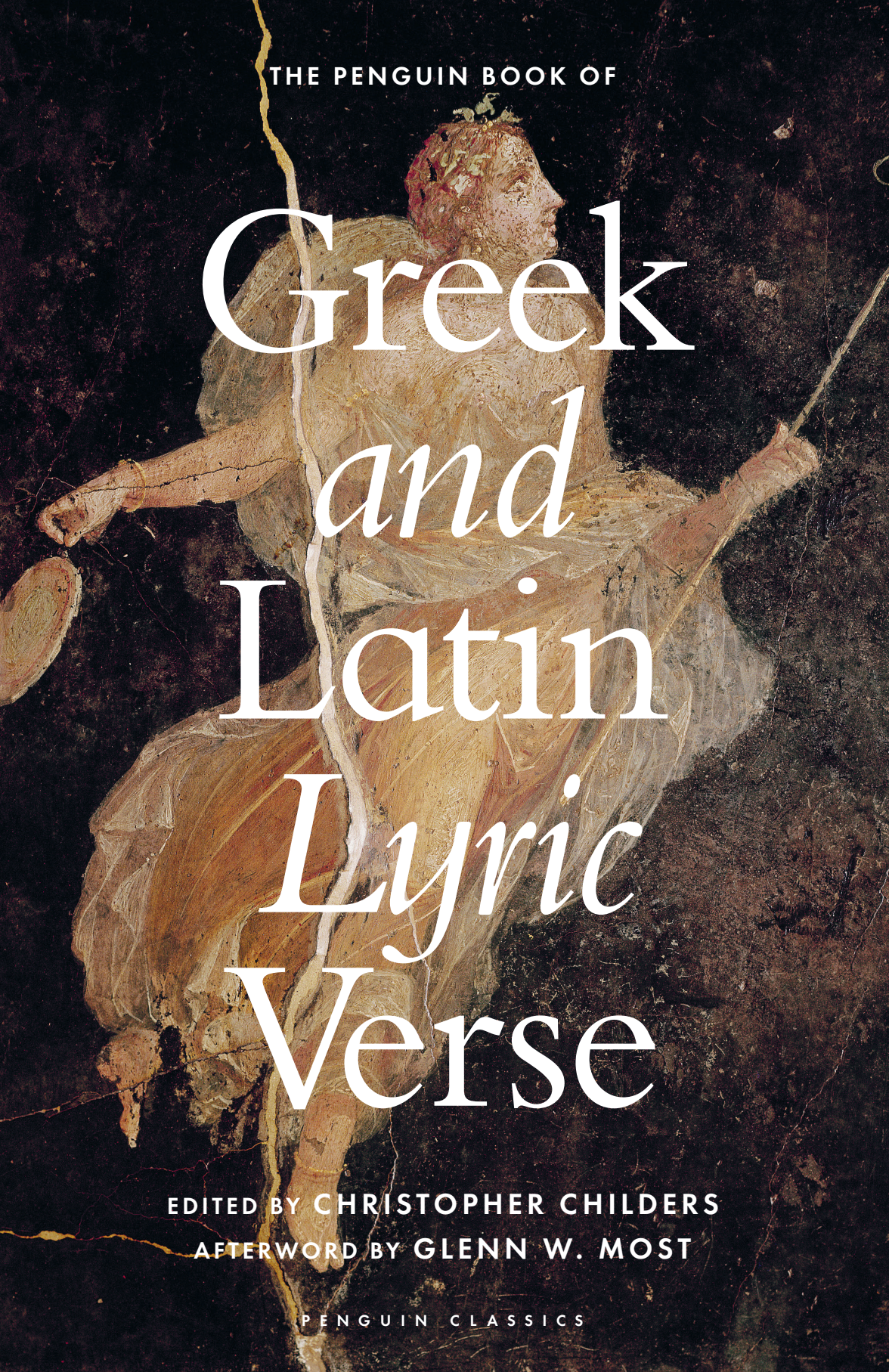




THE PENGUIN BOOK OF

Greek
and
Latin
Lyric
Verse

EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER CHILDERS

AFTERWORD BY GLENN W. MOST

PENGUIN CLASSICS

The Penguin Book of Greek and
Latin Lyric Verse

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CHRISTOPHER CHILDERS

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For Robert G. Kirkpatrick, Jr., 1940–2004
vagae moderatori summo iuventae

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Note on Lyric

This book is a hybrid work. Embedded within it is an anthology of Greek and Latin lyric poetry as the ancients would have understood it – and it can be navigated as such, by those readers and students who wish to do so, using the Index of Genres at the back (pp. 895). Surrounding and interleaving that strict core is something wider, more generous and no doubt more idiosyncratic: a survey of the poetry written by Hellenes, Alexandrians and Romans, covering roughly the period from 800 BCE to 100 CE, and selected according to the lens of our own, altogether more inclusive twenty-first-century understanding of the lyric.

The ancient definition is clear enough. It prescribes a mode of performance – a song sung to the accompaniment of a lyre – and a set of meters associated with it. The songs so performed were the work of the canonical Nine Lyric Poets, spanning the Greek world and active between the seventh and fifth centuries BCE: Alcman and Anacreon (pp. 31–7 and 100–108); the Lesbian poets Sappho and Alcaeus (pp. 38–54 and 55–67); Stesichorus (pp. 89–95), Ibycus and Simonides (pp. 96–9 and 120–33); and Pindar and Bacchylides (pp. 134–64 and 165–85). To these might be added, from Latin verse, perhaps as few as two poems by Catullus (poems 11 and 51, pp. 380 and 387), and a heaping of Horace's *Odes* (pp. 462–91).

Opposed to such classical clarity is the understanding native to anglophone poetry. For us, 'lyric' has evolved to refer roughly to poems of short to moderate length, either isolated or forming part of a discontinuous sequence of vignettes, which seem to speak personally (in the poet's voice or in that of a mask) and/or to verge toward song. Our lyric poem is often redolent of the everyday. It is what T. S. Eliot called 'the voice of the poet talking to himself', and what Gail McConnell, quoting

Denise Riley, terms ‘the form of writing closest to . . . “the voice without a mouth that is inner speech”’. It is not epic, like Homer, nor is it dramatic, like Greek tragedy. It is the mode that in the last two centuries has come to dominate English verse almost completely.

Iambus (invective), elegy, sympotic (drinking-party) poetry, epigram, Latin love elegy – even certain fragments which the historical accident of damage and decay has imbued with an aura of lyric mystery: this volume includes much fascinating and affecting material that falls outside the strict definition of lyric, and yet which, seen through this anglophone lens, looks markedly lyrical. It also includes much that does *not* now strike us as lyrical. Yet to have told only part of the story of these genres would have been to do a disservice to the larger projects – the mental categories, aims and objectives – of the poets who wrote in them.

Included too, finally, are a small handful of poems which represent an exception even to these capacious rules, but without which the picture formed of key moments in the art form’s development would have been incomplete. These are the excerpts from Callimachus’ didactic poem *Aetia* (*Causes*, pp. 258–61), and the pastoral inclusions from Theocritus’ *Idylls* (pp. 283–98) and Virgil’s *Eclogues* (pp. 400–410), and they are explained at the relevant places.

In short, then, anyone looking for a picture of what ancient poets were up to when they weren’t composing, with grand ambition, national epics, manuals in verse or masterpieces for the tragic or comic stage – when they were singing to the gods, or their friends, or otherwise opening little verbal windows into their life and times – can find it here. Readers interested in gaining a deeper insight into the more technical questions of genre and the lyric, meanwhile, can refer to Glenn Most’s generous Afterword to this volume, ‘What Is Lyric?’ (pp. 557–66).

Translator's Preface

The Penguin Book of Greek and Latin Lyric Verse has been an epic undertaking: in a sort of personal odyssey, it has detained me for ten years now. And, viewed in the light of much-longer-established trends in the translation of the Classics, it might look somewhat unusual. For one thing, while readers are used to omnibus translations of Greek lyric poetry – a practical necessity, given that the material is often too fragmentary, and too scant, to present in isolation – we are less used to volumes of Latin lyric, and even less to the combination of both Greek and Latin verse in a single volume, as here. For another, we are accustomed to translations by many hands: one kind of book will often gather the work of multiple translators, each tackling a different poet, and communicating, by way of the varying styles and attitudes of the translators, the variety of authors anthologized; a second kind applies this hundred-handed approach to a single poet – Horace (pp. 453–91), say – and thus highlights the capacity of its original to ‘contain multitudes’. Finally, the prevailing tastes of the last thirty or fifty years have tended noticeably toward unrhymed, free verse translation.

In the present volume, the situation is different. Here, more than eighty poets spanning eight centuries are translated by a single hand, and according to consistent principles. And not just that: the translations that result also use a great number of the English language’s traditional resources of meter, stanza and rhyme – I hope to thrilling, or at times soothing, or, generally, enjoyable effect. But why?

The formal choice is the easiest explained. Neither free verse nor prose is particularly well suited to communicating what has always struck me as a fundamental characteristic of classical verse, namely, its lapidary quality, its sense of being intricately and solidly made, as if the

poet had chiseled the words into stone. I don't mean that free verse *cannot* seem this way – Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts* is only one of the obvious counterexamples; I only mean that, *as a form*, free verse seems to me more interested in *what* is being said than *how*; the utterance itself must be poetry, not merely dressed as poetry. In this way, the wigs and corsets of so-called 'formal verse' are stripped away to show more of the human body beneath, and appreciation moves from the elegant turn of phrase or the stately fulfillment of syntax and stanza to the individuality of the voice and the (perceived) honesty of the emotion. However crude that *précis* is, it outlines a way of thinking about poetry which has made aesthetic and historical sense for a while now, but which I believe would have seemed thoroughly alien to the poets compassed in this book. For them, a poet's authority was predicated not so much on interior qualities of sincerity, or authenticity, or visionary derangement, as on the solid, objective evidence of what they could do with words. The language of Greek and Latin verse is *marked* as poetic by any number of usages that diverge on the one hand from everyday speech and on the other from prose: poetic diction, elaborate word order, and, especially, metrical patterns, often quite intricate, repeated like clockwork across lines and stanzas, which, at least in the earliest lyrics, may well have conjured traditional melodies or even steps to a dance. It is this sense of marked and patterned language which my more formal strategies seek to communicate. True, ancient Greek and Latin poetry did not use rhyme, but it had many meters; English is much more metrically limited – attempts to shape it into such mysteries to the anglophone reader as choriambes or dactylo-epitrites tend, to my ear, to sound muddy and inscrutable – but, as if in compensation, the history of English poetry has given it a wealth of kinds and patternings of rhyme.

These strategies, in turn, have allowed me to employ, throughout these hundreds of pages of verse, a consistent formal approach, and thereby, I hope, to show the reader – in a way that is simply not possible when each text has its own translator – both what these various poets and poems have in common, and what divides them: how they stand out from, and rub shoulders with, one another, even when their authors lived hundreds of years apart. I think of these contextual richnesses as a kind of 'thickness', commandingly present in the original language

but all too often lost in translation. My highest hope is that this volume might make such thickness freshly available to the anglophone reader.

Of course, a translation – whatever else it may be – is always the result of a translator's personal experience of a text. If this talk of 'thicknesses' sounds very abstract, then an account of my own experiences in first coming to discover the treasure trove that this poetry represents might help to shed more light on the aims and approach of the present anthology.

At the start, when the hard work of studying grammar was over, when, with lots of help and difficulty, I was finally able to read poetry composed in ancient Greek and Latin, you could say I was like one wandering in a forest, enchanted by the beauty of individual trees, but with little sense of where I was or what I was looking at. In the first place, I was drunk on music – a common enough experience for the young poetry enthusiast dabbling in foreign tongues with more enthusiasm than expertise. One of the first Latin poems I ever read was the fourth Eclogue of Virgil (p. 403); long before I could make much of Virgil's Latin, I was convinced that in his dactylic hexameters I had encountered the true cadence of prophecy. Latin sounded solid and sonorous to my ears, a bit orotund, but sturdily constructed on a frame of consonants. Greek, by contrast, seemed light and full of air, an ambrosial distillation of sunlight and simplicity, elemental passions and hard-won wisdom. It also offered a breathtaking variety of rhythms, tones and dialects. Of course, I loved the limpidities of Sappho (pp. 38–54), her mesmerizing vowels, and the light-hearted lilt of Anacreon (pp. 100–108), but I was perhaps most struck by Alcman's *Partheneion* (p. 32), how singable it was, and how strange: his old Peloponnesian Doric felt as if the classical Attic Greek I had learned in school had wandered off to the Galapagos and gone wild.

But, in time, even a natural novice ceases to be one; over many walks in the woods, a sense of the forest begins to condense. By dint of practice, I got better at reading, and my understanding increased. I learned to listen not only with the sensual ear, but with the mind as well; to enjoy not only the delights of mystification, the ensorcellments of strangeness, but the more sober pleasures of comprehension and discernment. And what I mostly began to discern were the interconnections between texts and contexts: the rootedness of early Greek poetry in

occasion and ceremony; the rootedness, in turn, of later poetry in what had gone before. It was as if a map was forming in my head, in which poems no longer seemed to be isolated statements, but part of a grand conversation. This phenomenon, far from lessening the fascination of individual poems, intensified it. The very language felt denser, thicker, with relations and implications, and meter seemed not ornamental but essential to that thickness. The different meters, first employed by the Greeks and later adapted by the Romans, began to seem like a sort of musical code – the ‘iambus’, used for invective and general scurrility; the song forms, ranging from the straightforward melodiousness of Anacreon and the enthralling harmonies of Sappho to the dazzling complexities of Pindar’s triads (pp. 134–64); the ubiquitous elegiac couplets, neatly alternating between loping hexameters and pointed pentameters. This poetic DNA, once fathomed, revealed family resemblances among poets, affinities and enmities, carrying conversations and heated arguments down through the centuries. The music I first fell in love with did not disappear, but revealed itself to be part of a larger meaning.

A translator decides what is most important and translates accordingly. The decision is necessarily subjective. If classical poetry is thought of as a kind of forest, whose trees are the individual poems, my translations in this anthology seek to convey both the beauty of the trees themselves and the shape of the forest as a whole. They wish, first, to be musical, but to be so in such a way that their musical shapes reveal something about each poem’s genealogy and position in the grand conversation, just as tree species are revealed by the shape of their leaves: the spiky, five-pronged maple; the birch and elm leaves, like toothy eggs; the heart-shaped linden. The translations accomplish this by using the resources of English poetry – regular meter, mostly iambic; stanzas; and rhyme – to generate a musical shape which corresponds to the Greek or Latin originals. This analogy, once established, is maintained throughout.

Let me illustrate as briefly as I can. In what follows, I will present a few excerpts of Archaic Greek poetry, in different meters, alongside excerpts from later Latin verse which employ the same meters, all with

their English translations. The original of the first, from the Spartan martial elegist Tyrtaeus (pp. 22–6), is in elegiac couplets:

Tyrtaeus 10 (late seventh century BCE; p. 23):

– υ υ | – υ υ | – υ υ | – – | – υ υ | – υ
 ὦ νέοι, ἀλλὰ μάχεσθε παρ' ἀλλήλοισι μένοντες,
 – υ υ | – – | – || – υ υ – υ υ –
 μηδὲ φονῆς αἰσχρῆς ἄρχετε μηδὲ φόβου . . .
 – υ υ | – υ υ | – – | – υ υ | – υ υ | – –
 τοὺς δὲ παλαιοτέρους, ὧν οὐκέτι γούνατ' ἐλαφρα,
 – υ υ | – – | – || – υ υ – υ υ –
 μὴ καταλείποντες φεύγετε, τοὺς γεραιούς.

Young men, get up! Stand side by side and fight,
 and don't give in to fear or shameful flight! . . .
 Think of the old, their knees no longer light –
 don't turn your back on them and take to flight!

Whether the English reader simply has an instinct for the rhythms and sounds of English poetry as she reads it aloud – always the best way of 'hearing' any poem – or has the expertise necessary to recognize that this first excerpt is translated into pairs of rhymed iambic pentameter lines (known in English poetics as 'heroic couplets'), she will hopefully perceive the family resemblance, the musical genetic code, when the form reappears over half a millennium later, both in the original language and in my English translations of the Latin poetry of the first century BCE:

Ovid, Amores 1.9 (circa 16 BCE–2 CE; p. 495):

– υ υ | – υ υ | – υ υ | – υ υ | – υ υ | – –
 Militat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido;
 – υ υ | – υ υ – || – υ υ – υ υ –
 Attice, crede mi | hi, militat omnis amans.
 – – | – υ υ | – υ υ | – υ υ | – υ υ | – –
 quae bell(o) est habilis, Veneri quoque convenit aetas.
 – υ υ | – – | – || – υ υ – υ υ –
 turpe senex miles, turpe senilis amor.

Each lover is a soldier on campaign.
 Cupid, too, has tents pitched on the plain.
 Believe me, Atticus, when I maintain
 each lover is a soldier on campaign.
 Both war and Venus want a youth still green;
 old soldiers and aged lovers are obscene.

What does this coincidence of meter tell us? Well, Ovid's *modus operandi* is to ring witty, often shocking variations on conventional wisdom. Here, the echo of martial elegy can be seen to lie in the background of the *militia amoris* (warfare of love) motif, a trope inherited by Ovid as part of his chosen genre of love elegy, which he, with characteristic insouciance, elaborates to absurdity, in this poem and elsewhere. In seeking to associate the lover, a figure firmly identified with delinquency by Romans and Spartans alike, with the industry and dignity of the soldier, Ovid commits an irreverence for which Tyrtaeus probably would have wanted him whipped; and whether his conscious target was Tyrtaeus himself or only the genre of which Tyrtaeus is here the figure-head, it may not be irrelevant that in travestyng the subject matter he also uses the meter.

Undoubtedly relevant, on the other hand, are the metrical concurrences of the next two examples. In the first, the original is taken from the scabrous iambic poet Hipponax (pp. 114–19), written in a form of his own invention called 'limping iambics' – here rendered into English as unrhymed (or irregularly rhymed) iambic hexameters – and it is no coincidence that Catullus (pp. 373–97) then casts his swaggering Latin polemic in the humorously clunky meter of that earlier virtuoso of invective.

Hipponax 3+3a (circa 540–530 BCE; p. 115):

◡ – ◡ – | – ◡ – | – – – ◡
 ἔβωσε Μαίης παῖδα, Κυλλήνης πάλμων.
 – – ◡ – | ◡ – ◡ – | ◡ – – ◡
 Ἑρμῇ κυνάγχα, Μηιονιστὶ Κανδαῦλα,
 – – ◡ – | ◡ – ◡ – | ◡ – – –
 φωρῶν ἑταῖρε, δεῦρό μοι σκαπαρδεῦσαι.

He called on Maia's son, grand poobah of Cyllene:
 'Dog-Choker, Hermes, whom the Lydians call "Candaules",
 buddy of burglars, come and save my ass already!'

Catullus 37 (circa 60s–50s BCE; p. 384):

◡ – ◡ – | ◡ – ◡ – | ◡ – – –
 Salax taberna vosque contubernales,
 – – ◡ – | – ◡ – | ◡ – – ◡
 a pilleatis nona fratribus pila,
 ◡ – ◡ – | ◡ – ◡ – | ◡ – – ◡
 solis putatis esse mentulas vobis . . .

You pubic pub, and you, its pubey regulars,
 nine doors down from the bonnet-wearing Dioscuri,
 you think, I guess, the only cocks in town are yours . . .

In the third example, the original is from the drinking songs of the Mytilenean Alcaeus (pp. 55–67), composed in a meter called 'greater asclepiads'. Alcaeus was one of the favorite poets of the Roman Horace; and here, Horace's *carpe diem* ode uses the same meter, while simultaneously elevating the Mytilenean's gruff particularity to universality and transcendence. Both are rendered into English in iambic tetrameter couplets, set end-to-end to make internally rhyming eight-beat lines:

Alcaeus 346 (circa 600 BCE; p. 65):

– – – ◡ ◡ – | – ◡ ◡ – | – ◡ ◡ – ◡ –
 πώνωμεν· τί τὰ λύχν' ὀμμένομεν; δάκτυλος ἄμερα·
 – – – ◡ ◡ – | – ◡ ◡ – | – ◡ ◡ – ◡ –
 καὶ δ' ἄερρε κυλίχνας μεγάλαις, αἶτα, ποικίλαις.

Drink! Is it lamps we're waiting for? A finger of day is left, no
 more.
 Come on, my man, break out the great wine goblets, massy
 and ornate.

Horace, Odes 1.11 (circa 23 BCE; pp. 467–8):

— — — ∪ ∪ — | — ∪ ∪ — | — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —
 Tyrrhenum! sapias, vina liques, et spatio brevi
 — — — ∪ ∪ — | — ∪ ∪ — | — ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪
 spem longam reseces. dum loquimur, fugerit invida
 — — — ∪ ∪ — | — ∪ ∪ — | — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —
 aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.

...Be wise; have taste; let the wine decant, and prune back your extravagant hopes for forever. Life is brief. While we sit talking, Time, that thief, escapes. Don't let your life delay until tomorrow: pluck today.

The reader may indulge one further example. The Greek stanza which bears Sappho's name is a languid, haunting, minor-key sort of quatrain, consisting of three eleven-syllable lines followed by a truncated five-syllable close. (Some deny that there should be a line break between the third and fourth lines, but the matter is, strictly speaking, academic.) Here is the opening of one of Sappho's most famous poems, fragment 31 (p. 44):

— ∪ — — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪
 φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν
 — ∪ — — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — —
 ἔμμεν' ὦνηρ, ὅττις ἐνάντιός τοι
 — ∪ — — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — —
 ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδῃ φωνεῖ-
 — ∪ ∪ — —
 σας ὑπακούει
 — ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ —
 καὶ γελαίσας ἡμέροεν . . .

He seems like the gods' equal, that man, who-
 ever he is, who takes his seat so close
 across from you, and listens raptly to
 your lilting voice

and lovely laughter . . .

Five centuries or so later, both Catullus and Horace used Sappho's stanza to hold a conversation with her, and each other:

Catullus 51 (p. 387):

- ∪ - - - ∪ ∪- ∪ - ∪
 Ille mi par esse deo videtur,
 - ∪ - - - ∪ ∪- ∪ - -
 ille, si fas est, superare divos,
 - ∪ - - - ∪ ∪- ∪ - -
 qui sedens adversus identidem te
 - ∪ ∪ - - ∪
 spectat et audit
 - ∪ - - -
 dulce ridentem . . .

The equal of a god that man appears,
 better than gods, if it's not blasphemy,
 who sits across from you, and stares, and hears
 continually

your lovely laughter . . .

Horace, Odes 1.22 (p. 468):

- ∪ - - - ∪ ∪- ∪ - -
 pone sub curru nimium propinqui
 - ∪ - - - ∪ ∪- ∪ - -
 solis in terra domibus negata:
 - ∪ - - - ∪ ∪- ∪ - -
 dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,
 - ∪ - - - ∪
 dulce loquentem.

[T]ake me to where the sun swoops lower, faster,
 so low there are no towns or houses built;
 I'll still love Lalage for her lovely laughter,
 her lovely lilt.

These three poems are among their authors' most celebrated, and I love each one individually, but I am fascinated by their interrelationships. The origin of Sappho's stanza, whether she invented it herself, or merely made more and better use of it than anyone before or after, is lost to history; but when Catullus tackles it, he uses Sappho's poem and legacy to work out something personal, about femininity and masculinity, poetry and political ambition, Greekness and Roman-ness. By contrast, Horace's chief model was Alcaeus, who also wrote poems in sapphics, which means that Horace often uses the sapphic without any reference to Sappho. Here, however, when he quotes Catullus translating Sappho, and even adds back in the 'lovely lilt' (*dulce loquentem*) which appeared in Sappho's original (ἄδῃ φωνεῖσας) but which Catullus left out, both poets are very much on his mind. Horace's poem, as I hear it, is a bit arch, a bit critical of his predecessors, but fondly so; he wants to show himself a different kind of poet from the other two, but takes the time to say, as it were, 'That Sapphic stuff that Catullus got himself mixed up in – isn't it silly? But, ah, what a lovely lilt!'

One need not notice a stanza form to enjoy a poem, of course, any more than one needs to know that a tree is a poplar, or a willow, to find it beautiful. Notice or not, however, the poems in this volume carry a density of musical meaning that connects them to their context, and raises fascinating questions – just as it gives us rich information, or tantalizing hints – about poetic lineage, cultural influence and evolution, and authorial intent. It is a density I perceive whenever I read these poems in Greek or Latin, though I have seldom seen it rendered into English.

I am indebted to a number of excellent previous translations. I rely on the donnish prose of the Loeb Classical Library, published by Harvard University, to supply the defects of my own scholarship. Of more literary translations, I love the playful exuberance of James Michie, Aaron Poochigian and A. E. Stallings, the rhythmical inventiveness of Richmond Lattimore, Charles Martin and Jim Powell, the plainspoken intimacies of Willis Barnstone and David Ferry, the wit of Daryl Hine, the evocative literalism of Anne Carson (*If Not, Winter* is a brilliant title!). Editions and anthologies edited by J. D. McClatchy, Diane Rayor and William W. Batstone, and the Norton leviathan (Peter Constantine, Rachel Hadas,

Edmund Keeley, Karen Van Dyck, editors), all translated by various hands, contain a lot of first-class work. And that goes for many others as well.

I hope, however, that my translation offers something that the others have not: not only the excitement of individual poems, individual poets, but also the shape of the forest, dark and difficult to interpret though it often is. My ambition has been to transplant both the forest *and* the trees of classical lyric verse into English, without missing one for the other. If a reader gets from these translations some sense of the musical charge and variety that so excited me in my own early encounters with Greco-Roman lyric, along, perhaps, with a slight feeling of strangeness, straddling the gap between antiquity and today, then my translation will be a success. Should a reader spend a little more time with the book, however, I hope that a larger sense of interrelation, of an ecosystem, will also start to emerge: the recognition that certain kinds of lines and stanzas signal certain kinds of poetry; that the very *shapes* of stanzas suggest one poem's affinity to, or difference from, another; that even an obvious instance of debt or derivation points out something important about a poet's craft or expressive choices. I hope, in short, that reading a poem in this volume might feel a little less like encountering a Greek statue or Roman mosaic in a museum, and a little more like seeing it in the atrium of the villa it was made for, along a road of cobblestones precisely rutted by the wheels of untold trundling wagons.

Christopher Childers
Baltimore, MD, January 2022

Note on Meters

Classical Quantity, English Stress

Beginning from a foundation of three basic types of meter, the Greeks elaborated a metrical system of great sophistication and complexity, a few small patches of which the Romans tamed and turned to their own purposes. Many readers of poetry in English will be familiar with certain of the more famous Greco-Roman meters – the dactylic hexameter, the sapphic – and may well know of attempts by writers like Thomas Campion and Alfred Lord Tennyson, among others, to do what the Romans did to the Greeks and adapt classical meters to English. This approach, while it has produced some interesting results and some fine poems, is not followed in the present volume, owing to what I perceive as a fundamental difference between Greco-Roman and English verse. In what follows, I will attempt to explain, in brief, the basic principles of classical, as opposed to English, meters, and shed some light on the various metrical and formal patternings I employ in rendering classical verse into English.

Greek and Latin meters are quantitative, that is, based on syllable quantity or length (the time it takes to pronounce a syllable), while English meter is qualitative, that is, based on syllable quality or stress (the force with which a syllable is pronounced). In Greek and Latin, syllable length is fixed, while stress in English is relative: syllables are pronounced more or less forcefully in relation to each other. Words of two or more syllables have fixed stress (you don't put the *emphas*is on the wrong *syllable*, as they say), but monosyllables (like 'let', 'me', 'not', 'the', 'true', etc.) do not have stress in themselves, but only in relation to

other words in the line or sentence where they are found. This feature of English (or is it a bug?) has long bedeviled meticians, who squabble heatedly about whether, in Shakespeare's famous line, we should say 'LET me NOT to the MARRIAGE of TRUE MINDS / ADMIT IMPEDIMENTS' or 'let ME not TO the MARRIAGE OF true MINDS'. The latter may at first sound less natural, but what if the speaker wanted to recuse himself in particular, to wit: 'Let *others* admit impediments, but not *me*'? Stress is, at least in part, a function of tone, and a matter of interpretation.

A related characteristic of stress in English is that it tends to alternate. Whether we know it or not, our anglophone ears, outside of chants at sporting events and protest rallies, do not like strings of three or more stressed or unstressed syllables – utter a bunch of monosyllables in a row, and some will step out, as it were, into the aural spotlight, while others will shrink back demurely. This tendency makes English unsuited to imitating the runs of long and short syllables so frequent in Greco-Roman verse: we have to use monosyllables, and then, once we do, their stresses start slipping and sliding, muddying the rhythm – which, inasmuch as it is already unfamiliar, needs to be precisely rendered to be heard by the nonspecialist reader. Strict imitation of classical measures in English therefore strikes me as both quixotic (especially when it comes to some of the more recondite rhythms of Greek choral lyric) and self-stymieing, since the precision required to make foreign meters intelligible precludes expressive variation of a sort the Greeks and Romans themselves often employed when they made verbal stress clash with syllable length. Such expressive variations are, however, fully possible in traditional (stress-based, mostly iambic) English meters, which centuries of exercise have rendered hardy enough to absorb a bit of rough treatment. This anthology, therefore, has preferred not to imitate the metrical rhythms of the Greek and Latin poems it translates, but instead to seek analogous forms for classical line and stanza shapes from among the resources of traditional English prosody.

I've said already that there are three basic types or categories of classical meter; they are the *dactylic*, the *iambic* and the *aeolic*. *Dactylic* meters consist of *dactyls* (a long syllable followed by two short, – ∪ ∪, the same in Greek as in English), often interchangeable with *spondees*

(two long syllables, --). A Greek or Latin *iambus* is like its English equivalent (◡ –), except it contains twice as many syllables (x – ◡ –), so *iambic trimeter* in Greek to the anglophone ear sounds like hexameter, and iambic dimeter sounds like tetrameter. The base of *aeolic* meters is the *choriamb* (– ◡ ◡ –). These are the building blocks from which the whole splendid edifice is constructed.

It should further be remarked that meters are either *stichic* or *strophic*. A *stich* consists of a single metrical line – dactylic hexameter, say, or iambic pentameter – which is repeated, line by line, for an entire poem. A *strophe* (or stanza) consists of several different types or lengths of line, arranged into a pattern which then becomes the unit of repetition – readers familiar with anglophone poetry might find it helpful to think of the elaborate stanza forms of George Herbert, Thomas Hardy or Marianne Moore. Sometimes, when strophes are used frequently, they become recognized forms, and are given names, like the *sapphic* and the *alcaic*. Other times, they are one-offs, used only in the particular poem in which they appear; in this case, we can call them *nonce strophes* (or nonce stanzas).

Generally, strophes in classical lyric are distinguished in two other chief ways. The first distinction is between *choral* strophes (that is, those performed by a chorus) and *monodic* strophes (those performed by an individual singer). The second is between *monostrophic* poems, in which the unit of repetition is a single strophe, and *triadic* poems, in which the unit of repetition consists of three strophes, called the *strophe*, *antistrophe* and *epode* (turn, counter-turn and stand). *Monostrophes*, depending on their length and complexity, can be either monodic or choral; but triads are thought to be exclusively choral. It should be obvious that, by reading a poem on a page, we cannot say for sure whether it was originally performed by a single individual or a chorus. Yet it is generally assumed that larger, more complex monostrophes (such as Alcman's *partheneia*, pp. 32–7), and all triadic poems (such as Pindar's victory odes, pp. 135–55), were performed chorally, while the simpler, shorter monostrophes of Aeolic poetry were intended for monodic performance.

In between the stich and the strophe, finally, is the *distich*, or couplet, in which repetition alternates between two different types of metrical

lines; the most common of these is the *elegiac couplet*, famously illustrated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the lines

In the hexameter rises the fountain's silvery column,
In the pentameter aye falling in melody back.

NB

Many meters are associated with particular genres, moods or tones, while others are 'unmarked', meaning either that they were used in all manner of different poems, or that not enough examples survive to generalize about their associations.

In what follows, as elsewhere in this volume,

- indicates a long syllable;
- ∪ indicates a short syllable, about half the length of a long;
- × indicates an *anceps*, a metrical position that can be occupied by either a long or a short syllable; and
- || indicates a *caesura* or pause in the line.

Dactylic and Iambic Meters

DACTYLIC HEXAMETER

stichic

SCANSION: Six feet, the first four being dactyls or spondees, the fifth usually a dactyl and the sixth a spondee or anceps.

ASSOCIATIONS: Widely used in narrative and discursive verse of all sorts. Its primary associations are with High Poetry – epic, didactic, hymns – but it is also employed in pastoral (perhaps Theocritus first used it to give his rustic peasants a literary air) and is the chief meter of Roman satire (Horace, Persius, Juvenal).

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TRANSLATED HERE AS:

- A Loose blank verse with liberal use of feminine (unstressed) line endings.
- B (*when the poem is an epigram, or feels like one*) Stricter iambic pentameter, often rhymed.
- C (*when the poem frames an internal story or song*) Blank verse for framing lines; rhymed iambic pentameter for the embedded song.

EXAMPLES: A: *Xenophanes* 11–34 (pp. 112–13); *Praxilla* (p. 198); *Callimachus*, Hymns 2 (p. 269); *Catullus* 60 (p. 388). B: *Alcman* 26 (p. 36); *Sappho* 104–5 (p. 51); *Phocylides* 3–6 (pp. 86–7). C: *Theocritus*, Idylls (pp. 283–98); *Catullus* 62 (p. 388); *Virgil*, Eclogues (pp. 400–410); *Statius*, *Silvae* 2.4 (p. 528).

ELEGIAC COUPLETS

distichic

SCANSION: Two lines, the first a dactylic hexameter and the second an *elegiac pentameter*, meaning two and a half feet of dactyls or spondees followed by a *dactylic hemiepes* (– ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ –).

ASSOCIATIONS: Inscriptions and epitaphs; the genre of elegy (‘symptotic’ or drinking-party elegy; martial elegy; public elegy; love elegy); the Greek and Latin epigram.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Rhymed iambic pentameter (‘heroic’) couplets, with occasional triplets.

EXAMPLES: *Archilochus* 1–13 (pp. 6–7) and the Achaeans at Mysia (p. 7); *Callinus* (p. 21); *Tyrtaeus* (pp. 22–6); *Mimnermus* (pp. 28–30); *Solon* 4–27 (pp. 69–73); *Theognis and the Theognidea* (pp. 77–85); *Phocylides* 1 (p. 86); *Demodocus* (p. 88); *Anacreon*, *Elegy* 2 (p. 108); *Xenophanes* 1–8 (pp. 110–12); *Simonides*, *Elegies* (pp. 128–9) and

Epigrams (pp. 129–33); *Timocreon of Rhodes*, *Elegy* 10 (p. 195); *Ion of Chios*, *Elegy* 26 (p. 197); *Timotheus*, Epitaph for Euripides (p. 212); ‘*Plato*’ (pp. 221–2); *Aristotle* 673 (p. 225); *Callimachus*, *Aetia* (pp. 258–61), *Hymns* 5 (p. 272) and Epigrams (pp. 276–81); *most of the Greek Anthology* (pp. 304–56); *Catullus* 65–109 (pp. 390–97); *Tibullus* (pp. 413–20); *Propertius* (pp. 423–45); *Sulpicia* (pp. 447–52); *Ovid*, *Amores* (pp. 494–511), *Tristia* (pp. 512–20) and *Letters from Pontus* (pp. 521–6); *Martial* 1.23, 1.32, 1.34, 1.68, 1.73, 1.79 (pp. 535–7), etc.

IAMBIC TRIMETER

stichic

SCANSION: Three iambic feet (× – ∪ –).

ASSOCIATIONS: Relatively unmarked, but especially associated with iambus, a genre known for invective and profanity. Its use as the main conversational meter in Greek drama suggests a deep association with lively first-person speech.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Stricter iambic pentameter, usually blank, occasionally rhymed (for epigrammatic effect).

EXAMPLES: *Archilochus* 19–48 (pp. 8–9) and 201–13 (p. 15); *Semonides of Amorgos* (pp. 16–20); *Solon* 36 (p. 75).

TROCHAIC TETRAMETER

stichic

SCANSION: Four feet, each a trochee (– ∪ – ×).

ASSOCIATIONS: Iambus; colloquial speech; invective and polemic. Found frequently in Archaic poetry, but not afterwards.

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TRANSLATED HERE AS: Iambic heptameter (fourteeners), with and without rhyme.

EXAMPLES: *Archilochus* 105–31 (pp. 9–12); *Sappho* 132 (p. 53); *Solon* 33 and 34 (p. 74); *Anacreon* 419 (p. 108); *Hipponax* 120+121 (p. 119).

‘LIMPING IAMBIC’ OR SCAZON

stichic

SCANSION: Iambic trimeter, with the final long and short of each line reversed.

ASSOCIATIONS: Intentional and humorous clunkiness; the metrical inversion of the last two syllables creates the limp (Greek *skazein*, ‘to limp’; the other Greek term, *choliambic*, derives from *cholos*, ‘lame’) that gives it its name. Said to have been invented by Hipponax, it was revived by Callimachus and then most notably used by Catullus and Martial.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Iambic hexameters, with and without rhyme.

EXAMPLES: *Hipponax* 3–78 (pp. 115–17); *Callimachus*, Iambi 1–4 (pp. 261–4); *Catullus* 8 (p. 379), 22 (p. 382), 31 (p. 383) and 37 (p. 384); *Martial* 1.10 (p. 535), 4.81 (p. 542) and 10.92 (p. 551).

EPODIC METERS

distichic / strophic

SCANSION: Any of a number of combinations of dactylic and/or iambic lines into repeating strophes of two, three or four lines (the latter often a repeated distich). Examples include dactylic hemiepes alternating with

iambic dimeter; iambic trimeter with dactylic hemiepes; iambic trimeter with iambic dimeter; etc.

ASSOCIATIONS: Generally associated with iambus and invective, though Horace also uses them for some of his most melancholy and moving exhortations.

TRANSLATED HERE AS:

- A Tercets or quatrains with irregular line lengths and variable rhyme schemes, taking their cue from the originals while maintaining differentiation from *glyconic tercets* (see below).
- B (*when alternating dactylic hexameter and dactylic hemiepes*)
A five-line stanza.

EXAMPLES: A: *Archilochus* 168, 184, 188 and 191 (p. 12) and 196a (p. 13); *Hipponax* 115 and 117 (p. 119); *Theodoridas* 15 (p. 316); *Horace*, Epodes (pp. 456–61) and Odes 1.4 (p. 464); *Martial* 1.61 (p. 536). B: *Horace*, Odes 4.7 (p. 489).

Aeolic Meters

The aeolic meters use long feet of many varieties, but they are alike in almost always featuring a *choriamb* (– ∪ ∪ –) at the beginning or middle of the foot. Though the basic aeolic metrical units are numerous, and each has a name, only three – variously tweaked and expanded – form the crucial building blocks of the presentation that follows. They are:

- the *glyconic* (– – – ∪ ∪ – ∪ –), by far the most common;
- the *pherecretean* (– – – ∪ ∪ – –), a catalectic glyconic (that is, with the final syllable omitted); and
- the *hagesichorean* (– – ∪ – ∪ – –).

AEOLIC OR SAPPHIC PENTAMETER

stichic / glyconic

SCANSION: — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — ◡ —

ASSOCIATIONS: Originally the meter of Sappho's second book (in Alexandrian recension) and Theocritus' second book of *Idylls* (only one poem from which has survived). For Theocritus, the meter pointed to Sappho; for Sappho and perhaps Alcaeus, the meter may have had Homeric associations, owing to the relatively large proportion of epic / Ionic dialect forms.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Anglo-Saxon-style alliterative tetrameter, with a visual caesura.

EXAMPLES: *Sappho* 44–9 (pp. 45–6), 115 (p. 52) and 130–31 (p. 53); *Alcaeus* 38a (p. 57), 141 (p. 62) and 364 (p. 67).

FIRST OR LESSER ASCLEPIAD

stichic / glyconic

SCANSION: — — — ◡ ◡ — || — ◡ ◡ — ◡ —

ASSOCIATIONS: Named for the Hellenistic poet Asclepiades (pp. 303–6), who apparently used it frequently, though no examples of his survive. Often employed as part of a strophe, more rarely as a stich; see the other 'asclepiad' meters, below.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Accentual hexameter, with a visual caesura.

EXAMPLES: *Alcaeus* 70 (p. 59) and 130b (p. 61); *Horace*, Odes 1.1 (p. 462) and 3.30 (p. 487).

GREATER ASCLEPIAD

stichic or distichic / glyconic

SCANSION: --- ◡ ◡ --- ◡ ◡ --- ◡ ◡ - ◡ -

ASSOCIATIONS: Sappho's third book (in Alexandrian recension) consisted entirely of poems in this meter; frequent also in Alcaeus, and in anonymous drinking songs (*scolia*); for Horace, at any rate, wine and the symposium seem to be the relevant associations. In Greek, it is generally arranged into distichs; in Latin, it is treated as a stich.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Iambic octameter lines, with an internal rhyme falling on the fourth and eighth beats instead of a visual caesura.

EXAMPLES: *Sappho* 53-6 (p. 47); *Alcaeus* 345-8 (pp. 65-6); *Scolia* 902-8 (p. 247); *Horace*, Odes 1.11 (p. 467).

HAGESICHOREAN WITH DOUBLE CHORIAMBIC EXPANSION

stichic

SCANSION: -- ◡ ◡ -- ◡ ◡ -- ◡ ◡ - ◡ --

ASSOCIATIONS: Unknown. The meter is obviously close in effect to the greater asclepiad. The 'hagesichorean' itself is so named because, in its unexpanded form (--- ◡ ◡ - ◡ ---), it is used in the strophe of Alcman's *Partheneion* (p. 32).

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Eight-beat lines with internal rhyme variously located.

EXAMPLES: *Sappho* 58a-b (pp. 47-8) and 81 (p. 48).

GLYCONIC TERCETS

strophic / glyconic

SCANSION: Three-line strophes consisting of one or two pure glyconics, and one or two glyconics expanded in various ways.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Tercets of four- and five-beat lines, generally rhymed AAA, where one of the As is a slant or half rhyme (to distinguish them from epodic tercets, which generally have one unrhymed line, or which rhyme AAB CCB).

EXAMPLES: *Sappho* 94–8 (pp. 48–50); *Anacreon* 388 (p. 106).

PHALAECIAN HENDECASYLLABLE

stichic / glyconic

SCANSION: — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ×

ASSOCIATIONS: Named after Phalaecus (p. 310), the only extant example of whose work in this meter is not sufficiently interesting to include here. Catullus and Martial use it flexibly, for satire and invective, for ‘slice of life’ anecdote and for reflections on love, friendship and happiness.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Loose tetrameter lines, irregularly rhymed.

EXAMPLES: *Catullus* 5 (p. 377), 10 (p. 379), 16 (p. 382), 41–6 (pp. 385–6) and 50 (p. 387); *Martial* 1.1 (p. 535), 1.117 (p. 537), 2.33 (p. 538), 3.53 (p. 540), 5.20 (p. 543), 5.73 (p. 544), 6.19 (p. 544), 6.82 (p. 545), 7.39 (p. 546), 7.95–8.69 (p. 547), 10.47 (p. 549), 11.63 (p. 551), 12.18 (p. 553), 12.20 (p. 554) and 12.34 (p. 554).

SAPPHIC

strophic

SCANSION: — ◡ — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ — ×
 — ◡ — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ — ×
 — ◡ — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ — ×
 — ◡ ◡ — —

ASSOCIATIONS: Perhaps Sappho and Alcaeus associated the strophe with hymns and prayers; later generations associated it with Sappho and Aeolic poetry generally. To my ear, it combines a restless forward movement with a musical ‘dying fall’. Sappho’s entire first book (in Alexandrian recension) was in this meter.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Quatrains, consisting of three lines in loose iambic pentameter and one line of iambic dimeter. ABAB rhyme scheme.

EXAMPLES: *Sappho* 1–41 (pp. 39–45); *Alcaeus* 34 (p. 57), 42 (p. 58), 45 (p. 58), 69 (p. 59), 283 (p. 63), 308b (p. 64), 362 (p. 66); *Catullus* 11 (p. 380) and 51 (p. 387); *Horace*, Odes 1.22 (p. 468), 1.38 (p. 471), 3.18 (p. 485) and 4.11 (p. 490).

ALCAIC

strophic

SCANSION: (*in Alcaeus and Sappho*)

× — ◡ — × — ◡ ◡ — ◡ —
 × — ◡ — × — ◡ ◡ — ◡ —
 × — ◡ — × — ◡ — —
 — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — ◡ — —

(in Horace)

--o--||--oo--o--
 --o--||--oo--o--
 --o---o---
 --oo--oo--o--

ASSOCIATION: Predominantly with Alcaeus, and thus with the sort of politically engaged and wine-soused poetry he practiced.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Quatrains, with 5-5-3-4 or 5-5-4-4 beats to a line, with a bit of roughness, often a choriamb, in each of the first two lines, and a dactyl or two in the fourth. ABAB rhyme scheme.

EXAMPLES: *Sappho* 137 (p. 53); *Alcaeus* 6 (p. 56), 72-129 (pp. 59-60), 208 (p. 62), 298 (p. 63), 332 (p. 64), 335 (p. 65) and 338 (p. 65); *Horace*, Odes 1.9 (p. 466), 1.37 (p. 470), 2.3 (p. 471), 2.7 (p. 472), 2.13 (p. 474), 2.14 (p. 476), 2.20 (p. 477), 3.1-3.5 (pp. 478-80) and 3.23 (p. 485); *Statius*, *Silvae* 4.5 (p. 529).

Asclepiadean Quatrains

strophic / aeolic

SCANSION: Grouped under this heading is a variety of quatrains, each of which combines two or three lesser asclepiads with another Aeolic metrical element: glyconics, glyconics + iambus, glyconics and pherecreteans, or other obscure metrical fauna (hipponacteans and telesilleans).

ASSOCIATION: Alcaeus has two extant poems in asclepiadean strophes, both of which are polemically political. Horace, by contrast, seems to use asclepiadeans for poems more Hellenistic in inspiration, with situations and motifs evocative of epigrams from the Greek Anthology.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Quatrains, with various approaches to rhyme, but usually (except in version C) containing an accentual hexameter with caesura (see First or Lesser Asclepiad, p. xxxv, above). Both of Alcaeus' poems in the measure are one-offs, while Horace uses three varieties of asclepiadean quatrain (A, B and C), below.

EXAMPLES: *Alcaeus* 70 (p. 59) and 130b (p. 61). *Horace, ASCLEPIADEAN A: Odes* 1.6 (p. 466) and 1.24 (p. 469); *ASCLEPIADEAN B: Odes* 1.5 (p. 465), 1.23 (p. 469), and 3.13 (p. 484); *ASCLEPIADEAN C: Odes* 1.3 (p. 463), 3.9 (p. 482), 3.25 (p. 486), and 4.1 (p. 487).

MINOR IONIC

stichic / distichic / strophic

SCANSION: ◡ ◡ — —, arranged in various line lengths and stanza patterns.

ASSOCIATIONS: Inasmuch as ionics are associated with the region of Ionia, they may suggest a certain languid softness, shading into lubricity. Geographically speaking, Ionia is plainly not part of Aeolia; but Ionic meters strike my ear as perhaps more polished, and more frivolous, variations on Aeolic ones, with the ionic foot, both major (— ◡ ◡) and minor, as an *anaclastic* (reconfigured) choriamb.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Rhyming dimeter couplets, presented variously in two-, four- or eight-beat lines.

EXAMPLES: *Alcman* 46 (p. 36); *Alcaeus* 10b (p. 56); *Anacreon* 352 (p. 103); *Corinna* 654 (p. 200, in a *strophe*); *Horace, Odes* 3.12 (p. 483).

ANACREONTIC I

strophic / ionic

SCANSION: Strophes consisting mainly of the *anacreontic* or *anaclastic ionic dimeter*, a slightly scrambled lesser ionic line (◡ ◡ – ◡ – ◡ – –) with an occasional pure ionic dimeter (◡ ◡ – – ◡ ◡ – –) thrown in for variety.

ASSOCIATIONS: Song, wine and the symposium. Along with Anacreontics II and III, this is one of the meters characteristically used by Anacreon and associated with his brand of light-hearted drunkenness and literary polish; all three are among the most purely lilting and frolicsome in Greek poetry.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Accentual trimeter for the ‘anacreontic’ lines, and two lines of rhyming dimeter for the pure ionics.

EXAMPLES: *Anacreon* 356 (p. 103), 395 (p. 106), 396 (p. 107) and 400 (p. 107); *Anacreontea* 46 (p. 362) and 53 (p. 365).

ANACREONTIC II

strophic / glyconic / pherecretean

SCANSION: Three glyconics followed by a pherecretean.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Accentual tetrameters for the glyconics, and accentual trimeters for the pherecreteans. Irregularly rhymed.

EXAMPLES: *Anacreon* 348 (p. 103) and 357–61 (pp. 104–5); *Aristonous of Corinth*, Paean to Apollo (p. 227); *Catullus* 34 (p. 383).

ANACREONTIC III

stichic

SCANSION: Iambic dimeter catalectic: $\times - \cup - \cup - \times$.

TRANSLATED HERE AS: Iambic trimeter, irregularly rhymed.

EXAMPLES: Anacreontea 1–35 (*pp.* 358–62).

Choral Strophes

All of the *monodic* strophes covered so far have been *monostrophic*; yet, as mentioned above, *choral strophes* can be either *monostrophic* or *triadic*. They differ further from the monodic strophes by being ‘nonce’ forms, one-offs, composed for particular occasions, and particular choruses, perhaps even to fit original melodies and choreographies also composed for the occasion. At any rate, it is hard to imagine audiences following the extraordinary complexity of some of the stanzas of Pindar and Bacchylides without the additional cues of music and dance.

While a monostrophic ode repeats one stanza form for the entire poem, a triadic ode employs a *strophe*, *antistrophe* and *epode*, in which the strophe and antistrophe have the same meter, but the epode follows its own pattern; thus the unit of repetition is the entire three-part structure. The translations in this book imitate the basic concept of the monostrophic or triadic choral ode by inventing a nonce stanza in English, of comparable size and complexity to the Greek (there is nothing like this in Latin), and repeating it as appropriate. In addition, the stanzas of monostrophic poems are marked *Str.* for ‘strophe’, while those of triadic poems are marked *Str.*, *Ant.*, *Ep.*, for ‘strophe’, ‘antistrophe’, ‘epode’. To get the idea, a reader might compare the stanzas in Alcmæon’s monostrophic *Partheneion* (p. 32) with one of the triadic victory odes of Pindar (*pp.* 135–55).

With fragments, it can be difficult to tell whether we are dealing with

a monostrophe or a triad, or even (in the case of two- or three-line fragments) with a much smaller unit of repetition. The following poems are clearly monostrophic: Alcman 1 (p. 32) and 3 (p. 34); Simonides 542 (p. 123); Pindar, Dithyramb 2 (p. 158), Frs. 122 (p. 161) and 124a+b (p. 163); Bacchylides, fragment 20b (p. 185); Timocreon of Rhodes 727 (p. 194); Corinna 654 and 690 (p. 203); Ariphron 813 (p. 213); Aristonous of Corinth, *Hymn to Hestia* (p. 226) and *Paeon to Apollo* (p. 227); Philodamus, *Paeon to Dionysus* (p. 229); and the Anonymous *Hymn to Zeus on Mount Dicte, Crete* (p. 234). The following poems are triadic: Stesichorus, *Geryon* (p. 90) and the *Theban Saga* (p. 93); Ibycus 282 (p. 97); Simonides 543 (p. 124); and most of Pindar (pp. 135–64) and Bacchylides (pp. 167–85).

Note on the Text

To list all of the editions and editors consulted for these translations would require several pages of interest only, or mainly, to the sort of specialist who doesn't really need a book like this one to begin with. I shall not do so. Instead, I will direct readers interested in tracking down the texts I have translated to the Loeb Classical Library editions (published by Harvard University Press) and their own notes on their texts. There are three broad exceptions to this rule. (1) In cases where the text was disputed or in disrepair (for example, Propertius, pp. 421–45), I felt free to consult the available scholarly editions and make my own determinations. (2) For minor gaps in fragmentary papyri, I consulted the various *apparatus critici* in the scholarly editions and translated the supplements which struck me as (a) poetically attractive and (b) not philologically implausible. Such instances are indicated in square brackets []. (3) Finally, for poems published subsequent to the most recent Loeb editions (for example, Archilochus' *Achaeans at Mysia*, p. 7, or Simonides' *Plataea Elegy*, p. 128), I used the most authoritative scholarly texts and commentaries I could find.

The following pages contain many fragmentary poems. These often begin or end abruptly, as indeed they do in the papyri where they are often found. In general, line numbering tries to reproduce what we know or can reasonably deduce about the length of such poems. For example, if a poem starts on a line other than line 1, it is because the papyrus contains one or more lines that are too scrappy to translate, though we can see that the lines are there. Lacunas within poems are indicated by ellipses. When we know their length, it is indicated by the line numbering; but when the extent of the gap is unknown, the line numbering proceeds as if there were no gap. Sometimes fragments are combined, whether

because they share some thematic resemblance, are presented by our sources in close proximity to each other, or both; sometimes they clearly come from the same poem, but may or may not be consecutive. In all instances, the location of the join is indicated in the margin and (where helpful) explained in the Notes at the end of the book.

The numeration of early Greek poetry – both poems and fragments – follows the Loeb editions of Douglas Gerber and David Campbell, which in turn follow the standard editions of scholars such as Diehl, Lobel, Snell, West and Page. It is perhaps worth noting that the Greek lyric poets, other than Sappho and Alcaeus, were published most authoritatively in the *Poetae Melici Graeci* of Denys Page. Page began with Alcman (pp. 31–7), to whom he assigned numbers 1–177, then followed with Stesichorus (numbers 178–281), Ibycus (282–345), and the rest, concluding with ‘Minor Lyric Poets’ (696–1045). Thus if Aristotle has a fragment numbered 842 (p. 224), it does not mean that more than 800 fragments of Aristotle’s poetry survive, merely that this fragment came 842nd in Page’s omnibus edition. (One exception to this is Stesichorus, for whom I used the edition of M. Davies and P. J. Finglass.) Poems of the *Greek Anthology*, because I wished to present them by author rather than preserving the *Anthology*’s original thematic arrangement, follow the numeration in the editions of Gow–Page (*Hellenistic Epigrams* and *The Garland of Philip*) and Page (*Further Greek Epigrams*). Poems published after these scholarly editions (and thus ill-integrated into the standard numeration) are generally given blandly descriptive English titles.

Unless otherwise stated, translations from both modern and ancient languages in the Notes are my own.

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The Archaic Period (circa 800–479 BCE)

SONG CULTURE: *SOPHIA*

Our story begins around 650 BCE, give or take a hundred years, among the islands, archipelagos and peninsulas of what today we call Greece and Turkey. Then, as now, the landscape was scattered with the remnants of Mycenaean palace society, whose collapse at the end of the Bronze Age (around 1200 BCE) had left behind colossal ruins; at this point, the people had lived among those ruins for centuries, without remembering who built them, or how. Of course, there was no internet or television, but neither were there cinemas or theaters, concert halls or opera houses; there were no schools, or even books. There was writing – its appearance around 800 coincided with the end of the period we call ‘Dark’ and the beginning of the one we call ‘Archaic’ – but it still had a low profile in the collective consciousness, and was found mostly on dedications and inscriptions, where, since most people could not read, the words would have served more to impress than to enlighten.

Had you been there, you might have lived in a small town (to you quite large) of maybe 7,000–10,000 people – possibly Thebes in central Boeotia, whether by the Cadmeia, the old Mycenaean citadel defended by its famous seven gates, or on the fertile Aonian plain north of the acropolis. You might have hailed from the bustling multicultural port of half-Anatolian Mytilene, islanded from its island (Lesbos) by the narrow Euripus strait, its two major harbors looking toward Sardis and the Lydian mainland. Or, then again, you might have dwelt in Elis, along the Peneus River in the Peloponnese, a once-small settlement now expanding rapidly thanks to its management of the Funeral Games of Pelops. (The latter were otherwise known as the Olympics – a real growth industry.) In each place, you would have spoken a different dialect of the language we today call ‘Greek’, though you would not have

called yourself ‘a Greek’: your people would have been Thebans, Mytileneans, Eleans. Even the group identities these communities possessed as members of a given *polis* (or ‘city-state’ in English) were of no great antiquity. It was only within the last few generations that changing weather patterns had allowed agricultural production to pick up, causing a mini-boom in population and bringing people closer to their neighbors. The ‘cities’ they now inhabited represented a novel and uneasy sort of compromise, marked more by competitive cooperation, or cooperative competition, than by anything much in the way of centralized organization or institutions.

It was through song that you knew who you were. These identities were a product, above all, of stories (*mythoi*), and these, made more memorable by rhythm, melody and dance, were at the heart of religious festivals, like the Kallisteia or the Adonia, which recurred regularly throughout the year. The already heady atmosphere of such events was heightened further by the primal frisson of slaughter, the taste of meat (a rare and fortifying indulgence), intoxicating drink and the smell of incense – all good for health and morale. Song invested the mysteries of the landscape with meaning: that mound across the river was the tomb of Pelops; the impossibly large stones of this circuit wall, relics of the Bronze Age, were coaxed into place by the lyre of Amphion; and the whole island of Lesbos was understood to derive its musical potency from the singing severed head of Orpheus, which had washed over the sea to its shores from Thrace. Every visible remnant of the bygone Age of Heroes, every sacred grove and shrine, had its story and its god.

Song was your school and your training ground. As a boy you sang and danced the *paean* at the temple of Apollo Ismenius on the Ismenus River, where you learned orderly and graceful movement through rhythm, keeping time with the other boys – skills which would later serve you well in the military formation called the *phalanx*. Elegiac couplets sung after dinner taught elegance in speech and action, and put words both to the unbelievable sweetness and shocking violence of sexual desire (*eros*) and to the god who inflicted it. Praise poetry (*epainos*) articulated shared values, offering a sort of road map to excellence (*arete*), while iambus (*psogos*, blame poetry) made you laugh and taught you how not to become a laughing stock yourself. When it was time to mourn, dirges (*threnoi*) conjured tears with the visionary beauty of the life to come.

Song revealed the justice within the status quo: the oligarchs of Thebes, it was implied, ruled by right, for they were *Spartoi*, men sown by Cadmus from the dragon's teeth, descendants of Earth and Ares; or so the songs claimed. The world was a *hierarchy* – a 'holy order' or arrangement (*cosmos*) – with gods at the top and monsters at the bottom, encompassed always by chaos and death, but with powerful allies, too, on the side of order and civilization, and with the city as its microcosm. Finally, song, though it inculcated the discipline of the social order, also offered an escape from it, a sort of release valve, in the licentious whirlings of the dithyramb, sung by a chorus in honor of Dionysus. Away from the battlefield, it was in song and dance that you felt most a part of your community; and the musical stories stayed with you as models to emulate or avoid, framed and explained by the aphorisms of the poets in their wisdom.

What was the Wisdom (*Sophia*) of the poets? It was their ability to make poetry. First, *Sophia* was memory – the remembering of old stories, and the invention of new ones, which they could compose so as to make others remember. Memory (*Mnemosyne*) was the Mother of the Muses, and the poets were Masters of Truth (truth, *a-letheia*, literally 'not forgetting'). Thus poetry conserved what happened in the past, and conveyed what it meant for the present. Second, *Sophia* was inspiration, the gift of the Muses. When poets remembered or invented a story or poem, at first it wasn't in their heads, and then it was. How did it get there? Where did the words come from? It must have been that their friends, the Muses, sent them: everything extraordinary had its god. Finally, *Sophia* was the composer's expertise, the command of complex melodies, rhythms and stanzas, the deft deployment of diction – all that would come in time to be called *techné*. 'Technique' was the outward manifestation of the poet's inward authority. It publicized their friendship with the Muses, who gave the words, and with the Graces (*Charites*), who added sweetness and pleasure. Both authority and truth were built into the song itself; it was True, because it was unforgotten, and unforgettable.

How did songs survive their first performance and become memory, when they might so easily have vanished without a trace, sung once and then forgotten? Writing, of course, was the key, though exactly when it entered the process is hard to say for sure. The poets themselves wrote; or they composed in their heads, and dictated to literate scribes; or their songs were written down by chorus members after the fact, much as parts

of Shakespeare's First Folio would be more than 2,000 years later. In the rest of society, meanwhile, songs were widely learned and memorized, sung in the fields and after dinner, on shipboard and in exile, diffusing through the Greek world until in Athens a man named Solon (pp. 68–75), himself a poet and politician, while in attendance at an aristocrats' drinking party called a *symposium*, could hear his nephew sing a song by a Mytilenean named Sappho (pp. 38–54), and say to him, 'Teach me that song, so I can learn it and die.' Throughout the so-called Archaic period, the oral culture of song coexisted with the written word, which nonetheless continued to gain more and more currency – until, in the middle of the fifth century, Herodotus could compete with Homer by writing (yes, writing!) his monumental history of the Persian Wars in prose.

In that same century, the spread of literacy reached a tipping point, which, though it did not put an immediate end to the earlier song culture, was the beginning of the end. The Greeks of that time blamed the development on Cadmus, the mythical 'Easterner' and founder of Thebes who, when he traveled from Phoenicia to search for his sister Europa, kidnapped by Zeus, was said to have brought the first written letters with him. Yet it was not the old Phoenician syllabary that Cadmus brought. That system had been one in which only consonant sounds were represented, leaving vowels to be supplied by the reader's knowledge, but Cadmus' cargo was something else, something quite new in the history of the world: a true alphabet, in which every significant sound of the language, vowels as well as consonants, had been abstracted into symbols.

The new alphabet proved the perfect instrument for writing down Greek poetry, whose rhythms and meters were based above all on vowels. This tool of abstraction would enable the Theban Pindar to send his elaborate odes to Sicily across the sea at the height of the Lyric Age; and yet, in time, it also enabled the Athenian Plato to undermine the traditional authority of the poets and challenge their culturally embedded Archaic wisdom with an intellectual and absolute idea. When Plato asked not 'What does Homer say is good?' but 'What is Goodness, itself by itself?' he was at the vanguard of a new generation of thinkers bidding to supplant the singers as the true 'Lovers of Wisdom' (the original meaning of 'philosophers', from Greek *philo* + *sophia*). And the singers would have to respond.

That, however, is for the next section. For now, it is the Archaic period, and Archilochus is clearing his throat.

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Archilochus

Archilochus was born on the Cycladic island of Paros some time near the beginning of the seventh century BCE. His father, Telesicles, was reportedly involved in Paros' colonization of Thasos in the northern Aegean near Thrace, and we are told by a fifth-century source that Archilochus 'went to Thasos from Paros because of poverty'. He is known for his feud with one Lycambes, a denizen of Paros said to have promised Archilochus the hand of Neobule, one of his daughters, and then to have broken his oath. Incensed, Archilochus attacked Lycambes and his family in fierce iambs, driving the girls to hang themselves. (Recent scholars, pointing to the similarity between 'Lycambes' and 'iambus', have suggested that he and his daughters may have been stock figures of the genre, rather than real people.) By the third century, Archilochus had come to be worshiped as a hero on his native Paros, at a shrine called the Archilocheion.

According to the literary scholars of Hellenistic Alexandria, Archilochus was the first of the three canonical iambic poets (the other two being Semonides of Amorgos, pp. 16–20, and Hipponax, pp. 114–19). As the founder of the genre, he was often placed beside Homer and Hesiod, the progenitors of epic and didactic poetry, respectively (and thus not featured in this volume). More recently, he has been credited with the invention of the 'Lyric I' for first-person narrative in verse, and even of the 'confessional' (associated in the mid-twentieth century with such major American poets as Anne Sexton, Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath). Personal speech may, however, have been as conventional in iambus as objectivity was in epic; and we cannot always tell, from the meager fragments at our disposal, whether the poet is speaking in his own voice or in a character's (see fragment 122, p. 10, and note). However that may be, to modern ways of thinking, Archilochus' tonal and formal range, his liveliness, his vividness and his concision – in short, his voice – more than justify the esteem in which the ancients held him.

Like many of the poets in this book, Archilochus' work survives almost

entirely in fragments, either found on tattered papyri or quoted by later authors. The following translations represent a liberal selection.

I

I serve Lord Ares on the battlefield,
and the sweet Muses' gift is mine to wield.

2°

My bread's aboard ship, aboard ship is my wine,
and, as I drink aboard ship, I recline.

3°

You won't see many bent bows, nor a throng
of slings, when Ares drives both sides headlong
over the plain; the groans will come from swords.
This is the fighting style the spear-famed lords
have mastered in Euboea.

4

Come, bring the cup across this man-of-war
to every oarsman; unstop the cask, and pour
the red wine to the dregs, until we're toast.
There's no way we'll stay sober at this post.

5°

Some Thracian now enjoys the faultless shield
I tossed in bushes, fleeing the battlefield
to save my skin. To hell with it! Why curse?
Who cares? I'll get another one no worse.

11°

I can't cure this by weeping, nor can I
make matters worse by giving fun a try.

13

No man or government will fault our grief,
Pericles, turning to feast on wine and beef,°
such brave souls has the sea's confounding din
dashed to the depths, submerging our lungs in
surges of pain. But for such helpless ill,
my friend, the gods have given us this pill:
endurance. All men hurt – now less, now more.
It's our turn now to groan and drain the sore;
soon it will be another's. Make it fast –
endure. Put girlish grieving in the past.

10

The Achaeans at Mysia°

When a god goads us with necessity,
don't rant at 'gutless weaklings' – I say we
did well to cut and run! Flight can be right
at times: the whole Greek host once took to flight,
those mighty spearmen, routed by one man –
by Telephus, displaced Arcadian.°
So urgent is the force of fate. The slain
clogged the sweet-flowing Caicus, and the plain°
of Mysia; the finely greaved Greek bands,
dying in droves at his relentless hands,
turned backward to the booming beach in haste;
those men – the gods' own kith and kin – now raced
for shelter to the ships, they who had come
with Agamemnon to raze Ilium.
Off-course, along that coastline, they'd sailed down
and were assailing Teuthras' lovely town,°

10

both men and horses snorting battle fury
 deludedly. But soon they all were sorry –
 20 how quick they'd breached Troy's towers, so they thought,
 in wheat-rich Mysia, and all for naught.
 Heracles came, and roared at his son's mettle,
 indomitable in the dust of battle –
 Telephus, who made Achaea cut and run
 like cowards, fighting like his father's son.

19

I don't want golden Gyges' anything –°
 no envy here. A god's perks do not pique
 my interest. I don't hanker to be king.
 All that's too far away. My sight's too weak.

21+22°

21 This island, arching like an ass's backbone,
 stands covered over with a savage forest;
 22 it isn't beautiful, desirable
 or lovely, as around the stream of Siris.°

30+31°

30 Glowing with pleasure, she held a myrtle sprig
 and beautiful rose flower,
 31 and her hair
 spilled shadows on her shoulders and her back.

41

A kingfisher
 perched on a jutting rock and beat its wings.

42

Like a Phrygian or a Thracian sucking
beer through a straw, she knelt down hard at work.

48

their nurse brought them, with scented hair and breasts,
so even an old man would be turned on,
Glaucus°

105°

Look, Glaucus, as the breakers thrash the bottomless ocean there
and over Gyrae's peaks a column of cloud stands straight and sheer;°
it means a storm is coming and – when we least expect it – fear.

108

Be my ally, Lord Hephaestus: hear your suppliant;
be kindly now, and grant the kinds of favor that you grant.

114

I don't like tall generals who strut with a long stride,
and brag about their curls and style their whiskers when they shave.
Give me a little one instead, with stumpy legs bowed wide,
who plants his feet firm on the ground, is full of heart, and brave.

115°

Leophilus is leader now, Leophilus has sway,
it all rests with Leophilus; Leophilus, hooray!

116°

So long, Paros, with those figs and that seafaring life!

118

How I wish that I could touch the hand of Neobule!

119°

[I] fell on that hard-working wineskin and began to thrust
belly against belly, thigh on thigh.

120+121°

120 For I know how to strike up Dionysus' lovely strain,
the dithyramb, even as wine lightning-bolts my brain,°
121 and I can lead the Lesbian paeon as pipers play along.°

122°

No more surprises now, no stunning miracles, no thought
unthinkable, since heaven's father, Zeus, saw fit to blot
the midday with sheer midnight, overshadowing the sun,
and with that shadow fear and trembling fell on everyone.
From now on no occurrences, no worries or wild hopes
are past belief; from now on there's no call for shock or wonder,
not if you see the dolphins crop the mountains and treetops,
while woodland creatures graze each oceanic glen and copse –
the dolphins' home – and frisk with pleasure through the
breakers' thunder.

124

To Pericles°

One time you came to visit in the true Myconian style,°
draining neat wine by the carafe, freeloading all the while,
no cash in hand, no invitation, like you were our friend,
obedient only to your belly's hunger to transcend
the bounds of shamelessness

125

Like a man parched for water, so I long to skirmish with you.

126

I know how to do one major thing:
repay someone who makes me suffer with brutal suffering.

128

O heart, my heart, turned upside down by cares that have no cures,
get up, thrust out your chest, and take a stand – don't be afraid! –
go face your enemies now hunkering in their ambushade
with firmness. Don't be overjoyed if victory is yours,
and if you lose don't head home wailing, or collapse dismayed.
No, grieve when things are rotten, and enjoy your days of bliss,
but not too much – know all men's lives are up and down like this.

130

Chalk it all up to the gods; for they have often caught
men fallen down on the black earth and picked them up again,
and often, too, they've pummeled even well-established men,
and piled misfortunes high on them, laid out by the onslaught;
and the man roams – no food, no work – beside himself, distraught.

131

Glaucus, son of Leptines, our hearts are built this way,^o
to change their weather as the weather changes every day.

168^o

Hey, it's Sunshine, Sweetheart's son,
My best friend by a mile!
This story is *hilarious*;
It's bound to make you smile.

184

Bent on deceit, she carried
water in one hand; in the other, fire.

188

The Cologne Papyrus

Your skin has lost the bloom of spring,
dryness is withering
your furrow; fetid age now holds you fast.
The beauty and the tender grace
of your once-lovely face
have rushed away before the wintry blast
buffeting you from arctic climes,
and many, many times

191^o

In my desire for sex, blind lust
coiled deep in my chest
and drenched my vision in a heavy mist,
stealing the weak wits from my breast.

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193

I lie here pierced with longing,
 lifeless and wretched; the gods have speared my bones
 and the fierce pangs come thronging.

196

Lust, that makes limbs slack,
 my friend, has knocked me on my back.

196a°

The Cologne Papyrus

‘. . . wholly restraining yourself,
 and I’ll endure in the same way.

But if your longing’s urgent and can’t wait,
 there is a girl in our house
 right now whose need for you is great,

a lovely maiden, soft and delicate.

 I think that her beauty is perfect.
 With her you can be intimate.’

She finished, and I answered her in haste:

 ‘Dearest Amphímedo’s daughter –
 how noble and refined, how chaste

10

your mother was, whom the rank earth holds tight! –
 the goddess has given the young
 so many methods of delight

besides the sacred act, and one will do.

 The rest we will mull over later,
 calling on heaven, me and you,

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when you're more ripe, and we have calm to think.
I'll do what you tell me to do.
20 You've brought my longing to the brink.

But don't begrudge, my dear, my passing through
the entryway under the lintel
to the grass gardens where, I'm telling you,

I'm headed. Neobule? What a laugh!
Somebody else can have her.
She's twice your age, too ripe by half,

her girlish bloom has blown, the flower died,
her charms are a thing of the past.
Her lust cannot be satisfied;

30 she's shown how drunk with it, how crazed she is.
To the crows, to the gallows with her!
Let no one sentence me to this:

to take on such a woman as my wife.
I'd be a joke to the neighbors!
I much prefer you in my life,

since you don't lie or try to cheat with others.
But she is hot-tempered and harsh,
and welcomes many men as lovers.

I fear if I move too fast or rush in early,
40 like the proverbial bitch°
I'll bear blind offspring prematurely.'

I said no more, but took her to a bed
of grasses and blossoming flowers,
and laid her down. Behind her head

I laced an arm, and spread my tunic over
her as she fussed like a fawn,
and held her, moving to uncover

her breasts, which I took hold of gently, sleek
young flesh she revealed to my eyes
that showed her springtime near its peak;

50

and stroking her whole lovely body there
I let out a spurt of the white stuff,
with one hand in her yellow hair.

201°

The fox knows many tricks, the hedgehog one,
but it's a big one.

212

The ship sat on a knife-edge
between the waves and wind.°

213

They gave their lives into the waves' embrace.

Semonides of Amorgos

Semonides of Amorgos (first half of the seventh century BCE) – to be distinguished from Simonides of Ceos (pp. 120–33) – was, along with Archilochus (pp. 5–15) and Hipponax (pp. 114–19), one of the three canonical iambic poets as established by the scholars of Hellenistic Alexandria; all three are shadowy figures, but Semonides is much the most mysterious to us. We are told he was born on Samos, but like Archilochus he led a colonizing expedition, and was ultimately linked with the colony he founded on the Cycladic island of Amorgos. Just as Archilochus attacked Lycambes (p. 5), and Hipponax set his sights on his own target, the sculptor Bupalus (p. 114), so Semonides' preferred punching bag was one Orodœcides – at least, that's what we are told eight centuries later by the satirist Lucian of Samosata, though Orodœcides is not mentioned in any of the extant fragments. To Semonides is attributed a long elegiac poem of which nothing survives, possibly a *History of Samos*, as well as a collection of iambs. From what remains it is difficult to get a general sense of Semonides' poetry beyond a certain grimly hectoring pessimism and tedious misogyny.

1°

The will of Zeus the Thunderer, my boy,
holds and fixes the end of everything,
but men are dumb, blind creatures of the day,
who live like grazing herds, with no idea
of how the god will bring things to their end.
Meanwhile, hopeful bravado keeps us rushing
in hot pursuit of the impossible;
we wait for the next morning, or next season,
and no one thinks that he won't wake tomorrow
in bed with money and the ruling class.
But loathsome old age gets there first and takes

10

this man before his time, while that one coughs
 his life away, and war mows others down
 on a forced march to darkness underground.
 Some men are buffeted by hurricanes
 on the high seas, and drown in churning breakers,
 who couldn't make a living on dry land;
 while others tie the noose that breaks their necks,
 and leave the sunlight by a choice demise.
 Thus, nothing is unmixed with evil; thousands 20
 of deaths and sorrows and surprise disasters
 wait on us. But if we'd take my advice,
 we wouldn't lust for misery, or twist
 our hearts over the rack of bitter pain.

2+3

If we had sense, we wouldn't think about 2
 or mourn the dead more than a single day.
 For we'll be dead a long time, but we live 3
 a few years only, and we live them badly.

7°

In the beginning, god created women
 with different characters. One's from a sow
 bristling with hair. Everything in her house
 is smeared with muck and scattered on the floor.
 And she herself, unwashed, in unwashed clothes,
 sits there beside the shit-heap and gets fat.
 He made another from a fiendish fox:
 she's an authority on everything.
 She misses nothing bad, and nothing good,
 and mostly she considers bad things good, 10
 and good things bad. Her moods are always changing.
 One's from a snappish bitch – just like her mother,°
 she's got to hear it all, and know it all,
 and sneaks and seeks, and peers and pries all over,

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yapping no matter if there's no one there.
 Threats are no good; a man can't shut her up,
 not if he takes a rock in rage and breaks
 her teeth, or if he murmurs soothingly,
 not even if she's sitting there with guests,
 20 but she just yaps and yaps, unflappably.
 The gods made one from earth, and made her gimpy,
 her husband's damaged goods. Such a wife
 has no idea of what's bad or good;
 the only thing she knows is how to eat.
 And even when the winter makes her shiver,
 she's too dumb to scoot closer to the fire.

One's from the ocean; she's a paradox.
 One day she smiles and sparkles with delight,
 so houseguests will admire her and say,
 30 'There's no one in the world who's got a wife
 better than this one, or more beautiful.'
 But the next day her husband can't get close
 or even look at her, because she's crazy,
 defensive as a bitch around her pups,
 relentless, and at war with everyone,
 treating her friends and enemies the same.
 Just as the sea in summer lies becalmed,
 all innocence and imperturbable,
 gladdening sailors, but before long's crazed,
 40 raging with waves that crash like thunderclaps –
 that's what this sort of woman's moods are like.
 The ocean's character is always changing.

One's from a gray ass used to being beaten;
 only when forced and cussed she grudgingly
 gives in and works, and then the work she does
 is good enough. Meanwhile, all day and night,
 she eats in corners, eats beside the hearth,
 and takes on lovers like she takes in food,^o
 sleeping with anyone who comes along.

50 One's from a weasel – that one's miserable.^o
 There's nothing beautiful, desirable,

delightful or attractive about her.
 She's crazy about sex but sickening,
 and makes the man she sleeps with want to puke.
 She's always stealing, pissing off the neighbors,
 and eats the food reserved for sacrifices.

A gorgeous mare with an exquisite mane
 bore one; she turns her nose at drudgery,
 makes others do it. She won't touch a millstone,
 handle a sieve, shovel the shit from the house° 60
 or sit close to the stove (she can't stand soot).
 Her husband's forced to love her – and his debt.
 Two or three times a day she takes warm baths,
 scrubs off the dirt, anoints herself with scents,
 and that luxuriant hair – she always wears it
 combed straight and long, and shadows it with flowers.
 She's an exquisite sight for other men,
 but to her husband she's a royal pain,
 unless he's some crowned head or tyrant-type,
 the kind of man who likes this kind of woman. 70

One's from a monkey. This one is the worst,°
 the greatest curse that Zeus has thrust on men.
 Her face is so disgusting, when she goes
 around the city, everybody laughs.
 Her neck is stumpy. Her gait lurches weirdly,
 no ass, all knees and elbows – god, poor guy,
 who has to sleep with that monstrosity!
 She's cunning, though, knows lots of twists and turns,
 just like a monkey. Mockery doesn't faze her.
 She's no help ever, always on the lookout, 80
 scanning and planning all day every day
 for opportunities to do her worst.

One's from a bee. Her husband struck it lucky,°
 since she's the only one that's not a nightmare.
 Under her care, his livelihood improves,
 his household flourishes, and she grows old
 cherished by a man she cherishes,
 and rears a fine, distinguished family.

Her grace outshines all other women; grace
90 touched by the gods surrounds her with its glow.
She doesn't like to gossip with the girls
when they all get together, talking sex.
Such women are the best and most discerning
that Zeus bestows to grace a husband's life.
Zeus has it fixed so all these other species
of women are here with men, and here to stay.
But the worst curse Zeus has devised is this:
women. A husband who believes his wife
has something to contribute is in trouble.
100 Not once will a man make it a whole day
in a good mood if he lives with a woman,
or easily from his own home kick out
Hunger, a hated houseguest, hostile god.
And when her man is happiest at home,
because of the gods' help or human kindness,
she drums up some complaint and arms for battle.
Where there's a woman, men can't in good conscience
put up a distant guest, much less a neighbor.
And wives who seem most virtuous – it's true –
110 turn out to be most vicious in the end:
the husband gapes there dumbly, while the neighbors
are titillated, chuckling at his blindness.
And everyone still remembers to speak well
of his own wife, but badmouths other people's,
and we don't see we're all in the same boat.
For this is the greatest curse that Zeus devised,
clapping us with these ankle fetters we
can't shake off, ever, since so many men
went down to Hades fighting for a woman.^o

Callinus

Callinus (mid-seventh century BCE) came from Ephesus, one of the twelve Ionian cities in Asia Minor. Very little is known about him; besides the one long fragment, only a few scattered lines remain, though the skill and vigor of fragment 1 show that he was a talented poet. It is a shame so little of his work survives.

1°

How long, boys, will you lie there and hang back?°

Where is your heart? The neighbors see how slack
you are – aren't you ashamed? You think we stand
at peace, while war is general in the land! . . .°

and dying, hurl your spear one final time!

A man earns shining honor in the strife,
fighting to save his country, children, wife
from the foe's hands. When the Fates cut your thread –
that's when you'll die. So come, charge straight ahead,
with spear held high and heart behind your shield
unwavering, when you first take the field.

10

No man, not even of immortal blood,
is destined to escape from death for good.

A man who flees the strife and battersome
thudding of spears to die in his own home
will not be loved or missed at all in town;
but great and common mourn a soldier down.

For when a brave man dies, we grieve and pine;
alive, he's honored like one half-divine.

The people see him as a bastion,
who does the work of many, all alone.

20

Tyrtaeus

The Spartan elegiac poet Tyrtaeus (late seventh century BCE) wrote five books, under the headings of the *Spartan Constitution* or *Eunomia* (*Good Order*), *Exhortations* and *Marching Songs* (or *Battle Songs*; some titles will have comprised more than one book). Of these, our most substantial surviving fragments are from the *Exhortations*; we have little of the *Eunomia* and nothing of the *Marching Songs*. Tyrtaeus was said to have played a prominent role in the Second Messenian War (circa 620–600 BCE), in which the Spartans suppressed a revolt of the helots, the enslaved population of neighboring Messenia. We are told that he recited his elegies during the darkest moments of the war to inspire the Spartans not to give up fighting, and even that he declaimed them behind the front lines during battle to inspire the soldiers and discourage the weak ones from deserting. The latter is unlikely; more probably his poems were sung within or in front of the kings' tent on campaigns and at the messes during peacetime.

Later Greeks, incredulous that the Spartans could have produced a poet of any sort, claimed that Tyrtaeus was a limping, dim-witted schoolmaster sent to Sparta from Athens in response to an oracle; the story smacks of Athenian chauvinism. The Spartan king Leonidas reportedly found Tyrtaeus' poems 'good for enflaming the hearts of young warriors', and they remained popular in Sparta long after the subjugation of Messenia had been completed. Though Tyrtaeus is not a poet of the first rank, his imagery is vivid, his phrases are often striking and well turned, and his extant fragments are essential to our understanding of elegy in general and martial elegy in particular.

10

It's beautiful for a brave man to fall
fighting in front when home and country call,^o
but the most brutal, harshest thing of all

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is leaving one's hometown and fertile soil
 to scrape by on a beggar's life and toil,
 with his whole family wandering together:
 small children, wife, dear mother and old father.
 For everyone he meets is hostile to him;
 base poverty and neediness undo him;
 he soils his family name; his looks desert him; 10
 and all dishonor stains, all hardships hurt him.
 Therefore, since men don't care for or admire
 such homeless exiles, or the line they sire,
 let us fight for this land with spirits high;
 don't cling to life; it's for our sons we die!
 Young men, get up! Stand side by side and fight,
 and don't give in to fear or shameful flight!
 No, steel your fighting spirit to the strife;
 when you face men, don't be in love with life.
 Think of the old, their knees no longer light – 20
 don't turn your back on them and take to flight!
 Appalling, when an old man in the fray
 falls in the front while young ones shy away,
 his head already white, his gray beard mussed,
 exhaling his brave spirit in the dust,
 his hands clutching his bloodied private parts –
 appalling sight, one to incense your hearts! –
 stripped naked. But a youth – all is becoming
 for him, while his springtime is bright and blooming;
 alive, he's what men praise and women want; 30
 he's beautiful, too, fallen at the front.
 Now, everyone, stand wide, get a good grip
 with both feet, hold your ground, and bite your lip!

II

Come, you sons of unconquered Heracles!^o
 Zeus isn't yet among your enemies.
 Be brave! Don't fear that mob of men, don't fly,
 but march straight at them, with your shields held high,

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despising life, and loving the black night
of death as much as you love the sun's light.
You know how ruinous the actions are
of tear-stained Ares, you've felt the pulse of war,
you've been with those who chase, and those who flee;
10 in both you've reached and passed satiety.
Soldiers who dare line up and make a stand,
who gain the front and battle hand to hand –
those men survive, and shield the company;
but flight erases acts of bravery.
No one could list, when someone loses face,
all the misfortunes that attend disgrace.
It's awful when a man's pierced through the back
because he fled an enemy attack,
and shameful when a corpse with spearpoint thrust
20 between its shoulder blades lies in the dust.
Now, everyone, stand wide, get a good grip
with both feet, hold your ground, and bite your lip.
Make sure thighs, shins, chest, shoulders are concealed
behind the belly of your massive shield,
in your right hand heft your mighty spear,
and nod your plumed crest, flashing awe and fear.
By doing mighty deeds you learn to fight.
With shield in hand, don't steer clear of the flight
of arrows, but get close, close as you can,
30 and with your sword or long spear strike your man!
Go in, thrust foot to foot and chest to chest,
helmet to helmet, plumed crest to plumed crest,
clash shield on shield and fight your man, so near
you wrest away his sword, or seize his spear.
Crouch down on every side, you light-armed ones,
behind the shields, and let fly with huge stones
at them, or fling your polished javelin,
standing hard by the heavy-armored men.

12°

I'd never praise a man or pay him heed
 if he excels in wrestling or in speed,
 not if he has a Cyclops' size and might,
 or outstrips Thracian Boreas in flight,^o
 not if Adrastus' tongue drips with less honey,^o
 or Cinyras and Midas have less money,^o
 not if Tithonus is less fair to see,^o
 or Tantalus' son less a king than he,^o
 not if he's famed for every kind of glory
 except for bravery and battle fury.

10

A man who can't watch when the fight gets gory,
 or lunge at foes from close range and shed blood –
 in war that man will never be called good.

This is true excellence, this is the best
 prize youth can garner, and the loveliest.

For the whole city reaps the benefits
 when a man stands in front and never quits,
 doggedly holding ground, and risks his life,
 forgetting flight, his heart steeled to the strife,
 urging the man he stands by to endure –
 this is the man that we call good in war.

20

Quickly he routs the foes packed side by side
 and, bristling, keenly stems the battle's tide.

But if, in the front ranks, death cuts him down,
 he glorifies his father, townsmen, town,
 with his shield punctured, where he was hard-pressed,
 and holes punched through his breastplate and his breast.

Then youths and elders mourn the soldier slain;
 the whole town wails for him in grief and pain,
 and people point his sons out, and his tomb,
 and his sons' sons, and all his line to come.

30

His name, his glory, do not cease to sound;
 he is immortal, though beneath the ground,
 because he stood and fought and proved his mettle

for land and children, and was killed in battle.
But if he dodges death that brings distress,
and makes his brave boast good by his success,
everyone honors him, old men and boys;
he enters Hades after many joys,
40 and stands out in old age, when no one will
dishonor or defraud or wish him ill,
and young men, those his age, and elders greet
him at the benches, giving up their seat.
Now, men, each give your all to gain this height
of excellence; don't let up in the fight!

Mimnermus

Mimnermus (circa 660–600 BCE), an elegiac poet from Asia Minor, was born in Smyrna (modern İzmir) around the time when it was invaded by the Lydian king Gyges. (At some later point he was mistakenly claimed by the people of Colophon.) The Smyrnaeans defeated Gyges at the Hermus River (now the Gediz) around 660, and it is possible that Mimnermus' name, which means 'Remember the Hermus', was chosen to commemorate the victory. Smyrna was eventually sacked by Alyattes, a successor of Gyges and the father of the famously wealthy Croesus, around 600, and Mimnermus is assumed to have died either at the time of that conflict, or shortly before. Fragment 14 (p. 30) refers back to the first battle at the Hermus and may well exhort the Smyrnaeans on the eve of the second.

We are told Mimnermus produced two books in his lifetime, most likely the *Nanno*, a collection of elegiac poems on various topics, and the *Smyrneis*, a long historical elegy about Smyrna's victory over Gyges and the Lydians, of which fragment 13 (not included herein) is all that remains. The *Nanno* is said to have been named after a girl pipe-player whom Mimnermus loved; most, if not all, of our fragments of his poetry come from this collection. Though there is little evidence in his surviving poems, he was thought of by later generations primarily as a love poet; what our extant verses do show is that, while no early Greek poet has a positive view of old age (with the partial exception of Solon, pp. 68–75), none of them were as depressive or obsessive about it as Mimnermus.

He was revered by such authors as Callimachus (in *Aetia* 1.1, lines 11–12, p. 258) and Propertius (pp. 421–45) for his lovely concision and polished, lapidary style. Besides Archilochus (pp. 5–15), Mimnermus is easily the most skilled of the Archaic elegists.

I

What life, what pleasure, without golden Love?°
 Let me drop dead when I have had enough
 of secret trysts, love-gifts and the love-bed,
 flowers of youth whose joys are harvested
 by men and women. But when the pain sets in
 of age, deforming even handsome men,
 cruel worries always wear us down for spite;
 we get no pleasure looking on the light;
 women do not respect us; boys are cold.
 10 That's how bitter the god made getting old.

2

We are like leaves born in the teeming spring,°
 basking in sunlight, swiftly burgeoning;
 like them, for an arm's length of time, we live°
 happy and young, and what the gods will give
 we don't suspect. Presences wrapped in gloom
 are always near, one holding out the doom
 of age, another, death. And youth won't last;
 its fruit, like one day's worth of sun, dies fast.
 And when this season dwindles and is gone,
 10 it's better being dead than living on.
 For troubles swarm the heart: one man will blow
 his savings, and lose everything but woe;
 another man wants children most of all,
 and, wanting them, goes down to Hades' hall;
 disease destroys a third. For Zeus the king
 gives everyone a share of suffering.

3

When a man's past his prime, though handsome once,
 he isn't loved or honored by his sons.

4

Zeus gave Tithonus an everlasting curse:°
old age, at least as bad as death, and worse.

5

[Suddenly speechless sweat rivers my face
and my heart flutters at the charm and grace
of boys my age in bloom. If this could last!]
But like a pleasant dream that fades too fast
youth withers; suddenly above your head°
old age hangs pain and ugliness and dread;
dishonored, foul, disfiguring, it wounds
the mind and sight of those whom it surrounds.

6°

May my fate take me after sixty years
without the pain of sickness or sad fears.

7

Live for yourself, not reputation. Yes,
you will be criticized, now more, now less.

II+II Ia°

Jason could not have done it on his own,
brought back the great fleece to the brutal throne
of Pelias, prize won through hard exertion,
or even made it to the stream of ocean . . .
Aeëtes' city, where the great halls hold
the sun's swift rays in storerooms made of gold
by ocean's edge, where godlike Jason went.

II

IIa

I2°

For all the sun does every day is work.
 He never has a chance to rest or shirk,
 he and his horses, once rosy-fingered Dawn
 leaves ocean for the sky and brings day on.
 At night he's carried back across the seas
 all the way from the Hesperides
 asleep in a hollow, golden, wingèd cup
 made by Hephaestus, skimming the water's top
 to Aethiopia, where his steeds stand
 10 till Dawn awakes and rises overland.
 Hyperion's son then mounts his chariot°

I4°

That none today could rival that man's might
 I've gathered from the old, who saw him fight
 with spear in hand and rout the serried ranks
 of Lydian horsemen hard by Hermus' banks.
 At no time could Athena criticize
 his heartfelt fury, when amid the cries
 of bloody war he barreled to the front,
 into the rain of spears, and bore the brunt.
 For not one of his enemies was more
 10 suited to the brutal work of war
 when he came on, swift as the blazing sun

Alcman

Alcman, one of the canonical Nine Lyric Poets, was active in the mid- to late seventh century BCE. A Spartan, he composed in a local dialect on local themes. As with Tyrtaeus (pp. 22–6), later Greeks, surprised that Sparta should have produced a poet of note, argued that Alcman was really from Sardis in Lydia, probably because they misread the dialect of fragment 16 (p. 35). Alcman is said to have composed six books of poetry – the first two of which the scholars of Hellenistic Alexandria classified as *partheneia* (maiden-songs), the genre for which Alcman was most famous – as well as something called the *Diving Women*, perhaps a long narrative poem, otherwise unknown. Alcman is also credited with wedding hymns and erotic poetry. As with other Archaic poets, the stories told about Alcman – for example, that he was a man of large appetites for food and sex – are clearly derived from his verse. Alcman was also widely reputed to have been the teacher of the legendary minstrel and dolphin-charmer Arion (see Anonymous Classical Lyric, fragment 939, p. 239). Aristotle mentions, unpleasantly, that Alcman died of pubic lice.

The text of Alcman's first fragment, constantly gesturing beyond itself toward sights we cannot see and meanings at which we can only guess, has provoked numerous interpretations. Some see the poem as the script of an initiation ceremony for the female chorus, or as an *epithalamion* (wedding song) in which (in one version of this interpretation) Agido might be the bride, and Hagesichora a cult title of the goddess Helen. Given such difficulties, it is no wonder that Alcman's oeuvre should have provoked serious attention among the Alexandrians; as evidence of their attentions, we have the twelve papyrus fragments and six fragments of commentaries found in an ancient trash heap at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt from the late 1890s onward, as well as mentions of monographs on his poetry written between the third century BCE and the first century CE.

For us today, his work exerts a similar pull, and probably for similar reasons – chief among them, that its parochial rootedness in local

tradition provides tantalizing access to a spectacle and a society we cannot quite grasp. Apart from whatever it may have meant in the context of his contemporary Sparta, Alcman's poetry was also known for its sweetness and charm, its lightness of touch and delicacy of rhythm; one of his fragments (26, p. 36) is among the most beautiful of Archaic lyric. Taken together, his surviving poems show us – through a glass, darkly – an ancient Spartan song culture more musical and more in love with life than that oppressively martial people afterwards became.

I°

The Partheneion

Str. 6 There *is* revenge the gods exact.
 He's happy who lives weaving
 the fabric of each daily act
 in goodness, without grieving.°
 40 But me, I hymn the luminous
 auroral Agido,°
 who calls the sun to shine for us,
 her glow like sunlight's glow.
 The sparkler, though, who mounts our spectacle°
 won't let me cover her with blame or praise,
 herself as unsurpassable
 as a black horse among dream-flocks that graze
 in meadows of dreams, with the rock of the world
 for roof –
 a powerful thoroughbred victor with thunderous hoof.

Str. 7 Just look at her! This sable steed
 51 by the Black Sea was foaled.
 My cousin's of a Lydian breed,
 her mane of unmixed gold:
 Silvery Hagesíchora, Chorus
 Queen, whose countenance –°
 but why use words when she's before us?
 There, at the head of the dance!

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Next, rosy Agido will come, soon now,
a Scythian horse behind the Lydian.°

For as we bring around the plow 60
and its due season, at the cusp of dawn
the Pleiades, hanging aloft in ambrosial night
like fiery Sirius, are battling us, light to light.°

No purple cloth's enough to make *Str. 8*
our choir safe from harm,
no, nor a glittering, chased-gold snake
worn as a holy charm,
no Lydian garland dark-eyed girls
slip on to general awe,
nor Nanno with her gorgeous curls, 70
nor godlike Areta.

Cleësithera? – no; not Thylacis;
in that dark house all mortals praise, don't say,°
'I wish to stand by Astaphis,
I wish that Philylla would look my way,
and Damáreta, lovely Ianthemis . . .' No – when I near
Hagesíchora's radiant countenance, I disappear.°

Where Hagesíchora plies her dance *Str. 9*
on ankles fine and small,
look – Agido! Their radiance 80
applauds our festival.

Gods who accomplish every goal,
please hear us as we pray;
fulfillment is in your control.

And, Lady, if I may,
who mount our dance, I'm just a girl, whose voice°
pours from the sky in vain, like the mournful owl's;°
I long to make the heart rejoice
of healing Dawn, the lightener of our toils.
Away from Hagesíchora on pathways of peace 90
we plant our maidenly steps in sublime release.

Str. 10

For in a [chariot every horse]
 will let the trace-horse lead;
 and a ship's helmsman sets the course
 which all the sailors heed.
 When Sirens sing, we give way then –
 they're goddesses of heaven,
 and sing in perfect steps of ten;
 we stumble at eleven.^o

100

The melody is lovely as a swan's
 paddling the Xanthus, and the yellow hair^o

3^o*The Second Partheneion**Str. 1*

Olympian singers, [now descend!
 The longing for a ne]w song [brims
 inside] my heart. I w[ant] to hear
 the [maide]n voices [send

5

into the lof]ty air their lovely hymns . . .

7

will clear my eyes of sleep and bend

my footsteps to the gathering [where

9

I'll join the dance] and toss my yellow hair . . .^o

Str. 6

while longing makes their knees go weak.

62

More than in sleep or death they melt
 for her. Her sweetness doesn't go unfelt.^o

Str. 7

Astymeloisa makes no reply
 to me as she bears the anadem
 of flowers – like a shooting star^o
 that sparks in the vivid sky,

68

or like soft feathers, or a gold-green stem . . .

70

her elegant feet passed by.

The dewy Cypriot attars shed
 their fragrant blessings on her [lovely] head.

[So A]stymeloisa [marches] through
the crowd, the people's favorite,
and takes [my heart along with her.]

Str. 8

And I say [this to you:] . . .

76

May [the gods] show me favor, too,
and bring her close, lay my soft hand

79

in hers, and let [me serve at her co]mmand.

I4

Come, Muse, whose hymns and high notes ring,
unquenchable singer, strike
up a new strain for the maidens to sing.

I6°

He wasn't any backward yokel
or cretin ignorant what art is,
no shepherd son of Thessaly
or rude Erysichean local –°
no, no, he came from lofty Sardis.

I7

Someday I'll give you a tripod pot, where you
can store your grain. It's a big pot
as yet untouched by fire, but soon to brim
with fava mash – which Alcman, who°
eats anything and everything, likes hot
after the solstice. Not for him
the froufrou canapés; no, he seeks out
the common fare the people eat.

26°

No more, you honey-voiced maidens whose songs have a
 holy power,
 can my frame bear my weight. I wish, I wish that I were
 a kingfisher aloft with you halcyons over the sea-foam in flower,
 an ocean-colored holy bird, light-hearted, sure.

39

his music and his lyrics
 Alcman devised by listening
 to the clattering tongue of the partridge sing°

40

and I know the airs of every
 bird

41

On one side, steel; and on the other,
 the lovely lyre-playing.

46

The Muses, dressed in their saffron best,
 to Zeus's son, whose arrows stun°
 from far away, had this to say:

56

High on the mountains, when the gods enjoy
 their torchlight-thronged festivities,
 you'd take that golden barrel of a cup,°

the sort that shepherd swains employ,
 and with your own hands fill it up
 with lion's milk, to clabber for Argus's killer a great firm cheese.^o

58

Not Cypris, that
 is her childish brat,
 Love, at his pranks,
 maniacal
 as he flits and skips
 on the blooming tips –
 no touching, thanks! –
 of the galingale.

59a+b^o

Again, Love, doing Aphrodite's bidding, 59a
 invades my heart and heats it with his sweetness.

This gift of the charming Muses was unveiled 59b
 by that happiest of girls –
 Megalostrata, with the golden curls.

82

The young ladies scattered, their jobs half done,
 like birds when a hawk swoops in front of the sun.

89^o

Asleep are all the mountain peaks and the crevasses,
 the headlands and high torrents,
 and all the tribes of earth-fed creeping things,
 the beasts that haunt the hills, and the bee-races,
 and the monsters deep in the sea's dark currents;
 and asleep are the clans of the birds with their long wings.

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Sappho

Such details as are known of Sappho's life are distressingly sparse. One of the canonical Nine Lyric Poets, and commonly referred to as the 'Tenth Muse', she was probably born in Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, probably around 630 BCE, and probably knew Alcaeus (pp. 55–67) and the elected tyrant (*aisymnetes*) Pittacus. She had a mother and a daughter both named Cleis, and her brothers were Charaxus (see fragment 5, p. 41), Larichus and Eurygyus (or Erigyus). She seems to have gone into exile in Sicily around 600, though, unlike those of her countryman Alcaeus, her political activities and affiliations are obscure. We know next to nothing about pre-existing traditions of Aeolic song (was Sappho a traditionalist? an innovator?) or about the social framework in which she composed and performed, and which allowed her to become famous: for instance, were there female companies or associations (*hetaireiai*) on Lesbos, in parallel to the male ones? In other words, what we know of both her life and work is made up almost entirely of gaps.

Any reading of Sappho must engage imaginatively with those gaps – especially with the interrelated unknowns of how the poems were composed, performed and passed down. In doing so, all readers, and eras, inevitably invent their own Sappho, rewriting her tattered manuscript like a palimpsest. There is the Sappho depicted on the comic stage of Athens in the fourth century BCE: a voracious heterosexual, wife of 'Dick Allcock from the Isle of Man' (Cercylas of Andros), who, rejected by the beautiful Phaon, commits suicide with a leap into the sea. This Sappho is taken up by Ovid (or an imitator of Ovid) in an epistle which contributed much to the seventeenth-century view of Sappho as a victim of her own desire. In that century, she seemed a primitive voice, an exponent of softness and grace, in contrast to the sophistications of her 'literary husband' Anacreon (pp. 100–108) and the public grandiloquence of Pindar (pp. 134–64). For the Romantics, 'burning Sappho' was lionized for her subjectivity, and her suffering – her emotionalism,

distasteful to the eighteenth century, became in the nineteenth the mark of genius. Later, the Decadent poet Swinburne followed Charles Baudelaire and the Marquis de Sade in embracing her lesbianism – or Sapphism – for them indistinguishable from a light sadomasochism (as in Swinburne's 'Anactoria': 'I feel thy blood against my blood: my pain / Pains thee . . .') or, at any rate, a transgressive and passionate sexuality. In the twentieth century, we had – and still have today – Sappho the schoolteacher; Sappho the priestess; Sappho the proto-Imagiste, admired by Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle (H.D.); Sappho the liberated woman; Sappho the queer icon; and that Sappho whom we read as much with yearning for what isn't there as with pleasure in what is – the Sappho whom the accidents of history have turned into a metaphor for her chief subject, loss.

I°

O deathless Aphrodite, enthroned in glamor,°
 wile-weaver, Zeus's daughter, take my part,
 I pray, and do not yoke, with pain and fever,
 Lady, my heart,

but come here now, if you ever heard my voice
 with a heedful ear when I called to you on high,
 and, going from your father's golden house,
 came down the sky

charioted out of heaven in a hurry
 through mid-air by a team of lovely sparrows,° 10
 their wingbeats whirring in a crowded flurry
 over the furrows,

and there they were, and you – as a smile played
 on your immortal lips, o Blessed One,
 you asked what was the matter now, what made
 me call *again*,

what was the main thing that my maniac
heart hoped would happen. ‘Sappho, what love or lust
must I persuade this time to take you back?

20 *Now* who’s unjust?

For if she’s running now, she will soon pursue;°
if she says no to gifts, she’ll give them soon;
and if she feels no love, and refuses to,
she’ll change her tune.’

Appear to me now again. Release me from
desire’s stranglehold. Fulfill, provide
all that my heart has hoped for. Goddess, come
fight at my side.

2°

Come to this holy place from your Cretan home°
and join me here, where the orchard trees are dense
with the charm of apples, and the altars fume
with frankincense.

Here, through the apple boughs, the lapse of water
sounds icy-clear, and here, rose-shadow fills
the grass, as through the leaf-light and leaf-flutter
a trance distills.

10 And here are meadows where the buds of spring
 exuberantly bloom, where horses graze,
11 and, honey-sweet, the wind goes whispering . . .

13 Come hither, Cypris; nectar is in the bowl.
 Mix it well with feasting and good will;
 from your gold cups fill ours, pouring with all
 your grace and skill.°

5°

For my sake, Lady Nereids, please grant
 my brother his return with life and limb
 intact – and anything his heart may want,
 give it to him.

Let him atone for all the wrong he's done,
 and be a joy to friends, a misery
 to foes, and may he never be again
 a nobody,

but take a bit more heed of his sister's honor
 in his decisions, and [provide relief,]
 for hearts [his] suffering has [caused to suffer,]
 from all our grief

10

[at Doricha's in]fluence. Gossip in town
 could quickly have become a real blood-letter,
 and caused a scandal if ever there was one.
 But he [learned better]

before too long – and what could be [better] than
 for him to learn [the value of] reputation?
 But you, exalted Cypris

15

And, Cypris, about Doricha: don't let°
 her find you so compliant now as then,
 or gloat about how longingly he sought
 her arms *again*.

16°

Some say that horsemen, some a host on foot
 is loveliest of all that the dark lands boast,
 and some say warships; but I say it's what
 you love the most.

How effortless to make this perfectly
 clear to you all, since the incomparable
 Helen, that beauty more than human – *she*
 forsook her noble,

her royal husband and sailed for Troy, with all
 10 concern for her dear parents and dear child
 forgotten – [despite her woman's self-control,]
 12 misled, beguiled . . .

15 And now I'm thinking of Anactoria,
 who isn't here:

thinking of how I'd rather see her sway,
 her dancer's walk and sparkle, her face beaming,
 than all of Lydia's chariots and array
 20 of soldiers gleaming.

17°

Queen Hera, on this ground [the chorus rings,]
 let your grace [waft and fan] our festival
 which Atreus' sons founded, mighty kings°
 who did your will

when they, their epic tribulations over –
 both those that they endured at Ilium
 and when they landed here – could not discover
 the sea-route home

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until they turned to you and Thyone's son,^o
 the thirsted-for, and to the guest god, Zeus.
 And now we [too do what] of old was done
 in holiness

10

and b[eauty, as our g]irls and women [draw
 near to your altar in a great pro]cession,
 and lift in measure, [gladly and with awe,
 the u]lulation.

22^o

Now take your lyre and sing
 of Gongyla, Abanthis, I command you,^o
 until the same Desire on the wing
 flutters around you,

you lovely girl. For she was flustered when
 she saw your flowing dress. It makes me happy.
 Her Holiness herself, the Cyprian,
 was angry at me

once when I prayed

23^o

Each time I look into your eyes reveals
 beauty to match Hermione's, I swear;^o
 even comparing you to Helen feels
 perfectly fair.

26

What can a woman do, if you don't love [her,
 Cypris, slave driver, but be ill with craving?
 [When all] she wants to do is hi[de] her fever,
 [but you] keep driving?

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Idly [you churn] the billows; you split me open
 [with lo]nging that, [alas], makes my knees [slack;
 the sto]rm will swa[mp the stays], but it wouldn't happen
 [if you'd hold back]°

27

But you too, even you, at one time [were]
 a girl [who lov]ed to sing. Ponder the whole
 affair inside you, and then grant us your
 blessing in full,

since, [as you see,] we're going to a wedding.
 So come on, turn the girls loose right away
 and let us go, and may the gods see [no]thing
 [ugly] today.

30°

and all night let
 the maidens hymn your love and your lady's, gowned
 in violet.

Go, call your bachelor friends whose age is right.
 Don't even dream of dozing off; keep up!
 Think of the clear-voiced nightingale – tonight
 we get *less* sleep.

31°

He seems like the gods' equal, that man, who-
 ever he is, who takes his seat so close
 across from you, and listens raptly to
 your lilting voice

and lovely laughter, which, as it wafts by,^o
 sets the heart in my ribcage fluttering;
 as soon as I glance at you a moment, I
 can't say a thing,

and my tongue stiffens into silence, thin
 flames underneath my skin prickle and spark, 10
 a rush of blood booms in my ears, and then
 my eyes go dark,

and sweat pours coldly over me, and all
 my body shakes, suddenly sallow
 than summer grass, and death, I fear and feel,
 is very near.

But I must feel it all, since even a poor^o

34^o

The stars that in their glimmering orbits hover
 around the gorgeous Moon go dim and hide
 whenever she is full and beaming over
 the countryside.

41

and toward you who are lovely my regard
 will never alter

44^o

'Hector and company are heading here now
 from sacred Thebe and Placia's streams,^o
 on board with playful-eyed pretty Andromache,
 sailing her dowry across the salt sea:
 there's gold in abundance, bracelets and bangles,
 with royal robes, beautiful baubles,

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- and countless cups of silver, and ivories.⁷
 So the herald spoke. Spryly, Hector's
 beloved father leapt to his feet,
 10 and through the wide city word went to friends.
 The Trojans tied mules to the traces
 of carriage-cars that glide in comfort,
 and matrons and maidens flocked to the feast.
 Priam's daughters paraded apart;
 young heroes yoked horses to chariots . . .⁸
- They entered Ilium together, like gods.
 The sweetness of pipes and lyre-sounds swirled.
 Castanets kept time. Holy and clear,
 the maidens' hymn, more than human,
 20 struck the skies. In every street,
 cups and pitchers poured, and cassia
 mingled its fragrance with myrrh and frankincense.
 Elderly women whooped and warbled,⁹
 and all the fellows in fine falsetto
 called, *Paean! Paean!* *Lyre-Player,*⁹
awesome Archer! So godlike Andromache
 and Hector were hailed in their wedding hymn.

47

Love hit my heart
 like a gust that shakes oaks high on the rocks.

48

You came, when I was wild with wanting;
 you cooled my heart which craving made hot.

49⁰

Atthis, I loved you long ago;
 you seemed like a little graceless girl.

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53

You with the arms of roses, Zeus's daughters, come here, holy Graces

54

and out of heaven, Love came down and had a purple mantle on

55°

You'll lie low when you're dead, and be forgotten by posterity.
No one will think of you with love, who never plucked the roses of
Pieria; in Hades' hall, you'll be, as here, invisible,^o
and flit about, where none can mark, among the shadows in the dark.

56

Of girls who gaze upon the sun, I can't imagine even one
will come in future to possess a comparable artfulness.

58a°

Dear girls, [I'm still possessed] of the lovely gifts [of the Muses,
violet-dressed;
[I'm still in love with song] and the lyre's voice that rings as it sings
along.

But now this flesh and body, [once so supple,] old age has already
[got in its clutches,] and my head [is white] where all the black has
fled.

My heart, heavy with freight, beats slow; my knees buckle beneath
my weight –
knees which were as springy once as a small fawn's, and as quick to
dance.

And so I groan, and groan anew. But what else can a
body do?

No one made from a mortal mold can go on living and not
get old.

Even rosy-forearmed Dawn, they say, once spirited away
10 Tithonus to the farthest-flung brink of the world when he
was young

and lovely, and love [stung her.] Even so, he couldn't help
but grow
old and gray in the gray years' clutch and blur. But time
could not touch her.

58b

But *I*'m in love with the soft and sensuous. This [is my fire], and this
passion of mine has given its beauty to the sun, its sheen to heaven.

81

Now, Dica, with soft hands cull some anise strands,
plait the blooms and stalks and wreathe your lovely locks.
The Graces in bliss prefer a garlanded blossomer,
but turn their backs and neither love nor bless the
blossomless.

94°

I honestly wish that I were dead.
As she was leaving me, she stood and said,

letting a flood of crying fall,
'Oh, Sappho, it's been terrible
for us. I'm leaving you against my will.'

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I said to her in answer, 'Go.
Go and farewell, and as you do,
remember me, how I – we – cared for you.

But if you can't remember, let me
remind you . . . 10
and we *have* been happy: 11

think how, while I stood by your side,
you'd gather roses for your head,
or crocus, or violets, and go garlanded;

think of the necklaces you'd hang
around your neck in a woven string,
trimming the supple skin with blossoming;

remember, on your limbs and hair –
nothing could be queenlier –
the spicy lavishness of floral myrrh, 20

and the soft bed where you would sate
your craving for the delicate . . .'

95

Gongyla . . .°
some sign, surely . . .
and [Hermes] came . . .°

I said, 'My Lord . . .
By the great goddess, there's no more
happiness left for me in an earthly morning.

The longing's on me now to die, to go
witness Acheron in its flowing
through dewy banks where lotus flowers grow.'

more suitable: a simple braid
 of flowers blooming on her head.
 Just recently, an intricately made 10

headband from Sardis . . .

Cleis, I have no way to get 98b
 ahold of an elaborate
 headband for you

102

I can't do this weaving, sweet mother, since in truth
 Cypris is besieging me with love of a youth.

104°

O evening star, you bring home everything
 the brilliant Dawn disperses as she warms;
 you bring back sheep, and bring goats back, and bring
 children back home into their mother's arms.

105a°

An apple on a bough hangs redly, sweetly,
 high on the highest limb, against the sky.
 The pickers leave it be, but don't completely
 leave it – they reached for it; it was too high.

105c°

a hyacinth, which shepherds in the mountains
 trample, and the petals purple the ground

110a°

The doorman's feet stretch seven fathoms;
 five oxen died to make his sandals;
 ten cobblers cobbled them together,
 and it was hard work, too.

111°

Carpenters, raise the roof up! There is –
 Sing *Hymen, Hymen!* –°
 no room, no room.
 The groom is coming, big as Ares –
 Sing *Hymen, Hymen!* –
 he's big, this groom.

112°

O husband, blessed now the request made in your prayers
 is granted –
 the wedding's done; she's yours! You won the hand of the girl you
 wanted.
 O bride, he'll prize your honeyed eyes, your body's pride and grace,
 while Love's mystique flushes each cheek and streams from your
 beaming face,
 for Aphrodite has made you mighty

114°

Where, o where, Virginitude, where have you gone, deserting me?
I shall not come to you again; I shall not come again.

115°

Bridegroom, how do you seem to me?
 Just like a slender sapling tree.