INTRODUCTION

Thracian filly, why these scornful glances?
Why so cruelly run from me,
dismissing me as artless?

Trust me, I could slip the curb in deftly,
then with reins in hand could whirl
you round the turn-posts swiftly.

But instead you gambol in the pasture,
since you have no rider who's
a proper mounting-master.

Anacreon 417

Why can't you see what's obvious?
The racehorse is Enetian,
while cousin Hagesichora
has gleaming hair of purest gold,
and her complexion silvery –
what need to tell you this so plain?
Here's Hagesichora – her looks
come second after Agido –
she'll gallop, a Colaxian
against a swift Ibenian;
because the Pleiades are here
advancing through the deathless night,
which clash like Sirius with us
who bring a robe for Orthria.

extract from Alcman 1 (vv. 50–63)

io
Dynasty destroyed!
You galleons of the Greeks,
which singe like Sirius,
you massacred so many,
wiped out in their prime, my age.
Those boats shall not ship them back:
the force of black-smoke flame
shall burn them in its brutal body.
And there shall be groans and grief
through all the Persian provinces.

io
you weighty fall of fate
that dragged me here to Greece!
extract from Timotheus, *Persians*
(fr. 791.178–88): Xerxes at Salamis[1]

1 DEFINITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

'Lyric' in contemporary literary criticism is a term as elusive as it is suggestive. It exists both as an adjective, expressing a poetic quality, and as a noun denoting a poetic mode, and both are notoriously difficult to define. It is this protean quality that has allowed 'lyric' to become a powerful creative stimulus for both poets and theorists.

A foundational period for today's sense of 'lyric' was the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Romantic thinkers, especially in Germany, expanded earlier, looser ideas into a systematic theory of three fundamental forms – lyric, epic and drama – each characterised by distinctive qualities. Even though the triad of genres never acquired the same prominence in Anglophone writing, the primary quality accorded within this system to lyric certainly did: despite strong counter-currents in twentieth-century criticism, 'subjectivity', a form of poetic self-expression, often couched in the first person (the 'lyric "I"'), still remains a chief feature of 'lyric' for many readers, maintaining a special place on the long list of lyric qualities, alongside inwardness, emotionality, concision, truth, poeticity and musicality.[2]

Each of these qualities has a critical history, which exerts influence when applied to Greek lyric. Each therefore introduces forms of anachronism, and these can be detrimental when unintended or productive when consciously exploited. This is perhaps especially obvious for subjectivity, but it applies equally to several of the others. The important exception, at least to a point, is musicality, which poets and theorists across the ages have traced back to early Greek lyric. Much modern lyric is read rather than sung, and can be called 'musical' only metaphorically, because it pays attention to the sound and flow of the verse (pop 'lyrics', lyric-turned-*Lieder* and Italian '(opera) lirica' are among the exceptions that prove the rule). Lyric in early Greece, by contrast, was literally 'lyric' in that

[1] The three translations are by Oliver Taplin.
[2] For a brief overview of the notion 'lyric' in the modern period, see Jackson 2012. For theorists of lyric since about 1920, see Jackson and Prins 2014. Culler 2015 sets out his own theory but also analyses Romantic and New Critical notions of lyric. Johnson 1982 examines the idea of lyric by bringing together ancient and Modernist poetry.

it was sung to the lyre (and other instruments) in various social settings. Unlike the notion of 'subjectivity' (etc.), music is there right at the beginning of our lyric record.

This has various consequences for the nature of Greek lyric. Most immediately, it gives the Greek corpus the clear definition that modern lyric lacks: Greek lyric is poetry composed in what we think of as sung metres (see n. 3 for a different commonly used definition). It was not the only Greek poetry that could be sung; epic and elegy were both, at different times, sung in some way, but lyric was characterised by a greater variety of rhythmic and melodic expression. Metre thus provides Greek lyric with a defining criterion that is somewhat vague as an articulation of the realities of performance (not all poems can be classified categorically as either musical or not), but which is unambiguous in so far as we are concerned with written texts: we categorise a text as lyric on the basis of the pattern of long and short syllables. This sharp metrical criterion is taken over by Latin lyric (where it no longer reflects modalities of performance, as most Latin lyric was probably primarily for reading), but it is abandoned in modern lyric, which is not associated with any particular metre.

Despite this tidy definition, however, the corpus has only a loose coherence. Arguably, the contours appear sharpest when lyric is marked off against epic, a contrast that goes beyond the often radical difference in length. Unlike epic, much lyric is anchored in the present, or even altogether focused on the present and present-day concerns, and adopts a first-person voice, singular or plural. A good number of lyric poems, moreover, refer to their own performance ('I/we sing', etc.), and/or to the real or imagined circumstances of their performance, with an elaboration that is alien to early epic.

Individually and collectively, these features capture something important about Greek lyric. (They also, it is worth noting, capture something important about later lyric, which draws variously on Greek models). However, while they distinguish lyric from epic, they do not amount to a strict demarcation of the corpus in absolute terms. Brevity, present-tense and present-day perspectives, a prominent 'we' or 'I', and references to performance, were not unique to lyric. They were features also of elegy and iambus, genres that – specifics of metre apart – may be set off against epic in much the same way as lyric (hence the second, broader, definition of Greek lyric current today, though not adopted in this volume, which includes elegy and iambus, alongside lyric narrowly defined).[3] What is

[3] Narrow (as here): e.g. Campbell's *Greek Lyric* Loeb and Hutchinson's *Greek Lyric Poetry* commentary. Broad (incl. elegy and iambus): e.g. Campbell's *Greek Lyric Poetry* commentary, and the *Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric*. The broad definition is entwined with the Romantic idea of lyric subjectivity and of lyric as one of only three broad literary kinds.

more, any sense of coherence gained from this set of shared characteristics needs to be balanced against great variation in other respects (see section 2 below).

To understand why Greek lyric constitutes a rather loose group of texts at the same time as boasting a clear definition, one needs to consider the origins of the corpus. Greek lyric was created retrospectively. The term 'lyric' is first attested in the Hellenistic period, when poets such as Sappho, Anacreon and Pindar were canonised as λυρικοί, and their poems gathered and edited as a corpus (see sections 3 and 6 below). Originally, their compositions were probably thought of simply as μέλη or ὕμνοι, 'songs'.[4] The metrical criterion employed by the Alexandrian editors expresses something crucial about these texts (they were sung), and produces a collection of works that share further characteristics, at least loosely, but what it does not do, and probably was never intended to do, is create a tightly coherent or sharply demarcated poetic form. As a (loose) indication of musicality, lyric metre escapes the pronounced anachronism of 'subjectivity', but to a lesser degree it too bequeaths to us a retrospective view, grouping together firmly, as it does, a set of texts that will not have been grouped quite so firmly in the period in which the poems were composed and first performed.

Greek lyric, then, is rich in tensions: precisely defined, yet enormously varied; looking back to an original category (μέλος), yet a Hellenistic invention; predating, and in certain respects standing apart from, the subsequent tradition of lyric poetry and lyric theory, yet influencing it, and in our perception coloured by it. These tensions have created a vibrant and diverse field of study. By way of initial orientation, there follow brief sketches of major scholarly perspectives on Greek lyric: because of the thinness of the metrical criterion, 'lyric as . . .' is a necessary supplement to 'lyric is . . .'

Greek lyric as literature. Since antiquity, the Greek lyric poets have been considered literary classics. They are imitated, alluded to and named in Hellenistic and Latin poetry, and their afterlives continue in early modern and modern literature in many languages. The filly of Anacreon's poem quoted at the beginning of the Introduction, for example, appears in odes by Horace (*Carm.* 2.5) and Ronsard ('Pourquoy comme une jeune poutre'). The popularity of individual poets has always fluctuated, but readers of all periods have valued Greek lyric as a body of poems that repay close engagement.

[4] The latter is the broader term; μέλος is for the most part restricted to what the Alexandrians called 'lyric'. For the development of the terminology (μέλος, 'melic', 'lyric'), see Calame 1998.

In an obvious sense the same is not true for the immediate reception of the poems: 'literature', never an easy concept, is an anachronistic term for poetry that was originally sung and listened to more than it was read.[5] Yet it is evident that these are poetically ambitious texts irrespective of medium. The complex image-making of the Alcman passage quoted at the outset, or the sustained erotic allegorising of Anacreon's filly poem, demonstrate the kind of qualities that gave Greek lyric its place in the later canon.[6] Much of the poetry that has come down to us, while operating within a tradition, puts a premium on distinctive verbal artistry, an artistry that can be appreciated as such both in performance and on the page. It is very significant in this respect that the poems are firmly tied to individual, named authors from early on.[7]

Greek lyric as performance. Greek lyric is a corpus of songs as well as poems (and either term is used in this volume, depending on emphasis). Music-making, and the performers' appearance, are thematised in a number of texts, and lyric performers are a frequent motif in vase-painting. Timotheus (author of the third quotation above) was a celebrity, his performances as a kitharode sought after across the Greek world. Alcman's song was performed by well-rehearsed choruses of young Spartan women in eye-catching outfits. Many scholars think that the description of the two leaders as racehorses interacted with a choreography that drew attention to those two dancers; certainly Alcman's text as a whole is predicated on performance, and on the interplay of vision and imagination. Other performances were more impromptu. Relatively little rehearsal may be required to sing Anacreon's short and simple filly song, but even in the most extempore rendition the embodiment of the poetic voice in a singer added a musical appeal, an individuality and an interpersonal dimension that are missing on the page.[8]

Lyric as performance is compatible with lyric as literature. A performed text can be judged literary, and a literary text can be performed. Moreover, the history of lyric is rich in moments of imagined musicality. In their different ways, poets of all periods use words of singing to make their written lyric lyrical; Hellenistic readers, too, who created the label 'poets of the lyre', imagined music where there was only text.

[5] On the anachronism of 'literature', see Williams 1983: 183–8, Goldhill 1999. On Greek lyric as 'literature', see Maslov 2015, Budelmann and Phillips 2018a: 9–15.

[6] The three texts are discussed in further detail on pp. 58–83, 202–5, 232–52.

[7] With the exception of the anonymous *skolia* and *carmina popularia*, which thus provide an instructive contrast; see pp. 252–5.

[8] The secondary literature on Greek lyric as performance is large; see esp. Stehle 1997, Power 2010, Peponi 2012 (on aesthetic response).

Greek lyric as performing a (cultural, social, political, religious) function. In the Archaic period, lyric was part of the fabric of everyday life. Lyric (as well as epic, elegy and iambus) expressed things that mattered to Greek communities. Much of it was occasional, composed to perform specific social, ritual and political functions at specific types of occasion. At the end of the Alcman extract, the young women describe themselves as involved in a ritual act, carrying a robe for a goddess called Aotis. The rest of the text suggests that the performance serves to flaunt their own, and their leaders', looks before the gathered community. Reflections of Spartan ideology can be detected throughout. Lyrics of unrequited desire, such as the Anacreon piece, were part of the glue that bonded groups of male symposiasts. Even Timotheus' extravagant star turns exploit ideological values; Xerxes' catastrophe, narrated complete with barbarian stereotypes, will have been heart-warming to Greeks of all periods, not least to Athenians coming to terms with loss, hardship and setbacks during the Peloponnesian War (the likely first audience). Greek lyric celebrates athletic victories, communicates with the divine, shapes ideologies, expresses identities, codifies social memory, enacts beliefs. The recognition that early Greece was a 'song culture', in which song was omnipresent and in countless formal and informal ways contributed to the lives of communities and individuals, transformed the study of lyric in the latter part of the twentieth century.[9]

Greek lyric as fiction and statement about self and the world. Greek lyric creates fictional settings and fictional personas. The Anacreon piece is not performed in a meadow, before a filly. A less pronounced form of fictionalising takes place in the Alcman extract, when (among other things) the chorus cast their leaders as exquisite horses. At the same time, however, Greek lyric is capable of meaningful self-expression and authoritative proclamation. Despite the imaginary meadow, the term fiction does not capture the whole effect of Anacreon's poem, which is also (*inter alia*) a statement about love, and in performance a form of self-presentation. It is at least possible that Alcman's girls are saying something about their feelings for their leaders as they sing the poem; if not, they nevertheless articulate values appropriate to themselves and important for their audience. This distinctive mode of speech, at one remove from reality yet capable of engaging with reality, is an important part of the appeal and efficacy of Greek lyric, as it is of elegy and iambus and of later lyric traditions.

Greek lyric as a philological challenge. The Greek lyric that survives is incomplete. We have only a fraction of the output of even the best-preserved

[9] See esp. Rösler 1980, Herington 1985 (introducing the notion of 'song culture'), Gentili 1988 [1984], Kurke 1991, Kowalzig 2007, Morgan 2015.

poets, and many of those poems we have are fragmentary. Notoriously, phraseology, dialect and metre are often complex. As a result, much Greek lyric scholarship is philological in emphasis, more so than most scholarship on epic and drama. Often interpretation and reconstruction are intertwined.

2 CHARTING THE CORPUS

The varied nature of the lyric corpus may be illustrated, and the corpus charted, under several headings.

Chronology. The earliest properly historical lyric poet, and the first in this volume, is Alcman in the late seventh century BC. He is preceded, probably earlier in the same century, by the shadowy figures Terpander and Eumelus and the first iambic poets, first among them Archilochus. The last poet presented here is Timotheus, who was active in the late fifth and early fourth centuries. The selection thus encompasses much of the Archaic period and extends well into the Classical age, two full centuries, during which Greek communities experienced substantial social, political, institutional, economic and military change.[10]

Geography. The surviving corpus is geographically diverse from the beginning. Alcman was active in Sparta, Sappho and Alcaeus on Lesbos, and Stesichorus came from Magna Graecia. From early on, some lyric poets moved around, and they did so at an increasing rate as trade and other forms of inter-*polis* connectivity increased during the Archaic period. Alcman's supposed origin in Lydia is probably a fiction, and Sappho's (involuntary?) exile in Sicily might be considered a special case, and may even be a later invention, but Ibycus certainly, and probably also Stesichorus, were active both in their native Magna Graecia and elsewhere in Greece. Anacreon, originating from Teos in Asia Minor, enjoyed successively the patronage of Polycrates on Samos and of the Pisistratids in Athens (and he is linked to other cities too). Simonides, Pindar and Bacchylides were genuinely panhellenic poets who took individual and civic commissions across the Greek world, and Timotheus was a touring star performer.[11]

Length. Most of the poems are relatively short, but many (including those by Alcman and Timotheus quoted above) ran to a hundred lines or more,

[10] The lyric production of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods is excluded, as it is in many treatments of Greek lyric, despite some continuities, and so is dramatic lyric.

[11] On individual poets, see the commentary. On the mobility of poets in general, see Hunter and Rutherford 2009, esp. the articles by Bowie and D'Alessio. See also pp. 18–19 below, on poems travelling without their poets.

and Stesichorean poems exceeded 1,000 lines (pp. 153, 154). Longer poems usually contained a substantive past-tense mythological (or sometimes historical) narrative; some consisted more or less entirely of narrative.

Performers and instruments. Lyric was sung by men and women, adults and children, choruses and individuals, impromptu or after extensive rehearsal. Much monodic (= solo) performance was by men. This is indicated both by what we know of the *symposion* (see below), and by the usually male speakers in Alcaeus, Anacreon, Ibycus and others. But Sappho shows (if demonstration were needed) that women too sang monody, even though her songs were subsequently performed also by men, and many anonymous 'popular songs' were clearly sung by women.[12] Solo performers of lyric often accompanied themselves on the (typically seven-string) lyre. Not least because of the level of instruction required, stringed instruments were often primarily associated with the elite. The ideological concerns of some of the surviving poetry also reflect an elite context. On the other hand, 'popular song' and certain *skolia* show that there were forms of solo-song that were performed by a wide range of social groups (pp. 253–4, 266). Our evidence does not permit us to judge when, and to what degree, familiarity with the poetry of elite monodic poets such as Alcaeus, Sappho, Ibycus or Anacreon spread beyond elite circles. Different again are the professional touring kitharodes of the high and late Classical period (such as Timotheus), who performed their lengthy, innovative and hugely popular solo pieces before mass audiences, accompanying themselves on larger instruments of up to twelve strings.[13]

Choral performances are fundamentally different from monody. Not only are they the 'bigger' show – multiple singers, dance as well as song – but they also come with a rich set of associations, of divine worship, of order, of hierarchy, of communal action and communal values. Choral performances could be accompanied by a lyre or by *auloi* (pipes, usually played as a pair). Many choral texts are shaped to suit, or even advertise, the identity of their intended performers. Alcman's song quoted above was composed for a chorus of *parthenoi* (unmarried girls), for example, and at the end of Bacchylides 17 the chorus identify themselves as male Ceans. Other texts are non-specific, so that scholars disagree over whether to assign them to choruses or soloists: this is the case for certain pieces by

[12] Female-voiced poems survive from male monodists, but it is unclear whether they were intended for female performers; e.g. Alcaeus 10 Voigt (10B LP), Anacr. 385.

[13] On performers, solo and choral, with a focus on gender, see Stehle 1997; on stringed instruments, West 1992b: 48–80, Wilson 2004; on class ideology in sympotic performance, Kurke 1992, Kurke 1997 ~ Kurke 1999: ch. 5, Hammer 2004.

Sappho (pp. 114, 148), all of Stesichorus (p. 153), some Ibycus (p. 174) and Simonides (p. 205), and the whole genre of the victory ode.[14] Chorally performed pieces need not emphasise their choral associations textually, and (vice versa) monody may adopt choral tropes for poetic purposes. Moreover, many originally choral texts subsequently received solo performances (see p. 19). While any single performance has to be either monodic or choral, the question whether a text is monodic or choral does not always have a simple answer, and poets certainly cannot be categorised as either choral or monodic.[15] This is not to say that the choral/solo distinction is artificial. It is notable that what appear to be originally choral texts are distinguished by their Doric dialect, and many share an AAB pattern of strophic response (see sections 7 and 8).

Occasion. The two most important types of occasion for the performance of lyric are the *symposion* and the festival. Both terms encompass a range of phenomena. The *symposion* is widely considered the default venue for many shorter lyric pieces (including the majority of songs in this volume), as well as much elegy and possibly iambus, and has been the subject of a large body of scholarship.[16] *Symposia* were closed, indoor events. Men sat or reclined on couches, jointly enjoying drink, conversation, banter, politicking, speechifying, games and musical and poetic performance. At some *symposia*, male youths would pour wine and be the object of flirtation (which may well have included lyric serenading). Most scholars think that any women present were normally not wives but *hetairai* and musical entertainers (who offered further targets for playful serenading).

Like the monodic texts, which vary greatly in tone, a *symposion* could be light-hearted or passionate and serious. Either way, institutionalised inebriation will have had its effect. Degrees of formality and intimacy, too, varied, as did the relationship between any one set of symposiasts and the *polis* at large. A *symposion* held by a tyrant like Polycrates, hosting Anacreon, will have differed in character from one of a political faction, such as Alcaeus' *hetaireia* (p. 87), that saw itself in opposition to the current regime; and the status and nature of song-making when a famous poet provided the chief attraction was not the same as when ordinary symposiasts took turns to perform. Most lyric performance at the *symposion* will have been solo, and for practical reasons alone elaborate choral dancing is

[14] Victory ode: the majority view (choral) is defended by Carey 1989. For an overview of the debate, see Morrison 2007: 43–4.
[15] On this last issue, see Davies 1988a.
[16] The foundational volume on the *symposion* is Murray 1990. On poetry at the *symposion*, see Stehle 1997: 213–61 and Cazzato *et al.* 2016. For the bibliography on the *symposion*, see Yatromanolakis 2016.

unlikely, but less elaborate forms of joint singing, for example of paeans and *skolia*, will have had their place.[17]

Greek *poleis* had a full festival calendar. Panhellenic sanctuaries, too, held regular festivals. These were diverse events, some stretching over several days and many attended by a broad mix of social groups and sometimes foreigners. They honoured the city's gods, offered a welcome holiday and an opportunity for social interaction, re-enacted mythical history, marked the seasons, celebrated the city's achievements. At many festivals, choruses played a role. Such choruses (and indeed the festival itself) combined what in today's Western societies would normally be thought of separately as the religious and the secular domain. Just as sacrifices constituted gifts for the gods and at the same time provided meat for the celebrants, so choral performances aimed to give pleasure to divine and human audiences alike. Festivals could accommodate the celebration of individuals and individual families, such as (probably) the named chorus-leaders in the Alcman passage above, and it is likely that some victory odes were performed in the context of established festivals. At certain festivals, such as the Spartan Karneia, the Delphian Pythia and the Athenian Panathenaia, musical and poetic performance took the form of major competitions (μουσικοὶ ἀγῶνες), which attracted high-profile performers from across the Greek world.[18]

Symposia and festivals are particularly well documented as occasions for lyric performance, but there were many others. Weddings, funerals, repetitive manual labour, military campaigns and ad hoc festivities of different sorts all provided opportunities for communal and individual song-making. Song was pervasive.

Scholarly reconstruction of the original occasion for which a particular song was composed almost invariably involves informed guesswork and needs to be mindful of the methodological challenges. There is considerable risk of circular reasoning when the poetic text is our only evidence, as is often the case. Moreover, since many lyric texts create some sense of a setting, the question arises how close the poetic setting is to the actual setting, and how the two interact.[19] Repeat performance in a different context (pp. 18–19) further complicates the picture.

[17] For paeans, see Rutherford 2001b: 51–2; more generally, Cingano 2003.

[18] On festivals in general, see Parker 2011: ch. 6. Choruses at festivals, and the work they do for their communities: Kowalzig 2007. Songs as gifts to gods: Depew 2000. Victory odes in the context of festivals: Krummen 2014 [1990], Currie 2011. μουσικοὶ ἀγῶνες: Shapiro 1992 (concise discussion of the Athenian Panathenaia), Power 2010: Part I (discursive treatment across geographies and periods).

[19] On such questions of pragmatics, see in the first instance D'Alessio 2009b: 115–20.