. in Pind.* 27.1–3 Kambylis. See D. Clay, *Archilochos Heros: The Cult of Poets in the Greek Polis* (Washington 2004) 77; F. Kimmel-Clauzet, *Morts, tombeaux et cultes des poètes grecs* (Bordeaux 2013) 237–241.

Altogether this is one of Pindar's most ambitious known works, and such ambition reflects on the image that it projects of the author. Upon first unrolling the *Hymns*, the reader encounters a poet who originates in, and builds upon, one of the most mythically significant places in Greece; who commands a vast array of mythological material and can range right across the mythic time; who takes up the voice of the Muses and re-enacts them in their glory. Few of Pindar's poems could have been better chosen to exhibit the nature and worth of Pindar's poetry and prepare the reader for what was to come in the rest of the book —and potentially of the Pindaric corpus.

Pindar: other fragments

The Pindaric corpus offers a third, even more tentative example of how to do things with opening poems. In *Olympian* 13, composed to celebrate Xenophon of Corinth's double victory in *stadion* and *pentathlon* in 464 B.C., Pindar includes the dithyramb in a list of Corinthian inventions (18–19). The scholiast adds that he also treated the origin of the dithyramb in two other poems (fr.71 = 115):⁵³

ὁ Πίνδαρος δὲ ἐν μὲν τοῖς ὑπορχήμασιν ἐν Νάξῳ φησὶ πρῶτον εὐρεθῆναι διθύραμβον, ἐν δὲ τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν διθύραμβων ἐν Θήβαις, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἐν Κορίνθῳ.

Pindar says in the *Dancing-songs* that the dithyramb was first invented in Naxos, in the first of the *Dithyrambs* (that it was invented) in Thebes, and here (that it was invented) in Corinth.

Unfortunately we cannot be certain that this fascinating aetiology opened Pindar's *Dithyrambs*. The sense of ἐν ... τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν διθύραμβων is debated, but the Greek idiom would normally indicate the first *book* of the *Dithyrambs*, not the first poem within it.⁵⁴ But none of this excludes that the poem in which

⁵³ Schol. *Ol.* 13.25c (I 361 D.).

⁵⁴ M. J. H. van der Weiden, *The Dithyrambs of Pindar* (Amsterdam 1991) 173–174; differently, L. Lehnus, “Una glossa pindarica in Corinna di Tanagra,” *RendIstLomb* 107 (1973) 398–400, S. Lavecchia, *Pindari dithyramborum*

Pindar told this story was in fact the first in that first book of the *Dithyrambs*. One can easily see a rationale in opening the *Dithyrambs* with a reference to the first dithyramb to have ever been sung. And it was in Thebes that this first dithyramb had been sung: Pindar's own city, and therefore the ultimate birthplace not only of the dithyramb in general but also of that particular poem and of the entire book. All the more so if, as has been conjectured, the poem was commissioned for performance in Thebes herself. The link Pindar establishes between the poem and the distant origin of the poetic form it embodies would thus be mirrored upon the *Dithyrambs* as a collection, validating, on the one hand, the poem as a key to the genre, and therefore to the book which embodies it; on the other, indirectly, the poet—through his birthplace—as a composer of dithyrambs and an authority on the same.⁵⁵

If the previous example was tentative, the next is pure speculation. The book is the *Partheneia*; the poem, the daphnephoric that Pindar composed for his own son Daiphantos (fr.94c).⁵⁶ The Theban rite of the Daphnephoria is described by Pausanias and Proclus, and one other poem by Pindar was certainly composed for one of its iterations (fr.94b).⁵⁷ To judge

fragmenta (Rome/Pisa 2000) 275–276.

⁵⁵ Theban openings can be ascribed, with varying degrees of probability, to several other books of Pindar: certainly the *Hymns*, perhaps the *Partheneia* (below); within the *Epinicians*, the *Isthmians*—which could just as easily have opened with *Isth.* 2 for Xenocrates of Acragas—open with an ode for a Theban victor, an ode whose opening moreover thematizes the poet's Thebanness. See already P. Angeli Bernardini, "Il proemio della *Pitica XI* di Pindaro e i culti tebani," in H. Beister and J. Buckler (eds.), *Boiotika. Vorträge vom 5. Internationalen Böotien-Kolloquium* (Munich 1989) 39–40 and n.3. Bacchylides' *Epinicians* likewise open with a pair of poems for a Cean victor, the first of which has a myth centered on Ceos, contravening the general order of the book: Irigoien, *Bacchylide* xxiv–xxv.

⁵⁶ *Vita Ambrosiana* (I 3 D.), cf. *P.Oxy.* 2438 col. ii.28–30.

⁵⁷ Paus. 9.10.4, Procl. *Chrest.* 69–78 Severyns. On the Daphnephoria and fr.94b see A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia I* (London 1981) 83–85; L. Kurke, "Visualizing the Choral: Epichoric Poetry, Ritual, and Elite Negotiation in

from that poem and from Proclus' testimony, daphnephoric songs praised not only the *daphnephoros* who was the notional protagonist of the rite, but also the other members of his family who took part in it. I cannot be alone in wishing that we had the corresponding poem where Pindar praised his son, his daughters Protomache and Eumetis,⁵⁸ and, in all likelihood, himself. Nor am I the first to suggest that this daphnephoric may have opened the *Partheneia*: that honour goes to Luigi Lehnus.⁵⁹ If the poem contained direct praise of Pindar—Pindar the historical individual, not just Pindar's poetic persona—it would certainly make sense for it to be the one introducing the reader to the book to which it belonged.

The two fragments known to have come from this poem (fr. 94c.1–2, 94c.3) do not tell us much, although the masculine *θεράπων* of Leto mentioned at 3 invites attention (is he Daiphantos or his father?). But there is another fragment to which our ever more speculative gaze can turn. It is quoted in an anonymous scholarly work, *P.Oxy.* 2389 (*CLGP* Alcman 1a) fr. 9 col. i.5–11:⁶⁰

[.....].[...].νος ἐχέγγυος
 [.....].βεβιωτῆς ἄν γένου-
 [το ὅτι] Λάκων εἴη ὅτε φη-
 [σί· “.....] ἀντίφαριν Λάκωνι τέ-
 [κτονα πα]ρθενίων σοφῶν Ἀλκμᾶ-
 [νι ω]ν τε μελέων ποτίφορον
 [...].ον.”

Fifth-Century Thebes,” in C. Kraus et al. (eds.), *Visualizing the Tragic: Drama, Myth, and Ritual in Greek Art and Literature. Essays in Honour of Froma Zeitlin* (Oxford 2007) 63–102. Commentary on fr.94b: L. Lehnus, “Pindaro: il *dafnephorico per Agasicle* (Fr. 94b Sn.-M.),” *BICS* 31 (1986) 61–92.

⁵⁸ *P.Oxy.* 2438 col. ii.28–30.

⁵⁹ *RendIstLomb* 107 (1973) 422 and n.84.

⁶⁰ Amply discussed in T. R. P. Coward, *Pindar and the Greek Lyric Tradition* (diss. King's College London 2016) 42–49.

... trustworthy ... would be an authority ... that Alcman was a Laconian when he says: "... a craftsman of skilful maiden-songs, a rival to Laconian Alcman, and a fitting ... of ... songs."

The text of the poetic quotation is mutilated, but someone was said to be a rival of "Laconian Alcman" in composing maiden-songs. The uncertainty over the syntax—one could restore τέ[κτονι instead of the accusative, making Alcman, and not his rival, the "craftsman of skilful maiden-songs"⁶¹—makes little difference to the sense. Even when the gaps can only be filled by conjecture the construction is clear: what is missing is a genitive describing μελέων in line 9 and a noun governing ποτίφορον in 11.

The author is unknown, as is the identity of Alcman's "rival." Edgar Lobel suggested identifying both with Pindar, on the strength of his self-portrayal as a "choice herald of skilful words" at fr.70b.23–24. Although a few alternatives have been subsequently put forward,⁶² it is the Pindaric hypothesis that bears exploring here. *If* the author of these verses is Pindar, and *if* it is he who is portrayed as a rival to Alcman in parthenaic song, then the daphnephoric for Daïphantos would be an excellent occasion for such words to have been uttered. That ode is likely to have encompassed some praise of Pindar's highly

⁶¹ J. A. Davison, *From Archilochus to Pindar: Papers on Greek Literature of the Archaic Period* (London/New York 1968) 174. The accusative is due to the editor princeps E. Lobel, *P.Oxy.* XXIV (1957) p.41; it seems better for reasons of space, but this depends solely on the probable supplement at the beginning of line 12.

⁶² Davison, *From Archilochus* 173–174, suggests Alcman. Cratinus—supplementing Κ]ρα[τῆ]νος at 5 with Coward, *Pindar* 43—may be a better suggestion. Among surviving archaic and classical poetic genres, comedy is the one which most engages in explicit self-reflection and poetic competition, and engagement with Alcman is not outside its bounds, cf. the Spartan maiden-songs at Ar. *Lys.* 1296–1321. ποτίφορος would not normally be expected even in the choral parts of Attic drama, but ποτί and compounds are attested in parodies of Laconian (Ar. *Lys.* 82, Crates fr.46 Kassel-Austin), and Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6.5.11 (I 425 Stählin-Früchtel) can be taken to indicate that Cratinus wrote a comedy entitled Λόκωνες.

successful poetic activity: we do not know at what point in his career it was composed, but if his three children were all of a sufficient age to perform in the ceremony, he cannot have been very young. Such praise would be a fitting context for a boastful comparison with one of the great lyricists of the past, arguably the greatest composer of *partheneia*. And the poem was composed precisely for a chorus of *parthenoi* to perform, making the comparison with Alcman and the focus on maiden-songs all the more immediate.

We can thus imagine—for imagination it is; but what harm is there in imagining?—that upon unrolling Book 1 of Pindar's *Partheneia* the reader may have first encountered a composition which placed Pindar and his family at the very heart of civic ritual, performing priestly functions for the god of poetry and music, accompanied by a song that extolled his merits by (among other things) meditating on its own genre and engaging the poet in explicit one-upmanship with the most illustrious author of that genre—an author whose canonical status is thereby cemented as much as it is challenged.

Sappho

As was the case with *Olympian* 1, the position of the first poem in the Sapphic corpus (known as fr.1 but in fact a complete poem) is marked out as significant by falling outside the order that governs the rest of the book to which it belongs.⁶³ The criterion that governed the distribution of Sappho's poetry into books was metre: Book 1 consisted wholly of poems in Sapphic stanzas (a meaningful choice given the traditional association between that poetic form and Sappho),⁶⁴ Book 2 of what

⁶³ D. Yatromanolakis, "Alexandrian Sappho Revisited," *HSCP* 99 (1999) 179–195, suggests that more than one edition of Sappho was circulating in the post-Alexandrian period, but the surviving papyri fail to confirm his contention: with the one exception of *P.Köln* 429+430 (an anthological or para-anthological roll which predates the canonical edition and thus has no bearing on the question), all the published papyrus of Sappho seem to represent one canonical edition.

⁶⁴ Schol. metr. in Pind. *Pyth.* 1 (14 Tessier), Sacerd. Gramm. *Gram.Lat.* VI

Hephaestion calls the *Σαπφικὸν τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάσύλλαβον*,⁶⁵ etc. The order of poems within books is less certain, but some evidence is available. Already Edgar Lobel suggested that at least the first few books were ordered alphabetically by first letter (as was the custom then) of the first word of the text.⁶⁶ He noticed that quotations from Books 2, 3, and 4 given as examples by various metricians—quotations which, as was the metricians' habit, are likely to come from the first suitable occurrence of that verse in the book,⁶⁷ i.e. (in our case) the first line of the first poem—begin with letters near the beginning of the alphabet: Book 2 with *η* (fr.49),⁶⁸ Book 3 with *β* (fr.53),⁶⁹ Book 4 with *ε* or, more probably, *α* (fr.82a, 91).⁷⁰ There was also a glaring counter-example: Book 1, which begins with *π* (fr. 1.1).⁷¹ He noticed, however, that in *P.Oxy.* 1231 fr.1 (from Book 1) three consecutive poems begin with *ο*, *π*, and again *π* (fr.16–18).⁷² Citing the parallel of *Olympian* 1, Lobel attributed the anomaly of fr.1 to the particular status of the poem that introduces the whole collection.

At least as concerns Book 1, his intuition has been vindicated by *P.GC* inv. 105, which reveals that fr.5 was to be placed after fr.18 and that its first letter, contrary to what had been com-

546; G. Liberman, “L'édition alexandrine de Sappho,” in G. Bastianini and A. Casanova (eds.), *I papiri di Saffo e di Alceo* (Florence 2007) 46.

⁶⁵ Heph. 7.7 (23 Consbruch).

⁶⁶ *Σαπφοῦς μέλη*. *The Fragments of the Lyrical Poems of Sappho* (Oxford 1925) xv–xvi. On alphabetical order in antiquity see L. W. Daly, *Contributions to a History of Alphabetization in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Brussels 1967).

⁶⁷ But there are counter-examples, see Dale, *ZPE* 196 (2015) 23–24 n.20.

⁶⁸ Heph. 7.7 (23 C.).

⁶⁹ Inscr. Theoc. 28 (334 Wendel).

⁷⁰ Heph. 11.5 (36 C.), see Liberman, in *I papiri di Saffo* 50 n.41.

⁷¹ Heph. 14.1 (43 C.). The text is given in full by Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 23.11 (II 114–116 U.-R.).

⁷² A “rough alphabetical arrangement” had already been conjectured by the *editor princeps* A. S. Hunt, *P.Oxy.* X (1914) p.21, but in a way that had made the arrangement appear rougher than it was.

monly assumed, was π : $\pi\acute{o}\tau\nu\iota\alpha\iota$ (not Κύπρι καὶ) $\text{Νηρήϊδες, ἀβλᾶβη[ν μοι]}$.⁷³ The same papyrus strengthened the long-standing suspicion that fr.16 was not one poem but two, with the second (fr.16a) probably beginning $\acute{\omicron}\lambda\beta\iota\omicron\gamma\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \omicron\upsilon\ \delta\upsilon\acute{\nu}\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ as conjectured by H. J. M. Milne, in perfect accord with the alphabetical arrangement.⁷⁴ Finally, a further fragment of the same manuscript as *P.GC. inv. 105—P.Sapph. Obbink*—finds its most natural place in the next column but one after fr.5, with the intervening column perhaps containing fr.9; the second poem that *P.Sapph. Obbink* preserves, the “Kypris poem,” begins with π .⁷⁵ The original order of these fragments thus seems to have been: fr.15 (beginning lost), 16 (o), 16a (o²), 17 (π), 18 (π), 18a (lost), 15 (π), 9 (lost), “Brothers poem” (lost), “Kypris poem” (π).

Doubts have recently been voiced as to whether the order was truly alphabetical throughout the book except only the first poem, but they can be countered satisfactorily.⁷⁶ It has also

⁷³ Ed. pr. S. Burris, J. Fish, and D. Obbink, “New Fragments of Book 1 of Sappho,” *ZPE* 189 (2014) 1–28; see now D. Obbink, “The Newest Sappho: Text, Apparatus Criticus, and Translation,” in A. Bierl and A. Lardinois (eds.), *The Newest Sappho: P.Sapph. Obbink and P.GC inv. 105, frs. 1–4* (Leiden 2016) 13–33.

⁷⁴ H. J. M. Milne, “A Prayer for Charaxus,” *Aegyptus* 13 (1933) 177; see now Burris, Fish, and Obbink, *ZPE* 189 (2014) 5; M. L. West, “Nine Poems of Sappho,” *ZPE* 191 (2014) 2–3.

⁷⁵ Ed. pr. D. Obbink, “Two New Poems by Sappho,” *ZPE* 189 (2014) 32–49; see now Obbink, in *The Newest Sappho* 25–27, with 24–25 on its position relative to *P.GC inv. 105*.

⁷⁶ C. Neri, “Il *Brothers Poem* e l’edizione alessandrina di Saffo (in margine a *P. Sapph. Obbink*),” *Eikasmos* 26 (2015) 71–73, suggests that the alphabetical arrangement was only operative within thematically defined subsections of the book, namely (in our case) one centered on the woes of Sappho’s brother Charaxos. He emphasises the problem created by the seemingly stichometric letter on *P.Oxy. 2289 fr.1a* (another manuscript of Book 1), but Dale, *ZPE* 196 (2015) 26, argues that the letter is not stichometric, see also Obbink, in *The Newest Sappho* 43. In the ten-poem sequence attested by *P.Oxy. 1231* and *P.GC inv. 105 + P.Sapph. Obbink*, only three poems (fr.5, 15, “Brothers Poem”) clearly have to do with Charaxos, while at least three

been doubted whether fr.1 really stood at the beginning of the book,⁷⁷ but while the notion of an incipitary fr.1 is indeed only an inference from Hephaestion—and he does not always quote the first available example of a given verse in a book, although he habitually does⁷⁸—there is no positive evidence that he contravenes his habit here. Book 1 of Sappho seems indeed to have been ordered alphabetically, with the exception of the very first poem.⁷⁹ Whether this was equally true of other books of Sappho is more doubtful, but this question has little relevance to our main point. As far as one can tell, fr.1 did have a special position within Book 1; the very fact that Sappho's books were numbered makes this true also within the corpus as a whole.

We come, then, to our usual set of questions. Why was fr.1 deemed deserving of such a special place? And what may the special place given to fr.1 have meant for the poem, the book, and the Sapphic corpus as a whole? Let us remind ourselves of the text:

(fr.16, 16a, “Kypris poem”) clearly do not; even the ones that do relate to Charaxos are not all consecutive. So if there was indeed a recognizable thematic section devoted to Charaxos (which is uncertain), it was subordinate to the alphabetical arrangement, not the reverse.

⁷⁷ Dale, *ZPE* 196 (2015) 23–24, 30, suggesting that fr.1 may have been placed within the alphabetical sequence, between fr.5 and the “Brothers Poem.” However, Obbink, in *The Newest Sappho* 24, 40, brings papyrological evidence in support of West's suggestion, *ZPE* 191 (2014) 2, that what stood there was fr.9.

⁷⁸ For counter-examples see Dale, *ZPE* 196 (2015) 23–24 n.20.

⁷⁹ Starting from D. L. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford 1955) 125–126, it has sometimes been supposed that epithalamia were gathered together at the end of the book, but the argument is quite weak. Fr.30, known from *P.Oxy.* 1231 fr.56 to have been the last in Book 1, is probably a poem of this kind, but its final position may be a coincidence (we do not know how it began); the likely epithalamian nature of fr.27 is immaterial, since—*pace* Page—its position within the book is unknown. Fr.44, a narrative of the mythical wedding of Hector and Andromache, was the last poem of Book 2 (as testified by *P.Oxy.* 1232 fr.1 and *P.Oxy.* 2076), but whether it was an epithalamium is open to doubt.

ποι κιλόθρονον ἄθανάτ' Ἀφροδίτα,
 παῖ Διός δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
 μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
 πότνια, θυμόν,
 ἀλλὰ τυιδ' ἔλθ', αἶ ποτα κἀτέρωτα
 τὰς ἔμας αὔδας αἰοίσα πήλοι
 ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα
 χρυσίον ἤλθεις
 ἄρμ' ὑπασδελύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
 ὤκεες στρουθοὶ περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
 πύκνα δίνεντες πτέρ' ἅπ' ὠράνω αἴθε-
 ρος διὰ μέσσω,
 αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
 μειδιᾷσαισ' ἄθανάτῳ προσώπῳ
 ἦρε' ὅττι δηῦτε πέπονθα κῶττι
 δηῦτε κιάλημι
 κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γενεσθαι
 μαινόλα θυμῷ· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
 ······ σάγην ἔς σὺν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ
 Ψάπφ', ἀδίκησι;
 καὶ γὰρ αἶ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
 αἶ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει,
 αἶ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
 κῶκ ἐθέλοισα.
 ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον
 ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
 θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον, σὺ δ' αὐτά
 σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

Deathless Aphrodite of the rich-wrought throne,
 child of Zeus, weaver of wiles, I beg you:
 do not bring my heart to heel with upset and
 anguish, my lady,
 but come here, if ever before already
 you heard my cries from afar,
 listened and left your father's house
 and came,
 your golden chariot yoked—beautiful, swift
 sparrows were driving you around the black earth,
 whirring their wings down from heaven

across the sky,
 and in a moment they were here—and you, blessed one,
 with a smile on your deathless face,
 asked what was the matter with me this time and why

I was calling this time
 and what was the thing I most wished happened for me
 in my crazy heart: “Whom this time should I persuade
 to ... to your love? Who is doing you wrong,

Sappho dear?
 If she is fleeing, soon she will be the one chasing,
 if she is not accepting gifts, why, she will be the one giving,
 if she is not in love, soon she will be the one loving,
 even against her will.”

Come again now for my sake, release me from grievous
 anxiety, bring to fulfilment
 all that my heart longs to be fulfilled, and you
 yourself be my ally.

One obvious way in which our poem is a suitable beginning is that invocations and prayers to divinities traditionally were regarded as suitable beginnings. The performance of songs and other poetry at symposia was inaugurated by paeans.⁸⁰ The Theognidean corpus—the most extensive collection of sympotic poetry to survive from ancient Greece—opens with four elegies addressed to Apollo (1–4, 5–10), Artemis (11–14), and the Muses and the Graces (15–18) before moving on to the introductory “seal elegy” (19–28²) and then to poems on other subjects, in evident imitation of a symposium.⁸¹ The Alexandrian edition of Alcaeus⁸²—another poet whose verse finds in

⁸⁰ See I. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans: A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre* (Oxford 2001) 50–52.

⁸¹ V. Cazzato and E. E. Prodi, “Continuity in the Sympotic Tradition,” in V. Cazzato et al. (eds.), *The Cup of Song: Studies on Poetry and the Symposium* (Oxford 2016) 10.

⁸² On the testimony of Heph. *De sign.* 3 (74 C.), Alcaeus' works were collected in two different editions in the Hellenistic period: one by Aristophanes of Byzantium, and then one by Aristarchus. However, Hephæstion clearly implies that the one in use in his time is the latter (τὴν

the symposium its most natural setting—opened with three hymns in a row: one to Apollo (fr.307),⁸³ one to Hermes (fr. 308),⁸⁴ and one to the Nymphs (fr.343).⁸⁵ That of Anacreon, of whom much the same can be said, opened with a hymn to Artemis (*PMG* 348).⁸⁶ Nor is this conceit limited to the symposium. Rhapsodic recitations customarily began with a *prooimion* consisting of a hymn to a deity: Pindar in *Nemean* 2 specifies Zeus, but the Homeric Hymns—which are likewise, at least notionally, a collection of *prooimia*—praise a variety of divinities. A paean was customarily sung before battle and before setting sail.⁸⁷ Meetings of the Athenian assembly began with prayers,⁸⁸ much as sittings of both Houses of Parliament still do. In short, calling on heaven for assistance and good will was an auspicious beginning for almost any important enterprise.

But unlike Book 1 of Alcaeus, Book 1 of Sappho did not begin with hymns or prayers or invocations generally. Fr.5 (a prayer to the Nereids) and fr.17 (a hymn to Hera) were nowhere near the beginning of the book—although, as André Lardinois points out to me, the latter opens the sequence of poems beginning with π . The reason for the special position

$\nu\delta\nu$ Ἀριστάρχειον). No other author makes mention of two editions or specifies an editor's name when citing a specific book, and all the surviving papyri seem to represent one edition, at least as far as the division between books and the order of the poems is concerned. It seems Aristarchus' edition supplanted Aristophanes' fairly quickly: P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I (Oxford 1972) 462. Another explanation may be that the two editions presented the poems in the same order: A. Pardini, "La ripartizione in libri dell'opera di Alceo," *RivFil* 119 (1991) 259.

⁸³ Schol. A Heph. *De poëm.* 3.6 (169 C.), cf. Paus. 10.8.10.

⁸⁴ Schol. A Heph. *De poëm.* 3.6 (170 C.).

⁸⁵ *P.Oxy.* 2734 fr.1.20–22. G. Liberman, *Alcée. Fragments* I (Paris 1999) lv, suggests a distinction between political and non-political hymns, with the former (e.g. fr.34) scattered throughout the corpus and the latter grouped at the beginning of Book 1.

⁸⁶ Heph. *De poëm.* 4.8 (68 C.).

⁸⁷ See Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* 42–45, 53, 123.

⁸⁸ Aeschin. 1.23, Dem. 24.20, Din. 2.14, cf. Ar. *Thesm.* 295–330.

given to fr.1 must be specific to that poem, over and above the evident nod to the custom of addressing a divinity at beginnings. Fr.1 is addressed not to just any divinity, but to Aphrodite; its subject is love. And love is the subject Sappho was—is—best known for.⁸⁹ As Gauthier Liberman suggests, “l’édition alexandrine de Sappho s’ouvre sur un hymne à Aphrodite emblématique du personnage de la poétesse.”⁹⁰

Not that this emblematicity is a neutral one. As we know from the ultimately random selection represented by the survival of papyri, Sappho’s poetry—and especially Book 1—covered a considerable variety of themes and situations besides the amorous feelings of the poetic first person: from what appears to be public ceremonial to her brother’s dirty laundry and everything in between. Love poems are not even numerically preponderant. Thus the choice of fr.1 as the opening poem casts Sappho in a very specific light, one that is not intrinsically dictated by the material itself. The editor’s choice to privilege *eros* as the way into Sappho’s poetry is but one instance of a long and rich strand of her reception—and a powerful tool to orient her reception in that very direction. By encountering the prayer to Aphrodite as we first unroll the first book of Sappho, we are encouraged to read her first of all as a woman in love who sings about love. This introduction also resonates with the long-lived stereotype that casts women and their speech as particularly prone to emotion: *of course* the first

⁸⁹ The multifarious early reception of Sappho’s figure was not as fixated with Sappho’s sentiments and sexual proclivities as its modern counterpart has been, as Yatromanolakis, *Sappho*, shows. Nonetheless, even before the Hellenistic era (see e.g. the early fifth-century red-figure kalix-krater Bochum S 508 depicting Σάφφο and ἡ παῖς, Yatromanolakis 88–110) and ever more in later periods, Sappho the lover is a powerful presence in Greek and Roman imagings of her; see also M. Kivilo, *Early Greek Poets’ Lives: The Shaping of the Tradition* (Leiden/Boston 2010) 188–191. Is it a step too far to suggest that the increasing prevalence of this aspect of the poet’s figure in antiquity may have been due, in some part, to her standard edition beginning the way it does?

⁹⁰ *Alcée* I lvi, cf. *I papiri di Saffo* 64.

we see of antiquity's foremost female poet is her preoccupation with her own feelings in dialogue with the goddess that patronizes them.⁹¹

But fr. 1 nuances this portrayal of Sappho at the same time as it fosters it. For one, the poem names no names beside Aphrodite and Sappho herself. The object of Sappho's desire is not identified by Sappho's voice at all, neither in the present occasion nor in the one she recalls from the past. What little we are told of the present one—that she is female (24 ἐθέλωισα) and does not reciprocate Sappho's affection (18–24)⁹²—comes from Aphrodite. And Aphrodite, as far as the poem goes, speaks not from knowledge of the situation at hand as much as from previous experience with Sappho and with her recurring calls for help.⁹³ With an understanding smile,⁹⁴ Aphrodite *assumes* that what is the matter with Sappho, *again* (δηῦτε), is love for a woman who does not love her back; an assumption confirmed by Sappho's transparent failure to contradict her. The goddess knows whom she is talking to—much like knowledgeable readers, who will find their preconceptions about Sappho voiced back to them in a kind of *mise en abyme* the wrong way round.

⁹¹ On this line of thought in modern criticism see M. R. Lefkowitz, "Critical Stereotypes and the Poetry of Sappho," in E. Greene (ed.), *Reading Sappho: Contemporary Approaches* (Berkeley 1996) 26–34 (first published in *GRBS* 14 [1974] 113–123).

⁹² On the contentious dynamics of *philia* at 21–24 see A. Carson, "The Justice of Aphrodite in Sappho 1," in *Reading Sappho* 226–232 (first published in *TAPA* 110 [1980] 135–142); E. Greene, "Apostrophe and Women's Erotics in the Poetry of Sappho," in *Reading Sappho* 243–235 (first published in *TAPA* 124 [1994] 41–56). One doubts whether such dynamics were meant to be instantly clear to Sappho's audience; rather, the uncertainty—indeed the ambiguity—about what exactly Aphrodite is supposed to do emphasizes the indeterminacy remarked in the rest of this section.

⁹³ The element of repetition is well highlighted by Page, *Sappho* 13–14.

⁹⁴ Page, *Sappho* 15–16, seems to me to be right in remarking the humorous tone of Aphrodite's response and (at least to some extent) of the whole episode, *pace* Carson, in *Reading Sappho* 230–231.

Through Aphrodite's unanswered questions, the poet ventriloquizes the background story at a second remove in the past, by recalling a point in time when all this had occurred already. In this prooemial position, the prayer type which invites a deity's help by recalling her past benefaction (*da quia dedisti*)⁹⁵ doubles as the introduction of a character—Sappho—who turns out to need no introduction. Through its lack of specificity and its reference to several, equally unspecified past occasions as well as to its eternally present one, fr.1 makes for an excellent presentation of Sappho as *persona amans* before the specifics of her desire, its concrete iterations, her love for this or that person, and the rest of her *vita in versi* are filled in.⁹⁶ In a prologue of sorts, the reader is introduced to Sappho as a character and to her fundamental relationship with the goddess of love before being told of the many stories that involve her.

The liminality of fr.1 *qua* 1 is further emphasised by its subtle atemporality. The poem is suspended between a repeated past that is called on to reflect onto the present and yet another repetition of that past in the immediate future, with *vôv* (25) situating the poem in the moment just before the hoped-for reappearance of Aphrodite and her ensuing, renewed support. This moment could be any time, indeed every time, reverberating through each amorous node in the corpus; just as easily, it recapitulates what the reader might take to be the story—or indeed the nature—of Sappho as embodied in her verses. Encountered in a prooemial position, fr.1 is poised between the actual future represented by the rest of the collection and the envisaged past recalled by Aphrodite, echoing (and thereby reinforcing) the readers' existing notions about Sappho as they step over the threshold into her poetry.

This position also brings into sharper relief the indeterminacy—and therefore the open-endedness—of the prayer in

⁹⁵ See S. Pulleyn, *Prayer in Greek Religion* (Oxford 1997) 17 and *passim*.

⁹⁶ For a similar indeterminacy in fr.31 see Lefkowitz, in *Reading Sappho* 32–34.

the final stanza. Nothing explicitly restricts the request to “fulfil as many things as the heart longs to be fulfilled for me” (26–27) and the personal involvement invited by σύμμαχος ἔσσο (28) to the amatory sphere; the shift between Aphrodite’s love-themed questioning and the first-person’s resolutely general prayer may indicate redirection as much as acquiescence. If seen in this light, as Andrea Rodighiero suggests to me, the alliance invited by the closing adonian can be read as poetic no less than erotic. With fr.1 acting as a proem to the corpus, Sappho can be invoking Aphrodite’s cooperation much as one could invoke the Muses’; the rich treasure of poetry that follows testifies to the prayer’s success and validates the poet as divinely sanctioned, placing the corpus itself—like Sappho as a character and the stories she tells—under Aphrodite’s patronage.⁹⁷

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