



Did Sappho and Alcaeus Ever Meet?

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Did Sappho and Alcaeus ever meet? Symmetries of myth and ritual in performing the songs of ancient Lesbos

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Myth and ritual tend to be segregated from one another in classical studies.¹ A contributing cause is a general lack of sufficient internal evidence concerning the relationship of myth and ritual in ancient Greek society. Another contributing cause is a failure to consider the available comparative evidence. This situation has led to an overly narrow understanding of myth and ritual as concepts - and to the emergence of a false dichotomy between these two narrowed concepts. A sustained anthropological approach can help break down this dichotomy.² Applying such an approach, I have argued that myth is actually an aspect of ritual in situations where a given myth comes to life in performance - and where that performance counts as part of a ritual.³ I propose to develop this argument further here by considering mythological themes evoked in singing the songs of Sappho and Alcaeus in various ritual contexts. I will focus on themes involving Aphrodite and Dionysus, which will be relevant to the question that I ask in the title: did Sappho and Alcaeus ever meet?⁴

As I write this, the very idea that the songs of Sappho and Alcaeus were sung in ritual contexts is not to be found in most standard works on these songs.⁵ But there are telling examples of such contexts, two of which stand out. One is the *choros* and the other is the *kōmos*.

I start with a working definition of the *choros*: it is a group of male or female performers who sing and dance a given song within a space (real or notional) that is sacred to a divinity or to a constellation of divinities.⁶ [[211|212]] In the case of Sappho, her songs were once

¹ GM 3–4.

² Bierl 2003:105–107; Yatromanolakis 2003.

³ PH 30–33, 66–68; Bierl 2003:105n51, 106n52.

⁴ The first time I raised this question was in a lecture delivered 3 27 1996 at King’s College, University of London. I owe Michael Silk, who was my generous host, special thanks for his encouragement.

⁵ Notable exceptions are Gentili 1985 / 1988 and Yatromanolakis 2003. Cf. also Lardinois 1994 and 1996.

⁶ PP 53–54, with extensive references to my earlier work and to Calame 1977 / 2001; Bierl 2003:98–101.

performed by women singing and dancing within such a space.⁷ And the divinity most closely identified with most of her songs is Aphrodite.⁸

I now proceed to a working definition of the *kōmos*: it is a group of male performers who sing and dance a given song on a festive occasion that calls for the drinking of wine.⁹ The combination of wine and song expresses the ritual communion of those participating in the *kōmos*. This communion creates a bonding of the participants with one another and with the divinity who makes the communion sacred, that is, Dionysus.¹⁰ To the extent that the *kōmos* is a group of male performers who sing and dance in a space (real or notional) that is sacred to Dionysus, it can be considered a subcategory of the *choros*.

Back when Sappho is thought to have flourished in Lesbos, around 600 BCE, we expect that her songs would be performed by women in the context of the *choros*. Around the same time in Lesbos, the songs of Alcaeus would be performed by men in the context of the *kōmos*. This context is signaled by the use of the verb *kōmazein* ‘sing and dance in the *kōmos*’, which is actually attested in one of his songs (Alcaeus F 374.1).

There is an overlap, however, in performing the songs attributed to Sappho. As I will argue, such songs could be performed not only by women in a *choros* but also by men in a *kōmos*.

A typical context for the *kōmos* is the symposium.¹¹ Accordingly, at this early point in my argumentation, I find it convenient to use the general term symptotic in referring to the context of the *kōmos*. At a later point, however, I will need to use the more specific term comastic. That is because the ancient symposium, in all its attested varieties, could accommodate other kinds of singing and dancing besides the kinds we find attested for the *kōmos*.¹² [[212|213]]

For now there is one basic fact to keep in mind about the term symptotic. Dionysus is the god of the symposium. So the symptotic songs attributed to Alcaeus must be connected somehow to Dionysus. It is not enough to say, however, that Dionysus is the symptotic god. The

⁷ PH 371; PP 87.

⁸ PP 96–103; N 2007; cf. Gentili 1988:216–222.

⁹ For the *kōmos*, see in general Bierl 2001 ch. 2 pp. 300–361; also Pütz 2003 and the review by Bierl 2005. See also Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:220, especially their p. 228 on Philostratus *Imagines* 1.2.298: as they argue, the detail given there about the participation of women in the rituals of the *kōmos* is anachronistic from the standpoint of the archaic and even the classical periods.

¹⁰ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:230.

¹¹ PP 85; N 2004:31n17.

¹² In my earlier work, I used the more general word symptotic even in contexts where the more specific word comastic would have made a better fit.

essence of Dionysus is not only *sympotic*. It is also *theatrical*. Dionysus is also the god of theater. So the question arises, how does the theatrical essence of Dionysus connect to the sympotic songs attributed to Alcaeus?

In search of an answer, I begin by focusing on the role of Dionysus as the presiding god of the festival of the City Dionysia in Athens. This festive occasion was the primary setting for Athenian state theater.¹³ Such a role of Dionysus as the presiding god of theater is parallel to his role as the presiding god of the symposium.¹⁴ That is because the symposium of Dionysus, like the theater of Dionysus, was a festive occasion for the acting out of roles by way of song and dance.¹⁵ And the Greek word that signals such a festive acting out of roles is *mimēsis*.¹⁶ In terms of this word, the *sympotic Dionysus is simultaneously a mimetic Dionysus*. In this sense, the songs of Alcaeus are not only *sympotic*: they are also *mimetic* and even *quasi-theatrical*.

As I have argued elsewhere, the songs of Alcaeus were once performed in a quasi-theatrical setting, visualized as a festive occasion that takes place in a sacred space set aside for festivals.¹⁷ There once existed such a sacred space, shared by a confederation of cities located on the island of Lesbos. The confederation was headed by the city of Mytilene, which dominated the other cities on the island. And the name of the federal sacred space shared by all these cities was *Messon*, which means ‘the middle space’. The exact location of *Messon* has been identified by Louis Robert, primarily on the basis of epigraphical evidence: ancient *Messon* was the same place that is known today as *Mesa*.¹⁸ In the Greek language as spoken today, this name *Mesa* derives from the neuter plural of *meson* ‘middle’ just as the ancient name *Messon* derived from the neuter singular *messon* ‘middle’ (the double *-ss-* was characteristic of the ancient Aeolic [[213|214]] dialects of Lesbos). True to its name, this place *Messon / Mesa* is in fact located in the middle of the island.

Songs 129 and 130 of Alcaeus refer to *Messon*.¹⁹ The wording of these songs describes this place as a *temenos* ‘sacred space’ that is *xunon* ‘common’ to all the people of Lesbos (F 129.1–3), and it is sacred to three divinities in particular: (1) Zeus, (2) an unnamed goddess who is evidently Hera, and (3) Dionysus (F 129.3–9).²⁰ Of particular interest is the epithet applied to

¹³ PH 384–404. For Dionysus in Greek tragedy, see in general Bierl 1991.

¹⁴ PP 218.

¹⁵ PP 84–86.

¹⁶ PP 55, especially with reference to Aristotle *Poetics* 1448b17 and *Rhetoric* 1.1371a21.

¹⁷ N 2007.

¹⁸ Robert 1960; N 1993.

¹⁹ N 1993.

²⁰ N 1993.

Dionysus, *ōmēstēs* ‘eating raw flesh’ (F 129.9: Ζόννυσσον ὠμήσταν). As we will see later, this epithet is relevant to the myths and rituals of Dionysus in Lesbos.²¹

Given this background, I return to my question: how are the *symptotic* songs of Alcaeus *mimetic* and even *quasi-theatrical*? In these songs, as I argued elsewhere, there is a variety of roles acted out by the ‘I’ who figures as the speaker. The roles may be either *integrated with* or *alienated from* the community that is meant to hear the performances of these songs. Both the integration and the alienation may be expressed as simultaneously political and personal, and the personal feelings frequently show an erotic dimension - either positive or negative. Even in songs that dwell on feelings of alienation, however, the overall context is nevertheless one of integration. Alcaeus figures as a citizen of Mytilene who became alienated from his city in his own lifetime and was forced to take refuge in the federal sacred space called Messon - only to become notionally reintegrated with his community after he died, receiving the honors of a cult hero within this same sacred space.²²

The combined evidence of Songs 129 and 130 of Alcaeus is most revealing in this regard. The speaker expresses his alienation as he tells about his exile from his native city of Mytilene (F 129.12; F 130.16–19, 23–27) and about his finding a place of refuge at Messon, described here as a no-man’s-land, *eskhatiai*, far removed from city life (F 130.24: φεύγων ἐσχατίασ’). In this negative context, we see a place of alienation, and the speaker says he ‘abides’ there, *oikeîn*, all by himself (F 130.25: οἶος ἐοίκησα). On the other hand, this same place is where the speaker says the people of Lesbos celebrate their ‘reunions’, *sunodoi* (F 130.30: συνόδοισι). [[214|215]] In this positive context, we now see a place of integration, and the speaker goes on to say once again that he ‘abides’ there, *oikeîn* (F 130.31: οἶκημ<μ>ι). This place is Messon, which the words of Alcaeus describe as a *temenos* ‘sacred space’ that is *xunon* ‘common’ to all the people of Lesbos (F 129.2–3: τέμενος μέγα | ξῦνον). To be contrasted with this positive context is the negative context of this same *temenos* ‘sacred space’ (F 130.28: τέμ[ε]νος θέων): in this negative context, as we saw earlier, the words of Alcaeus describe this space as a lonely place where he ‘abides’, *oikeîn*, all by himself (F 130.25: οἶος ἐοίκησα). But this same lonely place is where the speaker says he encounters a chorus of beautiful young women in the act of singing and dancing (F 130.31–35). I repeat, this place is Messon, which the words of Alcaeus describe as a *temenos* ‘sacred space’ that is *xunon* ‘common’ to all the people of Lesbos (F 129.2–3: τέμενος μέγα | ξῦνον).²³

Such sustained balancing between the themes of alienation and integration in this context of the *temenos* ‘sacred space’ at Messon points to an overarching pattern of integration, and a sign of this integration is the reference in Song 130 of Alcaeus to a chorus of beautiful

²¹ For more on this epithet *ōmēstēs* ‘eating raw flesh’, see Henrichs 1981.

²² This paragraph is a summary of the arguments presented in N 1993 and N 2007.

²³ Robert 1960, N 1993.

young women shown in the act of singing and dancing. As I have argued elsewhere, this reference is really a cross-reference to a form of choral performance that is typical of the songs of Sappho.²⁴ In terms of this argument, the *temenos* ‘sacred space’ at Messon was actually a setting for the performances of songs attributed not only to Alcaeus but also to Sappho.²⁵ That is, Sappho figures as a lead performer of choral song and dance at Messon.²⁶

In brief, then, the sacred complex of Messon in Lesbos is the historical context for understanding the mimetic and even quasi-theatrical characteristics of the songs of Alcaeus, and the same can be said about the songs of Sappho.²⁷ [[215|216]]

While Alcaeus speaks as the lead singer of a *kōmos*, Sappho speaks as the lead singer of a *choros*. This choral role of Sappho is ignored in most standard modern works on Sappho and Alcaeus.²⁸ In the songs of Sappho, the ‘I’ may represent a lead singer who can speak directly to a presiding divinity on behalf of the whole *choros*, as we see in Song 1 of Sappho. Further, the ‘I’ may also represent that divinity speaking back to the lead singer and, by extension, to the whole group attending and participating in the performance of the song. Within the framework of that song, the lead singer becomes identified with Aphrodite by virtue of performing as the prima donna of a *choros*. And there are also many other roles played out by the speaking ‘I’ in the songs of Sappho. For example the ‘I’ may be Sappho speaking in the first

²⁴ N 1993, with reference to the women’s choral event of the *Kallisteia*.

²⁵ N 1993 and N 2007, with further analysis of the *Kallisteia*.

²⁶ N 2007, especially with reference to *Greek Anthology* (9.189) and the comments of Page 1955.168n4.

²⁷ Commenting on my overall analysis of Alcaeus F 129 and F 130, Anton Bierl (*per litteras* 8 22 2006) agrees that these fragments reveal a quasi-theatrical interaction of Alcaeus as a solo male performer with an ensemble of choral female performers celebrating the feast of the *Kallisteia* (more on which in N 2007). Such interaction, as Bierl notes, is distinctly Dionysiac. In F 129, we see the persona of Alcaeus praying to the gods - including Dionysus (*omēstēs*) - to help destroy an enemy described in grotesque comic terminology that is evidently Dionysiac in provenance (as Bierl also notes, *phusgōn* ‘pot-belly’ at F 129.21 is evocative of a “padded dancer” or “Dickbauchtänzer”). In F 130, there is a Dionysiac theme at work in the image of the alienated man living alone in a desolate periphery and interacting in that role with a chorus representing the women of Lesbos competing at the festive event of the *Kallisteia*. I draw attention to a word referring to the ritual ululation of these women, *olologē* (F 130.20), which is characteristic of choral performance (N 1993:222; Gentili 1985:220, 306n30). As Bierl notes, this choral cry could have a specifically Dionysiac reference (as in Euripides *Bacchae* 24 and 689; cf. Seaford 1996:151). In F 129, where the speaker prays to the gods - including Dionysus (*omēstēs*) - to release both his community and himself from troubles and cares, the context of this prayer matches the meaning of a cult epithet of Dionysus, *luaíos* ‘the releaser’, as analyzed by Plutarch (*On containing anger* 462b). I will have more to say about this epithet at a later point in my argumentation.

²⁸ Again, a notable exception is Gentili 1985 / 1988.

person to a bride or to a bridegroom in the second person - or about them in the third person.²⁹

So also in the songs of Alcaeus, the 'I' may play out a variety of roles. Primarily, the 'I' is Alcaeus speaking in the first person to his comrades in the second person - or about them in the third person. Secondly, however, the 'I' may play roles that are distinct from Alcaeus. For example, one song that is explicitly attributed to him starts with the 'I' of a female speaker, who speaks of the sound of a mating-call from a stag that lingers in the heart of a hind (F 10B).³⁰

From what we have seen so far, the sacred space of Messon was a stage, as it were, for not one but two kinds of quasi-theatrical performance: one kind was the symptotic performance of the songs of Alcaeus, while the other was the choral performance of the songs of Sappho.³¹ [[216|217]]

With this observation in place, I have come to the end of my brief overview of the songs of Alcaeus as performed in contexts appropriate to a *kōmos*. So I have reached a point where I can begin my argumentation concerning an overlap with the songs of Sappho as performed in contexts appropriate to a *choros*. I am now ready to argue that the songs of Sappho could be performed not only by women or girls in a *choros* but also by men or boys in a *kōmos*.

To argue for such an overlap is to argue for a symmetry between the profane and the sacred in the songs of Alcaeus and Sappho, despite what appears at first to be a disconnectedness between these two sets of songs:

Behind the appearances of [...] disconnectedness between the songs of Alcaeus and Sappho is a basic pattern of connectedness in both form and content. This pattern is a matter of symmetry. In archaic Greek poetry, symmetry is achieved by balancing two opposing members of a binary opposition, so that one member is marked and the other member is unmarked; while the marked member is exclusive of the unmarked, the unmarked member is inclusive of the marked, serving as the actual basis of inclusion. Such a description suits the working relationship between the profane and the sacred in the songs of Alcaeus and Sappho. What is sacred about these songs is the divine basis of their performance in a festive setting, that is, at festivals sacred to gods. What is profane about these songs is the human basis of what they express in that same setting. We see in these songs genuine expressions of human experiences, such as feelings of love, hate, anger, fear, pity, and so on. These experiences, though they are unmarked in everyday settings, are marked in festive settings. In other words, the symmetry of the profane and the sacred in the songs of

²⁹ This paragraph summarizes the argumentation in PP 99 and N 2007.

³⁰ N 2007.

³¹ N 2007.

Alcaeus and Sappho is a matter of balancing the profane as the marked member against the sacred as the unmarked member in their opposition to each other; while the profane is exclusive of the sacred, the sacred is inclusive of the profane, serving as the actual basis of inclusion.³²

This formulation has a converse. Whereas the sacred includes the profane in festive situations, it can be expected to exclude the profane in non-festive situations. That is, in non-festive situations the sacred is marked and the profane is unmarked. Only in festive situations does the sacred become the unmarked member in its opposition with the profane. Only in festive situations does the sacred include the profane. Once the festival is over, the sacred can once again wall itself off from the profane.

The festive balancing of the sacred and the profane is relevant to questions of morality and decorum. Such questions are pointedly raised in [[217|218]] the sympotic songs of Alcaeus, which display morally incorrect as well as correct ways of speaking and behaving in general.³³ Despite such displays, however, the incorrect aspects of these songs remain subordinated to the overall moral correctness of the symposium as a festive ritual made sacred by the notional presence of the god Dionysus.³⁴

An analogous observation can be made about vase paintings featuring the god of the symposium, Dionysus himself. Vase painters conventionally depict this god as a morally correct and decorous figure even in settings where his own closest attendants abandon themselves to morally incorrect and indecorous behavior. We find striking illustrations in pictures of satyrs, mythologized Dionysiac attendants whom vase painters conventionally depict in the act of committing various wanton sexual acts.³⁵ By contrast, such depictions generally show Dionysus himself in a different light: the god maintains a stance of decorum amidst all the indecorous wantonness of his attendants.³⁶

Likewise in sympotic songs, we find a festive balance between the sacred and the profane, though the profanities seem to be less pronounced. To illustrate such balancing, I

³² N 2007, with reference to PH 6. On the terms marked and unmarked, see PH 5–8.

³³ N 2004:46–48.

³⁴ N 2004.

³⁵ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:231. They point out an interesting contrast: whereas the wanton male attendants of Dionysus are depicted as beasts, that is, as satyrs, the wanton female attendants of the god are depicted simply as women - even in their most wanton engagements with satyrs. For a traditional visualization of satyrs interacting with Bacchic women, see Cornutus *On the nature of the gods* 60 ed. Lang. I will have more to say later about this passage. (In my overall formulation, I have used the word satyr only as a general term. In another project, I hope to refine the terminology.)

³⁶ I note with interest the relevant observation of Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:231n108: “The genitals of Dionysus never seem to be visible on archaic Attic pottery.”

highlight the inclusion of songs typical of Sappho in sympotic songs sung by men and boys. A case in point is Song 2 of Sappho. We have two attested versions of the closure of this song. In the version inscribed on the so-called Florentine ostrakon dated to the third century BCE, at lines 13–16, the last word is οἶνοχόεισα ‘pouring wine’, referring to Aphrodite herself in the act of pouring not wine but nectar. In the “Attic” version of these lines as quoted by Athenaeus (11.463e), on the other hand, the wording after οἶνοχοῦσα ‘pouring wine’ continues with τούτοις τοῖς ἑταίροις ἔμοις γε καὶ σοῖς ‘for these my (male) companions [*hetairoi*], such as they are, as well as for your [[218|219]] (male divine) companions [= Aphrodite’s]’.³⁷ At a later point in my argumentation, we will see that this kind of sympotic closure is compatible with the singing of Sappho’s songs by men and boys at Athenian symposia (Aelian via Stobaeus 3.29.58). As we will also see, choral songs typical of Sappho could be included in sympotic songs typical of Alcaeus.

Within the songs of Alcaeus, the choral figure of Sappho could appear decorous - even sacred. A notable example is this fragment:

ἰόπλοκ’ ἄγνα μελλιχόμειδε Σάπφοι
 You with strands of hair in violet, O holy [(h)agna] one, you with the honey-sweet smile, O
 Sappho!

Alcaeus F 384

As I argued in earlier work, the wording that describes the choral figure of Sappho here is fit for a queenly goddess.³⁸ For example, the epithet (*h*)agna ‘holy’ is elsewhere applied to the goddess Athena (Alcaeus F 298.17) and to the *Kharites* ‘Graces’ as goddesses (Sappho F 53.1, 103.8; Alcaeus F 386.1). As for the epithet *ioplokos* ‘with strands of hair in violet’, it is elsewhere applied as a generic epithet to the Muses themselves (Bacchylides 3.17). In the overall context of all her songs identifying her with Aphrodite herself, Sappho appears here as the very picture of that goddess.

Such appearances, however, can be deceiving. The aura of the sacred and the decorous as externalized in choral songs typical of Sappho can no longer be the same once these songs make contact with the profane and the indecorous as externalized in sympotic songs typical of Alcaeus. The dialogic personality of Sappho speaking in the protective context of songs sung by women or girls in a *choros* ‘chorus’ will be endangered in the unprotected context of songs sung by men or boys in a symposium or, more specifically, in a Dionysiac *kōmos*. In such unprotected contexts, even the honor of Sappho as a proper woman will be called into question.

³⁷ On the relevance of this wording to questions of genre, see Yatromanolakis 2004:65. On the “Attic” transmission of the sympotic songs of Alcaeus, see N 2004:37–41.

³⁸ N 2007; see also Gentili 1985 / 1988.

Such a situation arises in a fragment of poetry quoted by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1.1367a) and generally attributed to Sappho (F 137). The fragment reveals a dialogue in song - a duet, as it were. This musical dialogue features, on one side, Alcaeus in the act of making sly sexual advances on Sappho and, on the other side, Sappho in the act of trying to protect her honor by cleverly [[219|220]] fending off the predatory words of Alcaeus. Ancient scholia interpret Aristotle to mean that it was Sappho who composed this dialogue in song, and that the song is representing Alcaeus in the act of addressing her.³⁹ Modern experts tend to agree.⁴⁰ I will argue, however, for the opposite: that the notional composer of this dialogue in song was Alcaeus, and that the song is representing Sappho in the act of responding to him. Here is the dialogue as quoted by Aristotle:

τὰ γὰρ αἰσχρὰ αἰσχύνονται καὶ λέγοντες καὶ ποιοῦντες καὶ μέλλοντες, ὥσπερ καὶ Σαπφῶ
πεποίηκεν, εἰπόντος τοῦ Ἄλκαίου

θέλω τι εἰπῆν, ἀλλά με κωλύει
αἰδῶς,
αἰ δ' ἦχος ἐσθλῶν ἴμερον ἢ καλῶν
καὶ μή τι εἰπῆν γλῶσσ' ἐκύκα κακόν
αἰδῶς κέν σε οὐκ εἶχεν ὄμματ',
ἀλλ' ἔλεγες περὶ τῷ δικαίῳ.

Men are ashamed to say, to do, or to intend to do shameful things. That is exactly the way Sappho composed her words when Alcaeus said:

{He:} I want to say something to you, but I am prevented by
shame [*aidōs*] ...

{She:} But if you had a desire for good and beautiful things
and if your tongue were not stirring up something bad to say,
then shame would not seize your eyes
and you would be speaking about the just and honorable thing to do.

“Sappho” F 137 via the quotation of Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.1367a

The meter of the lines in this passage is typical of a pattern found in the songs of Alcaeus:

x-u---uu-u-

This Alcaic meter is not to be found in songs attributed to Sappho. One modern expert has tried to explain this apparent anomaly by arguing that “she [= Sappho] chose it [= the

³⁹ Collection of relevant comments in the scholia: Campbell 1982:152 at “Sappho” F 137.

⁴⁰ An example: Campbell 1982:153n1.

Alcaic meter] because it was, in general, a favourite metre of her ‘correspondent’, and, in particular, the metre of the poem to which she is replying.”⁴¹ [[220|221]]

Such an explanation is based on the assumption that Alcaeus and Sappho were simply two competing composers. This assumption leads to two alternative ways of interpreting the lyric exchange quoted by Aristotle:

(a) “... that the first part of the quotation [...] comes from a poem by Alcaeus; the remainder [...] from Sappho’s rejoinder.”⁴²

(b) “... that the quotations in Aristotle come from a poem composed by Sappho in the form of a dialogue between herself and Alcaeus.”⁴³

Either way we take it, “some have objected that, since Sappho appears to presuppose that her audience is aware of Alcaeus’ words [...], it is hard to conceive of any but artificial arrangements for the presentation of the two poems to the public: were both presented, each by its own poet, to the same audience on different occasions?”⁴⁴

The impression of “artificial” arrangements is shaped by the same assumption: that Alcaeus and Sappho were competing composers. In terms of my argument, however, we are dealing here not with competing songs composed by competing composers but with competing traditions in the actual performance of these songs. A survey of singing traditions around the world reveals a vast variety of comparable “boy-meets-girl” songs of courtship or pseudo-courtship. Some of these traditions feature musical dialogues between the lovers or would-be lovers, and there is a vast variety of scenarios, as it were, for success or failure in such ritualized games of love: a case in point is the Provençal lyric tradition of the *pastorela*, as I noted in earlier work.⁴⁵ Within the Greek lyric traditions themselves, another case in point is the “Cologne Epode” of Archilochus (P.Colon. 7511; F 196A ed. West, F S478 ed. Page).⁴⁶ It is most noteworthy that the setting of the first-person narrative of the Cologne Epode of Archilochus is a *temenos* ‘sacred space’, as we know from a poem of Dioscorides in the *Greek Anthology* (7.351).⁴⁷

⁴¹ Page 1955.107.

⁴² Page 1955.106.

⁴³ Page 1955.108.

⁴⁴ Page 1955.108.

⁴⁵ PH 399.

⁴⁶ PH 399–400.

⁴⁷ N 1993:222n5, with further references.

In Greek lyric traditions, the dialogic language of love can come to life even in situations where the first-person 'I' is talking to a second-person 'you' who does not talk back, as in Song 31 of Sappho.⁴⁸ [[221|222]]

I highlight a point of comparison in the popular music of several decades ago as of this writing: it is a song entitled "Oh, Pretty Woman," composed by Roy Orbison with Bill Dees and performed by Roy Orbison, whose recording goes back to 1964 in Nashville, Tennessee. This is a song of a speaking 'I' talking his way through a tortured declaration of passionate love for a pretty woman who never talks back. The pretty woman walks on by without stopping to listen to the singer's plaintive song of unrequited love. But then, most unexpectedly, she turns around and walks back to him. And it happens at the precise moment when he despairs of ever meeting her. Just as the song is reaching an end, the pretty woman who has been walking away from him is now all of a sudden walking back to him. What I find most remarkable about this song is that everything we hear happening in it happens while the speaking 'I' is singing to the pretty woman:

Pretty woman walkin down the street
Pretty woman, the kind I'd like to meet
Pretty woman, I don't believe you
You're not the truth
No one could look as good as you
Mercy

Pretty woman, won't you pardon me
Pretty woman, I couldn't help but see
Pretty woman, and you look lovely as can be
Are you lonely just like me?
... rrr ...

Pretty woman, stop a while
Pretty woman, talk a while
Pretty woman, give your smile to me
Pretty woman, yeah, yeah, yeah
Pretty woman, look my way
Pretty woman, say you'll stay with me

⁴⁸ N 2007.

Cause I need you
I'll treat you right
Come with me baby
Be mine tonight

Pretty woman, don't walk on by
Pretty woman, don't make me cry
Pretty woman, don't walk away
OK
[[222|223]]

If that's the way it must be, OK
I guess I'll go on home, it's late
There'll be tomorrow night

But wait, what do I see?
Is she walking back to me?
Yeah, she's walking back to me
O-oh
Pretty woman.

Since the voice of the pretty woman who is 'walkin down the street' is not heard in response, her character is in question. When the 'I' tells this woman that she is 'the kind I'd like to meet', does that wording make her the perfect woman or just a streetwalker who is 'walkin down the street' - or both? In the beginning, the pretty woman is idealized. She looks too good to be true: 'I don't believe you | You're not the truth | No one could look as good as you'. Words fail to express fully her loveliness: 'you look lovely as can be'. But, despite all these worshipful words of admiration for the pretty woman, she is in danger of becoming a profanity by the time the song reaches the end: the streetwalker 'walkin down the street' who has been implored not to 'walk on by' but to 'stop a while' and to 'talk a while' will now be seen in the act of 'walkin back to me'. And her character can be called into question precisely because she is about to come into contact with the questionable character of the 'I' who is singing to her. The 'I' had started reverently enough by addressing the pretty woman in the mode of a worshipful admirer. And, for a while, the wording continued to be reverent, but then the undertone of irreverence set in. The cry of 'Mercy' at the end of the first stanza already sounds less like an admiring exclamation and more like a predatory growl, which then devolves

further into a non-verbal ‘...rrr...’ at the end of the second stanza. By now the sound resembles the mating call of a tomcat on the prowl.

In the musical meeting between Alcaeus and Sappho, by contrast, Sappho gets to talk back to Alcaeus. In their dialogue, she gets a chance to defend her character. It is not clear, though, just how successful such a musical defense can be. After all, the anonymous woman in the dialogue of the Cologne Epode of Archilochus likewise gets a chance to talk back to the speaker - and look what happens to her character: it will be ruined forever as the dialogue proceeds.

Here is the way it happens in the musical meeting of the Cologne Epode. As we start reading the fragment of the poem as we have it, we find [[223|224]] that the female speaker is already being directly quoted, as it were, by the male speaker. The fragment fails to show how the dialogue had started, and so our reading has to start in the middle of things, at a point where the dialogue is already in progress. But the sense is clear enough. The first five surviving verses show the female speaker already talking back to the male speaker. Her words are being quoted by the male speaker, who then marks in his first-person narrative the end of his quotation of her words: ‘such things she spoke’ (verse 6). Then he speaks back to her, quoting what he says (verses 7–27), but not before he signals in his first-person narrative the beginning of his self-quotation: ‘I answered back’ (again, verse 6). After he finishes what he says to the female speaker, the male speaker marks in his first-person narrative the end of his self-quotation: ‘such things I spoke’ (verse 28). And then he proceeds to narrate in the first person his success in winning the sexual favors of the woman he has just addressed (verses 28–35). That is how the narration in the Cologne Epode ostensibly ruins the woman’s reputation. In retrospect, however, in light of what is eventually narrated, her reputation has already been ruined from the very start. That is, she has ruined her own reputation by what she has already said at the very start, back when she is quoted as speaking in the first person (verses 1–5).

By contrast, in the musical meeting between Alcaeus and Sappho, we find no first-person narrative embedding the dialogue that is taking place between the first-person male speaker and the first-person female speaker. In this case, then, the *mimēsis* is more direct. And the dialogue is therefore more theatrical, more musical. In the case of the Cologne Epode, by contrast, the dialogue is less theatrical - and less musical - because the *mimēsis* is less direct. In that case the *mimēsis* of the dialogue between man and woman is embedded within the overall *mimēsis* of a first-person narrator who plays the role of the indecorous man reminiscing about his sexual conquest of the once-decorous pretty woman. [[224|225]]

The theatricality of a musical meeting between Alcaeus and Sappho is blurred, however, for those who assume that these two figures were simply “writers,” as we see from this sampling of rival explanations:

(a) “A poem by two writers is hard to imagine in the sixth century.”⁴⁹

(b) “Aristotle’s text [...] implies either two poems by two writers or one poem (in dialogue-form) by one writer.”⁵⁰

The theatricality stays blurred even if one “writer” - either Alcaeus or Sappho - is imagined as the composer of a functioning dialogue. Those who choose to imagine such a writer need to impose restrictions, as we see in the argument “that the poem is not a dialogue between Alcaeus and Sappho but between a man and a woman, or rather between a suitor and a rather unwelcoming maiden.”⁵¹ In other words, a dialogue between would-be lovers seems imaginable only if neither Alcaeus nor Sappho is participating in the dialogue. It is assumed that Alcaeus and Sappho could not represent Sappho and Alcaeus respectively in such dialogic roles. After all, these figures are the equivalent of what we think is a writer. Surely a writer cannot be transformed into some kind of singing actor!

This is to misunderstand the medium of Alcaeus and Sappho, which as I have argued is fundamentally mimetic. The first person of Alcaeus and the first person of Sappho are ever engaged in roles of interaction with other persons. In terms of my overall argument, that is because the medium of Alcaeus and Sappho is not only mimetic. It is theatrical.

Which brings me to the question: did Sappho and Alcaeus ever meet? My answer is: yes, there was such a meeting - if you think of such a meeting as a staged musical event. Sappho and Alcaeus really did meet on the stage, as it were, of the festival held at Messon in Lesbos. And they could meet not just once but many times, as many times as a seasonally-recurring festival was being celebrated there.

The context for such a musical meeting at Messon, in terms of my overall argumentation, is sympotic. As such, this context is the source of a major problem in the transmission of songs attributed to Sappho. The problem has to do with a basic fact concerning sympotic events. The fact is, no woman could attend a symposium. Or, to put it differently, only women of questionable character could be imagined as attending. So a sympotic role for Sappho could not have been performed by Sappho even in the time of Sappho. Rather, such a role would be played out by men or by boys - or perhaps by women of questionable character.

This basic fact about the exclusion of women from symposia is essential for understanding what eventually happened to Sappho’s character - in both the theatrical and the moral senses of the word character. So long as the musical dialogues of Alcaeus and Sappho stayed within the framework [[225|226]] of traditional festivities at Messon, the more playful aspects of Sappho’s character as sung by men or boys in a sympotic context could be

⁴⁹ Bowra 1935 (ed. 1 of *Greek Lyric Poetry*) 234.

⁵⁰ Page 1955.107n1.

⁵¹ Bowra 1961 (ed. 2) 225, following Wilamowitz 1913:41.

counterbalanced by the more serious aspects as sung by women or girls in a choral context. But the overall character of Sappho - let me call it her *role* - became endangered once it slipped away from its native festive environment at Messon. And slip away it did.

The lyric role of Sappho, symmetrically conjoined with the lyric role of Alcaeus, eventually outgrew its origins in Aeolian Lesbos. It became widely influential in the overall song culture of Aeolian and Ionian elites throughout the Aegean. And we can see clear signs of this influence in the songmaking traditions of Anacreon of Teos.

Anacreon was court poet to Polycrates of Samos, the powerful ruler of an expansive maritime empire in the Aegean world of the late sixth century. As we will see, the lyric role of Sappho was appropriated by the imperial court poetry of Anacreon.

This appropriation can be viewed only retrospectively, however, through the lens of poetic traditions in Athens. That is because the center of imperial power over the Aegean shifted from Samos to Athens when Polycrates the tyrant of Samos was captured and executed by agents of the Persian empire. Parallel to this transfer of imperial power was a transfer of musical prestige, politically engineered by Hipparkhos the son of Peisistratos and tyrant of Athens. Hipparkhos made the powerful symbolic gesture of sending a warship to Samos to fetch Anacreon and bring him to Athens (“Plato” *Hipparkhos* 228c). This way, the Ionian lyric tradition as represented by Anacreon was relocated from its older imperial venue in Samos to a newer imperial venue in Athens. Likewise relocated, as we will see, was the Aeolian lyric tradition as represented by Sappho - and also by Alcaeus.

The new Aegean empire that was taking shape under the hegemony of Athens became the setting for a new era in lyric poetry, starting in the late sixth century and extending through most of the fifth. In this era, Athens became a new stage, as it were, for the performing of Aeolian and Ionian lyric poetry as mediated by the likes of Anacreon. The most public context for such performance was the prestigious Athenian festival of the Panathenaia, where professional monodic singers performed competitively in spectacular restagings of lyric poetry. As we will see later on, the Aeolian and Ionian lyric traditions exemplified by Anacreon figured prominently at this festival. [[226|227]]

For now, however, I turn to another prestigious Athenian festival, the City Dionysia. Starting in the late sixth century and extending through most of the fifth century, the Aeolian and Ionian lyric traditions exemplified by Anacreon also figured prominently in this and other Dionysiac festivals in Athens. Most telling are the references in Athenian Old Comedy to the sympotic singing of Aeolian and Ionian lyric. I cite an example from Aristophanes (F 235 ed. Kassel/Austin), where singing a song of Anacreon at a symposium is viewed as parallel to singing a song of Alcaeus: ἄσον δὴ μοι σκόλιόν τι λαβῶν Ἀλκαίου κ’Ανακρέοντος ‘sing me some

skolion, taking it from Alcaeus or Anacreon'.⁵² Elsewhere, in the *Sympotic Questions* of Plutarch (711d), singing a song of Anacreon at a symposium is viewed as parallel to singing a song of Sappho herself: ὅτε καὶ Σαπφοῦς ἂν ἄδομένης καὶ τῶν Ἀνακρέοντος ἐγὼ μοι δοκῶ καταθέσθαι τὸ ποτήριον αἰδούμενος 'whenever Sappho is being sung, and Anacreon, I think of putting down the drinking cup in awe'.

In general, the Dionysiac medium of the symposium was most receptive to the Aeolian and Ionian lyric traditions exemplified by the likes of Anacreon, Alcaeus, and Sappho. There is an anecdote that bears witness to this reception: it is said that Solon of Athens became enraptured by a song of Sappho as sung by his own nephew at a symposium (Aelian via Stobaeus 3.29.58).⁵³

The correlation of Aeolian lyric with the Ionian lyric of Anacreon in these contexts is relevant to an explicit identification of Anacreon with the Dionysiac medium of the symposium. In a pointed reference, Anacreon is pictured in the lavish setting of a grand symposium hosted by his patron, the tyrant Polycrates, in the heyday of the Ionian maritime empire of Samos. The reference comes from Herodotus (3.121), who pictures Polycrates in the orientalizing pose of reclining on a sympotic couch in the company of his court poet Anacreon: καὶ τὸν Πολυκράτεια τυχεῖν κατακείμενον ἐν ἀνδρεῶνι, παρεῖναι δέ οἱ καὶ Ἀνακρέοντα τὸν Τήϊον 'and he [= a Persian agent] found Polycrates reclining in the men's quarters, and with him was Anacreon of Teos'.⁵⁴ [[227|228]]

The lyric tradition of 'singing Sappho' or 'singing Alcaeus' in Athens, as mediated by the sympotic singing of Anacreon in Samos and thereafter in Athens, would have derived ultimately from the sympotic singing of men and boys in the festive setting of Messon in Lesbos. So the question arises, what happened to the role of Sappho after her lyric tradition was transferred to the Dionysiac media of Athens?

An answer can be found in Athenian Old Comedy. In this Dionysiac medium, as we are about to see, influential lyric models like Sappho become conventional subjects of amusement and even ridicule.⁵⁵

For background, I turn to an argument I offered in earlier work on the phenomenon of reperformance.⁵⁶ In any given song culture, I argued, we can expect that each composition of a

⁵² The word *skolion*, as used in the time of Aristophanes, is a distinctly sympotic term. Details in N 2004:37n31.

⁵³ PP 219. Of relevance are my comments on Song 2 of Sappho at an earlier point in my argumentation.

⁵⁴ Commentary by Urios-Aparisi 1993.54 on the explicitly sympotic features of the description given by Herodotus.

⁵⁵ N 2007.

song is to some degree re-created in each new performance. I argued further that such a process of recomposition-in-performance could re-create not only the given composition itself but also the identity of the composer credited with speaking as the ‘I’ in the notionally original composition. The voice of the composer could even be replaced by the voice of a performer other than the notionally original composer. In short, a reperformed composer could become a recomposed performer.⁵⁷

In making this argument, I concentrated on the Dionysiac medium of the symposium in fifth-century Athens as a primary context for the practice of reperforming the songs of Sappho as well as Alcaeus and other such poetic figures, including Anacreon and even Archilochus. In the case of Sappho and Archilochus in particular, I made the following point about the risks of destabilizing the identities of such figures in the process of recomposition-in-performance:

In the *mimēsis* of a rogue’s persona, as in the case of Archilochus, we may expect an intensification of distinctions between composer and performer in the symposium. A similar point can be made about other personae as well, as in the case of Sappho. We know that Sappho’s songs, like those of Archilochus, were performed at symposia.⁵⁸ [...] The point is, for a male singer to act out a woman’s persona implies a radical reshaping of personality in performance.⁵⁹ [[228|229]]

Even when a composer is speaking in his or her own persona, the reperformance of the speaking ‘I’ in a symposium can lead to a fragmentation of this persona:

Let us reconsider the various songs in which an “author” is speaking through what is understood to be his or her own persona. The variety of situations conjured up even in such appropriated songs may lead to a commensurate variety of speaking personae. In other words, the demands of *mimēsis* may lead toward an intensified multiplicity in ethos even for the author, with the persona of an Archilochus or a Sappho becoming transformed into multiple personalities that fit multiple situations. Just as the performer may be recomposed in multiple ways, so too this multiplicity may be retrojected all the way to the supposedly prototypical composer, the author. A case in point is the persona of Sappho, which becomes refracted into multiple personalities that eventually become distinguished from the “real” poetess in various *Life of Sappho* traditions: one such “fake” Sappho is a lyre-player who reputedly jumped off the cliff of Leukas (Suda σ 108, iv 323 Adler; cf. Strabo 10.2.9 C452), while another is a courtesan (*hetaira*: Aelian *Varia Historia* 12.19, Athenaeus 13.596e), even a prostitute (*publica*: Seneca in *Epistles* 88.37).⁶⁰

⁵⁶ PP 11, 15, 18–20.

⁵⁷ PP 60.

⁵⁸ Survey at PP 219.

⁵⁹ PP 219.

⁶⁰ PP 221.

There is a parallel fragmentation of the persona of Alcaeus. Didymus, an eminent philologist in the late first century BCE who followed the methodology of Aristarchus, attempts to distinguish Alcaeus the poet from an Alcaeus who is merely a lyre-player (scholia to Aristophanes *Women at the Thesmophoria* 162). Further, Quintilian (*Principles of Oratory* 10.1.63) says he is puzzled that Alcaeus the poet mixes high-minded statesmanship with frivolous love affairs.

So the tradition of singing Alcaeus and Sappho exemplifies the model of the recomposed performer. Alcaeus and Sappho are not only being reperformed. They are also being recomposed.

So far, our prime example has been the passage we saw earlier where Aristotle quotes Alcaeus in the act of speaking to Sappho, who then speaks back to Alcaeus. Now I turn to another example:

Λέσβιος Ἀλκαῖος δὲ πόσους ἀνεδέξατο κώμους,
Σαπφοῦς φορμίζων ἡμερόεντα πόθον
γινώσκεις

How many ensembles of comastic singers [*kōmoi*] did Alcaeus of Lesbos greet⁶¹ [[229|230]] as he played out on his lyre a yearning [*pothos*] - lovely⁶² it was - for Sappho - you know how many (such ensembles) there were.

Hermesianax F 7 47–49 (ed. Powell) via Athenaeus 13.598b

This testimony, by way of Hermesianax of Colophon (early third century BCE), indicates that Alcaeus was well known for singing not one but many love songs that were directed at Sappho - and that were performed in the Dionysiac context of the *kōmos*.

There is even further relevant testimony. Anacreon too was known for singing love songs directed at Sappho. Reputedly, Anacreon too loved Sappho. Earlier, in the quotation made by Aristotle, we saw implicit evidence for a musical dialogue between Sappho and Alcaeus. He is singing to her and then she sings back to him. Now we are about to see explicit evidence for another musical dialogue - this time between Sappho and Anacreon.

⁶¹ As leader of the comastic ensemble, Alcaeus here is figured here as ‘greeting’ (*ana-dekhesthai*) the ensemble. In other words, he is figured as organizing a serenade, as it were.

⁶² The epithet *himeroeis* ‘lovely’ describing the *pothos* ‘yearning’ of the poet indicates a reciprocity. The poetry of yearning for the beauty of Sappho is so beautiful as to be reciprocated by yearning for the beauty of that poetry. So the ‘loveliness’ of the *pothos* ‘yearning’ refers both to the love felt by the poet and to the love felt by those who listen to his poetry.

Once again a male singer is singing to Sappho and then she sings back to him. Once again the testimony comes from Hermesianax, in precisely the same context where he had mentioned the love of Alcaeus for Sappho (F 7 47–49 via Athenaeus 13.598b). In that same poem, the reference to the love professed by Alcaeus is immediately followed in that same context by a reference to another love. This time, the poem of Hermesianax refers to the love professed for Sappho by Anacreon, not by Alcaeus, and the wording provides a further relevant detail: that Anacreon was an envious rival of Alcaeus for the love of Sappho (F 7 49–51 via Athenaeus 13.598b–c). The poem of Hermesianax describes Sappho as an *aēdōn* ‘nightingale’ (F 7 49), the most beautiful of all the women of Lesbos, and it goes on to tell how a lovelorn Anacreon often journeyed from Samos to Lesbos in seemingly vain attempts to succeed in winning her love (F 7 50–57 via Athenaeus 13.598c).

After the quotation of the poem by Hermesianax comes to an end in the text of Athenaeus (13.599b), the learned discussion turns to a questioning of what the poet says about Anacreon. It is claimed that Hermesianax made a big mistake by ‘synchronizing’ Anacreon with Sappho: [[230|231]]

ἐν τούτοις ὁ Ἑρμησιάναξ σφάλλεται συγχρονεῖν οἰόμενος Σαπφῶ καὶ Ἀνακρέοντα, τὸν μὲν κατὰ Κῦρον καὶ Πολυκράτην γενόμενον, τὴν δὲ κατ’ Ἀλυάττην τὸν Κροΐσου πατέρα. Χαμαιλέων δ’ ἐν τῷ περὶ Σαπφοῦς καὶ λέγειν τινὰς φησιν εἰς αὐτὴν πεποιῆσθαι ὑπὸ Ἀνακρέοντος τάδε·

σφαίρη δευτέ με πορφυρέη
βάλλων χρυσοκόμης Ἔρωσ
νήνι ποικιλοσαμβάλω
συμπαίζειν προκαλεῖται.
ἢ δ’ (ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ’ εὐκτίτου
Λέσβου) τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην
(λευκὴ γάρ) καταμέμφεται,
πρὸς δ’ ἄλλην τινὰ χάσκει.

καὶ τὴν Σαπφῶ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ταῦτά φησιν εἰπεῖν·

κεῖνον, ὦ χρυσόθρονε Μοῦσ’, ἔνισπες
ῥυθμὸν, ἐκ τᾶς καλλιγύναικος ἐσθλᾶς
Τήιος χώρας ὃν ἄειδε τερπνῶς
πρέσβυς ἀγαυός.

ὅτι δὲ οὐκ ἐστὶ Σαπφοῦς τοῦτο τὸ ἄσμα παντί που δῆλον. ἐγὼ δὲ ἡγοῦμαι παίζειν τὸν Ἑρμησιάνακτα περὶ τούτου τοῦ ἔρωτος. καὶ γὰρ Δίφιλος ὁ κωμωδιοποιὸς πεποίηκεν ἐν Σαπφοῦ δρᾶματι Σαπφοῦς ἔραστὰς Ἀρχίλοχον καὶ Ἰπώνακτα.

In these lines Hermesianax is making a mistake in thinking that Sappho and Anacreon are contemporaries. For he [= Anacreon] lived in the time of Cyrus and Polycrates while she [= Sappho] lived in the time of Alyattes the father of Croesus. But Chamaeleon in his work *On Sappho* [F 26 ed. Wehrli] even says that the following verses were composed by Anacreon and addressed to her [= Sappho]:

Once again with a purple ball I am hit
- it was thrown by the one with the golden head of hair, Eros,
and - with a young girl wearing pattern-woven sandals
- to play with her does he [= Eros] call on me.
But, you see, she is from that place so well settled by settlers,
Lesbos it is. And my head of hair,
you see, it's white, she finds fault with it.
And she gapes at something else - some girl.

Anacreon F 358 in PMG (ed. Page)

He [= Chamaeleon] says that Sappho says back to him [= Anacreon]:

It was that particular song, I tell you, you Muse wearing the golden pattern-weave. Yes, you spoke that particular *humnos*. It came from the noble place of beautiful women, [[231|232]] and the man from Teos sang it. It came from that space. And, as he sang, he did so delightfully, that splendid old man.

Adespota F 35 in PMG (ed. Page)

That this song does not belong to Sappho is clear to everyone. And I think that Hermesianax was simply being witty in talking about this passionate love. Diphilus, the poet of comedy, composed a play called *Sappho* [PCG V F 70 (Kassel–Austin)], in which he made Archilochus and Hipponax lovers of Sappho.

Athenaeus 13.599c

In the context of a learned claim about an ostensible mistake on the part of Hermesianax, we see here another learned claim about another ostensible mistake - this time on the part of Chamaeleon of Heraclea Pontica (fourth / third centuries BCE). In his work *On Sappho* (F 26 ed. Wehrli), Chamaeleon interpreted what we know as Song 358 of Anacreon to be the words of the poet's declaration of love for Sappho.

After quoting the words supposedly spoken by Anacreon in professing his love, Chamaeleon then quotes the words supposedly spoken by Sappho in talking back to Anacreon (*Adespota* 35 = F 953 in PMG ed. Page). An essential point of comparison here is Aristotle's quotation of the words spoken by Sappho in talking back to Alcaeus.

The case of the musical dialogue between Anacreon and Sappho differs in one crucial respect, however, from the corresponding case of the musical dialogue between Alcaeus and Sappho: in the second case, it is clear from the dating of these two figures that they cannot be contemporaries. That is why modern editors assign to the category of “Adespota” the words reportedly spoken by Sappho in response to Anacreon.⁶³

So these words attributed to Sappho are officially declared to be inauthentic. And this modern judgment is in agreement with the ancient judgment expressed in the learned discourse of Athenaeus (13.599c). Modern editors have not dared go so far, however, when they pass judgment on the words reportedly spoken by Sappho in response to Alcaeus, since in this first case the ancient world considered these two particular figures to be contemporaries. That is why the words attributed to Alcaeus and Sappho cannot be so easily dismissed. Or, at least, they cannot be dismissed on the basis of chronological considerations. Accordingly, editors are willing to allow for the possibility that Sappho herself composed such a dialogue, [[232|233]] even though they are generally unwilling to identify the speakers of the dialogue as Alcaeus and Sappho.

An example of this kind of thinking is the opinion expressed by the editor and translator of the Loeb Classical Library version of Alcaeus and Sappho. Here is what he says about Song 137 of “Sappho”: “Perhaps S[appho] wrote a poem in which the identity of the male speaker was unclear, and later biographers identified him falsely as Alc[aeus].”⁶⁴ This editor then goes on to associate such a “false” identification with “the type of error that a Peripatetic writer could make.”⁶⁵ The “error” to which the editor is referring here is the “false” identification of Sappho as a dialogic partner of Anacreon in the works of such “Peripatetics” as Hermesianax and Chamaeleon. By implication, the same “error” is also being committed by the greatest “Peripatetic” of them all, Aristotle himself, who identifies the male speaker in the dialogue of Song 137 of “Sappho” as Alcaeus. So we are left to infer that the dialogue between Alcaeus and Sappho is a mere invention.

I resist this line of thinking. It is unjustified to claim that the likes of Aristotle, Chamaeleon, and Hermesianax invented stories about musical encounters between preclassical poets. I argue, rather, that such stories were part of a musical tradition that shaped the roles of these poets in the performance traditions that preserved the poetry attributed to them. The idea that a figure like Sappho could speak directly to a figure like Alcaeus does not start with

⁶³ In another project, I argue that the wording of “Sappho” in *Adespota* F 35 refers to choral performance in the context of the *Kallisteia* at Messon in Lesbos. The use of the word *humnos* here in referring to such performance is of special interest, as we will see later on when we consider the context of *paideioi humnoi* ‘songs of boys / girls’ in Pindar’s *Isthmian* 2 (line 3).

⁶⁴ Campbell 1982:153.

⁶⁵ Campbell 1982:153.

Aristotle and the Peripatetics. Such an idea can be dated at least as far back as the early fifth century, well over a century before Aristotle.

Here I turn to the evidence of two pictures painted on a red-figure vase of Athenian provenance. This vase, a krater shaped like a *kalathos* and made in Athens sometime in the decade of 480-470 BCE (Munich, Antikensammlungen no. 2416; ARV² 385 [228]), shows on its two sides two paintings attributed to the so-called Brygos Painter.⁶⁶ I will describe these two paintings with reference to the two line drawings I have provided, Image 1 and Image 2.

In Image 1 we see two figures in a pointedly musical scene. The figure on the left is Alcaeus playing a specialized string instrument known as the *barbiton*, while the figure on the right is Sappho playing her own *barbiton*. [[233|234]] The visual duet of Alcaeus and Sappho as rendered by the painter matches in its symmetry the verbal duet of these same figures as quoted by Aristotle. The two figures in the painting are described as follows by a team of art historians:

[They are] side by side in nearly identical dress. But under the transparent clothing of one - a bearded man - the sex is clearly drawn. The other is a woman - her breasts are indicated - but a cloak hides the region of her genitals, apparently distancing her from any erotic context. She wears a diadem, while the hair of her companion is held in a ribbon (*tainia*). Each holds a *barbiton* and seems to be playing. The parallelisms of the two figures, male and female, is unambiguous here. A string of vowels (O O O O O) leaving the man's mouth indicates song. An inscription, finally, gives his name, Alcaeus [ΑΛΚΑΙΟΣ], and indicates the identity of his companion, Sappho [ΣΑΦΟ - sic]. [...] The long garment and the playing of the *barbiton* are [...] connected with Ionian lyric.⁶⁷

The vase on which this image was painted, now housed in Munich, was discovered in the vicinity of the ancient site of Akragas in Sicily (as of 1823, this vase was recorded as part of the Panitteri collection in Agrigento).⁶⁸ As we will now see, the place of discovery is significant.

The diaphanous ankle-length *khitōn* worn by the figure of Alcaeus in this painting is strikingly similar to the diaphanous ankle-length *khitōn* worn by a sculpted marble figure

⁶⁶ The attribution to the Brygos Painter is not absolutely certain: Bell 1995:11n64, with further references. On the dating, see Bell pp. 27-29.

⁶⁷ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:219. Besides the inscriptions indicating Alcaeus and Sappho, there is an inscription between the two figures that reads ΔΑΜΑΚΑΛΟΣ (see ARV² 1573).

⁶⁸ Bell 1995:27.

discovered in 1979 on the Punic island of Motya and known as the “Motya Charioteer.”⁶⁹ Malcolm Bell gives a detailed comparison of the costumes worn by these two figures:⁷⁰

The ankle-length musician’s {*khitōn*} worn by {Alcaeus} is divided into many long and sinuous folds that play over the legs and lower torso while maintaining their volume. These decorative, pleatlike vertical folds are strikingly like the drapery of the charioteer. At the left knee, right calf, and ankles the drapery is modeled by the underlying limbs. The {*xustis*} [= ankle-length *khitōn*] of {Alcaeus} is, in fact, the closest parallel known to me for the drapery of the Motya youth, and it suggests that Attic vase painters could aim for the same [[234|235]] effects as the sculptors, most likely by imitating works that they had seen.⁷¹

Bell shows that both the painted vase and the marble sculpture were custom-made by Athenian artisans sometime in the decade of 480-470 BCE, and that both of these artifacts had been commissioned as artistic trophies intended for members of the dynastic family of the Emmenidai in Akragas - most likely for Xenokrates, tyrant of Akragas, and for Thrasyboulos, his son.⁷² How the vase survived is not known. As for the sculpture, the fact that it was found on the island of Motya leaves some clues. When Carthaginian forces captured and pillaged Akragas in 406 BCE, the statue was evidently carried off to this island; as Bell notes, “this may have been the moment when the face and genitals of the sculpture were intentionally damaged.”⁷³

Linked with the vase and the marble sculpture is a third artistic trophy: it is the song that is Pindar’s *Isthmian 2*. This song was commissioned to celebrate the victory of a four-horse chariot team sponsored by Xenokrates of Akragas in a chariot race that took place at the biennial festival of the Isthmia - most probably it was the festival held in the spring of 476; the same Isthmian victory is also mentioned in Pindar’s *Olympian 2* (lines 49–51), which in turn celebrated the victory of a four-horse chariot team sponsored by the brother of Xenokrates, Theron of Akragas, in the chariot race that took place at the quadrennial festival of the Olympia in the summer of 476.⁷⁴ According to the Pindaric scholia, the reference in Pindar’s *Isthmian 2* (line 3) to *paideioi humnoi* ‘songs of boys / girls’ is actually a reference to the songs of

⁶⁹ Bell 1995:27–30.

⁷⁰ The brackets indicate transliterations that are different from those used by the author.

⁷¹ Bell 1995:11–12. This description of the drapery worn by Alcaeus and the Motya Charioteer is comparable to the visualization of Pentheus as a would-be Bacchant in the *Bacchae* of Euripides. I will analyze the relevant passage in the *Bacchae* at a later point in my argumentation.

⁷² Bell 1995:25–30.

⁷³ Bell 1995:22.

⁷⁴ Bell 1995:16.

Alcaeus, Ibycus, and Anacreon (ταῦτα δὲ τείνει καὶ εἰς τοὺς περὶ Ἄλκαϊον καὶ Ἴβυκον καὶ Ἀνακρέοντα).⁷⁵

In earlier work, I argued that Pindar's *Isthmian 2* associates itself with the eroticism of Aeolian and Ionian lyric poetry - while at the same time distancing itself from the public professionalism of monodic singers who [[235|236]] sang competitively in spectacular restagings of such lyric poetry at the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens.⁷⁶ The professionalism inherent in the singing of such lyric poetry is ostentatiously acknowledged in the wording that opens the song in Pindar's *Isthmian 2* (lines 1–13), which contrasts the 'professional Muse' (*Mousa ergatis*) of its own era with a nostalgically idealized earlier era of non-professional elites who once upon a time sang such lyric poetry for each other at symposia.⁷⁷

Here I return to the argument I started to make at an earlier point concerning the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens. I was saying that this festival was the most public venue for the professional performance of Aeolian and Ionian lyric poetry during the period starting with the late sixth century and extending through most of the fifth. As we now see from the wording in Pindar's *Isthmian 2*, the publicity stemming from such Panathenaic performances must have enhanced exponentially the artistic prestige that this poetry already had as the medium *par excellence* for expressions of elite solidarity at symposia. And the eroticized charisma of such enhanced artistic prestige would have been perceived as distinctly Athenian in provenance.

Pindar's *Isthmian 2* is linked with the Panathenaia not only indirectly, by way of its reference to the Aeolian and Ionian lyric poetry performed at that festival. There is also a direct link, by way of a reference in this song to something else that is Panathenaic and therefore distinctly Athenian in prestige: it is the victory of a four-horse chariot team sponsored by Xenokrates of Akragas in a chariot race that took place at the quadrennial festival of the Panathenaia in Athens (lines 19–22) - most likely at the festival held in the year 474 BCE.⁷⁸ So the lyric poetry of Pindar's *Isthmian 2* is linked with the Panathenaic competitions

⁷⁵ I submit that this reference in Pindar's *Isthmian 2* (line 3) must have included Sappho. As we will see later on, *pais* can mean not only 'boy' but also 'girl' - as in erotic poetry attributed to Sappho.

⁷⁶ PH 340 and 342.

⁷⁷ N 1989.

⁷⁸ Bell 1995:17, 19, 25. This reference in Pindar's *Isthmian 2* to a Panathenaic victory in 474 shows that the song was completed long after the Isthmian victory of 476. Bell p. 18 offers a most useful formulation concerning the synchronization of five Panhellenic festivals, which I summarize as follows. The festivals of the *Olympia* and the *Pythia*, each operating on a four-year cycle and each held in the summer, alternated with each other in the even-numbered years of our calendar, while the festival of the *Isthmia*, operating on a two-year cycle, was held

in chariot racing as well as in [[236|237]] poetry. That is to say, we see here a second Athenian signature in this song, and the prestige inherent in this signature is comparable to the prestige inherent in the Athenian provenance of two other trophies we have been considering - the painted vase now housed in Munich and the marble sculpture of the charioteer found in Motya. All three artifacts - the vase, the statue, and the song - were displays of Athenian artistic prestige that served to enhance the eroticized charisma of the tyrants of Akragas.

Next we turn to Image 2 as painted on the Munich vase. Here we see two figures in a pointedly sympotic scene. The figure on the left is Dionysus, while the figure on the right is a female devotee, that is, a Maenad. Sympotic themes predominate. Dionysus, god of the symposium, is directly facing the Maenad, who appears to be coming under the god's possession, transfixed by his direct gaze. The symmetry of Dionysus and the Maenad is reinforced by the symmetrical picturing of two overtly sympotic vessels, one held by the god and the other, by his newly possessed female devotee: he is holding a *kantharos* while she is holding an *oinokhoē*.⁷⁹ The pairing creates a sort of sympotic symmetry.

Matching the sympotic symmetry of Dionysus and the Maenad in Image 2 is the musical symmetry of Alcaeus and Sappho in Image 1. Both Alcaeus and Sappho are shown in the musical moment of striking all seven strings of the *barbiton* in a sweep of the *plēktron* held in the right hand. Each of the two figures has just executed this masterful instrumental sweep, and now the singing may begin. Alcaeus has already begun to sing, but Sappho has yet to begin. She appears to be waiting for her own turn to sing.

The musical medium of Alcaeus and Sappho as pictured in this painting corresponds to the musical medium of Anacreon as pictured in a set of vase paintings described by art historians as “Anacreontic” in theme.⁸⁰ I focus here on a single point of comparison with these Anacreontic images. It has to do with the string instrument known as the *barbiton*.

As we have just seen, the painting on the Munich vase shows Alcaeus playing a *barbiton* as he sings his song - and it also shows Sappho playing on her own *barbiton* as she waits to begin singing her own song. I now [[237|238]] juxtapose this vase painting with two Anacreontic vase paintings showing Anacreon playing a *barbiton*. On one vase, a red-figure

in the spring of each even-numbered year of our calendar, before the summer games of the Olympia and the Pythia. The festival of the Panathenaia, operating on a four-year cycle, were held in the late summer after the Pythia. The festival of the Nemea, operating on a two-year cycle, was held on odd-numbered years of our calendar, one year before and one year after the festival of the Olympia.

⁷⁹ I offer my thanks to Gloria Ferrari, Kathryn Topper, and Hilda Westervelt for giving me their valuable advice about this painting.

⁸⁰ Price 1990:134: “These scenes, beginning ca. 520-510 and continuing through the mid-fifth century, thus span almost seventy years.”

lekythos (Syracuse 26967), a man wearing a long *khitōn* and a turban is playing a *barbiton*, and the inscribed lettering indicates that he is *Anacreon* (ANAKPEON).⁸¹ On another vase, a red-figure kylix (London, British Museum E 18), a bearded man wearing a cloak is again playing a *barbiton*, and again the inscribed lettering indicates that he is *Anacreon* (ANAKPEON).⁸² In the second of these two images, the singer playing the *barbiton* holds a pose suggestive of movement in a dance.

Also relevant are fragments of a krater dated approximately to 500 BCE and attributed to the Kleophrades Painter (Copenhagen MN 13365). In one fragment, we see a *barbiton* inscribed with the name of *Anacreon* (ANAKPE[ON]) on one of its arms;⁸³ in another fragment, we see a figure who “wears a *mitra* [= headband], has a garland of ivy around his neck, and carries a parasol.”⁸⁴ In this second of several fragments, the figure raises his head and sings with vowels (I O O O) coming out of his mouth.⁸⁵

The morphology of the *barbiton* made it ideal for a combination of song, instrumental accompaniment, and dance. With its elongated neck, it produced a low range of tone that best matched the register of the human voice, and its shape was “ideally suited to walking musicians, since it could be held against the left hip and strummed without interfering with a normal walking stride.”⁸⁶ What is described here as “a normal walking stride” could modulate into a dancing pose, as we see in the second of these two pictures claiming to represent *Anacreon* himself.

There is a comparable image of *Sappho* painted on a red-figure kalyx-krater dated to the first third of the fifth century BCE and attributed to the Tithonos Painter (Bochum, Ruhr-Universitaet Kunstsammlungen, inv. S 508).⁸⁷ [[I offer here a line-drawing, which I label “Image A.”]] Pictured here is a woman in a dancing pose that resembles the [[238|239]] “walking stride” of *Anacreon*. The woman is wearing a cloak or *himation* over her *khitōn*, and a snood (net-cap) or *sakkos* is holding up her hair. As she “walks,” she carries a *barbiton* in her left hand,

⁸¹ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:237 Fig. 7.6.

⁸² Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:237 Fig. 7.7.

⁸³ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:238 Fig. 7.8.

⁸⁴ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:215.

⁸⁵ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:215. See also Bierl 2001:162–174 and p. 234 with n354 on the parodying of *Anacreon* in the song of *Agathon* in the *Women at the Thesmophoria* by *Aristophanes* (especially with reference to the vase painting attributed to the Kleophrades Painter, Copenhagen MN 13365).

⁸⁶ Price 1990:143n30.

⁸⁷ Yatromanolakis 2001, with photographs of the obverse and the reverse sides.

while her gracefully extended right hand is holding a *plēktron*. The inscribed lettering placed not far from her mouth indicates that she is *Sappho* (ΣΑΦΟ).⁸⁸

It has been said that Sappho is “shown alone” on this vase.⁸⁹ I prefer a different interpretation, as formulated by Dimitrios Yatromanolakis.⁹⁰ Applying an anthropological approach to the images painted on both sides of this vase, he argues that the obverse and the reverse can be viewed together. [[The image on the obverse side is what I have been calling “Image A.” I also offer a line-drawing of the image on the reverse side, to which I will refer as “Image B.”]] Yatromanolakis sees an intriguing symmetry in the depiction of Sappho on the obverse [[Image A]] and the depiction of another female figure dressed similarly on the reverse [[Image B]]: this other female figure, like Sappho, is wearing a cloak or *himation* over her *khitōn*, and a snood or *sakkos* is holding up her hair. The symmetry is clarified as soon as we realize that there is a second, hitherto unknown, inscription on the reverse of this vase. Near the *sakkos* holding up the hair of this female figure [[in Image B]] paired with Sappho [[in Image A]] is lettering that reads ΗΕ ΠΑΙΣ (= *hē pais*), meaning ‘the girl’.⁹¹ If the viewer’s eye keeps rotating the vase, the two female figures eternally follow each other, but because their position is symmetrically pictured, they can never gaze at each other. Nor can a viewer ever gaze at both figures at the same time - at least, no such gaze is possible without a mirror.⁹²

Of special interest here is a carrying bag that we see hanging from the lower arm of Sappho’s *barbiton* [[in Image A]]. Such a carrying bag, most familiar from vase paintings assigned to Douris (whose work is related to the vase-paintings of the Tithonos Painter), was evidently used for carrying inside it a wind instrument known as the *aulos* ‘reed-pipe’.⁹³ In this particular picture [[Image A]], the carrying bag attached to the *barbiton* is flowing in the air, and the contour of this flow is synchronized with the graceful motion of the dance step. This flowing effect is evidently caused by the absence of an [[239|240]] *aulos* inside the bag. As I will argue later, the visual reference here to an *aulos* is not just incidental.⁹⁴

Besides the *barbiton*, there is a variety of other features that mark the Anacreontic singer in Anacreontic vase paintings. They include (1) a long *khitōn* with a cloak or *himation* worn over it, (2) boots, (3) earrings, (4) a parasol, (5) a turban; significantly, all of these

⁸⁸ On the diverse spellings of the name Sappho in all the vase-inscriptions that identify the poet, see Yatromanolakis 2005.

⁸⁹ Snyder 1997:112.

⁹⁰ Yatromanolakis 2001 and 2005.

⁹¹ See Yatromanolakis 2005, who was the first to read and publish this inscription.

⁹² Yatromanolakis 2001 and 2005.

⁹³ Yatromanolakis 2007 chapter 2.

⁹⁴ So Snyder 1997: 112, who believes that “the emphasis of the scene [...] seems to be on the dance step that the Sappho figure executes, rather than on musical performance *per se*.”

features, including (6) the *barbiton*, were linked with Asiatic Ionia.⁹⁵ Moreover, all of these Asiatic Ionian features would have been linked with Anacreon himself as the court poet of Polycrates of Samos. Here it is relevant to add that some traditions actually credit Anacreon with the invention of the *barbiton* (Athenaeus 4.175e). Alternatively, the inventor of the *barbiton* is said to have been an archetypal poet from Lesbos known as Terpander (Athenaeus 14.635d).

I will have more to say presently about the relevance of Terpander. For now, however, I concentrate on the overall relevance of the Anacreontic vase paintings in general.

I note here an obvious fact about Anacreontic vase paintings: their overarching theme is sympotic, even Dionysiac. And I note also a less-than-obvious fact: this Dionysiac theme is not confined to a specifically *comastic* setting. For the first time in my argumentation, I need to use the term *comastic* in order to contrast it with the more general term *sympotic*. It has to do with another less-than-obvious fact about Anacreontic vase paintings: of the six Asiatic Ionian features I have listed in describing the Anacreontic singer, not a single one of them, not even the *barbiton*, is characteristic of the *kōmos* in particular. In other words, the Anacreontic singer is not a specifically *comastic* figure, even if he is a generally *sympotic* figure.⁹⁶

Here I focus once again on the *barbiton*. The fact is, the Anacreontic vase paintings express the *comastic* feature of singing and dancing not by way of picturing a *barbiton*. Rather, the *comastic* singing and dancing are expressed by way of picturing the wind instrument known as the *aulos* ‘reed-pipe’. [[240|241]] Relevant is a detail I highlighted earlier from a vase painting by the Tithonos Painter: it is the “*aulos* bag” hanging from the *barbiton* played by a dancing figure of Sappho [[in Image A]].

In a description of this detail, it has been stated that this wind instrument, the *aulos*, was featured “in sympotic or *comastic* contexts” as “the companion of the *barbiton*.”⁹⁷ I propose to modify this statement. Granted, Anacreontic paintings can show the *barbiton* coexisting in the same picture with the *aulos* or with the bag that contains the *aulos*, but the fact is that the *barbiton* does not signal - of and by itself - the *comastic* themes of drinking wine while singing and dancing as expressed in these paintings. The musical instrument that is

⁹⁵ Price 1990:136; Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:221.

⁹⁶ As Kathryn Topper points out to me (*per litteras* 8 21 2006), there are cases where the Anacreontic figures appear in explicitly sympotic situations. For example, on a red-figure hydria shoulder in Kassel (P. Dierichs Collection; no ARV number), a figure in Anacreontic dress reclines on the ground and holds a cup poised for *kottabos*.

⁹⁷ Snyder 1997:112.

typical of comastic and even Dionysiac themes is the *aulos*.⁹⁸ By contrast there is nothing intrinsically comastic about the *barbiton*.

Even in vase paintings that show a *barbiton* in a comastic context, the signal for comastic singing and dancing is not the *barbiton* but the *aulos*. A case in point is a red-figure kylix (Erlangen 454) showing a young man with his head thrown back ecstatically and singing while carrying - but not playing - a *barbiton* in his right hand and a kylix in his left hand. The accompanying inscription reads:

EIMIKOMAZONYPIAY[ΛΟΥ]

(= εἰμὶ κωμάζων ὑπ' αὐ[λοῦ])

I am celebrating in a *kōmos* to the accompaniment of an *aulos*.⁹⁹

There is a conclusion to be drawn from this picture: whenever you are celebrating in a *kōmos*, you sing and dance to the tune of an *aulos* even if a *barbiton* is literally at hand.

So the *barbiton* of the Anacreontic singer cannot be an obligatory feature of the *kōmos* as pictured in Anacreontic vase paintings. And the same can be said about his long *khitōn* and his boots and his earrings and [[241|242]] his parasol and his turban. All six features are simply optional additions to the two obligatory features of a *kōmos*, which are (A) ritualized drinking of wine and (B) ritualized singing and dancing to the accompaniment of the *aulos*.

The six optional features I have listed, including the *barbiton*, are not only Ionian and Asiatic in theme: they are also orientalizing, even feminizing. And a further example of orientalizing and feminizing tendencies inherent in these themes is the occasional substitution of a snood or *sakkos* for the turban conventionally worn by the Anacreontic singer.¹⁰⁰

Such Ionian and Asiatic features of the Anacreontic singer, once they were integrated into a comastic context, became Dionysiac in theme. That is why Dionysus himself can be pictured as wearing a long *khitōn* in such comastic contexts.¹⁰¹ But the point is, these features were not specifically comastic in theme. A prime example is the *barbiton*. As we have already

⁹⁸ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:220 describe the *aulos* as the “obligatory instrument” of the *kōmos*. Such a description may be an overstatement, however, since there are sporadic attestations of comastic scenes where no *aulos* is to be found (thanks to Kathryn Topper, *per litteras* 8 21 2006).

⁹⁹ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:242 Fig. 7.16. For the restoration ὑπ' αὐ[λοῦ] see their p. 220n50. See also Bierl 2001:165–166, especially n146. Richard Martin (18 July 2009) suggests that we may read EIMI as εἶμι, so that we may translate instead: ‘I am going to celebrate in a *kōmos* to the accompaniment of an *aulos*’.

¹⁰⁰ Price 1990:134.

¹⁰¹ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:230.

seen, only the *aulos* was specifically comastic, not the *barbiton*. In fact, the Anacreontic singer is always shown playing the *barbiton* and never the *aulos*.¹⁰²

So the dancing Sappho of the Tithonos Painter is basically an *Anacreontic* figure, not a *comastic* one - despite the fact that she is dancing. Her comastic features are incidental, as signaled by the *aulos* bag hanging from her Anacreontic *barbiton*. The *aulos* bag without any *aulos* inside serves as a signature for the incidental status of comastic themes featured in the picture. One such comastic theme is the dance step executed by the figure of Sappho here. When you dance in a *kōmos*, you dance to the tune of the *aulos*, not of the *barbiton*. So if Sappho is to be shown in the act of executing a comastic dance step while playing the *barbiton*, then surely there must be an *aulos* being played somewhere. The *aulos* bag is a telling sign.

By contrast with the *aulos*, which is an obligatory feature of the *kōmos*, the *barbiton* is merely an optional feature - even if the *kōmos* happens to be a specifically *Anacreontic kōmos*. The fact is, the Anacreontic singer can even be shown playing a *kithara* instead of the expected *barbiton*. It seems that the only relevant constraint in painting an Anacreontic [[242|243]] scene is that the *barbiton* and the *kithara* must be mutually exclusive.¹⁰³

Given that the *barbiton* of Anacreontic singers is interchangeable with the *kithara*, and given that neither of these string instruments is specifically linked to the *kōmos*, I am ready to argue that the Anacreontic associations of both instruments were derived from a Panathenaic rather than a Dionysiac context.

To repeat what I said earlier, the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens was a most obvious context for the continued performance of Aeolian and Ionian lyric poetry as mediated by the likes of Anacreon. The Panathenaia, as the most prestigious of all Athenian festivals, provided an ideal setting for professional monodic singers to perform competitively in spectacular restagings of such lyric masters as Anacreon, Alcaeus, and Sappho. Such restagings in a Panathenaic context would have been matched by other restagings in the Dionysiac context of the symposium. An example of such a Dionysiac context is the stylized occasion of Pindar's *Isthmian 2*.

Even the paintings that celebrated such Dionysiac contexts could become part of an overall Dionysiac context. That is what we see in the pictures of sympotic vase paintings that celebrate the symposium by restaging in these pictures what is already being restaged in the singing and dancing of the symposium.

The actual restaging of lyric traditions in the symposium can be expected to vary, running the gamut from decorous to indecorous. And the same can be said about the restaging

¹⁰² Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:225.

¹⁰³ Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990:226.

of lyric traditions in pictorial representations of the symposium. Examples that seem less decorous include the parodistic restagings of Anacreon in Anacreontic vase paintings.¹⁰⁴ A more decorous example, on the other hand, is the less overtly parodistic restaging of Alcaeus and Sappho in the painting on the Munich vase.

So much for the restagings of Anacreon and Alcaeus and Sappho in symposia and in sympotic pictures about symposia. But what about the more elevated restagings that took place at the festival of the Panathenaia? What can sympotic vase paintings tell us about Panathenaic performances of the songs of such lyric artists? [[243|244]]

In the representational world of Anacreontic vase paintings, a mark of Panathenaic performances was the *barbiton*. To back up this formulation, I start by returning to a relevant fact: as we have already seen, a string instrument that served as an optional substitute for the *barbiton* in the Anacreontic paintings was the *kithara*. Next I connect this fact with another: in the classical period of the fifth century, the *kithara* was the string instrument of choice at the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens, where *kitharōidoi* ‘*kithara*-singers’ competed with each other in singing lyric poetry. Connecting these two facts, I will consider the possibility that the *barbiton* temporarily replaced the more traditional *kithara* as the string instrument of choice at the Panathenaia in the preclassical period of the late sixth century; then the more traditional *kithara* could become predominant again in the classical period of the fifth century.

We have already seen another relevant fact, which has to do with two conflicting claims about the invention of the *barbiton*. According to one version, the inventor was Anacreon (Athenaeus 4.175e); according to the other version, the inventor was an archetypal poet from Lesbos known as Terpander (Athenaeus 14.635d).

Just as the figure of Anacreon was associated with the *kithara* as well as the *barbiton*, so too was the older figure of Terpander. In fact, Terpander of Lesbos was thought to be the prototype of *kitharōidoi* ‘*kithara*-singers’ (Aristotle F 545 Rose and Hesychius s.v. μετὰ Λέσβιον ᾠδόν; Plutarch *Laconic sayings* 238c). Pictured as an itinerant professional singer, he was reportedly the first of all winners at the Spartan festival of the Karneia (Hellanicus *FGH* 4 F 85 by way of Athenaeus 14.635e).¹⁰⁵ Tradition has it that the Feast of the Karneia was founded in the twenty-sixth Olympiad, that is, between 676 and 672 BCE (Athenaeus 14.635e-f).

Not only was Terpander of Lesbos thought to be the prototypical *kitharōidos* or ‘*kithara*-singer’ (“Plutarch” *On Music* 1132d, 1133b-d). He was also overtly identified as the originator of *kitharōidia* or ‘*kithara*-singing’ as a performance tradition perpetuated by a historical figure named Phrynis of Lesbos; just like Terpander, Phrynis was known as a *kitharōidos* (“Plutarch”

¹⁰⁴ The article of Price 1990 argues strongly for the parodistic function of Anacreontic vase paintings.

¹⁰⁵ PH 86–87, with further discussion.

On Music 1133b). And the historicity of this Phrynis is independently verified: at the Panathenaia of 456 (or [[244|245]] possibly 446), he won first prize in the competition of *kitharōidoi* (scholia to Aristophanes *Clouds* 969).¹⁰⁶

Given the interchangeability of *barbiton* and *kithara* in traditions about Terpander as the prototypical *kitharōidos* ‘*kithara*-singer’, I return to the traditions about Anacreon as shown in Anacreontic vase paintings: here too we have seen an interchangeability of *barbiton* and *kithara*. In both cases of interchangeability, it is implied that the *kithara* is the more traditional of these two kinds of instrument, since the *barbiton* is figured as something invented by the Asiatic Ionian Anacreon according to one version (Athenaeus 4.175e) or by the Asiatic Aeolian Terpander according to another (Athenaeus 14.635d).

Here I must stop to make three observations. All three have to do with methodology concerning the use of available iconographic and literary evidence.

The first observation has to do with the parodistic function of Anacreontic vase paintings and the relevance of this function to the *barbiton*. In terms of my argumentation, any reference to the *barbiton* in a given Anacreontic vase painting is merely a case of accentuating a feature that is obviously Asiatic. Or, to say it more precisely, it is a feature that is Asiatic from the standpoint of Panathenaic traditions current in the classical period. By contrast, an alternative reference to the *kithara* in such a painting would be merely a matter of failing to accentuate something that could have been accentuated. A similar point can be made about other such references in Anacreontic vase paintings. I have in mind here the various references to the long *khitōn* and the boots and the earrings and the parasol and the turban. The point is, even if you see a picture of a person associated with only some but not all of these features in a vase painting, you can still guess that this person is supposed to be an Asiatic Aeolian or Ionian. Only if all these features were missing would there be no point in guessing. In short, the purpose of Anacreontic vase paintings is not to provide reportage about marked features. Rather, it is simply to parody the features that happen to be marked. Any failure to mark a feature in a parody is not necessarily a failure in the overall parody.

The second observation has to do with the parodistic function of Old Comedy - and with the relevance of this function to the figure of the Anacreontic singer. A case in point is *Women at the Thesmophoria*, a [[245|246]] comedy by Aristophanes. Here the tragic poet Agathon is depicted as wearing a turban and a woman’s *khitōn* - costuming that matches the costume of the lyric poet Anacreon as depicted by the Kleophrades Painter (Copenhagen MN 13365).¹⁰⁷ In the comedy of Aristophanes, the stage Agathon even says that his self-staging replicates the monodic stagings of Ibycus, Anacreon, and Alcaeus (verses 159–163). This reference indicates

¹⁰⁶ PH 98. On the date 446 see Davison 1968 [1958] 61–64.

¹⁰⁷ Price 1990:169, with further bibliography.

that Agathon as a master of tragic poetry was strongly influenced by the monodic performance traditions of lyric poetry as performed at the Panathenaia.¹⁰⁸

The third observation is an extension of the second. It has to do with the potential for choral as well as monodic parody in Old Comedy. The case in point is again the *Women at the Thesmophoria*. In this comedy of Aristophanes, the Panathenaic persona of the tragic poet Agathon extends into a Dionysiac persona when the acting of the actor who plays Agathon shifts from into a choral mode. Once the shift takes place, there can be a choral as well as monodic self-staging of the stage Agathon.¹⁰⁹ And such choral stagings would most likely be comastic in inspiration.

Having made these three observations, I am ready to reassess the picturing of Alcaeus and Sappho by the painter of the Munich vase. So far, we have seen that the musical symmetry of these two figures is distinctly monodic and Panathenaic, as marked by their musical instrument of choice, the *barbiton*. But now we are about to see another symmetry, one that is comastic and Dionysiac.

The musical symmetry of Alcaeus and Sappho as pictured on one side of the Munich vase, in Image 1, is counterbalanced by the sympotic symmetry of Dionysus and the Maenad as pictured on the other side of the vase, in Image 2. This counterbalancing achieves the effect of linking Image 2 with Image 1 and thus promoting a crossover of themes from one image to the other. In particular, the sympotic themes of Image 2 cross over into the musical themes of Image 1. This crossover suits the overall [[246|247]] Dionysiac ritual function of the sympotic vessel on which the images are painted.

I see a Dionysiac theme even in the actual crossover from Image 2 to Image 1. To start, I note a symmetry in the body language of Dionysus in Image 2 and of Alcaeus in Image 1: each of these two male figures is leaning into the space occupied by the two female figures of the Maenad in Image 2 and of Sappho in Image 1. And, whereas the two male figures are each leaning slightly forward, the two corresponding female figures are leaning slightly backward - and away. Unlike the Maenad, however, who is facing Dionysus, Sappho is facing away from Alcaeus as well as leaning away from him. And Sappho not only faces away while leaning away from the ardent man who is singing to her. The pretty woman seems to be on the verge of walking away.

So the figures of Sappho and the Maenad are asymmetrical in some ways, even though they are symmetrical in other ways. The asymmetry of eye contact is of particular interest.

¹⁰⁸ For more on Anacreon in Aristophanes *Women at the Thesmophoria*, see Bierl 2001:160–163; on Agathon as a stage Anacreon, see Bierl p. 158 n137, 165; on Agathon as parody of Dionysus see Bierl pp. 164–168, 173, 321n60.

¹⁰⁹ Price 1990:169–170.

Whereas the Maenad is shown in profile view, thus making eye contact with Dionysus and becoming possessed by his direct gaze, Sappho is shown in three-quarter view. It has been pointed out to me that “the position of her irises makes it clear that Sappho is looking at Alcaeus; he, on the other hand, is looking down, his head to the ground in a typical attitude of *aidōs* [= modesty], all the more striking in that figures that sing O O O usually tilt their head up and backwards.”¹¹⁰ A Sappho shown in profile view could be making direct eye contact with Alcaeus - if he were not looking down in seemingly false modesty. If she had been shown in frontal view, on the other hand, she would be making direct eye contact with the viewer. That is, she would be looking straight back at the viewer. Shown in three-quarter view, however, Sappho is looking only indirectly at Alcaeus. It is as if she were looking askance at him. Does Sappho disapprove of Alcaeus? Is she on the verge of walking away from him? Or is she perhaps on the verge of walking back to him?

In this regard, I offer an observation about the artistic conventions at work here. As we know from evidence independent of the vase we are considering, it was conventional in ancient vase painting to make distinctions in meaning between frontal and profile views of painted figures. For example, the frontal view of a given figure, unlike the profile view, could [[247|248]] convey intense emotion on the part of that figure at the very moment of viewing.¹¹¹ In terms of this particular convention in painting, emotion is communicated at the exact moment when the figure being viewed can look right back at the viewer.

Turning back to the painting by the painter of the Munich vase, we may ask ourselves: what emotion do we actually see in the looks of Sappho? Well, whatever it is that she is feeling while on view in this painting, she is certainly not showing it to the viewer.

So Sappho figures as something of an anomaly within the overall Dionysiac framework created by the visual symmetries painted into the vase. Still, it is this same Dionysiac framework that defines the anomaly.

We may look for such a Dionysiac framework even in the musical themes associated with Alcaeus and Sappho. After all, we have seen that these themes were not only Panathenaic but also Dionysiac.

Here I return to a point I was making earlier: within the Dionysiac framework of these songs, there was a contrast being made between an indecorous Alcaeus and a decorous Sappho. As I argued, this contrast was already at work in the poetic traditions of the symposium in the old historical setting of festive occasions in Lesbos. And this same contrast was perpetuated in the new historical setting of festive occasions in Athens during the sixth

¹¹⁰ Gloria Ferrari *per litteras* (8 21 2006).

¹¹¹ For an introduction to contrasts in frontal and profile views in vase painting, see Frontisi-Ducroux 1995:77–80.

and the fifth centuries BCE. In the case of Athens, as I also argued, there were at least two kinds of festive occasion for actually performing - not just parodying - the songs of Alcaeus and Sappho. Besides the spectacularly large-scale and public occasion of musical competitions among *kitharōidoi* or 'kithara-singers' at the festival of the Panathenaia, there was also the relatively small-scale and elitist occasion of the symposium. So I reiterate that we have to reckon with the symposium as a distinctly Dionysiac occasion for performing the songs of Alcaeus and Sappho.

Matching such a Dionysiac occasion for performing Alcaeus and Sappho is a Dionysiac theme. As we will see, this theme is noticeable not only in the songs of Alcaeus and Sappho but also in their picture as rendered by the painter of the Munich vase.

I start by taking another look at that picture, which I have been calling Image 1 in the illustration I have provided. And I will compare it one more time to the picture I have been calling Image 2, painted on the other side [[248|249]] of the same vase. As I look again at the staging, as it were, of Sappho in Image 1, I see a theme that is shared in the staging of the Maenad in Image 2. Sappho's loose and flowing strands of hair match the loose and flowing strands of the Maenad transfixed by the gaze of Dionysus. Although Sappho is not transfixed by any gaze from Alcaeus, her own hair is loose enough to resemble the hair of the Maenad.

This is not to say that Sappho's hairstyle is lacking in decorum.¹¹² It is just as decorous as the hairstyle of a stately *Korē* in archaic Greek sculpture. There would be no shame even for the likes of Artemis to show off such a hairstyle.

Still, there is a hint of eroticism in Sappho's hair as rendered by the painter of the Munich vase, and this hint comes from the matching hair of the Maenad facing Dionysus in the picture we see on the other side of the vase. Although the Maenad's hair is just as decorous as Sappho's at the moment of viewing, we know that it will soon become indecorous once the power of Dionysus fully takes hold of her. The Maenad's hair, once she is fully possessed, will come totally undone. And the Maenad's loss of decorum, as we are about to see, transforms the subtle eroticism of the moment into raw sexuality.

The total undoing of a Maenad's hair is a traditional Dionysiac theme attested already in the Homeric *Iliad*. When Andromache suddenly sees the corpse of Hector, she falls into a swoon (XXII 466–467) while at the same time tearing off her elaborate *krēdemnon* 'headdress' (XXII 468–470). In this passionate moment, as her eyes are just about to behold the dreaded

¹¹² For references in Sappho to hair and to ribbons in hair, see especially F 98a+b and F 103.9.

sight of her husband's corpse, she is described as looking just like a Maenad (XXII 460: μαινάδι ἴση).¹¹³

In this dramatic context, I draw attention to the evocative word *krēdemnon* 'headdress' (XXII 470). It refers to the overall ornamental hair-binding that holds together three separate kinds of ornamental hair-binding that serve to keep Andromache's hair in place, under control (XXII 469).¹¹⁴ When [[249|250]] Andromache violently tears off from her head this most elaborate headdress, causing her hair to come completely undone, she is ritually miming her complete loss of control over her own fate as linked with the fate of her husband: we see here a ritually eroticized gesture that expresses her extreme sexual vulnerability as linked with the violent death and disfiguration of her husband.¹¹⁵ For Andromache to do violence to her own *krēdemnon* is to express the anticipated violence of her future sexual humiliation at the hands of the enemy.¹¹⁶ Pointedly, the goddess Aphrodite herself had given this *krēdemnon* to Andromache on her wedding day (XXII 470-471).¹¹⁷

Such explicit association of the *krēdemnon* with Aphrodite reveals its erotic properties. The undoing of a woman's hair, caused by the undoing of her *krēdemnon*, produces what I will call an Aphrodisiac effect. So long as a woman's *krēdemnon* is in place, her sexuality is under control just as her hair is under control. When the *krēdemnon* is out of place, however, her sexuality threatens to get out of control.

This ritual symbolism is part of a "cultural grammar of hair."¹¹⁸ Such a "grammar" helps explain why the virginal Nausikaa would not think of going out in public without first putting on her *krēdemnon* (*Odyssey* vi 100). She won't leave home without wearing her headdress. Her gesture here is hardly a signal of being married. Clearly, she is unmarried. So, we see that

¹¹³ Earlier in the *Iliad*, in an analogous context (VI 389), Andromache is pictured as μαινομένη ἔϊκυῖα 'looking like a woman possessed' as she rushes toward the walls of Troy to see for herself the fate of the Trojans on the battlefield.

¹¹⁴ The three separate terms for ornamental hair-bindings here are *ampux* 'frontlet', *kekruphalos* 'snood', and *anadesmē* 'headband' (*Iliad* XXII 469); the overall hair-binding or 'headdress' that keeps it all in place is the *krēdemnon* (XXII 470). Similarly, Varro (*On the Latin language* 5.130) speaks of three separate terms for ornamental hair-bindings traditionally used by Roman matrons: *lanea* 'woolen ribbon', *reticulum* 'net-cap' or 'snood', and *capital* 'headband'. To these three words Varro (7.44) adds a fourth, *tutulus* (derived from the adjective *tutus* 'providing safety'), which seems to be an overall term for the generic headdress worn by brides and Vestal Virgins as well as matrons. For more on the Latin terms, see Levine 1995:103–104.

¹¹⁵ Nagler 1974:44–63; Levine 1995:103.

¹¹⁶ Another example of such ritual miming is the moment in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* when Demeter tears off her *krēdemnon* in reacting to the violation of her daughter Persephone by Hades (verses 40–42); see Levine 1995:103.

¹¹⁷ Detailed analysis by Dué 2006.4, 78, with citations.

¹¹⁸ Levine 1995:95.

unmarried women as well as married women like Andromache wear the *krēdemnon* in public. The gesture is simply a signal of propriety.¹¹⁹

Such a “grammar” is in fact typical of the Mediterranean world in general. A striking point of comparison is the figure of the *sotah* ‘errant [[250|251]] woman’ in Jewish traditions. In this case, the ‘errant woman’ is a foil for the properly married woman:

Jewish women from Biblical times on probably bound or covered their hair in some way after marriage, since the wife suspected of adultery, called the *sotah* (errant woman), undergoes, according to the Bible, a ceremony of testing in which the preliminary ritual is the dishevelment of her hair (Num. 5:11–31). The unbound or uncovered hair of the *sotah*, together with the further ceremonial dishevelment of her clothing (a Mishnaic addition), signifies her “loose,” sexually suspect state. Indeed, the immense body of Rabbinic legislation regarding the covering of married women’s hair all derives from the disheveled hair of the hapless *sotah*.¹²⁰

A moment ago, I described as an Aphrodisiac effect the ritual symbolism inherent in the undoing of a woman’s hair, and my prime example was the eroticized image of Andromache’s completely loosened hair. In what follows, we will see that such a description applies also to the eroticized image of Sappho’s partially loosened hair as depicted by the painter of the Munich vase.

Before we return to that image, however, I must stress that Sappho’s beautiful strands of flowing hair were depicted not only in paintings. They must have been depicted also in poetry, even in her own poetry. In a rhetorical paraphrase of one of Sappho’s own songs, we see the same Aphrodisiac effect applied not to Sappho but to her ultimate divine referent, Aphrodite herself:

τὰ δὲ Ἀφροδίτης ὄργια παρήκαν τῇ Λεσβία Σαπφοῖ ἄδειν πρὸς λύραν καὶ ποιεῖν τὸν θάλαμον· ἢ καὶ εἰσῆλθε μετὰ τοὺς ἀγῶνας εἰς θάλαμον, <πλέκει παστάδα, τὸ λέχος στρώννυσι,> γράφει παρθένους, <εἰς> νυμφεῖον ἄγει καὶ Ἀφροδίτην <ἐφ’ ἄρμα Χαρίτων> καὶ χορὸν Ἐρώτων <συμπαίστορα>. καὶ τῆς μὲν ὑακίνθῳ τὰς κόμας σφίγγασα, πλὴν ὅσαι μετώποις μερίζονται, τὰς λοιπὰς ταῖς αὖραις ἀφῆκεν ὑποκυμαίνειν, εἰ πλήττειεν. τῶν δὲ τὰ πτερὰ καὶ τοὺς βοστρύχους χρυσῶ κοσμήσασα πρὸ τοῦ δίφρου σπεύδει πομπεύοντας καὶ δᾶδα κινοῦντας μετάρσιον.

¹¹⁹ On the function of the *krēdemnon* ‘headdress’ as an equivalent of a ‘veil’, see Levine 1995, especially pp. 96–110; in a future project, I hope to address more fully the important contributions of Levine to the topic of veiling, as also other related contributions to this topic (especially Llewellyn-Jones 2003). [[In the present paragraph, I correct some mistakes I made in the first printed version.]]

¹²⁰ Levine 1995:104–105.

But [the other poets] left it to Sappho of Lesbos to sing the rituals of Aphrodite to the accompaniment of the lyre and to make [= imagine] the bridal chamber. After she [= Sappho] is finished with her contests [*agōnes*], she enters the bridal chamber and then plaits the wedding canopy, then spreads the sheets for the bed, then pictures maidens in attendance, and then conveys into the bridal chamber [[251|252]] Aphrodite herself riding on a chariot drawn by Kharites accompanied by a *khōros* of Erōtes joining in sportive dance. Then she arranges her [= Aphrodite's] hair, all done up and held together by a garland of hyacinth blossoms - except for strands separated at the forehead, and their loose ends she lets down for the swirling breezes to shape as they please. Then she [= Sappho] decorates in gold the wings and the curls of the Erōtes, speeding them along in procession ahead of the chariot, and there they are waving their torches in the air.

Himerius *Oration* 9 lines 37–47 ed. Colonna

In this paraphrase of Sappho's song, the reference to the *agōnes* 'contests' in which she supposedly competes seems to be a playful anachronistic allusion to the monodic competitions of *kithara*-singers at the festival of the Panathenaia. It is as if Sappho herself were a monodic singer engaged in such public competitions. But the ongoing paraphrase of the song reveals the older choral setting of that song. And the detail about Aphrodite's loose strands of flowing hair as pictured by Sappho's song and as repictured by the paraphrase of Himerius is evidently part of the choral lyric repertoire.¹²¹

This lyric image is matched by the painterly image of Sappho's loose strands of flowing hair as rendered by the painter of the Munich vase. Here I return to my argument that the visual detail of Sappho's loose strands produces an *Aphrodisiac effect*. That is not all. As we see from the symmetry of Sappho and the Maenad in the painting of the Munich vase, this same visual detail produces also a *Dionysiac effect*. The Maenad's loose strands of flowing curls of hair are seen cascading down from behind her ears at either side of her head garlanded with the ivy of Dionysus. As we look at the Maenad's hair coming undone, we see a distinctive sign of her starting to lose control to Dionysus, of becoming possessed by Dionysus, of surrendering the self to Dionysus. That is what I mean when I speak of a *Dionysiac effect*.¹²² [[252|253]]

¹²¹ On the eroticizing of loose hair in the performance of choral song by women, see Bierl 2007b, especially with reference to Alcman F 1.50-59, 101 and F 3.9; also Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 1311 and 1316–1317.

¹²² Kathryn Topper (per litteras 8 21 2006) highlights a stamnos that shows the abandonment of Ariadne by Theseus (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 00.349a): here the sleeping Ariadne is shown bare-breasted and with ostentatiously loose hair; there are also black figure paintings of Dionysus reclining on a sympotic couch or in a vineyard and in the company of a bare-breasted woman who is evidently Ariadne (examples: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum G 48, ABV 259.17; Munich, Antikensammlungen J 1325). In such cases, the hair of both Dionysus and his female companion falls loosely over the shoulders.

In the *Bacchae* of Euripides, we see a parallel correlation between an undoing of hair and a surrender of the self to the power of Dionysus. In the passage I am about to quote, we see Pentheus in the act of rehearsing, as it were, his misconceived role as a choral devotee of Dionysus. Once Pentheus is costumed as a would-be Maenad, he finds himself losing control to the god, becoming possessed by him, even surrendering himself to him.

- {Δι.} σὲ τὸν πρόθυμον ὄνθ' ἄ μὴ χρεῶν ὄρᾶν
 σπεύδοντά τ' ἀσπούδαστα, Πενθέα λέγω,
 ἔξιθι πάροιθε δωμάτων, ὄφθητί μοι,
 915 σκευὴν γυναικὸς μαινάδος βάκχης ἔχων,
 μητρός τε τῆς σῆς καὶ λόχου κατάσκοπος·
 πρέπεις δὲ Κάδμου θυγατέρων μορφὴν μιᾷ.
 ...
 925 {Πε.} τί φαίνομαι δῆτ'; οὐχὶ τὴν Ἴνουῦς στάσιν
 ἢ τὴν Ἀγαυῆς ἐστάναι, μητρός γ' ἐμῆς;
 {Δι.} αὐτὰς ἐκείνας εἰσορᾶν δοκῶ σ' ὄρων.
 ἀλλ' ἐξ ἔδρας σοι πλόκαμος ἐξέστηχ' ὄδε,
 οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ νιν ὑπὸ μίτραι καθήρμισα.
 930 {Πε.} ἔνδον προσείων αὐτὸν ἀνασειῶν τ' ἐγὼ
 καὶ βακχιάζων ἐξ ἔδρας μεθώρμισα.
 {Δι.} ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἡμεῖς, οἷς σε θεραπεύειν μέλει,
 πάλιν καταστελοῦμεν· ἀλλ' ὄρθου κάρα.
 {Πε.} ἰδοῦ, σὺ κόσμει· σοὶ γὰρ ἀνακείμεσθα δῆ.
 935 {Δι.} ζῶναί τέ σοι χαλῶσι κούχ ἐξῆς πέπλων
 στολίδες ὑπὸ σφυροῖσι τείνουσιν σέθεν.
 {Πε.} κάμοι δοκοῦσι παρά γε δεξιὸν πόδα·
 τάνθένδε δ' ὀρθῶς παρὰ τένοντ' ἔχει πέπλος.
 {Δι.} ἦ πού με τῶν σῶν πρῶτον ἠγήσησι φίλων,
 940 ὅταν παρὰ λόγον σώφρονας βάκχας ἴδῃς.
 {Πε.} πότερα δὲ θύρσον δεξιᾷ λαβὼν χερὶ
 ἢ τῆιδε βάκχηι μᾶλλον εἰκασθήσομαι;
 {Δι.} ἐν δεξιᾷ χρὴ χᾶμα δεξιῶι ποδὶ
 αἴρειν νιν· αἰνῶ δ' ὅτι μεθέστηκας φρενῶν. [[253|254]]

{Dionysus:}

You there! Yes, I'm talking to you, to the one who is so eager to see the things that should not be seen

and who hurries to accomplish things that cannot be hurried. I'm talking to you, Pentheus.
Come out from inside the palace. Let me have a good look at you

915 wearing the costume of a woman who is a Maenad Bacchant,
spying on your mother and her company.
The way you are shaped, you look just like one of the daughters of Kadmos.
[...]

925 {Pentheus:}
So how do I look? Don't I strike the dancing pose [*stasis*] of Ino
or the pose struck by my mother Agaue?

{Dionysus:}

Looking at you I think I see them right now.

Oh, but look: this strand of hair [*plokamos*] here is out of place. It stands out,
not the way I had secured it underneath the headband [*mitra*].

{Pentheus:}

While I was inside, I was shaking it [= the strand of hair] forward and backward,
and, in the Bacchic spirit, I displaced it [= the strand of hair], moving it out of place.

{Dionysus:}

Then I, whose concern it is to attend to you, will
arrange it [= the strand of hair] all over again. Come on, hold your head straight.¹²³

{Pentheus:}

You see it [= the strand of hair]? There it is! You arrange [*kosmeîn*] it for me. I can see I'm really
depending on you.

{Dionysus:}

And your waistband has come loose. And those things are not in the right order. I mean, the
pleats of your peplos, the way they

extend down around your ankles.

{Pentheus:}

That's the way I see it from my angle as well. At least, that's the way it is down around my right
foot,

but, on this other side, the peplos does extend in a straight line down around the calf.¹²⁴

{Di.} I really do think you will consider me the foremost among those dear to you

¹²³ Seaford 1996:224 infers that the head of the would-be Bacchant is flung back.

¹²⁴ Seaford 1996:225 notes that Pentheus "raises his left foot backwards and looks over his shoulder to see the dress falling straight over it," which is the same pose struck by Glauke in Euripides *Medea* 1165–1166. The arrangement of pleats is comparable to what we have seen earlier in considering the drapery of the "Motya Charioteer" - and of Alcaeus in the painting on the Munich vase.

when, contrary to your expectations, you see the Bacchants in full control of themselves [= *sōphrones*].

{Pentheus:}

So which will it be? I mean, shall I hold the thyrsus with my right hand or with this other one? Which is the way I will look more like a Bacchant?

{Dionysus:}

You must hold it in your right hand and, at the same time, with your right foot [[254|255]] you must make an upward motion. I approve of the way you have shifted in your thinking.

Euripides *Bacchae* 912–917, 925–944¹²⁵

The image of hair displaced in the process of Bacchic dancing recurs elsewhere in the *Bacchae* (150, 455–456).¹²⁶ Of special interest is the use of *pothos* ‘desire’ in such contexts (456; also at 415). Elsewhere (693–713), we see the Bacchant shifting from a state of ‘proper arrangement’ or *eukosmia* (693) to a state of full Bacchic possession, the first sign of which is that they let their hair down to their shoulders (695).¹²⁷ As we know from the words of instruction uttered by Dionysus himself to Pentheus (830–833), the initial *kosmos* ‘arrangement’ (832) of the Bacchant includes these two requirements: {1} flowing long hair (831) that is done up and arranged by way of the *mitra* ‘headband’ (833) and {2} an ankle-length peplos (833).¹²⁸

The maenadism of the Maenad as depicted by the painter of the Munich vase is not nearly as overt as the maenadism of the would-be Bacchant Pentheus as depicted by Euripides in the *Bacchae*. The Maenad of the painting carries no thyrsus and she strikes no overtly Bacchic pose. But her maenadism is more overt than the maenadism of Sappho as painted on the other side of the vase. Unlike the Maenad, who is transfixed by the intense direct gaze of Dionysus, Sappho looks askance at the downcast indirect gaze of the sympotic Alcaeus.

But there is one suggestion of maenadism even in the picture of Sappho as painted on the Munich vase. As we look again at Image 1, we see loose strands of flowing curls of hair cascading down from her head to her breast, starting from behind her ears at either side of her headdress. These loose strands of Sappho signal a suggestion of what may follow after the moment of the viewing. By contrast, the corresponding loose strands of the Maenad signal the certainty of what will follow for her, that is, the complete undoing of her hair. Comparable is the complete undoing of Andromache’s hair in the *Iliad*.

As we saw, Andromache’s dishevelment happens in a moment of supreme passion, immediately after she is compared in a simile to a Maenad (*Iliad* XXII 460). As if this simile were

¹²⁵ On this passage, see in general Bierl 1991:204.

¹²⁶ Seaford 1996:165–166, 187.

¹²⁷ Seaford 1996:206.

¹²⁸ Seaford 1996:214–215.

a theatrical cue for her, Andromache [[255|256]] immediately falls into a swoon (XXII 466–467) while at the same time tearing off her elaborate *krēdemnon* ‘headdress’ (XXII 468–470). By the time she recovers from her swoon (XXII 473–476), she is completely disheveled and, in this most vulnerable state, the supreme diva of Homeric poetry sings a passionate song of lament for her dead husband - a lament as sensual as it is sorrowful (XXII 477–514). Only the ritual of lament protects her modesty. Without such ritual protection, this modesty would be destroyed. But the cover of ritual allows her to appear in public with her hair completely undone. Without such cover, her appearance with a full head of exposed hair would be like going naked in public. Even more than that, it would be like making wild love to someone in public. So her wild hair enhances the eroticism of her lament. In her exquisitely theatrical moment of passion, Andromache is just like a Maenad in a state of total possession, in a state of total surrender to the god Dionysus.

By contrast, loose strands of flowing curls of hair, a plaything of the breezes in Sappho’s songs, merely suggest the possibility of such total surrender to Dionysus. As we saw, the suggestively maenadic Sappho as painted on the Munich vase is demurely looking askance at the ardent Dionysiac singer who is singing to her without looking at her, whereas the Maenad on the other side of the vase signals the onset of her own total surrender to Dionysus by making direct eye contact with the god’s gaze.

Even if Sappho could avoid looking at Alcaeus in the painting, she could hardly avoid hearing the music of the song he is singing to her. This song belongs not only to Alcaeus. It is Sappho’s own song as sung all over again by men and boys in symposia. More than that, it is her own song as once sung and danced by women in a choral setting at a place called Messon in Lesbos. I have already argued for a Dionysiac effect in the sympotic setting. Now I will argue for a Dionysiac effect even in the earlier choral setting of Sappho’s songs.

A prime example is Song 1 of Sappho. In this song, which is a functional Hymn to Aphrodite, the heart of Sappho is described as a ‘frenzied heart’. This description, as we are about to see, is Dionysiac as well as Aphrodisiac.

The word I translate here as ‘heart’ is *thumos*, while the word I translate as ‘frenzied’ is *mainolās*, cognate with *mainás* ‘maenad, maenadic woman’. In Song 1 of Sappho, when the goddess Aphrodite herself appears to Sappho in an epiphany, she asks her what she wants to happen in her ‘frenzied heart’, *mainolāi thumōi*. Those are the exact words as we [[256|257]] find them in Song 1 of Sappho (verse 18: μαινόλαι θύμωι). The goddess of love and sexuality is asking Sappho about Sappho’s affairs of the heart.

Someone should write an essay about the heart of Sappho. It would be a difficult task, since this heart is so easy to misunderstand. Or, to say it another way, the ancient Greek *thumos* is so hard for speakers of modern languages to understand. For those who speak

modern English, to take just one example, the ancient Greek notion of *thumos* as ‘heart’ seems too hard-hearted. After all, *thumos* in archaic Greek poetic diction conveys the human capacity to know and learn and think, not only to feel emotion: about half of the time, *thumos* is used in ways that are cognitive or even rational rather than affective or emotional.¹²⁹ Such a distribution in meaning is hard to translate for speakers of English, to whom the word *heart* means something almost entirely emotional. The heart is for us only residually cognitive, as when we speak of learning things *by heart*.

Things are different with ancient Greek *thumos*. The sensitivity of the *thumos* is also a matter of sensibility. When otherwise sensible people lose control of their senses, it means that something must have affected their *thumos*. And the divinity in overall charge of this control is Dionysus himself. So when the *thumos* ‘heart’ of Sappho becomes *mainolās* ‘frenzied’ in the choral setting of Song 1, Dionysus is both the cause and the effect of the ‘frenzy’.

In fact, *mainolēs* ‘frenzied’ was a ritual epithet of Dionysus, as we learn from a variety of sources (Cornutus *On the nature of the gods* 60 ed. Lang; Philo *De plantatione* 148; *Greek Anthology* 9.524.13; etc.); in one source, we find the same Aeolic form *mainolās* that we have just seen in the song of Sappho (Origen *Against Celsus* 3.23: ὁ μαινόλας Διόνυσος καὶ γυναικεῖα περιβεβλημένος). A particularly striking example comes from a work of Plutarch (*On containing anger* 462b), where we see the positive Dionysiac epithets *khoreios* ‘the choral one’ and *luaios* ‘the releaser’ balanced against the negative Dionysiac epithets *mainolēs* ‘the frenzied one’ and *ōmēstēs* ‘the eater of raw flesh’: here the negative epithets are being applied to wine that has negatively affected the *thumos* of someone who is feeling savage anger when he drinks it (ἄν μὴ προσγενόμενος ὁ θυμὸς ὠμηστὴν καὶ μαινόλην ἀντὶ λυαίου καὶ χορείου ποιήσῃ τὸν ἄκρατον). Elsewhere too, we see that the epithet *mainolēs* has negative applications: it is associated [[257|258]] with the mythological and ritual themes of frenzied *ōmophagia* ‘eating of raw flesh’ (Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2.12.2: Διόνυσον μαινόλην ὀργιάζουσι Βάκχοι ὠμοφαγία τὴν ἱερομανίαν ἄγοντες). It is relevant here to recall that *ōmēstēs* ‘eating raw flesh’ in its Aeolic form *ōmēstās* is attested as the epithet of Dionysus in the song of Alcaeus that referred to this god as one of three divinities presiding over the precinct of Messon (F 129.9: Ζόννυσσον ὠμήσταν).

From these contexts I conclude that there is a Dionysiac effect produced by applying the epithet *mainolās* ‘frenzied’ to the lovelorn *thumos* ‘heart’ of Sappho (1.18). We see a parallel effect in the Cologne Epode of Archilochus, where the supposedly oversexed Neoboule is described as a *mainolis gunē* ‘frenzied woman’ (verse 20).

¹²⁹ In GM 87–88, I offer some relevant observations about the meaning of *thumos* in Homeric poetry.

It remains to be seen how this Dionysiac effect in the choral lyric world of Sappho fuses with what I have been calling the Aphrodisiac effect. I start with the idea of Dionysiac possession, which is evident even within the context of Sappho's prayer to Aphrodite. As we have seen, the *mainolās thumos* 'frenzied heart' of Sappho betrays her possession by Dionysus.

Such possession by the god has its positive as well as negative dimensions. After all, Dionysus is the god of *sōphrosunē* 'control': that is why this god describes Bacchantes as *sōphrones* 'in full control of themselves' in the passage I quoted earlier from the *Bacchae* of Euripides (verse 940). To be contrasted with such a positive Dionysiac view of Bacchantes, ritually balanced as they should be, is the negative Dionysiac view of Pentheus as a would-be Bacchant who is ritually unbalanced.

Basically, the god Dionysus controls the balance between maintaining control and losing control, as we see in the ritual context of maintaining an equilibrium in the mixing and drinking of water and wine at a symposium. Such a balance between positive and negative dimensions of possession is also at work in the ritual context of the *khōros* 'chorus', as we have just seen in the positive sympotic use of the Dionysiac epithet *khoreios* 'the choral one' combined with *luaios* 'the releaser' as balanced against the negative sympotic use of the Dionysiac epithet *mainolēs* 'the frenzied one' combined with *ōmēstēs* 'the eater of raw flesh' (Plutarch *On containing anger* 462b).¹³⁰

So the Dionysiac effect in choral song is a balance of control and loss of control. And when this Dionysiac effect fuses with the Aphrodisiac [[258|259]] effect, which is what happens in the choral songs of Sappho, the outcome will be a balance of sexual control with loss of sexual control.¹³¹ Such a balance is what we see in the vision of Aphrodite's hair coming only partially undone in the song of Sappho as paraphrased by Himerius.

The most unbalanced vision of the Aphrodisiac effect would be total dishevelment, as we saw in the Homeric picturing of Andromache in her moment of being likened to a Maenad. As for the picturing of Aphrodite's loose strands of hair in the song of Sappho, it is a more balanced vision. The same can be said about the vision of Sappho's loose strands of hair in the picture painted on the Munich vase. Here too we see a more balanced vision of a woman's hair. As we have noted, however, such a vision can become unbalanced. And the model for such threatening unbalance is the Maenad in the picture painted on the other side of the vase. That is because the Maenad's loose strands of hair at the present moment prefigure a complete undoing of her hair at a future moment - once she becomes completely possessed by Dionysus.

¹³⁰ As I argued earlier, the meaning of *luaios* 'the releaser' in this passage corresponds to the context of Alcaeus F 129, where the speaker prays to the gods - including Dionysus (*ōmēstēs*) - to release both his community and himself from troubles and cares.

¹³¹ For an example of such fusion, I cite Euripides *Cyclops* 37-40, 63-72, with the commentary of Bierl 2006:130.

What provides balance in this painterly vision of the present moment is the Dionysiac effect, as fused with the Aphrodisiac effect. It is a moment when a woman's hair can look domesticated and tamed even while revealing a suggestion of the wild and untamed. I return here to the suggestiveness of the Maenad's loose strands of flowing curls of hair as they cascade down from behind her ears at either side of her head garlanded with the ivy of Dionysus. All signs point to the eventuality that the Maenad's hair will come completely undone. As a Maenad, she is destined to a fate of losing control to Dionysus, of becoming possessed by Dionysus, of surrendering the self to Dionysus.

The kind of thing I am calling the Dionysiac effect is hardly unique to ancient Greek culture. That much should go without saying. To this day, there are many parallels to be found in a wide variety of cultures around the world. The suggestiveness of partially undone or uncovered female hair can cause a major uproar - or at least make a big impression - in a vast variety of cultural contexts. For an example, I turn to the world of women's fashion current in the Islamic Republic of Iran as of this writing. In such a world, when some pretty woman exposes a wisp of hair from underneath a headscarf that has somehow slipped back ever so slightly [[259|260]] from her forehead, such a vision will be as alluring to her admirers as a full head of female hair that must never be exposed to the public gaze. As we look for other examples in other worlds of fashion, we find that perhaps the most persistent of all themes is the allure of partially covered female nudity. A notorious example is the female cleavage in all its variations, running the gamut from the formality of a low-neck bodice to the informality of a bikini bottom. No matter how it looks when some pretty woman shows cleavage to her admirers, this display will suggest forbidden visions of bareness underneath.

Under the protective cover of the Dionysiac effect, Sappho in Song 1 of Sappho may allow herself to become maenadic for the moment. An otherwise sensible woman may take leave of her senses.¹³² In her own maenadic moment, Sappho may lose control of her sexuality. After all, Dionysus himself now possesses her, causing her *thumos* to be *mainolās* 'frenzied'. She is now ready to surrender to the god.¹³³

Such a poetics of Dionysiac surrender is also at work in the picture of Sappho as painted on the Munich vase. And the onset of this surrender is manifested in her seeming to lose control of her elaborately and beautifully arranged hair. Such a suggestion of loss of control is also experienced by the partially disheveled Aphrodite herself as pictured in the song of Sappho as paraphrased by Himerius.

In the poetics of Sappho, the Dionysiac effect is basically choral. To be contrasted is the poetics of Alcaeus, where the same effect is more basically comastic. Either way, however, the

¹³² A point of comparison is Helen in Song 16 of Sappho, on which see Bierl 2003:107–111, especially n59 and n73.

¹³³ Such a reading of eroticism in Sappho is most compatible with the reading by Bierl 2003.

effect is communal, not individualized. Both the *choros* and the *kōmos* are based on communal rather than individualized songmaking. And it is the communality of songmaking that makes it a thing of ritual and myth combined.

I conclude this essay by returning to my earlier work on defining ritual and myth in terms of communal songmaking. My earlier definitions can now be sharpened by applying the concept of the Dionysiac effect as we see it at work in the communal songmaking of Alcaeus and Sappho.

I start with this working definition of myth, derived from Walter Burkert: [[260|261]]

[Myth is] a traditional narrative that is used as a designation of reality. Myth is applied narrative. Myth describes an important and meaningful reality that applies to the aggregate, going beyond the individual.¹³⁴

Next I turn to a complementary working definition of ritual, again from Burkert:

Ritual, in its outward aspect, is a programme of demonstrative acts to be performed in set sequence and often at a set place and time - sacred insofar as every omission or deviation arouses deep anxiety and calls forth sanctions. As communication and social imprinting, ritual establishes and secures the solidarity of the closed group.¹³⁵

In my own work, I have applied these definitions for the purpose of analyzing the interaction of myth and ritual in traditional song, dance, and instrumental accompaniment.¹³⁶ I have also applied to this analysis a concept developed by the anthropologist Stanley Tambiah in his typological studies of ritual: he describes what he calls a “fusion of experience” in ritual, produced by “the hyper-regular surface structure of ritual language.”¹³⁷ Tambiah’s understanding of ritual language accommodates all aspects of what I have just described as song, dance, and instrumental accompaniment.¹³⁸ As for Tambiah’s concept of fusion, it corresponds to what Burkert describes as the solidarity of participants in ritual.¹³⁹ In

¹³⁴ My translation, with slight modifications, of Burkert 1979:29. See also GM 8.

¹³⁵ Burkert 1985:8. See also GM 10, where I note: “The insistence of ritual on a set order of things should not be misunderstood to mean that all rituals are static and that all aspects of rituals are rigid. Even in cases where a given society deems a given ritual to be static and never changing, it may in fact be dynamic and ever changing, responding to the ever-changing structure of the society that it articulates.”

¹³⁶ PH 33, where I attempt a holistic typological formulation of song, dance, and instrumental accompaniment.

¹³⁷ Tambiah 1985:165.

¹³⁸ PH 33n88.

¹³⁹ In myth, I would add, the fusion of ritual can lead to the confusion of the character who figures in the corresponding myth.

particular, as I argued, this concept of fusion corresponds to ritual participation in the *mimēsis* of myth by the ritual ensemble that we know as the *choros* ‘chorus’.¹⁴⁰ [[261|262]]

Here I find it relevant to quote Tambiah’s typological description of song and dance in ritual. In the wording of this description, the term fixed pitch stands for song while fixed rhythm stands for dance:

Fixed rhythm and fixed pitch are conducive to the performance of joint social activity. Indeed, those who resist yielding to this constraining influence are likely to suffer from a marked unpleasant restlessness. In comparison, the experience of constraint of a peculiar kind acting upon the collaborator induces in him, when he yields to it, the pleasure of self-surrender.¹⁴¹

(Although Tambiah speaks only of male participants in ritual, his formulations can of course extend to female participants as well.)

In terms of my analysis of the Dionysiac effect, I offer two relevant examples. Both involve participants in the rituals of Dionysus. One is a positive example while the other is negative. To start with the negative, I point to the mythical figure of Pentheus in the *Bacchae* of Euripides: he fits perfectly Tambiah’s model of “those who resist yielding to this constraining influence.” As for a positive example, I point to the mythical figure of the Maenad facing Dionysus in the picture painted on the Munich vase: she fits perfectly the model of a participant in ritual who feels a “constraint” acting upon her and inducing in her, when she yields to it, “the pleasure of self-surrender.”

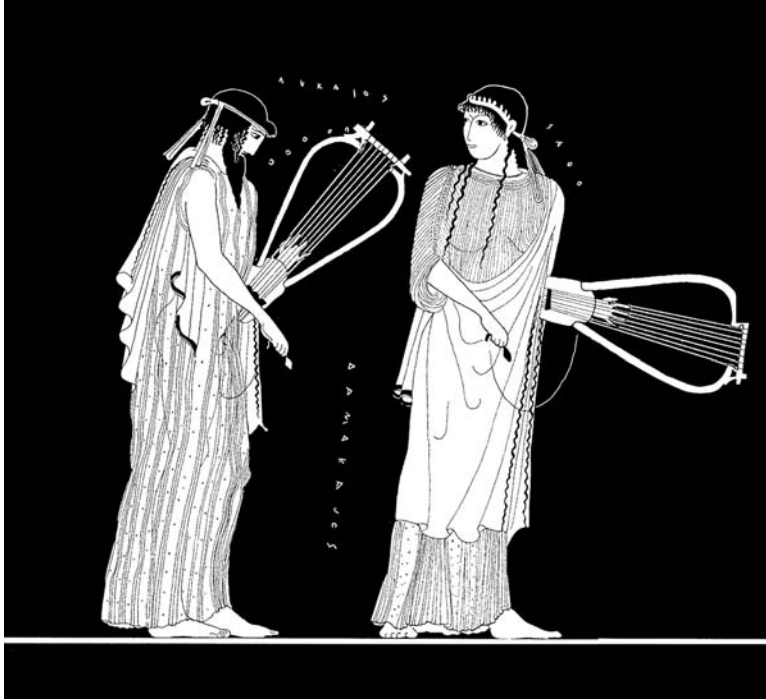
This mythical figure of the Maenad in the picture painted on one side of the Munich vase matches the ritual figure of Sappho in the picture painted on the other side. Sappho’s ritual function may be sympotic, as when she is reperformed by a man or a boy at a symposium, or it may be choral, as when she performs or is reperformed as the prima donna of a *choros* of women. Either way, she is the pretty woman who surrenders herself to the Dionysiac effect.

As we have seen, a basic feature of the Dionysiac effect is the principle of self-surrender to the god. Such an act of surrender, as we have also seen, is made possible by Dionysus himself. He presides over the participation of those who surrender to him. And he protects them within the sacred space created by the ritual. In fact, it is essential for the god to protect his participants, since their self-surrender can happen only under the protective cover of his sacred rituals and the sacred myths that go with them. [[262|263]]

¹⁴⁰ PH 44.

¹⁴¹ Tambiah 1985:123. See PH 44 on the pleasure inherent in *mimēsis* (Aristotle *Poetics* 1448b).

So I come back to the question: did Sappho and Alcaeus ever meet? My answer has been that Sappho and Alcaeus really did meet under the protective cover of the festival held at Messon in Lesbos. Even beyond Messon, they could keep on meeting under the protective cover of symposia and other such Dionysiac events - so long as songs were being sung about pretty women, the kind men would like to meet.



[[263|264]] Image 1: Attic krater painted by the Brygos painter, 480-470 BCE.
Line drawing by Valerie Woelfel.



[[264|265]] Image 2: Attic krater attributed to the Brygos painter, 480-470 BCE.
Line drawing by Valerie Woelfel.





Images A and B: Attic kalyx-krater attributed to the Tithonos Painter, first third of the fifth century. Line drawing by Valerie Woelfel.

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