



ORAL TRADITION

Festschrift for John Miles Foley

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

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Oral Tradition and Sappho

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Over the last several decades there has developed among scholars an increasing willingness to examine the many possibilities that existed for the oral performance of non-epic poetry in the song culture of the early Greek world.¹ However, perhaps because archaic lyric and elegiac poets are often considered to have been individual artisans displaying unique brands of creativity, philosophy, and emotion,² there has been an unfortunate reluctance by scholars to delve beyond the ancient performance arena itself and consider how other aspects of the poetic process are themselves indebted to oral traditional practices. In a recent monograph, I attempted to redress part of this scholarly imbalance by demonstrating that much of archaic Greek elegy should be viewed in light of the oral-formulaic techniques that lay at its compositional core (Garner 2011). In this essay I would like to build on those earlier arguments in order to raise the possibility that Sappho's stanzaic poetry also might be understood as oral, traditional, and even formulaic.

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

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

¹ See, for example, Nagy 1990a, 1990b; Gentili 1988; for Sappho in particular and her awareness of positioning herself within this performance-based society, see Lardinois 2008 and the bibliography therein. On the dominant early Greek cultural mindset being steeped in orality more generally, see Havelock 1963, 1982; Thomas 1989.

² Sappho in particular is especially often put forward as the epitome of this Greek poetic individuality. Thus, for instance, Bowra once stated that "Sappho seems to have been sure of herself and her art" (1961:246) and Svenbro claimed that Sappho is more specifically "is the poem of an individual" (1975:49). Such issues are also at the heart of more recent debates concerning Sappho's position within or against masculine norms of behavior; see, for example, Skinner 1993, 2002; Greene 2002; Winkler 2002.

points to the same thing for Sappho and Alcaeus. Yet while we may feel some doubt as to the way in which they made their verses, there is not the least doubt that their poetic language was drawn from an oral tradition: only in an oral poetry does one ever find such a variety of forms that have each one its own metrical value.

For Parry it was this last distinctive characteristic of coexisting metrical by-forms and the corresponding thrift with which they were employed that constituted firm evidence that a given poet was working within a formulaic oral tradition.³ But since the output of poets such as Sappho and Alcaeus was not preserved in large enough quantities for such analysis to be conclusive in the same way that it was for Homer, Parry made no further effort to detail any possible relationship between the Lesbian poets and oral-formulaic compositional techniques, and in fact only a handful of other scholars since Parry's time have pursued the issue in any depth, either in relation to Sappho specifically or with respect to early Greek lyric more broadly.⁴ Instead, the few recent attempts to analyze the relationship between lyric and oral traditional poetic techniques have tended either to proceed in the quite problematic direction of exploring intertextual parallels between lyric and epic⁵ or to limit their analysis to diachronic issues of metrical development.⁶ The result, then, has been that some scholars have dismissed altogether the oral traditional nature of such poetry while others have accepted the idea of a predominantly oral context for performance and transmission of the poems but have done so without taking the additional step of considering the specific expressive means by which these poems achieved their desired effects within such traditional arenas.⁷

³ See especially Parry 1930 and 1932.

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

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

⁶ See, for example, West 1973, Nagy 1974 (with further theoretical refinements found in Nagy 1979, 1990b:439-64, 1996, and 1998), Haslam 1976, Berg 1978, and Bowie 1981.

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

Sappho and Oral Performance

Before we look into the specifics of traditional compositional techniques used by Sappho, what can we first say with certainty concerning the original performance arena for her poems? We know from both internal and external testimonia, for instance, that the usual means for presenting lyric poetry to an audience in archaic Greece involved active performance, with performance modes varying from monodic to choral and with instrumental accompaniment (or the lack thereof) further helping to define the performance arena.⁸ For Sappho in particular this connection between music and poetic production is made even stronger by the depictions of the poet within archaic and classical vase painting, where musical instruments and singing play prominent roles, even when Sappho is pictured as reading the poetry from a book while sitting.⁹ Positioning Sappho's works within a more specific performance frame, though, is a much more difficult task. On one end of the spectrum, it has been argued that the majority of Sappho's poems must have been private monodic poems for limited audiences within an intimate *thiasos* and that much of the significance of the poems is thus hidden from anyone outside that original religious group; however, it has also been put forward that Sappho's poems, however intimate they may seem, were actually the remains of great choral activity on the island of Lesbos and that their content should be viewed primarily with this larger audience in mind.¹⁰ Unfortunately scant evidence remains as a basis for such speculation, and in all likelihood many of Sappho's songs were probably performed and re-performed in a variety of different contexts such as weddings and funerals where the line between private and public would have already been blurred for the audiences involved. However, even if we imagine these poems as being performed for the most intimate of audiences, it is quite clear—as André Lardinois (2008) has observed—that Sappho herself imagined her own fame and that of her subjects as carrying on through the memory of her poetry's actual performances rather than through its textualized transmission.¹¹

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

⁸ See further Bowra 1961:3-4, Campbell 1964, Herrington 1985:192-200, Gentili 1988:24-49, Nagy 1990b: 19-20, Gerber 1997 (espec. pp. 96-97), Garner 2011:4-6.

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

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

¹¹ See especially fragments 16 and 94.

- (1) Sappho's poems were originally performed and transmitted orally (whether or not previous written composition was involved) before being fixed in written form at a much later point.
- (2) Sappho's poems were originally performed orally and were written down quickly afterward by Sappho herself or another individual present as either a performer or an audience member.
- (3) Sappho's poems were originally composed as written works and were always transmitted as such.

Scenario 1 is closest to the view held by scholars such as Nagy (1990b) and Gentili (1988:19) who view the fossilizing of lyric poetry in written form as a product of cultural change that occurred only later in the Greek world, with few readers of poetry existing in large numbers before the fifth century.¹² Under such circumstances, the transition of works into written form would be rather separate from the original processes of poetic composition and performance; accordingly, poets such as Sappho would rarely have been composing with the idea of written dissemination of their works as a primary goal. Instead, the impetus for such textualization would have been likely to arrive from an external source, perhaps in Sappho's case as the result of prominent families on Lesbos wishing to create poetic texts as possessions that heightened their status by strengthening their connections to the poet.¹³

On the other hand, Scenarios 2 and 3 imagine Sappho herself as the motivating force behind our texts, with the qualitative difference between the two scenarios being only whether the written words were initially the scripts or the revisions of the original performances.¹⁴ The pre-existence of written texts might seem especially likely if we view Sappho's output as primarily choral, since textualized versions might act as aids for teaching complex pieces to a company for singing and dancing in a group performance, but comparative evidence has shown that even choral output regularly occurs without reliance on writing.¹⁵ One might also point to the lack of internal and external references linking written composition with Sapphic poetry as evidence that standardized written texts came only later, but such evidence is regularly lacking for the entirety of the early Greek poetic corpus and could simply be coincidental or the byproduct of lyric poems being primarily situated in the oral performance arena. In any case, it is

¹² Cf. Ford 2003.

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

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

¹⁵ Cf., for example, Gentili's discussion (1988:20-21) of a non-written choral tradition in the Gilbert Islands. Similarly, many of the traditional songs underlying the Finnish *Kalevala* circulated orally through group performance long before (and also after) they were collected and standardized by Lönnrot in the nineteenth century.

now impossible to determine at exactly what point writing entered into the composition or transmission of Sappho's poetry, and the very fact that her output has survived to us through such a variety of sources—including literary quotations, inscriptions, and scattered papyri—indicates that the circumstances of textualization may have varied quite a lot from one poem to the next.

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

Traditional Structuring Techniques in Lesbian Stanzaic Poetry

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

¹⁶ Foley has previously explained that tradition and individual talent act as complementary and not oppositional forces (1999:xii): “tradition provides the language, but it is the speaker who breaks the silence, whether eloquently or otherwise. Remove the language and all connection to the traditional context is lost, but remove the performing poet and the silence resumes. As with any medium, while an artistic heritage is always theoretically in the public domain, artistic brilliance is the achievement of relatively few. The tradition and the poet both matter.”

As it turns out, Lesbian stanzaic poetry also exhibits regularized structuring principles for its phraseology, though the organizational patterns differ somewhat from those found in early Greek epic and elegy.²⁰ On the island of Lesbos, rather than lines comprising four separate phraseological parts, it is tripartite structures that dominate the various poetic forms. There are of course some Aeolic meters that do not seem to be organized in three parts,²¹ and in some cases the evidence is too fragmentary to determine any underlying structural tendencies, but in general the three-part division is the one that dominates the poetic landscape. For instance, if Plutarch's quotation of the "Miller's Song" from Eresus is considered authentic (*Septem sapientium convivium* 14),²²

ἄλει, μύλα, ἄλει·
καὶ γὰρ Πιττακὸς ἄλει
μεγάλας Μυτιλάνας βασιλεύων.

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

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

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

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

δέδυκε μὲν ἄ σελάννα
καὶ Πληρίαδες· μέσαι δὲ
νύκτες, παρὰ δ' ἔρχετ' ὦρα·
ἐγὼ δὲ μόνα καθεύδω.

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

²² See Campbell 1967 (*Carm. pop.* 869).

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

²⁴ As will become clear in the analyses that follow, I do not avoid considering the possibility that single words can act as integers of traditional phraseology, though I often omit them as evidence for actual formula employment since less controversial examples can be used instead. Such worries, though, are mitigated when such isolated words appear to fill out entire cola on a recurring basis in one or more types of early Greek verse. Additionally, as Foley has shown (1990:44-50), comparative evidence suggests that traditional oral poets most often do not themselves recognize the distinction between individual lexemes and longer phraseological units that work together as a single traditional "word," and thus there seems to be little reason to deny their importance in relation to the verse-structuring techniques used on Lesbos.

criticized is the distinction of *καὶ γὰρ* as a self-contained unit. However, such employment is quite common in Homer where the phrase appears 28 times as the introductory colon in the hexameter. Thus, even in a most basic form, Lesbian poetry has the ability to arrange itself in what our evidence is displaying as a quite pervasive traditional structure for early Greek non-epic poetry in general.

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

Alcaeus 72.7-10: κῆνος δὲ τούτων οὐκ ἐπελάθετο
ῶνηρ ἐπεὶ δὴ πρότον ὀνέτροπε,
παίσαις γὰρ ὀννώρινε νύκτας,
τῷ δὲ πίθῳ πατάγεσκ' ὀ πύθμην.

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

Alcaeus 129.1-12: . . . τόδε Λέσβιοι
] . . . εὐδελιον τέμενος μέγα
ξῦνον κά[τε]σσαν ἐν δὲ βώμοις
ἀθανάτων μακάρων ἔθηκαν

κάπωνύμασσαν ἀντίαον Δία
σὲ δ' Αἰολίαν [κ]λυδαλίμαν θεόν
πάντων γενέθλαν, τὸν δὲ τέρον
τόνδε κελίμιον ὠνύμασ[α]ν

Ζόννυσσον ὠμήσταν. ἄ[γι]τ' εὐνοον
θύμον σκέθοντες ἀμμετέρα[ς] ἄρας
ἀκούσατ', ἐκ δὲ τῶν [δ]ε μόχθων
ἀγαλέας τε φύγας. . . .

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

²⁵ Except where indicated, citations and quotations from Alcaeus and Sappho refer to Lobel and Page 1955. Translations—also except where noted—are taken from Campbell 1982.

raw flesh. Come, with gracious spirit hear our prayer, and rescue us from these hardships and from grievous exile. . . .)

Alcaeus 6.1-3:

τόδ' αὖτε κύμα τὸ προτέρω †νέμω†
στείχει.] παρέξει δ' ἄμμι πόνον πόλυν
ἄντλην ἐπεί κε νᾶος ἔμβαι . . .

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

The above divisions are based first on major syntactic divisions and a practice of keeping together inseparable prepositive and postpositive elements, and in those cases where juncture points are still uncertain, my methodology has been whenever possible to compare the Alcaic phraseology with similar recurring elements that fill out entire cola in other archaic Greek meters or to make divisions on the basis of syntactic parallels if the phrase (or sometimes the individual word) is not found elsewhere as a unit.²⁶ Though the results may seem a bit subjective, it is worth noting that every Alcaic stanza that has survived to us from archaic Lesbos can be divided in this tripartite fashion.

Finally, the structuring of the Sapphic stanza is slightly more complex. The first two lines of each stanza consistently divide into three portions just as do their Alcaic counterparts, but the third and fourth lines—in actuality a single line as far as metrical analysis is concerned²⁷—together comprise four semantic units. Again, the following examples (which I present with the third and fourth lines combined but with their conventional line numbering) are representative:

Sappho 1.9-16:

ἄρμ' ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
ὄκεες στρουθοὶ περὶ γὰς μελαίνας
πύκνα δίνεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνω ἴθερος διὰ μέσσω·²⁸

αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
μειδίασασ' ἀθανάτῳ προσώπῳ
ἦρε' ὅτι δηῦτε πέπονθα κῶττι δηῦτε κάλημμι

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

²⁷ Cf. West 1982:32.

²⁸ Though Lobel and Page print ὠράνωἴθερος as a single word, I have inserted the space between the lexemes to present more clearly the phraseological juncture that occurs at that point.

(with chariot yoked: beautiful swift sparrows whirring fast-beating wings brought you above the dark earth down from heaven through the mid-air, and soon they arrived; and you, blessed one, with a smile on your immortal face asked what was the matter with me this time and why I was calling this time. . . .)

Sappho 1.21-28:

καὶ γὰρ αἱ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
αἱ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει,
αἱ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει κωὺν ἐθέλοισα.

ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λύσον
ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
θῦμος ἰμέροει, τέλεσον, σὺ δ' αὐτὰ σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

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

Sappho 16.1-4:

οἱ μὲν ἰππῶν στρότον οἱ δὲ πέσδων
οἱ δὲ νάων φαῖσ' ἐπ[ι] γᾶν μέλαι[ν]αν
ἔμμεναι κάλλιστον, ἔγω δὲ κῆν' ὅττω τις ἔραται.

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

Sappho 31.1-4:

φαίνεται μοι κήνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν
ἔμμεν' ὄνηο, ὅττις ἐνάντιός τοι
ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδου φωνείσας ὑπακούει

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

Sapphic stanzas, however, provide one final feature that needs explaining. Though the majority of the stanzas have final lines whose component parts are arranged in the customary paratactic fashion, a few stanzas actually demonstrate a type of expansion in which one semantic unit is

split into two parts that surround a different internal phraseological element. This phenomenon appears three times, for instance, within Sappho 1:²⁹

Sappho 1.1-8: ποικιλόθρον' ἀθανάτ' Αφροδίτα,
παί Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα, πότνια, θυμόν,
'-----'

ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθ', αἶ ποτα κατέρωτα
τὰς ἔμας αὔδας αἰόισα πήλοι
ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα χρούσιον ἦλθες
'-----'

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

Sappho 1.17-20: κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μαινόλαι θυμῶι· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
.|σάγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ Ψάπφ', ἀδικήει;
'-----'

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

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

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

³⁰ Campbell's translation is based on the emendation ἄψ σ' ἄγην ἐς φὰν. . . .

³¹ Cf. Hainsworth 1968:74-109 where Ch. 6 is devoted to the expansion of Homeric formulas in general and Ch. 7 discusses particular formulas with elements separated by variable units.

flexibility metrically than did the hexameter or elegiac couplet, where alternations between dactyls and spondees are commonplace. In fact, because of the few metrical variations allowed within the Sapphic stanza, the number of different possible metrical types for its colon-length phrases (34) is quite comparable to that found in the Homeric hexameter (26), and the number actually employed within the Sapphic corpus is limited even further with only 24 attested variations. The structuring of phraseology within Lesbian stanzaic poetry, then, seems to be leading us further down the path of viewing Sappho's work as being even more steeped in traditional processes than it might first appear.

Traditional Phraseology in Sappho

But even if the stanzaic verse forms employed by Sappho had the capacity to make use of traditional phraseology, do we have any evidence that she indeed used such phrases in oral traditional—or even formulaic—ways? As we have already seen, even though Lesbian stanzaic poetry does exhibit several metrical by-forms, not enough poetry of this type remains to demonstrate any possible thrift that would be in line with the oral-formulaic practices apparent in other early Greek poetic genres. Additionally, we might look for similarities between the stanza-ending internal expansion techniques in Sappho and the traditional practice of tmesis in the Homeric hexameter,³² but this approach also ultimately leaves our main question unanswered. We might, however, attempt to locate any formulaic usage in Sappho through the regularity with which traditional colon-length phrases are placed within her stanzas. As O'Neill (1942) showed long ago for the early Greek hexameter, poets using oral-formulaic techniques tend to employ systematic—though not completely universal—placement of phraseology at specific positions within the verse.³³ Again, not enough Lesbian poetry remains for us to determine whether Sappho was regularly consistent herself in the localization of formulas. But we can, on the other hand, check to see whether there are similarities between the metrical placements of formulas shared by Sappho and early Greek epic, with any correspondences between the two poetries not only adding to our evidence that Sappho was employing oral-formulaic verse-making techniques but also indicating that she was doing so through a lyric tradition that was interacting with—and not just parallel to—its epic counterpart.

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

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

³³ The origin of such localization practices in Homer is a murky matter at best and is wrapped up in complex questions of metrical and linguistic development from Indo-European practice onward. (See the references provided in note 6 as well as in Russo 1997:espec. note 8.) Specifically, default Greek (and possibly Indo-European) syntactic patterns themselves may have acted as a possible systematizing influence on Greek verse so that its localization tendencies are more apparent than a random distribution might suggest (cf. Peabody 1975:30-167 on Hesiod), but rather than separate poetic processes from everyday linguistic realities, we would instead do well to recall Foley's formulation that “oral tradition works like language, only more so” (1999:6).

to analyze phraseology occurring within a given verse form and are therefore difficult to apply beyond that single meter.³⁴ For that reason, I have previously proposed a different type of formula—the lexical formula—that allows for comparison among various metrical forms. As I defined it in a previous study aimed at comparing Greek epic and elegiac forms (2011:21), a lexical formula is “a group of two or more lexemes that appear together regularly in order to fill out completely a traditionally defined colon or cola either by themselves or in conjunction with prepositive or postpositive words.”³⁵ Any set of phraseology found to meet this definition will consist of only the most systematic and mechanical elements that could be determined to be shared by different poetries, but even though it will be inadequate for demonstrating the full flexibility of a traditional system at work, it can at least provide a glimpse of just how regularized Sappho’s traditional diction is.

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

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

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

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

³⁴ See further Garner 2011:19-21.

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

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

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

³⁸ The only exceptions are αἶψα δ’ ἐξίχοντο (Sappho 1.13) and δῶρα μὴ δέχεται’ (Sappho 1.22), but both of these cases involve internal expansion of one type or another from their Homeric parallels.

localization occurs consistently at the end of both tripartite³⁹ and four-part lines,⁴⁰ and it may even be a final element of a stanza that then undergoes internal expansion.⁴¹)

2) Phrases filling out two cola together in the hexameter appear in line-initial position within the Sapphic stanza.⁴²

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

Sappho 1

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

³⁹ For instance, *περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας* (Sappho 1.10) / *ἐπὶ γᾶν μέλαιναν* (Sappho 16.2) and *ἴσος θεόισιν* (Sappho 31.1).

⁴⁰ Examples are *καὺν ἐθέλοισα* (Sappho 1.24) and *οὺκ ἐδύναντο* (Sappho 17.8).

⁴¹ Sappho 1.3-4: *δάμνα . . . θῦμον*.

⁴² Appearing at Sappho 1.9 (*ἄρμ’ ὑπασδεύξαισα*) and Sappho 2.5 (*ἐν δ’ ὕδωρ ψύχρον*).

examination of the first (as well as longest and most complete) poem in the Sapphic corpus. Much of the poem has already appeared as evidence throughout this essay, but I provide it here in the full form which has come down to us (with the third and fourth lines again split apart):

ποικιλόθρον' ἀθανάτ' Αφροδίτα,
παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
πότνια, θῦμον,

ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθ', αἶ ποτα κατέρωτα 5
τὰς ἔμας αὔδας αἰόισα πῆλοι
ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα
χρῦσιον ἦλθες

ἄρμ' ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον 10
ὄκεες στρουῦθοι περὶ γὰς μελαίνας
πύκνα δίνεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνωϊθε-
ρος διὰ μέσσω·

αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
μειδιαίσαισ' ἀθανάτῳ προσώπῳ 15
ἦρε' ὅτι δηῦτε πέπονθα κῶττι
δηῦτε κάλημμι

κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μαινόλαι θύμῳ· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
.].σάγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ 20
Ψάπφ', ἀδικήει;

καὶ γὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
αἰ δὲ δώρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει,
αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
κωῦκ ἐθέλοισα.

ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον 25
ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
θύμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον, σὺ δ' αὐτά
σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

(Ornate-throned immortal Aphrodite, wile-weaving daughter of Zeus, I entreat you: do not overpower my heart, mistress, with ache and anguish, but come here, if ever in the past you heard my voice from afar and acquiesced and came, leaving your father's golden house, with chariot yoked: beautiful swift sparrows whirring fast-beating wings brought you above the dark earth

down from heaven through the mid-air, and soon they arrived; and you, blessed one, with a smile on your immortal face asked what was the matter with me this time and why I was calling this time and what in my maddened heart I most wished to happen for myself: ‘Whom am I to persuade this time to lead you back to her love? Who wrongs you, Sappho? If she runs away, soon she shall pursue; if she does not accept gifts, why, she shall give them instead; and if she does not love, soon she shall love even against her will.’ Come to me now again and deliver me from oppressive anxieties; fulfil all that my heart longs to fulfil, and you yourself be my fellow-fighter.)

Whether this poem was conceived as a personal prayer or as a hymnic effort has been debated in the same manner as the general performance contexts for Sappho’s poetry,⁴³ but ultimately the uncertainty here lies in the fact that both forms draw on the same traditional type-scene structure that is common not only in early Greek epic but also in lyric, with over twenty examples able to be drawn from archaic non-epic poetry.⁴⁴ That such structuring pervades lyric as well as epic provides yet another indication of traditional interaction between the different art forms, but it also allows us to observe important differences in the ways that varying genres were able to make use of the same traditional material and techniques. The first of these differences becomes apparent immediately: in a Homeric prayer, the type-scene is always introduced by the praying individual first making a prayer-related gesture—usually involving the raising of hands—and the poet also using specific verbs (for example, εὔχομαι or ἀράομαι) to indicate that a prayer is about to occur; in many cases there is also an indication as to which deity is about to be addressed.⁴⁵ In Sappho 1, the audience has none of this context to assist in interpreting the prayer. Instead, the original audiences would have been forced to draw upon the immediate performance context, their previous experiences with Sappho’s poetic tradition, and possibly their own acquaintance with Sappho’s particular compositions in order to interpret each new piece of information as it came forth in the poem. Whereas Greek epic tends to be determinative and direct the audience members’ interpretation through previous and subsequent narrative context, Greek lyric was by necessity a more privately participatory experience with poets having less ability or desire to steer audience members’ individualistic interpretations—interpretations that were not limited by traditional compositional techniques but enabled by them in the first place.

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

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

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

⁴⁵ For a full discussion of the traditional template for Homeric prayers, see Morrison 1991 (who draws heavily on the analysis of Arend 1933). For scholarship on Homeric prayer type-scenes more generally, see Edwards 1992:315.

helps set the tone for the entire poem but also since it is the one word from this poem that is most disputed in meaning. The traditional interpretation of the word has been “elaborate-throned,” a meaning supported by similar descriptions in Homer:⁴⁶

Od. 1.130-32: αὐτὴν δ' ἐς θρόνον εἶσεν ἄγων, ὑπὸ λίτα πετάσσας,
καλὸν δαιδάλεον· ὑπὸ δὲ θρήνυς ποσὶν ἦεν.
παρ δ' αὐτὸς κλισμὸν θέτο ποικίλον. . . .

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

Il. 18.389-90: τὴν μὲν ἔπειτα καθεῖσεν ἐπὶ θρόνου ἀργυροῦ ἴλου
καλοῦ δαιδαλέου. . . .

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

However, even though these two examples and others throughout the Homeric corpus describe situations in which goddesses are shown proper respect by being seated upon intricate chairs,⁴⁷ the phrases themselves are not exact parallels, and some scholars, such as Lawler (1948) and Burnett (1983:250-51), have posited a different meaning for ποικιλόθρονος, deriving the compound not from the noun θρόνος but from the word θρόνα (“flowers embroidered on cloth,” “herbs used as drugs and charms” [LSJ: s.v. θρόνον]) and thereby defining ποικιλόθρονος as something like “elaborately clad with love-charms.”⁴⁸ As with the other interpretation of “elaborate-throned,” this derived meaning would also be well-suited to Aphrodite’s character and is supported by a passage from the *Iliad* (22.440-41):⁴⁹

ἀλλ' ἦ γ' ἰστὸν ὕφαινε μυχῷ δόμου ὑψηλοῖο
δίπλακα πορφυρέην, ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ' ἔπασσε.

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

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

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

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

(But she was weaving a web in the inner recess of the high house, a bright double robe, and on it she sprinkled elaborately embroidered flowers.⁵⁰)

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

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

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

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

⁵³ Foley has well illustrated this type of “traditional referentiality” related to Homeric epithets in his discussion (1999:209-11) of Achilles being called “swift-footed” even in narrative contexts where the epithet is irrelevant or even contradictory to the ongoing action.

After further establishing a traditional prayer context through her employment of the conventional verb *λίσσομαι* (“entreat”), Sappho completes her first stanza by narrowing the focus even further by establishing that this particular prayer will concern the mitigation of love’s anguish. At this point, the poet then provides in rapid succession three separate markers that a tradition-aware audience would immediately have interpreted as indicators of this prayer’s eventual success. The first of these markers occurs on a more general level, as Sappho now embarks upon the depiction of a previous epiphany provided by Aphrodite, the mentioning of which helps to forge a link between petitioner and divinity. In Homeric prayers, there are thirteen similar narrations of previous interactions between petitioner and divinity, and in each case there is a successful outcome for the prayer.⁵⁴ In addition, within the transition from her general request for help to this former appearance of Aphrodite, Sappho includes two further forecasters of success by employing *αἴ ποτα* (line 5) and *ἔκλυες* (line 7). The phrase *αἴ ποτα* is a dialectal variant of *εἴ ποτε*, a phrase that I have elsewhere shown to have strong connections with successful prayer and supplication within the Homeric epics and Hymns.⁵⁵ Forms of *κλύω* also forecast success in Homeric prayers, as all 12 uses of the verb in prayers—similarly always occurring in a line-initial position—result in divine favors being granted.⁵⁶

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

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

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

⁵⁵ See Garner 1996. See also the related usage of *εἴ ποτε* at Callinus 2.

⁵⁶ The occurrences are at *Iliad* 1.37, 1.451, 5.115, 10.278, 16.514, 23.770; *Odyssey* 2.262, 3.55, 4.762, 5.445, 6.324, and 9.528.

different from the corresponding elements in Homer. Such predictive elements in lyric rely much more heavily than do their epic counterparts on the audience's awareness of traditional meaning in order to fill narrative gaps of indeterminacy,⁵⁷ since those gaps of interpretation must be filled not only within the poem itself but also beyond it. Therefore, when Sappho's poem reaches its end without Aphrodite's reaction being provided, audience members who draw from their knowledge of similar usages of these markers in previous traditional contexts will likely reach the conclusion that Sappho's prayer was successful. If, on the other hand, there is an individual who is unaware of such associations, the gap of indeterminacy widens and the task of interpretation becomes even greater.

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

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

⁵⁸ Svenbro 1975:39. Svenbro also mentions three parallels from outside the epiphany, though none are exact: πέπλον . . . ποικίλον (734-35) ~ ποικιλόθρον' (1); Ἀθηναίη κούρη Διὸς (733) ~ Ἀφρόδιτα, παῖ Διὸς (1-2); ἔς πόλεμον (737) ~ σύμμαχος (28).

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

⁶⁰ Cf. Rissman 1983:10.

⁶¹ Also, as has often been observed, the placement of χούσιον in line 8 is quite ambiguous since it could plausibly be a modifier of either δόμον or ἄρμα. However, the observation that χούσιον is in the first place likely an element purposely used by Sappho to expand a traditional phrase makes it more probable that any ambiguity was actually intended by Sappho, thereby creating a much more fluid transition in her removal of Aphrodite from Olympus to earth.

After yet another traditional referencing of Aphrodite in line 14 with *μειδιαίσαισ' ἄθανάτωι προσώπωι* (cf. h. Hymn 10.2-3: *ἔφ' ἰμερτῶ δὲ προσώπω / αἰεὶ μειδιάει*), Sappho goes on to report Aphrodite's earlier speech to her, moving quickly through indirect to direct speech. Here, the traditional nature of the actual vocabulary within the goddess's words is less readily apparent, as fewer parallels to phraseology in early Greek poetry can be found. However, not only does the phraseological structuring of the passage stay within traditional expectations, but here we also have several rhetorical features that are most easily explained as byproducts of an oral performance context for either this poem in particular or this type of poetry more generally. For instance, in recognizing the similarity between Aphrodite's words and incantation, Segal (1974:148) has made note of the triple recurrence of *δηῦτε* with its ritualistic effect of repetition, as well as several other traditional features of incantation located specifically in the direct speech of the goddess (149):

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

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

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

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

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

⁶³ See Page 1955:10-11.

14.195-96, 18.426-27): τελέσαι δέ με θυμὸς ἄνωγεν, / εἰ δύναιμι τελέσαι γε καὶ εἰ τετελεσμένον ἐστίν. Finally, we should observe that the placement of these two commands as well as that which ends the poem—σὺ δ' αὐτὰ σύμμαχος ἔσσο (27-28)—follow the traditional structuring of prayers both in Homer and in early Greek poetry in general, where the ultimate wish from the petitioner comes only after the reference (if one occurs) to past interaction between mortal and divinity.

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

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

(line positions for the hexameter according to Fränkel 1926)

- Sappho 1.5: ἀλλὰ τυιδ' ἔλθ', αἶ ποτα κατέρωτα
- Il.* 1.39: Σμυνθεῦ εἶ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ' ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα, [A3-B1]
- Il.* 1.340: καὶ πρὸς τοῦ βασιλῆος ἀπηνέος εἶ ποτε δ' αὐτε [C2-X]
- Il.* 1.394: ἐλθοῦσ' Οὐλύμπονδὲ Δία λίσαι, εἶ ποτε δὴ τι [C2-X]
- Il.* 1.503: Ζεῦ πάτερ εἶ ποτε δὴ σε μετ' ἀθανάτοισιν ὄνησα [A3-B2]
- Il.* 15.372: Ζεῦ πάτερ εἶ ποτέ τις τοι ἐν Ἄργεί περ πολυπύρῳ [A3-B2]
- Il.* 22.83: αὐτήν, εἶ ποτέ τοι λαθικηδέα μαζὸν ἐπέσχον· [A3-B1]
- Od.* 3.98 (= *Od.* 4.328): λίσσομαι, εἶ ποτέ τοί τι πατήρ ἐμός, ἐσθλὸς Ὀδυσσεύς, [A3-B2]
- h. Demeter* 64: Ἥέλι· αἶδεσσαί με θεὰν σύ περ, εἶ ποτε δὴ σευ [C2-X]
- Sappho 1.13: αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
- Il.* 18.532: βάντες ἀερσιπόδων μετεκίαθον, αἶψα δ' ἵκοντο. [C2-X]
- Od.* 19.458: ἔσχεθον, αἶψα δ' ἵκοντο φίλου πρὸς δῶματα πατρός. [A3-B2]
- Od.* 24.13: ἦϊσαν· αἶψα δ' ἵκοντο κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμώνα, [A3-B2]
- h. Apollo* 520: ἄκμητοι δὲ λόφον προσέβαν ποσίν, αἶψα δ' ἵκοντο [C2-X]

Sappho 1.11-12: πύκνα δίνεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνω ἴθερος διὰ μέσσω·
Theogony 414: ἡ δὲ καὶ ἀστερόεντος ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἔμμορε τιμῆς, [B2-C2]
Theogony 689: φαίνε βίην· ἄμυδις δ' ἄρ' ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἡδ' ἀπ' Ὀλύμπου [B2-C2]

Sappho 1.9: ἄρμ' ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
Il. 24.14: ἀλλ' ὃ γ' ἐπεὶ ξεύξειεν ὑφ' ἄρμασιν ὠκέας ἵππους, [A2-C2]
Od. 3.478: καρπαλίμως δ' ἔξευξαν ὑφ' ἄρμασιν ὠκέας ἵππους. [A4-C2]

Sappho 1.10: ὠκεες στρουῦθοι περὶ γὰς μελαίνας
Sappho 16.2: οἱ δὲ νάων φαῖσ' ἐπὶ γὰν μέλαιναν
Il. 2.699: ζῶδες ἐόν· τότε δ' ἤδη ἔχεν κάτα γαῖα μέλαινα. [C1-X]
Il. 15.715: ἀνδρῶν μαρναμένων· ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα μέλαινα. [C2-X]
Il. 17.416: νῆας ἔπι γλαφυράς, ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ γαῖα μέλαινα [C2-X]
Il. 20.494: κτεινομένους ἐφέπων· ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα μέλαινα. [C2-X]
Od. 11.365: βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυσπερέας ἀνθρώπους [A3-B2]
Od. 19.111: εὐδικίας ἀνέχησι, φέρησι δὲ γαῖα μέλαινα [C2-X]
h. Apollo 369: πύσει γαῖα μέλαινα καὶ ἠλέκτωρ Ἵπερίων. [A3-B2]
Theogony 69: ἀμβροσίη μολπή· περὶ δ' ἴαχε γαῖα μέλαινα [C2-X]

Sappho 1.3-4: μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα, πότνια, θυμόν,
Il. 14.439: νῦξ ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα· βέλος δ' ἔτι θυμόν ἐδάμνα. [C2-X]

Sappho 1.22: αἱ δὲ δώρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει,
h. Hermes 549: φήμ' ἀλίην ὁδὸν εἶσιν, ἐγὼ δέ κε δώρα δεχοίμην. [C2-X]

Sappho 31.1: φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν
Od. 11.304: τεθνάσιν· τιμὴν δὲ λελόγγασιν ἴσα θεοῖσι. [C2-X]
Od. 11.484: πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζῶν ἐτίομεν ἴσα θεοῖσιν [C2-X]
Od. 15.520: τὸν νῦν ἴσα θεῶ Ἴθακήσιοι εἰσορόωσι· [A3-B1]
h. Hymn 5.214: ὡς ἔοι ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρω ἴσα θεοῖσιν. [C2-X]

Sappho 1.7-8: ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα χρύσιον ἦλθες
Scutum 81: ἦλθε λιπὼν Τίρυνθον, ἐυκτίμενον ποταμῶν, [0-A4]

Sappho 17.8: οὐκ ἐδύναντο
Il. 3.236: δοιῶ δ' οὐ δύναμαι ιδέειν κοσμήτορε λαῶν [A3-B1]
Il. 8.299: τοῦτον δ' οὐ δύναμαι βαλέειν κῦνα λυσσητήρα. [A3-B1]
Il. 9.551: τόφρα δὲ Κουρήτεσσι κακῶς ἦν, οὐδ' ἐδύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 11.116: ἡ δ' εἰ πέρ τε τύχησι μάλα σχεδόν, οὐ δύναται σφι [C2-X]
Il. 13.552: οὐταζον σάκος εὐρὸν παναίολον, οὐδὲ δύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 13.634: Τρωσίν, τῶν μένος αἰὲν ἀτάσθαλον, οὐδὲ δύνανται [C2-X]
Il. 13.687: σπουδῆ ἐπαίσσοντα νεῶν ἔχον, οὐδὲ δύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 15.22: λῦσαι δ' οὐκ ἐδύναντο παρασταδόν· ὄν δὲ λάβοιμι [A3-B2]

- Il.* 15.406: Τρώας ἐπερχομένους μένον ἔμπεδον, οὐδ' ἐδύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 15.416: τῷ δὲ μῆϊς περὶ νηὸς ἔχον πόνον, οὐδὲ δύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 15.651: κτείν'· οἱ δ' οὐκ ἐδύναντο καὶ ἀχνύμενοί περ ἑταίρου [A1-B2]
Il. 16.107: ἔμπεδον αἰὲν ἔχων σάκος αἰόλον· οὐδ' ἐδύναντο [C2-X]
Il. 16.520: ἔγχος δ' οὐ δύναμαι σχεῖν ἔμπεδον, οὐδὲ μάχεσθαι [A3-B1]
Il. 18.163: ὡς ῥα τὸν οὐκ ἐδύναντο δῶ Αἴαντε κορουστὰ [A3-B2]
Il. 22.47: οὐ δύναμαι ἰδέειν Τρώων εἰς ἄστυ ἀλέντων, [0-A4]
Il. 22.201: ὡς ὁ τὸν οὐ δύνατο μάρψαι ποσίν, οὐδ' ὅς ἀλύξαι. [A3-B1]
Il. 23.465: ἢ τὸν ἠνίοχον φύγον ἠνία, οὐδὲ δυνάσθη [C2-X]
Il. 24.403 (= *Od.* 17.144): ἀσχαλώσι γὰρ οἶδε καθήμενοι, οὐδὲ δύνανται [C2-X]
Od. 4.558 (= *Od.* 5.15): ἴσχει· ὁ δ' οὐ δύναται ἦν πατρίδα γαίαν ἰκέσθαι· [A2-B1]
Od. 5.319: τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόβρυχα θῆκε πολὺν χρόνον, οὐδὲ δυνάσθη [C2-X]
Od. 13.331: τῷ σε καὶ οὐ δύναμαι προλιπεῖν δύστηνον ἔοντα, [A2-B1]
Od. 18.230: ἀλλὰ τοι οὐ δύναμαι πεπνυμένα πάντα νοῆσαι· [A3-B1]
Od. 21.184: τῷ ῥα νέοι θάλλοντες ἐπειρῶντ', οὐδ' ἐδύναντο [C2-X]
h. Apollo 192: ζῶουσ' ἀφραδέες καὶ ἀμήχανοι, οὐδὲ δύνανται [C2-X]
h. Hymn 5.7: τρισσὰς δ' οὐ δύναται πεπιθεῖν φρένας οὐδ' ἀπατήσαι· [A3-B1]
h. Hymn 5.33: τάων οὐ δύναται πεπιθεῖν φρένας οὐδ' ἀπατήσαι· [A3-B1]
Works and Days 134: ἀφραδίης· ὕβριν γὰρ ἀτάσθαλον οὐκ ἐδύναντο [C2-X]

Sappho 1.24: κωὺκ ἐθέλοισα.

- Il.* 1.112: οὐκ ἔθελον δέξασθαι, ἐπεὶ πολὺ βούλομαι αὐτήν [0-A4]
Il. 3.241: νῦν αὐτ' οὐκ ἐθέλουσι μάχην καταδύμεναι ἀνδρῶν [A3-B2]
Il. 3.289: τίνειν οὐκ ἐθέλωσιν Ἀλεξάνδροιο πεσόντος, [A3-B2]
Il. 4.300: ὄφρα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλων τις ἀναγκαίη πολεμίζοι. [A2-B1]
Il. 5.233: μὴ τῷ μὲν δείσαντε ματήσετον, οὐδ' ἐθέλητον [C2-X]
Il. 6.165: ὅς μ' ἔθελεν φιλότητι μιγήμεναι οὐκ ἐθελούση. [C2-X]
Il. 9.356: νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἐθέλω πολεμιζέμεν Ἔκτορι δίῳ [A1-B1]
Il. 9.444: ὡς ἂν ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ σείο, φίλον τέκος, οὐκ ἐθέλοισι [C2-X]
Il. 9.678: κείνός γ' οὐκ ἐθέλει σβέσσαι χόλον, ἀλλ' ἔτι μάλλον [A3-B1]
Il. 10.311 (= *Il.* 10.398): φύξιν βουλεύουσι μετὰ σφίσι, οὐδ' ἐθέλουσι [C2-X]
Il. 12.171: ὡς οἱ γ' οὐκ ἐθέλουσι πυλάων καὶ δῦ' ἔοντε [A3-B2]
Il. 13.106: μίμνειν οὐκ ἐθέλεσκον ἐναντίον, οὐδ' ἠβαιόν· [A3-B2]
Il. 13.109: οἱ κείνῳ ἐρίσαντες ἀμυνέμεν οὐκ ἐθέλουσι [C2-X]
Il. 13.572: ἰλλάσιν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα βίη δήσαντες ἄγουσιν· [A3-B2]
Il. 15.215: Ἰλίου αἰπεινῆς πεφιδήσεται, οὐδ' ἐθελήσει [C2-X]
Il. 17.66: πολλὰ μάλ' ἰύζουσιν ἀπόπροθεν οὐδ' ἐθέλουσιν [C2-X]
Il. 18.262: οἶος κείνου θυμὸς ὑπέρβιος, οὐκ ἐθελήσει [C2-X]
Il. 18.434: πολλὰ μάλ' οὐκ ἐθέλουσα. ὁ μὲν δὴ γῆραὶ λυγρῷ [A3-B2]
Il. 21.36: ἦγε λαβῶν ἐκ πατρὸς ἀλωῆς οὐκ ἐθέλοντα [C2-X]
Il. 21.366: οὐδ' ἔθελε προορῆειν, ἀλλ' ἴσχετο· τεῖρε δ' αὐτμῆ [0-A4]
Il. 21.580: οὐκ ἔθελεν φεύγειν, πρὶν πειρήσασθαι Ἀχιλῆος. [0-A4]
Il. 23.88: νῆπιος, οὐκ ἐθέλων, ἀμφ' ἀστραγάλοισι χολωθεῖς· [A3-B1]

- Il.* 24.289: ὀτρύνει ἐπὶ νῆας ἐμεῖο μὲν οὐκ ἐθελούσης. [C2-X]
Od. 2.50: μητέρι μοι μνηστήρες ἐπέχραον οὐκ ἐθελούση, [C2-X]
Od. 5.99: Ζεὺς ἐμέ γ' ἠνώγει δεῦρ' ἐλθέμεν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα. [C2-X]
Od. 7.305: ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐκ ἔθελον δείσας αἰσχυρόμενός τε, [A3-B1]
Od. 8.223: ἀνδράσι δὲ προτέροισιν ἐριζέμεν οὐκ ἐθελήσω, [C2-X]
Od. 10.573: ῥεῖα παρεξελθούσα· τίς ἂν θεὸν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα [C2-X]
Od. 13.277: πόλλ' ἀεκαζομένους, οὐδ' ἠθέλον ἐξαπατήσαι. [B1-C2]
Od. 13.341: ἀλλὰ τοι οὐκ ἐθέλησα Ποσειδάωνι μάχεσθαι [A3-B2]
Od. 14.125: ψεύδοντ' οὐδ' ἐθέλουσιν ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι. [A3-B2]
Od. 17.226: ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ οὖν δὴ ἔργα κάκ' ἔμμαθεν, οὐκ ἐθελήσει [C2-X]
Od. 18.328: οὐδ' ἐθέλεις εὐδριν χαλκῆιον ἐς δόμον ἐλθῶν [0-A4]
Od. 18.362: ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ οὖν δὴ ἔργα κάκ' ἔμμαθες, οὐκ ἐθελήσεις [C2-X]
Od. 20.141: οὐκ ἔθελ' ἐν λέκτροισι καὶ ἐν ῥήγεσσι καθεύδειν, [0-A3]
Od. 22.31: ἴσκεν ἕκαστος ἀνὴρ, ἐπεὶ ἦ φάσαν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα [C2-X]
Od. 24.307: πλάγξ' ἀπὸ Σικανίης δεῦρ' ἐλθέμεν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα. [C2-X]
h. Demeter 124: ἤλυθον οὐκ ἐθέλουσα, βίη δ' ἀέκουσαν ἀνάγκη [A3-B2]
h. Apollo 473: ἀλλὰ τις ἀθανάτων δεῦρ' ἤγαγεν οὐκ ἐθέλοντας. [C2-X]
h. Hymn 5.25: ἡ δὲ μάλ' οὐκ ἔθελεν ἀλλὰ στερεῶς ἀπέειπεν, [A3-B1]

Sappho 1.2: παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,

- Il.* 13.825: εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼν οὔτω γε Διὸς πάϊς αἰγιόχοιο [B2-C2]
Od. 8.488: ἡ σέ γε Μοῦσ' ἐδίδαξε, Διὸς πάϊς, ἡ σέ γ' Ἀπόλλων· [B2-C2]
Od. 11.604: παῖδα Διὸς μεγάλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδίλου. [0-A4]
Theogony 952: παῖδα Διὸς μεγάλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδίλου, [0-A4]
Scutum 371: πάϊς τε Διὸς μεγάλοιο καὶ Ἐνυαλίιο ἄνακτος. [0-A4]

Sappho 2.5: ἐν δ' ὕδωρ ψυχρον κελάδει δι' ὕσδων

- Od.* 9.392: εἰν ὕδατι ψυχρῶ βάπτῃ μεγάλα ἰάχοντα [0-B1]

Sappho 1.13: αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,

- Il.* 3.182: ὦ μάκαρ Ἄτρείδη μοιρηγενὲς ὀλβιόδαιμον, [0-A3]

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