This article belongs to a special issue of *Oral Tradition* published in honor of John Miles Foley’s 65th birthday and 2011 retirement. The surprise Festschrift, guest-edited by Lori and Scott Garner entirely without his knowledge, celebrates John’s tremendous impact on studies in oral tradition through a series of essays contributed by his students from the University of Missouri-Columbia (1979-present) and from NEH Summer Seminars that he has directed (1987-1996).

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Over the last several decades there has developed among scholars an increasing willingness to examine the many possibilities that existed for the oral performance of non-epic poetry in the song culture of the early Greek world. However, perhaps because archaic lyric and elegiac poets are often considered to have been individual artisans displaying unique brands of creativity, philosophy, and emotion, there has been an unfortunate reluctance by scholars to delve beyond the ancient performance arena itself and consider how other aspects of the poetic process are themselves indebted to oral traditional practices. In a recent monograph, I attempted to redress part of this scholarly imbalance by demonstrating that much of archaic Greek elegy should be viewed in light of the oral-formulaic techniques that lay at its compositional core (Garner 2011). In this essay I would like to build on those earlier arguments in order to raise the possibility that Sappho's stanzaic poetry also might be understood as oral, traditional, and even formulaic.

Of course, the idea that Sappho's poems are to one degree or another related to oral traditional compositional techniques is not novel. Milman Parry himself raised the idea as early as 1932 (29-30):

The same forces which created the poetic epic language of Homer created the poetic lyric language of Sappho and Alcaeus. The scant remains of these two poets do not allow us to show, as we can do for Homer, that their diction is formulaic, and so oral and traditional. We do know, however, that Solon and Theognis were still following an oral tradition of iambic poetry, and that they lived at that time, always so precious for our own knowledge of oral poetries of the past and present, when verse-making was oral but writing known and used as a means of recording and keeping. All that we know of the use of writing in Greece at the beginning of the sixth century

See, for example, Nagy 1990a, 1990b; Gentili 1988; for Sappho in particular and her awareness of positioning herself within this performance-based society, see Lardinois 2008 and the bibliography therein. On the dominant early Greek cultural mindset being steeped in orality more generally, see Havelock 1963, 1982; Thomas 1989.

Sappho in particular is especially often put forward as the epitome of this Greek poetic individuality. Thus, for instance, Bowra once stated that “Sappho seems to have been sure of herself and her art” (1961:246) and Svenbro claimed that Sappho I more specifically “is the poem of an individual” (1975:49). Such issues are also at the heart of more recent debates concerning Sappho’s position within or against masculine norms of behavior; see, for example, Skinner 1993, 2002; Greene 2002; Winkler 2002.
points to the same thing for Sappho and Alcaeus. Yet while we may feel some doubt as to the way in which they made their verses, there is not the least doubt that their poetic language was drawn from an oral tradition: only in an oral poetry does one ever find such a variety of forms that have each one its own metrical value.

For Parry it was this last distinctive characteristic of coexisting metrical by-forms and the corresponding thrift with which they were employed that constituted firm evidence that a given poet was working within a formulaic oral tradition. But since the output of poets such as Sappho and Alcaeus was not preserved in large enough quantities for such analysis to be conclusive in the same way that it was for Homer, Parry made no further effort to detail any possible relationship between the Lesbian poets and oral-formulaic compositional techniques, and in fact only a handful of other scholars since Parry’s time have pursued the issue in any depth, either in relation to Sappho specifically or with respect to early Greek lyric more broadly. Instead, the few recent attempts to analyze the relationship between lyric and oral traditional poetic techniques have tended either to proceed in the quite problematic direction of exploring intertextual parallels between lyric and epic or to limit their analysis to diachronic issues of metrical development. The result, then, has been that some scholars have dismissed altogether the oral traditional nature of such poetry while others have accepted the idea of a predominantly oral context for performance and transmission of the poems but have done so without taking the additional step of considering the specific expressive means by which these poems achieved their desired effects within such traditional arenas.

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3 See especially Parry 1930 and 1932.

4 Though “lyric” originally designated only poetry sung to the lyre or another stringed instrument, here and throughout this essay I use the term synonymously with “non-epic” to include iambic and elegiac poetry as well. (Cf. Gentili 1988:32.) My choice in this matter is not meant to diminish the role that instrumental accompaniment or lack of it helped determine issues of genre in the ancient world, but is instead aimed at underlining the variability with which such accompaniment actually seems to have occurred in the early Greek poetic landscape and the interdependence that such genres had on each other. See further Gentili 1988:32-49, Garner 2011:4-6.

5 As a small representative sample of works exemplifying this approach in conjunction with Sappho in particular, see Page 1955, Harvey 1957, Svenbro 1975, Hooker 1977, Rissman 1983, and Schrenk 1994. More recently, Winkler (2002) has similarly suggested that “Sappho’s use of Homeric passages is a way of allowing us, even encouraging us, to approach her consciousness as a woman and poet reading Homer” (46), though elsewhere he argues that archaic lyric “was not composed for private reading but for performance to an audience” (41).


7 For a fuller account of these methodologies being applied to early non-epic Greek poetry, see Garner 2003:389-91. The few notable exceptions to this pattern of scholarly inattention toward oral traditional practices being present in lyric have been found in discussions of elegy, most notably in the work of Giannini (1973:61) and Barnes (1984:ch. 3; 1995). Even in these perceptive studies, however, only isolated aspects of meter and enjambement are considered without further discussion of the larger processes involved.
Sappho and Oral Performance

Before we look into the specifics of traditional compositional techniques used by Sappho, what can we first say with certainty concerning the original performance arena for her poems? We know from both internal and external testimonia, for instance, that the usual means for presenting lyric poetry to an audience in archaic Greece involved active performance, with performance modes varying from monodic to choral and with instrumental accompaniment (or the lack thereof) further helping to define the performance arena. For Sappho in particular this connection between music and poetic production is made even stronger by the depictions of the poet within archaic and classical vase painting, where musical instruments and singing play prominent roles, even when Sappho is pictured as reading the poetry from a book while sitting.

Positioning Sappho’s works within a more specific performance frame, though, is a much more difficult task. On one end of the spectrum, it has been argued that the majority of Sappho’s poems must have been private monodic poems for limited audiences within an intimate thíasos and that much of the significance of the poems is thus hidden from anyone outside that original religious group; however, it has also been put forward that Sappho’s poems, however intimate they may seem, were actually the remains of great choral activity on the island of Lesbos and that their content should be viewed primarily with this larger audience in mind. Unfortunately scant evidence remains as a basis for such speculation, and in all likelihood many of Sappho’s songs were probably performed and re-performed in a variety of different contexts such as weddings and funerals where the line between private and public would have already been blurred for the audiences involved. However, even if we imagine these poems as being performed for the most intimate of audiences, it is quite clear—as André Lardinois (2008) has observed—that Sappho herself imagined her own fame and that of her subjects as carrying on through the memory of her poetry’s actual performances rather than through its textualized transmission.

Nevertheless, at least in the cases of the poems that have survived to us today, textualization did indeed enter into the picture at some point. When and how this process occurred is, however, unknown, though at least three possible scenarios exist:

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9 Yatromanolakis (2001) provides a catalogue of vases from 610-540 BCE on which Sappho is positively labeled or more tentatively identified. For a fuller discussion of these vase depictions alongside the relevant literary evidence, see also Yatromanolakis 2007.

10 This lively debate concerning issues of Sappho’s audience and the circumstances of performance has now extended over several decades, and the above possibilities are only the most disparate of the many contexts that have been envisioned for Sappho’s performances. A few of the more important forays into this discussion are represented by Merkelbach 1957; Calame 1977:367-72, 1996; Hallett 1979; Gentili 1988; Parker 1993; Lardinois 1994; and Stehle 1997:262-318. Cf. more recently Ferrari 2010:31-38.

11 See especially fragments 16 and 94.
Sappho’s poems were originally performed and transmitted orally (whether or not previous written composition was involved) before being fixed in written form at a much later point.

Sappho’s poems were originally performed orally and were written down quickly afterward by Sappho herself or another individual present as either a performer or an audience member.

Sappho’s poems were originally composed as written works and were always transmitted as such.

Scenario 1 is closest to the view held by scholars such as Nagy (1990b) and Gentili (1988:19) who view the fossilizing of lyric poetry in written form as a product of cultural change that occurred only later in the Greek world, with few readers of poetry existing in large numbers before the fifth century. Under such circumstances, the transition of works into written form would be rather separate from the original processes of poetic composition and performance; accordingly, poets such as Sappho would rarely have been composing with the idea of written dissemination of their works as a primary goal. Instead, the impetus for such textualization would have been likely to arrive from an external source, perhaps in Sappho’s case as the result of prominent families on Lesbos wishing to create poetic texts as possessions that heightened their status by strengthening their connections to the poet.

On the other hand, Scenarios 2 and 3 imagine Sappho herself as the motivating force behind our texts, with the qualitative difference between the two scenarios being only whether the written words were initially the scripts or the revisions of the original performances. The pre-existence of written texts might seem especially likely if we view Sappho’s output as primarily choral, since textualized versions might act as aids for teaching complex pieces to a company for singing and dancing in a group performance, but comparative evidence has shown that even choral output regularly occurs without reliance on writing. One might also point to the lack of internal and external references linking written composition with Sapphic poetry as evidence that standardized written texts came only later, but such evidence is regularly lacking for the entirety of the early Greek poetic corpus and could simply be coincidental or the byproduct of lyric poems being primarily situated in the oral performance arena. In any case, it is

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13 The suggestion is that of Davison (1968:101).

14 These two scenarios would then fall much more in line with the view held by Gerber concerning early Greek lyric more generally (1997:3-4): “In spite of the prodigious capability of the early Greeks to preserve poetry orally, it seems difficult to believe that contemporary copies of lyric poetry did not exist, especially for longer poems.” Gerber does, however, admit that the evidence is slender for such written transmission without prior oral circulation.

15 Cf., for example, Gentili’s discussion (1988:20-21) of a non-written choral tradition in the Gilbert Islands. Similarly, many of the traditional songs underlying the Finnish Kalevala circulated orally through group performance long before (and also after) they were collected and standardized by Lönnrot in the nineteenth century.
now impossible to determine at exactly what point writing entered into the composition or transmission of Sappho’s poetry, and the very fact that her output has survived to us through such a variety of sources—including literary quotations, inscriptions, and scattered papyri—indicates that the circumstances of textualization may have varied quite a lot from one poem to the next.

But although we cannot now locate the specific role of writing in the history of our surviving texts, wherever and whenever the written word came into the poetic process it did so—as we have seen—within an environment where the oral performance of poetry must still have been common and probably even the norm, and it is ultimately the societal expectations of these original audiences (rather than the written or oral nature of the compositional process itself) that would have been more likely to determine the particular mode of expression that Sappho employed to communicate meaningfully among her contemporaries. Even if those closest to the poet could appreciate her art through written texts, many of Sappho’s poems seem to have gained fame quickly throughout the Greek world in locations far removed from their original production, and the dominant aesthetic that would have unified these widely diverse audiences would have been one steeped in oral performance along with the interpretive frame that it provided. For any given tradition, it is always possible for the boundaries themselves between oral and written to become blurred, or even for oral composition to give way entirely to the written mode. However, as long as the context of oral performance remains intact, the process of creating meaningful art will continue to make use of many enabling devices from the traditional compositional register. As Foley has maintained (1999:17), “since these forms constitute a real and singularly expressive language, rather than a standard kit of handy compositional tools, there is no reason why they should immediately cede place to an entirely new, unrelated mode of expression.” Indeed, the persistence of these traditional forms of oral communication must have been especially important in ancient Greece, where the general acquisition of literacy was a particularly slow and uneven process, and it becomes even more likely that whatever success Sappho attained in her poetry was arrived at only by the meshing of her own individual genius with what must have been a thriving and pervasive oral tradition on the island of Lesbos around the beginning of the sixth century.16

Traditional Structuring Techniques in Lesbian Stanzaic Poetry

Our driving question thus moves away from whether or not Sappho used writing to compose her poetry and focuses instead on what techniques of oral traditional composition she might have employed and to what degree she might have relied on them to infuse her poems with meaning accessible to a wide range of audiences. As a starting point for investigating such issues, we might note that in both early Greece and traditions from around the world, one of the most common characteristics of oral and oral-derived poetry is the regularity with which it

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16 Foley has previously explained that tradition and individual talent act as complementary and not oppositional forces (1999:xii): “tradition provides the language, but it is the speaker who breaks the silence, whether eloquently or otherwise. Remove the language and all connection to the traditional context is lost, but remove the performing poet and the silence resumes. As with any medium, while an artistic heritage is always theoretically in the public domain, artistic brilliance is the achievement of relatively few. The tradition and the poet both matter.”
partitions its phraseology into formulaic semantic units. That such semantic partitioning was used as a structuring principle in traditional Greek epic poetry has been demonstrated by numerous scholars, going back at least as far as Fränkel, who in his 1926 work showed that Homeric hexameters normally comprise four semantic units (or cola) that stand as the basic constituents of the line. Although the caesurae that set the boundaries for these colonic units have been somewhat debated, Fränkel’s original schema for breaking down the hexameter remains the most commonly accepted arrangement by scholars today, though many (including myself) prefer to consider at least some of the A breaks as secondary rather than primary juncture points in the line:

\[ \text{|--|--|--|--|} \]
\[ 1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 1 \quad 2 \quad 1 \quad 2 \]
\[ \text{A} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{C} \]

Within such a system, the first phraseological element starts at the beginning of the line and continues on to one of four possible stopping points (A 1-4), after which the next unit continues on until one of the two possible mid-line juncture points (B 1-2); the third element then starts from one of these two positions and fills out the line up to either the hethemimeral caesura or bucolic diaeresis (C 1-2), with a final phrase then completing the rest of the hexameter. Similarly, early Greek elegy also displays four-part structuring tendencies in both the hexameter and so-called “pentameter” portions of each couplet:

\[ \text{|--|--|--|--|} \]
\[ 1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 1 \quad 2 \quad 1 \quad 2 \]
\[ \text{A} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{C} \]
\[ \text{|--|--|--|--|} \]
\[ 1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \]
\[ \text{D} \quad \text{E} \quad \text{F} \]

Both early Greek epic and elegy thus had built-in structuring principles for their traditional phraseology that necessitated and at the same time enabled semantic and metrical coordination.

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\[ ^{17} \text{For a fuller discussion of the scholarship involved in determining such breaks, see Foley 1990:73-80. Cf. also the arguments made for varying divisions as proposed by Porter (1951), Peabody (1975), Foley (1990), Russo (1997), Clark (2004), Garner (2011:6-9). See Kirk 1966 and 1985:18-24 for possible doubts concerning the true applicability of such a four-part structuring system for Homer.} \]

\[ ^{18} \text{For the evidence of such structuring, see Garner 2011:9-17.} \]

\[ ^{19} \text{It should be mentioned, however, that this colonic structuring of the hexameter is not absolutely rigid in its employment within all Homeric lines. For instance, semantic unit endings do not occur universally in all lines at one of the B caesurae; a small but significant 1% of hexameters have these breaks “blocked,” with the semantic unit continuing on until at least the C caesura. Blockages for the A and C caesurae occur in fully 10% of all lines. (See further Foley 1990:79-82.) Archaic elegy contains a similar number of digressions from these structural norms, though in the hexameter portion there does seem to be a slightly less rigid standard of employment. (Cf. Garner 2011:9-11, 16.)} \]
As it turns out, Lesbian stanzaic poetry also exhibits regularized structuring principles for its phraseology, though the organizational patterns differ somewhat from those found in early Greek epic and elegy.\textsuperscript{20} On the island of Lesbos, rather than lines comprising four separate phraseological parts, it is tripartite structures that dominate the various poetic forms. There are of course some Aeolic meters that do not seem to be organized in three parts,\textsuperscript{21} and in some cases the evidence is too fragmentary to determine any underlying structural tendencies, but in general the three-part division is the one that dominates the poetic landscape. For instance, if Plutarch’s quotation of the “Miller’s Song” from Eresus is considered authentic (\textit{Septem sapientium convivium} 14),\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{quote}
 ἄλει, μύλα, ἄλει
 καὶ γὰρ Πιττακὸς ἄλει
 μεγάλας Μυτιλάνας βασιλεύων.
\end{quote}

(Grind, mill, grind / for even Pittakos grinds / ruling over great Mytilene.)

we have at least one example of what may be considered a Lesbian folksong to be sung in conjunction with the grinding of corn.\textsuperscript{23} Although the poem is simple and does not employ any recognizable meter, the tripartite organization is obvious—even if nearly all of the units consist of a single word.\textsuperscript{24} Of the three lines, the only place where the three-part division might be

\footnotesize{20} The following discussion draws heavily from and builds upon my remarks concerning Alcaic and Sapphic stanzas found in Garner 2003:51-57.

\footnotesize{21} At least some counter-examples to such Lesbian tripartite structuring still show regularized phraseological organization. For instance, the possible Lesbian folksong quoted by Hephaestion (Campbell 1982:171-72 [Sappho fr. 168BJ]) does not adhere to the three-part structuring tradition and instead seems to consist of only two phraseological elements that balance each other out on each side of the line:

\begin{quote}
 δέδυκε μὲν ἀσελάννα
 καὶ Πηλίαςς μέσαι δὲ
 νύκτες, παρὰ δ᾿ ἔγνυτεν ὑθρα. ἔγνω δὲ μόνα καθέεδω.
\end{quote}

Such structuring, however, seems to have been the exception rather than the rule, and it had very little influence on Lesbian poetry as a whole.

\footnotesize{22} See Campbell 1967 (\textit{Carm. pop.} 869).

\footnotesize{23} This specific type of song is mentioned by Athenaeus (xiv.618c). Cf. the discussion of this poem by Bowra (1961:143-44).

\footnotesize{24} As will become clear in the analyses that follow, I do not avoid considering the possibility that single words can act as integers of traditional phraseology, though I often omit them as evidence for actual formula employment since less controversial examples can be used instead. Such worries, though, are mitigated when such isolated words appear to fill out entire cola on a recurring basis in one or more types of early Greek verse. Additionally, as Foley has shown (1990:44-50), comparative evidence suggests that traditional oral poets most often do not themselves recognize the distinction between individual lexemes and longer phraseological units that work together as a single traditional “word,” and thus there seems to be little reason to deny their importance in relation to the verse-structuring techniques used on Lesbos.
criticized is the distinction of καὶ γὰρ as a self-contained unit. However, such employment is quite common in Homer where the phrase appears 28 times as the introductory colon in the hexameter. Thus, even in a most basic form, Lesbian poetry has the ability to arrange itself in what our evidence is displaying as a quite pervasive traditional structure for early Greek non-epic poetry in general.

More important for our purposes here, though, are the structures of the most influential verse forms of Lesbian poetry—the Alcaic and Sapphic stanzas. Unfortunately there is not enough extant poetry of these forms to produce exact colometry schemes such as those given for the hexameter and elegiac couplet, but the overall structuring methods in these stanzaic forms are still quite apparent. First, in the Alcaic stanza we have a regularized tripartite scheme. Though these divisions are easy enough to make in each surviving fragment that we have, I here provide only a few of the more straightforward examples taken from the work of Alcaeus:25

Alcaeus 72.7-10:

χήνος δὲ τοῦτων ὅψε επελάθετο
ἔνθη ἐπεὶ δὴ ποιῶν ὄνετρος,
πάσος γὰρ ὄννυρινε νύκτας,
τὸ δὲ πίθου πατάγεσκ ὀ πόθυμν.

(But that man did not forget these things when he first created a disturbance, for he kept whole nights awake, and the bottom of the jar went on ringing.)

Alcaeus 129.1-12:

. . . τόδε Λέσβιοι
. . . ἐβδομένῳ τέμενος μέγα
ἐὖνον κατέλαβαν ἐν δὲ βάμοις
ἀδενάτον μακάρων ἔθηκαν
κατονύμασαν ἀντίαυον Δία
αὐτὶ Αἰολῆιαν [κ]υδαλίμαν θέουν
πάντων γενέθλαν, τὸν δὲ τέρτον
τόνδε κεμήλιον ὄννυμασ[α]ν

Ζώνυναον ὑμήσταταν, ἰ[γ]γ' εἶνοον
θύμον σχέδοντες εμμετέρα[ς] ἄοις
ἀκούσατ', ἐκ δὲ τῶν ἰδὲ μόθθουν
ἀγαλέας τε φύγας . . .

(The Lesbians established this great conspicuous precinct to be held in common, and put in it altars of the blessed immortals, and they entitled Zeus God of Suppliants and you, the Aeolian, Glorious Goddess, Mother of all, and this third they named Kemelios, Dionysus, eater of

25 Except where indicated, citations and quotations from Alcaeus and Sappho refer to Lobel and Page 1955. Translations—also except where noted—are taken from Campbell 1982.
raw flesh. Come, with gracious spirit hear our prayer, and rescue us from these hardships and from grievous exile. . . .

Alcaeus 6.1-3:

τὸδ’ αὖτε κύμα τὸ π[ρ]οτέρο[ν] ἕνεμον

οτέροι[ν] πανέξει δ’ ἄλμη πόνον πλόλων

ἀντήν ἐπείξει κε νόλος ἐμβιν

(This wave in turn comes [like?] the previous one, and it will give us much trouble to bale out when it enters the ship’s. . . .)

The above divisions are based first on major syntactic divisions and a practice of keeping together inseparable prepositive and postpositive elements, and in those cases where juncture points are still uncertain, my methodology has been whenever possible to compare the Alcaic phraseology with similar recurring elements that fill out entire cola in other archaic Greek meters or to make divisions on the basis of syntactic parallels if the phrase (or sometimes the individual word) is not found elsewhere as a unit.  

Though the results may seem a bit subjective, it is worth noting that every Alcaic stanza that has survived to us from archaic Lesbos can be divided in this tripartite fashion.

Finally, the structuring of the Sapphic stanza is slightly more complex. The first two lines of each stanza consistently divide into three portions just as do their Alcaic counterparts, but the third and fourth lines—in actuality a single line as far as metrical analysis is concerned— altogether comprise four semantic units. Again, the following examples (which I present with the third and fourth lines combined but with their conventional line numbering) are representative:

Sappho 1.9-16:

ἄρμ’ ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ α’ ἄγον

ὡράνω ἱθερος διὰ μέσσω

αἶψα δ’ ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ’, ὦ μάκαιρα,

μειδιαίσαισ ἀθανάτωι προσώπῳ

ηρε’ ὅττι δημύτε πέλονθς κἐττί δημύτε χάλημμι

26 Importantly, in those cases where I have separated words from their modifiers, it is nearly always the case that these items fill out cola individually somewhere else in the corpus. Also, as is the case for Homeric phrase structuring, strings of more than one enclitic are allowed to be separated from each other. On specific points of phraseological parallels, see further the discussion below. For a similar methodology being used to establish the structuring tendencies of archaic Greek elegy and further details on the guiding principles being used, see Garner 2011:6-17.


28 Though Lobel and Page print ὑράνω ἱθερος as a single word, I have inserted the space between the lexemes to present more clearly the phraseological juncture that occurs at that point.
καὶ γὰρ αἱ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
αἱ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἄλλα δώσει,
αἱ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει ζωῆς ἔθελοσα.

ἐλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπταν δὲ λέγεων
ἐκ μερίμναν, ὄσσα δὲ μοι τέλεσσα
Θύμος ἰμέοσε, τέλεσον, σὺ δ’ αὐτὰ σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

(‘If she runs away, soon she shall pursue; if she does not accept gifts, why, she shall give them instead; and if she does not love, soon she shall love even against her will.’ Come to me now again and deliver me from oppressive anxieties; fulfil all that my heart longs to fulfil, and you yourself be my fellow-fighter.)

οἱ μὲν ἴππηων στρότον οἱ δὲ πέσδων
οἱ δὲ νάων φαῖ' ἑπ[ι] γὰν μέλαν[γ]ον
ἐλευμ αὐτῶν κάλλιστον, ἵκο δὲ χηρ' ὀττὶς ἔσσαι.

(Some say a host of cavalry, others of infantry, and others of ships, is the most beautiful thing on the black earth, but I say it is whatsoever a person loves.)

φαίνεται μοι θάνως ἵσος θέουσιν
ἔμμεν ὑπηρ', ὄτθις ἐνάντιος τοι
ἰδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδι φωνείσας ὑπακούει

(He seems as fortunate as the gods to me, the man who sits opposite you and listens nearby to your sweet voice. . . .)

Sapphic stanzas, however, provide one final feature that needs explaining. Though the majority of the stanzas have final lines whose component parts are arranged in the customary paratactic fashion, a few stanzas actually demonstrate a type of expansion in which one semantic unit is
split into two parts that surround a different internal phraseological element. This phenomenon appears three times, for instance, within Sappho 1:29

Sappho 1.1-8: ποικιλόθρον’ ἀθανάτ’ Ἀφρόδιτα,
παί Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαι σε,
μή μ’ ἀσίας μηδ’ ὀνίας ὀδας, πότινα, θύμον.

άλλα τυιδ’ ἐλθ’ αἰ ποτα κάτέροιτα
τας ἠμας αὐδας ἁίωσα πήλαι
ἐκλες, πάτρος δε δόμον λίποσα χρύσιον ἴπθες

(Ornate-throned immortal Aphrodite, wile-weaving daughter of Zeus, I entreat you: do not overpower my heart, mistress, with ache and anguish, but come here, if ever in the past you heard my voice from afar and acquiesced and came, leaving your father’s golden house. . . .)

Sappho 1.17-20: κόττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μανόλας θύμοι· τίνα δηπίτε πείθο
Lambdaν ἐς σαν φιλότατα· τίς α’, ὦ Ψάφπ’, ἄδικει:

(. . . and what in my maddened heart I most wished to happen for myself: ‘Whom am I to persuade this time to lead you back to her love?30 Who wrongs you, Sappho?’)

Such overriding of paratactic structuring tendencies should not surprise us greatly, though, since even in Homer we find internal expansion as a method by which the poet added flexibility to his verse form.31 The phraseological expansion in Sappho is made even more interesting since it occurs in that portion of the verse that is most similar to the epic hexameter in general, both in terms of length (and its attendant four-part divisions) and with respect to rhythm (with the possibility of a concluding adonean in both poetries). Further, even though the partitioning systems in Lesbian lyric may seem less rigid than those that can be defined for other early Greek meters, we should also remember that the Sapphic and Alcaic stanzas allowed much less

29 That the expanded units should be viewed as integral and not as two separate units is assured in at least two of these cases by similar phrases occurring elsewhere in early Greek poetry, with δάμνα . . . θύμον paralleled by θυμὸν ἐδάμνα (a Homeric line-ending at Iliad 14.439) and λίποσα . . . ἴπθες being similar (though with a reversal of lexemes) to ἴπθες λιπὼν (Scutum 81).

30 Campbell’s translation is based on the emendation ἄψ σ’ ἄγην ἐς Γᾶν. . . .

31 Cf. Hainsworth 1968:74-109 where Ch. 6 is devoted to the expansion of Homeric formulas in general and Ch. 7 discusses particular formulas with elements separated by variable units.
flexibility metrically than did the hexameter or elegiac couplet, where alternations between dactyls and spondees are commonplace. In fact, because of the few metrical variations allowed within the Sapphic stanza, the number of different possible metrical types for its colon-length phrases (34) is quite comparable to that found in the Homeric hexameter (26), and the number actually employed within the Sapphic corpus is limited even further with only 24 attested variations. The structuring of phraseology within Lesbian stanzaic poetry, then, seems to be leading us further down the path of viewing Sappho’s work as being even more steeped in traditional processes than it might first appear.

**Traditional Phraseology in Sappho**

But even if the stanzaic verse forms employed by Sappho had the capacity to make use of traditional phraseology, do we have any evidence that she indeed used such phrases in oral traditional—or even formulaic—ways? As we have already seen, even though Lesbian stanzaic poetry does exhibit several metrical by-forms, not enough poetry of this type remains to demonstrate any possible thrift that would be in line with the oral-formulaic practices apparent in other early Greek poetic genres. Additionally, we might look for similarities between the stanza-ending internal expansion techniques in Sappho and the traditional practice of tmesis in the Homeric hexameter, but this approach also ultimately leaves our main question unanswered. We might, however, attempt to locate any formulaic usage in Sappho through the regularity with which traditional colon-length phrases are placed within her stanzas. As O’Neill (1942) showed long ago for the early Greek hexameter, poets using oral-formulaic techniques tend to employ systematic—though not completely universal—placement of phraseology at specific positions within the verse. Again, not enough Lesbian poetry remains for us to determine whether Sappho was regularly consistent herself in the localization of formulas. But we can, on the other hand, check to see whether there are similarities between the metrical placements of formulas shared by Sappho and early Greek epic, with any correspondences between the two poetries not only adding to our evidence that Sappho was employing oral-formulaic verse-making techniques but also indicating that she was doing so through a lyric tradition that was interacting with—and not just parallel to—its epic counterpart.

But what do we mean by “formula” when we are talking about phraseology shared between two different meters? Traditional definitions of formula for Greek poetry are all meant

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32 On tmesis as an inherited technique from Indo-European poetry, see Horrocks 1980, 1981. Aeolic poetry seems to retain many such characteristics of Indo-European metrical practice, as it is conservative with respect to resolution and contraction, often maintains a single line-initial double anceps, and matches the oldest Indian poetic forms in the metrical shape of many of its cola. Cf. West 1982:29-30.

33 The origin of such localization practices in Homer is a murky matter at best and is wrapped up in complex questions of metrical and linguistic development from Indo-European practice onward. (See the references provided in note 6 as well as in Russo 1997:espec. note 8.) Specifically, default Greek (and possibly Indo-European) syntactic patterns themselves may have acted as a possible systematizing influence on Greek verse so that its localization tendencies are more apparent than a random distribution might suggest (cf. Peabody 1975:30-167 on Hesiod), but rather than separate poetic processes from everyday linguistic realities, we would instead do well to recall Foley’s formulation that “oral tradition works like language, only more so” (1999:6).
to analyze phraseology occurring within a given verse form and are therefore difficult to apply beyond that single meter.\textsuperscript{34} For that reason, I have previously proposed a different type of formula—the lexical formula—that allows for comparison among various metrical forms. As I defined it in a previous study aimed at comparing Greek epic and elegiac forms (2011:21), a lexical formula is “a group of two or more lexemes that appear together regularly in order to fill out completely a traditionally defined colon or cola either by themselves or in conjunction with prepositive or postpositive words.”\textsuperscript{35} Any set of phraseology found to meet this definition will consist of only the most systematic and mechanical elements that could be determined to be shared by different poetries, but even though it will be inadequate for demonstrating the full flexibility of a traditional system at work, it can at least provide a glimpse of just how regularized Sappho’s traditional diction is.

I have listed in the appendix the lexical formulas shared by early Greek epic and Sappho’s stanzas.\textsuperscript{36} Though only 15 assured examples of shared lexical formulas can be gleaned from the small amount of surviving poetry, the patterned usage is almost startling in its regularity:

1) For single-colon-length phrases in epic, their positioning in the hexameter is nearly always mirrored directly in the Sapphic stanza.

A) If a lexical formula is primarily localized at the first, second, or third position within the hexameter, it tends to appear as the first, second, or third element respectively within an individual line in the Sapphic stanza as well.\textsuperscript{37}

B) If a formula is primarily localized at the end of a hexameter, it will tend to appear as the final element in a Sapphic stanza line as well.\textsuperscript{38} (Such

\textsuperscript{34} See further Garner 2011:19-21.

\textsuperscript{35} Within this definition, metrically nonequivalent forms, dialectal by-forms, and differently prefixed verb forms are all able to be considered part of the same formula family. Such allowances are especially important for comparison of Lesbian and Homeric poetry, as the study of formula families variously employing isometrical or metrically non-equivalent Aeolic and Ionic forms could have further ramifications for investigations into the diachronic development of the respective verse forms. For the application of this system to early Greek elegy, see Garner 2011:21-38.

\textsuperscript{36} In the appendix and the discussion that follows, the following editions of hexameter works have been used: Monro and Allen 1920 (\textit{Iliad}), Allen 1917 (\textit{Odyssey}), Allen et al. 1936 (\textit{Homeric Hymns}), West 1966 (\textit{Theogony}), Solmsen 1970 (\textit{Works and Days, Scutum}).

\textsuperscript{37} Such is the case for three of the four lexical formulas primarily localized in the hexameter at a non-final position. The one formula not fitting into this pattern appears at Sappho 1.13, where ω μάκαιρα acts as the final element in the line but its closest parallel, ω μάκαρ, appears in a line-initial position at \textit{Iliad} 3.182. However, even in this case, it is possible that Sappho is mirroring hexameter usage, as the plural μάκαιρες often appears by itself as the third unit in a Homeric line.

\textsuperscript{38} The only exceptions are αἶψα δ’ ἔξίκοντο (Sappho 1.13) and δῶρα μὴ δέκετ (Sappho 1.22), but both of these cases involve internal expansion of one type or another from their Homeric parallels.
localization occurs consistently at the end of both tripartite and four-part lines, and it may even be a final element of a stanza that then undergoes internal expansion.

2) Phrases filling out two cola together in the hexameter appear in line-initial position within the Sapphic stanza.

Of these patterned employments, perhaps the most interesting is the localizing of hexameter line-ending units within the various possible line-final environments of the Sapphic stanza, as such usage shows the Sapphic tendency to prioritize line position over metrical environment. Also, it should be stressed that even though the patterns given above show how hexameter formulas adapt to their Sapphic environment, we could also express the relationship in the opposite direction to demonstrate how Sapphic formulas localize into the hexameter. If the two types of poetry were actively sharing formulaic phraseology—as indeed seems to be the case—the likelihood would not be that one genre provided the diction for another in a hierarchical fashion but instead that there was a common poetic language that continually evolved and situated itself within the specific needs of any individual performance context or poetic form; the degree to which two different poetries had similar diction would be directly related to the amount of contact the practitioners and audience members of one genre had with the other. Consequently, I would suggest that the high correspondence rates for Sappho and epic were caused much more by Sappho’s contemporaries being fluent in two different but related poetic idioms rather than through any wish by the poet to emulate Homer or other hexameter poets in particular.

Sappho 1

If, then, we have evidence that Sappho’s poetry was composed in accordance with oral traditional verse-structuring techniques and the patterned usage of oral-formulaic phraseology, and we know that poetry of Sappho’s period was much more commonly transmitted through performance than via textualization, it would seem that we ourselves should default to interpreting her poetry not as works of a literate composer creating texts to be read privately but as pieces of art that were meant to be interpreted primarily through the traditional context of oral performance with all of its attendant strategies for aesthetic expression. And as an example of just how stark the interpretive difference can be if we drop our literate presuppositions and move closer toward this more realistic poetic scenario, I would like to close with a renewed

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39 For instance, περὶ γὰς μελαίνας (Sappho 1.10) / ἐπὶ γᾶν μέλαιναν (Sappho 16.2) and ἰσος θέουσιν (Sappho 31.1).

40 Examples are κωὐκ ἐθέλοισα (Sappho 1.24) and οὐκ ἐδύναντο (Sappho 17.8).

41 Sappho 1.3-4: δόμυνα . . . θύμων.

42 Appearing at Sappho 1.9 (ἄρμ' ἐπαοδεύεισσα) and Sappho 2.5 (ἐν δ' ὑδωρ ψύχον).
examination of the first (as well as longest and most complete) poem in the Sapphic corpus. Much of the poem has already appeared as evidence throughout this essay, but I provide it here in the full form which has come down to us (with the third and fourth lines again split apart):

ποικιλόθρον’ ἀθανάτ’ Αφρόδιτα,  
παί Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαι σε,  
μή μ’ ἀσαις μηδ’ ὄνιαις δάμνα,  
pότνια, θύμων,

ἀλλὰ τυίδ’ ἐλθ’, αἳ ποτα κάτερωτα  
tάς ἔμας αἴδας ἀίωνα πῆλοι  
ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμων λίσσοισα  
χρύσιον ἠλθεῖς

ἄρμ’ ὑπαοδεύξιαισά· κάλοι δὲ ὁ’ ἀγον  
όθενες στροφύθοι περὶ γὰς μελαίνας  
pόρνα διεννεντες πέρι’ ἀπ’ ὑφάνοκθε-  
ρος διὰ μέσσω.

αἴψα δ’ ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ’, ὦ μάκαιρα,  
μειδιαίαισά’ ἀθανάτωι προσόπωι  
ἡρε’ ὅτι δημύτε πέπονθα χώττι  
δημύτε κάλλιμμι

χώττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεοθαι  
μαινόλαι θύμωι· τίνα δημύτε πείθω  
.Ἰοάγην ἐς σάν φιλότατα; τίς σ’, ὦ  
Ψάφη, ἀδικήει;

καὶ γὰρ αἱ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,  
αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ’, ἀλλὰ δώσει,  
αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει  
κοῦκ ἐθέλοισα.

ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λύσον  
ἐκ μερίμναιν, δόσσα δε μοι τέλεοςα  
θύμος ἱμέρρει, τέλεοςα, σὺ δ’ αὐτα  
σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

(Ornate-throned immortal Aphrodite, wile-weaving daughter of Zeus, I entreat you: do not overpower my heart, mistress, with ache and anguish, but come here, if ever in the past you heard my voice from afar and acquiesced and came, leaving your father’s golden house, with chariot yoked: beautiful swift sparrows whirring fast-beating wings brought you above the dark earth
down from heaven through the mid-air, and soon they arrived; and you, blessed one, with a smile on your immortal face asked what was the matter with me this time and why I was calling this time and what in my maddened heart I most wished to happen for myself: ‘Whom am I to persuade this time to lead you back to her love? Who wrongs you, Sappho? If she runs away, soon she shall pursue; if she does not accept gifts, why, she shall give them instead; and if she does not love, soon she shall love even against her will.’ Come to me now again and deliver me from oppressive anxieties; fulfil all that my heart longs to fulfil, and you yourself be my fellow-fighter.)

Whether this poem was conceived as a personal prayer or as a hymnic effort has been debated in the same manner as the general performance contexts for Sappho’s poetry, but ultimately the uncertainty here lies in the fact that both forms draw on the same traditional type-scene structure that is common not only in early Greek epic but also in lyric, with over twenty examples able to be drawn from archaic non-epic poetry. That such structuring pervades lyric as well as epic provides yet another indication of traditional interaction between the different art forms, but it also allows us to observe important differences in the ways that varying genres were able to make use of the same traditional material and techniques. The first of these differences becomes apparent immediately: in a Homeric prayer, the type-scene is always introduced by the praying individual first making a prayer-related gesture—usually involving the raising of hands—and the poet also using specific verbs (for example, εὔχομαι or ἄραομαι) to indicate that a prayer is about to occur; in many cases there is also an indication as to which deity is about to be addressed. In Sappho 1, the audience has none of this context to assist in interpreting the prayer. Instead, the original audiences would have been forced to draw upon the immediate performance context, their previous experiences with Sappho’s poetic tradition, and possibly their own acquaintance with Sappho’s particular compositions in order to interpret each new piece of information as it came forth in the poem. Whereas Greek epic tends to be determinative and direct the audience members’ interpretation through previous and subsequent narrative context, Greek lyric was by necessity a more privately participatory experience with poets having less ability or desire to steer audience members’ individualistic interpretations—interpretations that were not limited by traditional compositional techniques but enabled by them in the first place.

Nevertheless, Sappho’s audience did not have to wait long for the patterned prayer type-scene to make itself clear, as the poem opens immediately in the traditional manner of a request for divine assistance by invoking the goddess Aphrodite in a string of epithets (lines 1-2). Of these epithets, ποικιλόθρονος is the most interesting, not only because the introductory word

43 In addition to the works provided in note 10 of this article for the possible performance environments of Sappho’s poems more generally, see also Cameron 1939 and Segal 1974 for discussions of this poem in particular.

44 Alcaeus 129; Alcman 81; Anacreon 348, 357; Ananius 1; Archilochus 26, 106, 108; Callinus 2; Hipponax 3a, 32, 40; Sappho 1, 2, 5, 15, 17, 33; Solon 13; Theognis 11-14. Anacreon 348 is included, even though the actual request is now missing from our remaining fragment. I do not here include simple invocations, since these briefer appeals to the divine follow a differing though related type-scene structure.

helps set the tone for the entire poem but also since it is the one word from this poem that is most disputed in meaning. The traditional interpretation of the word has been “elaborate-throned,” a meaning supported by similar descriptions in Homer:

**Od.** 1.130-32: αὐτὴν δ’ ἐξ θρόνον εἶσεν ἄγων, ὑπὸ λίτα πετάσως, καλὸν δαίδαλέων· ὑπὸ δὲ θρήνως ποιιν ἦν. πάρ δ’ αὐτὸς κλισμὸν θέτο ποικίλον . . .

(And leading her, he seated her upon a beautiful, elaborate chair, spreading out a cloth underneath, and under her feet was a footstool. For himself he set an elaborate couch beside her . . .)

**Il.** 18.389-90: τὴν μὲν ἔπειτα καθεῖσεν ἐπὶ θρόνου ἀργυροήλου καλοῦ δαιδαλέου . . .

(He then seated her on a beautiful and elaborate silver-studded chair . . .)

However, even though these two examples and others throughout the Homeric corpus describe situations in which goddesses are shown proper respect by being seated upon intricate chairs, the phrases themselves are not exact parallels, and some scholars, such as Lawler (1948) and Burnett (1983:250-51), have posited a different meaning for ποικιλόθρονος, deriving the compound not from the noun θρόνος but from the word θρόνα (“flowers embroidered on cloth,” “herbs used as drugs and charms” [LSJ: s.v. θρόνον]) and thereby defining ποικιλόθρονος as something like “elaborately clad with love-charms.” As with the other interpretation of “elaborate-throned,” this derived meaning would also be well-suited to Aphrodite’s character and is supported by a passage from the *Iliad* (22.440-41): 49

 álll’ ἡ γ’ ἱστὸν ὑφαινε μυχῷ δόμου ὑψηλῳ δίπλακα πορφυρᾶν, ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικ’ ἐπαυσε.

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46 Supporters of this meaning include Page (1955:5), Cameron (1939:2), and Greene (2002:86).

47 *Od.* 1.130-32 involves Athena being given her proper seat by Telemachos, and in *Il.* 18.389-90 Thetis is seated by Charis (a wife of Hephaistos and therefore parallel to Aphrodite herself).

48 Skinner (2002:67) also entertains this possibility in her discussion of the poem.

49 Burnett draws from narrative context to support this reading (1983:250-51): “An Aphrodite addressed as ‘elaborate-throned’ would have to divest herself of her epithet almost as soon as it had been bestowed, since it is not a description that could follow her into the scene of epiphany. Flowers, on the other hand, are almost required by that central scene, since they are the chief ingredients in the sort of amorous magic that Aphrodite there promises to work.”
But she was weaving a web in the inner recess of the high house, a bright double robe, and on it she sprinkled elaborately embroidered flowers.50)

So scholarship on this poem has, in general, focused on one of these two possible interpretations for ποικιλόθρονος, accepting it either as a term related to the respectful seating of the goddess in an arrival scene or as a particularized epithet illustrative of Aphrodite’s magical powers.51 Either of these interpretations is, of course, possible—especially if we were to accept a primarily text-based context for poetic composition and transmission—however, neither suggested meaning harmonizes completely with traditional practices. In neither case do we have cited phraseological parallels occurring in traditionally appropriate colon-length positions. The usage at Iliad 22.441 of θρόνα ποικίλ’ requires a verb to fill out the remainder of the line-ending colon, while the parallel phrases for “elaborate-throned” do not even fall within a single line. Additionally, if one wishes to see the reception of a guest as being referred to—or perhaps predicted by—ποικιλόθρονος, there is the additional difficulty of the placement of this detail so much earlier than the arrival scene in the poem, since the seating of a guest usually takes place only after the actual greeting by the host.52 However, in an oral traditional poetic environment there is a third interpretative possibility for epithets, since they are not always specific, context-aware modifiers but are often metonymic pathways that index the entire set of traits and actions that have been traditionally encoded for a given individual’s character.53 It is true that ποικιλόθρονος does not occur elsewhere in Greek poetry, thus perhaps calling its “traditional” nature into question; nevertheless, we should at least allow for the possibility that this opening word of the poem is not meant to do anything but refer metonymically to the totality of Aphrodite’s character by means of a specific trait, whatever that characteristic might actually be. A reference to seating or flowers may or may not have been completely irrelevant to the poet and audience; however, the important fact is that Aphrodite is named immediately by means of an epithet that Sappho’s audience would recognize—regardless of the specific interpretation by the individual audience members—and that this word together with its further elaboration by other descriptive epithets thus allows Sappho to complete the first element involved in the traditional prayer type-scene—that of identifying the divinity to be asked for a favor.

50 For Homer, however, θρόνα is more likely to denote an embroidered pattern more generally.

51 A third possibility of accepting a textual variant of ποικιλόφρον’ (“full of various wiles”) also exists; cf. Winkler 2002:42-44.

52 See Reece 1993:6-7. If, however, we wish to view this epithet as a collapsing of the greeting and seating of the guest, an interesting situation develops, since seating is normally followed by a feast in the hospitality type-scene. There, of course, is no actual feast present in Sappho 1, but the descriptions of love and the fulfillment that it can bring might be seen as a sort of metaphorical feast. Such a transfer of literal feasting to the realm of love is not unparalleled in early Greek poetry, as the reunion and lovemaking between Penelope and Odysseus in the Odyssey also occur after traditional markers that indicate a feast is to follow. See Foley 1999:185-86.

53 Foley has well illustrated this type of “traditional referentiality” related to Homeric epithets in his discussion (1999:209-11) of Achilles being called “swift-footed” even in narrative contexts where the epithet is irrelevant or even contradictory to the ongoing action.
After further establishing a traditional prayer context through her employment of the conventional verb λίσσομαι (“entreat”), Sappho completes her first stanza by narrowing the focus even further by establishing that this particular prayer will concern the mitigation of love’s anguish. At this point, the poet then provides in rapid succession three separate markers that a tradition-aware audience would immediately have interpreted as indicators of this prayer’s eventual success. The first of these markers occurs on a more general level, as Sappho now embarks upon the depiction of a previous epiphany provided by Aphrodite, the mentioning of which helps to forge a link between petitioner and divinity. In Homeric prayers, there are thirteen similar narrations of previous interactions between petitioner and divinity, and in each case there is a successful outcome for the prayer. In addition, within the transition from her general request for help to this former appearance of Aphrodite, Sappho includes two further forecasters of success by employing αἰποτα (line 5) and ἐκλυες (line 7). The phrase αἰποτα is a dialectal variant of εἴποτε, a phrase that I have elsewhere shown to have strong connections with successful prayer and supplication within the Homeric epics and Hymns. Forms of κλύω also forecast success in Homeric prayers, as all 12 uses of the verb in prayers—similarly always occurring in a line-initial position—result in divine favors being granted.

So here Sappho seems to be using at least three conventional signals to imply a favorable response to her prayer, with these signals only being effective because of their repeated usage within recognizable poetic environments in either the epic or lyric traditions. We do not need to assume along with Rissman (1983) that such elements are meant to remind the audience of specific, fixed scenes from within the Iliad or Odyssey, or that their usage is even meant to bring to mind epic contexts more generally. Given that such standardized prayers appear outside of the epic tradition in lyric—and perhaps even in undocumented prayers from daily life in Greece—the much greater possibility is that these markers of successful prayers were just as at home in non-epic environments as they were in Homeric poetry. The specific indication of a successful prayer may have been more likely to come from epic environments with its ability to direct interpretation through ensuing narrative, but the overall extralexical meaning for the signals necessarily drew from repeated employment within each of the different poetic traditions that were not always parallel but instead interacting with each other through the shared experiences of poets and audience members.

On the other hand, even though these traditional signals within Sappho’s prayer may be similar to those of epic, their employment and implied meaning again work in a fashion quite

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54 See Lang 1975 for an extended treatment of the different relationships that can be called upon within Homeric prayers and their effects upon the prayers’ results. This direct tradition-enabled link between concrete services offered in the past and a successful prayer thus seems to offset the individual importance that Burnett (1983:253) imparts to Sappho’s description of personal epiphany with her remark that “ordinarily, when a petitioner makes reference to past benefactions, he does so in terms as vague as possible, which is only common sense, since he does not want to offer any point that might be challenged or denied.” The question of specificity in Homeric prayer is not one of what the petitioner wants to avoid saying but rather what the individual has the ability to say truthfully.

55 See Garner 1996. See also the related usage of εἴποτε at Callinus 2.

56 The occurrences are at Iliad 1.37, 1.451, 5.115, 10.278, 16.514, 23.770; Odyssey 2.262, 3.55, 4.762, 5.445, 6.324, and 9.528.
different from the corresponding elements in Homer. Such predictive elements in lyric rely much more heavily than do their epic counterparts on the audience’s awareness of traditional meaning in order to fill narrative gaps of indeterminacy,\textsuperscript{57} since those gaps of interpretation must be filled not only within the poem itself but also beyond it. Therefore, when Sappho’s poem reaches its end without Aphrodite’s reaction being provided, audience members who draw from their knowledge of similar usages of these markers in previous traditional contexts will likely reach the conclusion that Sappho’s prayer was successful. If, on the other hand, there is an individual who is unaware of such associations, the gap of indeterminacy widens and the task of interpretation becomes even greater.

In the scene of Aphrodite’s arrival (lines 6-14) that these successful prayer markers help to introduce, several similarities have been observed—most notably by Svenbro (1975), Rissman (1983:9-10), and Winkler (2002:44-53)—with an episode at \textit{Iliad 5.720-72} where Athena arms for battle, has her chariot and horses readied, and travels down from Olympus to earth. In addition to the thematic context shared by both poems of a goddess coming to the aid of a mortal, there are two phraseological parallels that occur:\textsuperscript{58} δόμνησι (746) ~ δόμνα (3), and πύλαι μύκον οὐρανοῦ (749) ~ πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίπσιοσ (7). However, rather than seeing these phraseological similarities as direct evidence for Sappho’s adaptation of a preexisting Homeric episode for a specific personal purpose,\textsuperscript{59} it seems preferable—especially in light of our findings that formulaic phraseology can indeed be shared traditionally among different meters and genres—to view these expressions as traditional elements employed similarly for two full-blown scenes of a divinity’s arrival. This reading is bolstered by the fact that Sappho’s arrival scene also shares phraseological similarities with other Homeric scenes having nothing to do with \textit{Iliad 5.720-72} in particular. πύκνα δίννεντε πτέρ (11) is comparable with \textit{Odyssey 2.151} (ένθ’ ἐπιδινηθέντε τιναξάσθην πτερὰ πυκνά) and αἶψα δ’ ἔξκοντο (13) resembles \textit{Iliad 5.367} (αἶψα δ’ ἔπειθ’ ἔξκοντο . . . ).\textsuperscript{60} Also important is the usage of περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας (10), since, as Harvey has shown (1957:216-17), γῆ μέλαινα was undoubtedly a fixed element of traditional poetic diction within the sphere of lyric poetry.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{57} The term is Iser’s (1971) and was used in its original form with respect to implied readers of texts, but Foley has well applied the concept to oral traditional texts also (1991:espec. 38-95).

\textsuperscript{58} Svenbro 1975:39. Svenbro also mentions three parallels from outside the epiphany, though none are exact: πέπλον . . . ποικύλων (734-35) ~ ποικιλόθρον’ (1); Ἀθηναίη κούρη Διός (733) ~ 'Αφρόδιτα, παί Δίος (1-2); ἐς πόλεμον (737) ~ σύμμαχοσ (28).

\textsuperscript{59} For instance, Winkler (2002:46) states: “Sappho’s use of Homeric passages is a way of allowing us, even encouraging us, to approach her consciousness as a woman and poet reading Homer. The Homeric hero is not just a starting point for Sappho’s discourse about her own love, rather Diomedes as he exists in the \textit{Iliad} is central to what Sappho is saying about the distance between Homer’s world and her own.”

\textsuperscript{60} Cf. Rissman 1983:10.

\textsuperscript{61} Also, as has often been observed, the placement of χρύσιον in line 8 is quite ambiguous since it could plausibly be a modifier of either δόμον or ἄρμα. However, the observation that χρύσιον is in the first place likely an element purposely used by Sappho to expand a traditional phrase makes it more probable that any ambiguity was actually intended by Sappho, thereby creating a much more fluid transition in her removal of Aphrodite from Olympos to earth.
After yet another traditional referencing of Aphrodite in line 14 with μείδιαίσαισ ἀθανάτωι προσώπωι (cf. h. Hymn 10.2-3: ἑφ’ ἰμερτῷ δὲ προσώπῳ / αἰεὶ μειδιάει), Sappho goes on to report Aphrodite’s earlier speech to her, moving quickly through indirect to direct speech. Here, the traditional nature of the actual vocabulary within the goddess’s words is less readily apparent, as fewer parallels to phraseology in early Greek poetry can be found. However, not only does the phraseological structuring of the passage stay within traditional expectations, but here we also have several rhetorical features that are most easily explained as byproducts of an oral performance context for either this poem in particular or this type of poetry more generally. For instance, in recognizing the similarity between Aphrodite’s words and incantation, Segal (1974:148) has made note of the triple recurrence of δῆτε with its ritualistic effect of repetition, as well as several other traditional features of incantation located specifically in the direct speech of the goddess (149):

Aphrodite, appropriately, speaks in a language which itself imitates the incantatory, hypnotic effect of love’s thelixis. That effect depends on the repetition of the simple sentence structure (“if she flees, soon she will pursue; if she doesn’t receive gifts, she will give them; if she doesn’t love, soon will she love . . .”). The rhythmical echo between the first and third lines, ταχέως διώξει . . . ταχέως φιλήσει, almost seems to assure the success of this spell-like promise.

Other repetitions and alliterations contribute to this effect of incantation: the three-fold repetition of αἰ, the double repetition of δέ . . . δέ and of φίλει . . . φιλήσει; the analogous repetition (with an etymological play) of δῶρα . . . δώσει (22); the alliteration and rhyme of δώξει . . . δώσει (at the end of two successive lines); the strong d- alliteration in δώξει . . . δὲ . . . δώρα . . . δέκετ’ . . . δώσει . . . δὲ; the triple rhyme of -σει in the first three lines and the brilliant variation upon that in the assonance -λησει / -λοισα (φιλήσει . . . ἔθελοισα) between the last two lines (23-24).

Additionally, Cameron (1939:8-9) has observed that the antithetical form of expression found here is paralleled by magical papyri that, although greatly separated from Sappho in time, “preserve old formulae and in this matter tradition was strong.” Finally, Aphrodite’s words end with κωὐκ ἔθέλοισα, referring to a female who does not wish to be pursued. This phrase resonates traditionally alongside usages of οὐκ ἔθελ- such as those found in Homeric epic where an individual is placed in an unhappy situation against his or her will62 and is quite striking as a traditional phrase because of its conventionally enhanced use of the verb ἔθελω rather than the usual Lesbian form θέλω.63

After Aphrodite’s speech, Sappho then concludes her prayer with a restatement of her wish for divine assistance and does so in traditional manner. First, we have a verbal echo of the wish that led into the scene of epiphany—ἀλλὰ τυίδ’ ἔλθ’ (5)—in ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, a phrase that effects a sort of ring composition framing the appearance of Aphrodite. Next, there is the exhortation ὅσα δὲ μοι τέλεσσαι / θύμος ἔμερρει, τέλεσον (26-27), which is quite similar to a formulaic statement found three times within the Homeric corpus (Odyssey 5.89-90; Iliad

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62 Cf. Rissman 1983:17, Dawson 1966:48. See also the appearances of this phrase in the appendix to this essay.

tετελεσμένον ἐστίν. Finally, we should observe that the placement of these two commands as
well as that which ends the poem—οὗ δὲ ἀυτα οὕμαχος ἔσσο (27-28)—follow the traditional
structuring of prayers both in Homer and in early Greek poetry in general, where the ultimate
wish from the petitioner comes only after the reference (if one occurs) to past interaction
between mortal and divinity.

From beginning to end, then, Sappho 1 is a work wholly indebted to oral traditional
poetic techniques in terms of its phraseological thematic structuring, its rhetoric, and even its
extra-lexical encoding of formulaic phraseology, and it was the combination of Sappho’s
individual poetic talents with these traditional possibilities that imparted such a powerful impact
to her verses. Of course, some traditional aspects of the poem are now more easily observable
than others—and many specialized meanings will remain hidden altogether—since the further
we are removed chronologically and culturally from the poem’s original performance contexts
and their ambient, dynamic tradition, the more obscured some traditional elements become.
Nevertheless, recognizing these traditional characteristics and meanings for what they were can
still help us approach that much closer to appreciating Sappho’s poetry on the same terms that it
must originally have been understood within its original sixth-century Lesbian context.

Rhodes College

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Appendix: Instances of lexical formulas shared by both the Sapphic stanza and the epic hexameter

(line positions for the hexameter according to Fränkel 1926)

Sappho 1.5: ἀλλὰ τυίδ’ ἐλθ’, αἰὶ ποτα κατέφωτα
Il. 1.39: Σμινθεῦ εἰ ποτέ τοι γαριεντ’ ἐπὶ νην ἔχεψα, [A3-B1]
Il. 1.340: καὶ πρὸς τῷ βασιλῆος άππνέος εἰ ποτε δ’ αίτε [C2-X]
Il. 1.394: ἔλθον Οὐλυμπονδὲ Δία λίσαι, εἰ ποτε δὴ τι [C2-X]
Il. 1.503: Ζεὺ πάτερ εἰ ποτε δὴ σε μετ’ άθανάτοισιν ὀνήσα [A3-B2]
Il. 15.372: Ζεὺ πάτερ εἰ ποτὲ τίς τοι ἐν Ἄργεϊ περ πολυπύρῳ [A3-B2]
Il. 22.83: αὐτήν, εἰ ποτὲ τοι λαθικηδέα μαζὸν ἐπέσχον· [A3-B1]
Od. 3.98 (= Od. 4.328): λίσσομαι, εἰ ποτὲ τοι πατὴρ ἐμός, ἐσθλὸς Ὀδυσσεύς [A3-B2]
h. Demeter 64: Ἡέλι’ αἴδεσσαί με θεάν σὺ περ, εἰ ποτε δὴ σεν [C2-X]

Sappho 1.13: ἀψία δ’ ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ’, ὦ μάκαιρα,
Il. 18.532: βάντες ἀροπόδων μετεκιάθον, ἀψία δ’ ἐξίκοντο [C2-X]
Od. 19.458: ἔχεθον, ἀψία δ’ ἐξίκοντο φύλον πρὸς δόματα πατρός, [A3-B2]
Od. 24.13: ἤμισαν, ἀψία δ’ ἐξίκοντο κατ’ ἀσφοδελόν λειμώνα, [A3-B2]
h. Apollo 520: ἀχμητοὶ δὲ λόφον προσέβαν ποσίν, ἀψία δ’ ἐξίκοντο [C2-X]
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Sappho 1.11-12: πῦκνα δίννεντες πτέρ', ἀπ' οὕραν άμφι ήδη μέσσω.
Theogony 414: ἦ δὲ καὶ ἀστερόεντος ἀπ' οὕραν άμφι ἐμμορφο τιμῆς. [B2-C2]
Theogony 689: φαίνε βήμ' άμμιδς δ' ἀρ' ἀπ' οὕραν άμφι ήδ' ἀρ' Ολύμπου [B2-C2]

Sappho 1.9: ἀπ' ὑποθέτουσαν κάλοι δ' ο' ἄγον
Il. 24.14: ἀλλ' ὁ γ' ἐπι ζεύξειν ὑφ' ἀμμασαν άκέες ὑπους. [A2-C2]
Od. 3.478: καρπαλίμως δ' ἐζεύξαν ὑφ' ἀμμασαν άκέες ὑπους. [A4-C2]

Sappho 1.10: οὔκες στρούθι σπείρ' γάς μελάνας
Sappho 16.2: ο' δ' ὑπαισάς, θύμον, θύμον.
Il. 14.439: νὐξ ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα· βέλος δ' ἕτι θύμον ἐδάμνα. [C2-X]

Sappho 1.22: ο' δ' ἄρ' ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως ἐζεύξαν θεοῖσιν. [C2-X]

Scutum 81: ἦλθε λιπὼν Τίρυνθον, ἐυκτίμενον πτολίεθρον, [0-A4]

Sappho 17.8: οὗτος ἐδίναντο
Il. 3.236: δοιω δ' ο' δύναμιμ ιδέειν κοιμήτορε λαών [A3-B1]
Il. 8.299: τοῦτον δ' ο' δύναμιμ βαλείται χώνα λυαττήρα, [A3-B1]
Il. 9.551: τόφρα δ' Κορήτεσσα νάκος ἵν, οὔτι ἐδίναντο [C2-X]
Il. 11.116: ἦ δ' εἶ πέρ το τέρμα μάλα σχεδόν, οὗ δύναται αὕτη [C2-C2]
Il. 13.552: οὔταζον σάκος εὐφ' παναίολον, οὔτε δύνατο ἐξείτε [C2-X]
Il. 13.634: Τρωσίν, τὸν μένος ιάζειν ἀτάσθαλον, οὔτε δύνατα [C2-X]
Il. 13.687: οὔτε δύναται νέων ἔχων, οὔτε δύνατο [C2-X]
Il. 15.22: λύει δ' οὗτος ἐδίναντο παραστατον· ο' δ' λάβοιμ [A3-B2]
Il. 15.406: Τρόας ἔπεχομένους μένον ἔμπεδον, οὐδ’ ἐδύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 15.416: τὸ δὲ μῆς περὶ νησὶς ἔχον πόλον, οὐδὲ δύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 15.651: κατεν’; οἱ δ’ οὐκ ἐδύναντο καί ἐκχύμενοι πέρ ἐταύου [A1-B2]
Il. 16.107: ἔμπεδον αἰῶν ἔχον σάξος αἰῶλον· οὐδ’ ἐδύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 16.520: ἔχος δ’ οὐ δύναμαι σχεῖν ἔμπεδον, οὐδὲ μάχεσθαι [A3-B1]
Il. 18.163: ὡς θά τὸν οὐδ’ ἐδύναντο δύω Αἴαντες κορυφᾶτα [A3-B2]
Il. 22.47: οὐ δύναμαι ἵδειν Τρόων εἰς ἅστοι ἀλέντων, [0-A4]
Il. 22.201: ὡς δ’ τὸν οὐ δύνατο μάρφει ποιοῦν, οὐδ’ ὡς ἀλέξαι. [A3-B1]
Il. 23.465: ἤ τὸν ἤμισιν φύγον ἤμι, οὐδὲ δυνάσθη [C2-X]
Il. 24.403 (=Od. 17.144): ἀσχόλωσον γὰρ οίδε καθήμενοι, οὐδὲ δύνανται [C2-X]
Od. 4.558 (=Od. 5.15): ἵδειν δ’ οὐ δύναται ἵνα πατρίδα γαῖαν ἰδέαθαι: [A2-B1]
Od. 5.319: τὸν δ’ ἄρι υπόβρυχα θήκε πολιν χρόνον, οὐδὲ δυνάσθη [C2-X]
Od. 13.331: τὸ σε καὶ οὔ δύναμαι προλπεῖν δύστιγνον ἐόντα, [A2-B1]
Od. 18.230: ἀλλά τοι οὐ δύναμαι πεπνυμένα πάντα νόημα· [A3-B1]
Od. 21.184: τὸ μαίνει θάλαντος ἐπεφοίτη, οὐδ’ ἐδύναντα [C2-X]
h. Apollo 192: ‘ζοὺς’ ἄφραδες καὶ ἀμήχανοι, οὐδὲ δύνανται [C2-X]
h. Hymn 5.7: τρισασάς δ’ οὐ δύναται πεπεθεῖν φέρεσιν οὐδ’ ἀπατήσασι· [A3-B1]
h. Hymn 5.33: τῶν οὐ δύναται πεπεθεῖν φέρεσιν οὐδ’ ἀπατήσασι· [A3-B1]
Works and Days 134: ἀφραδίας· ἔβριν γὰρ ἀπασθάλον οὐκ ἐδύναντο [C2-X]

Sappho 1.24: 7. φωνὴς θῆλος.
Il. 1.112: οὐκ ήθελον δέξασθαι, ἐπεὶ πολὺ βούλομαι αὐτῆν [0-A4]
Il. 3.241: νῦν αὐτ’ οὐκ ήθελον μέχριν καταδύμενα ἄνδριν [A3-B2]
Il. 3.289: τίνες οὗ ήθελον Ἀλεξάνδροι πεσόντος, [A3-B2]
Il. 4.300: ὁφρα καὶ οὐκ ήθελον τις ἀναγκαῖα πολεμίζον. [A2-B1]
Il. 5.233: μὴ τὸ μὲν δείσαντες ματῆσον, οὐδ’ ήθελίτων [C2-X]
Il. 6.165: ὡς μ’ ήθελεν φιλοτιμή μεγῆμενα οὕς ήθελούσῃ. [C2-X]
Il. 9.356: νῦν δ’ ἐπεὶ οὐκ ήθελον πολεμιζέμεν Ἐκτορὶ διὸ [A1-B1]
Il. 9.444: ὡς ἄν ἐπιτ’ ἄτο σείο, φύλον τέχος, οὐκ ήθελομ’ [C2-X]
Il. 9.678: κείνος γ’ οὐκ ήθελεν σφέσσαι χόλον, ἀλλ’ ἔτι μᾶλλον [A3-B1]
Il. 10.311 (= Il. 10.398): φόβιον βουλεύομαι μετὰ σφίσι, οὐδ’ ήθελομ’ [C2-X]
Il. 12.171: ὡς οὗ γ’ οὐκ ήθελον πυλῶν καὶ δῦ’ ἑόντε [A3-B2]
Il. 13.106: μίμην οὕς ήθελον εὐνυμίον ἐναντίον, οὐδ’ ἠβλιάν· [A3-B2]
Il. 13.109: οὗ κείνος κρίσαντες ἀμινύμεν οὕς ήθελομ’ [C2-X]
Il. 13.572: ἄλασιν οὕς ήθελοντα βὴ δήσαντες ἄγουσιν· [A3-B2]
Il. 15.215: ἵλιον αἰτινῆς πεφιδήσετα, οὐδ’ ήθέλησα [C2-X]
Il. 17.66: πολλὰ μάλ’ ἤ’ οὕς ήθελον ἀπόπροθεν οὐδ’ ήθελον οὐδ’ [C2-X]
Il. 18.262: οἷς κείνοις θυμός ὑπέρβης, οὕς ήθελήσει [C2-X]
Il. 18.434: πολλὰ μάλ’ οὕς ήθελον, οὗ μὲν δὴ γῆραι λυγροί [A3-B2]
Il. 21.36: ἦς λαβὼν ἐν πατρῶς ἄλοιπης οὕς ήθελοντα [C2-X]
Il. 21.366: οὐδ’ ἠθέλεξε προφέειν, ἀλλ’ ἵσχετο· τείχος δ’ αὐτῆς [0-A4]
Il. 21.580: οὐδ’ ἠθέλεξεν φεύγειν, πρὶν πειρήσασαι Αχιλής, [0-A4]
Il. 23.88: νῆπιος, οὐκ ήθέλει, ἀμφ’ ἀστραγάλοισι χολοθείς· [A3-B1]
Il. 24.289: ὀτρύνει ἐπὶ νῆας ἐμεῖο μὲν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα. [C2-X]
Od. 2.50: μητέρι μοι μνηστῆρες ἐπέχραον οὐκ ἐθέλον. [C2-X]
Od. 5.99: Ζεὺς ἐμὲ γ' ἤνόγει δεῦρ' ἐλθέμεν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα. [C2-X]
Od. 7.305: ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὗκ ἐθέλον δεῖσας αἰσχύνομενός τε. [A3-B1]
Od. 8.223: ἄνδρας δὲ προτέροισιν ἐριζέμεν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα. [C2-X]
Od. 10.573: θεοὶ παρεξελθοῦσα· τίς ἂν θεὸν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα. [C2-X]
Od. 13.277: θεοὶ άνακαμώνους, οὗτ' ἐθέλον ἐξαπατήσαντα. [B1-C2]
Od. 13.341: άλλα τις οὗκ ἐθέλησα. Ποσειδάωνι μάχεσθαι. [A3-B2]
Od. 17.226: ἀλλ' ἐπει οὐν δή ἔργα ἐμαθεν, οὐκ ἐθέλησα. [C2-X]
Od. 18.328: οὗτ' ἐθέλες εὐδείν χαλκῆιον ἐς δόμον ἐλθὼν. [0-A4]
Od. 18.362: οǘν' ἐθέλεις εὑδείν χαλκῆιον ἐς δόμον ἐλθὼν. [0-A4]
Od. 20.141: οὗτ' ἐθέλες εὖ ἐκτροπα καὶ ἐν ἡγεσία καθεύδειν. [0-A3]
Od. 22.34: ἐπεὶ οὖν ἔργα κακ' ἐμμάθες. οὐκ ἐθελήσει. [C2-X]
Od. 24.307: πλάγξ' ἀπὸ Σικανίης δεῦρ' ἐλθέμεν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα. [C2-X]
h. Demeter 124: ἠλυθον οὐκ ἐθέλουσα. [B2-C2]
h. Apollo 473: άλλ' τις ἀθανάτων δεῦρ' ἠγαγεν οὐκ ἐθέλοντας. [C2-X]
h. Hymn 5.25: άλλα οὐκ ἐθέλεσι οὐκ θερμωσες. [A3-B1]

Sappho 1.2: παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαι σε.
Il. 13.825: εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼ σοι δόσος αἰγιόχοιο [B2-C2]
Od. 8.488: ἦ σε γε Μοῦν ἐδίδαξε, Διὸς πάις, ἦ σε γ' Ἀπόλλων. [B2-C2]
Od. 11.604: παῖς Δίος μεγάλου καὶ Ἡρης χρυσοπεδίλου. [0-A4]
Theogony 952: παῖς Δίος μεγάλου καὶ Ἡρης χρυσοπεδίλου. [0-A4]
Scutum 371: παῖς τε Δίος μεγάλου καὶ Ἐνυαλίοιο ἀναχτος. [0-A4]

Sappho 2.5: ἐν δ' υδώ ψύχον κελάδει δι' υδών
Od. 9.392: εἰν υδάτι ψυχοί βάττη μεγάλα ἴαχοντα. [0-B1]

Sappho 1.13: αἵρα δ' ἐξίσωντο· σὺ δ', ὁ μάκαιρα.
Il. 3.182: ὁ μάκαρ Ατρείδη μοιρηγενὲς ολβιόδαιμον. [0-A3]