

Introduction to Volume 1: Greek Poetry before 400 BC

This volume, the first of three in which my papers published between 1970 and 2020 are being reprinted, brings together (in the order of their publication) articles in periodicals and chapters in collective volumes that investigate Greek poetry down to the late fifth century BC. Neither reviews nor contributions to general histories or encyclopaedias are included in any of the three volumes, and, to bring about a more even distribution, papers on Old Comedy have been held over for volume 2. I have corrected some errors of fact, added several bibliographical items, and inserted a few comments where what I wrote in the original publication has been overtaken by more recent discoveries or scholarly argument. Such additions do not aspire to offer an overview of the state of the question, which in some cases would require not lines but pages.

The earliest paper in this volume appeared in 1986, whereas I began to publish on the Greek literature and culture of the Roman Empire in 1966. This partly reflects the fact that, when I started graduate work, my declared area of research was imperial Greek culture. But my interest in melic, elegiac and iambic poetry goes back to my undergraduate years, when I benefited greatly from the stimulating lectures on elegiac and iambic poetry of my gifted Pembroke Tutor Godfrey Bond and from his individual tutorials on the whole of the special subject for Honour Moderations described as 'Greek lyric, elegiac and iambic poetry'. That interest was not extinguished by the seven terms studying for the Final Honour School of Literae Humaniores (1962) in which literature had no place, though reading for Greek history of the archaic period included A. R. Burn's recently published *The Lyric Age of* Greece (1960). Nor was it diminished by my work from 1962 in the field I had chosen for my research, or by my giving tutorials in the years 1962-5 that were more often on ancient history than on language and literature. My good fortune in being appointed to the E. P. Warren Praelectorship at Corpus Christi College in 1965 shifted the balance of my teaching decisively in the direction of Greek language and literature and brought me back to close engagement with the fascinating problems of early and classical Greek literature.

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¹ E.g. entries on early Greek poets in Bowder 1982 and in *Der Neue Pauly*, or the chapter 'Greek lyric poetry' in Boardman, Griffin and Murray 1986.



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Oxford undergraduates whose first public examination, Honour Moderations, was in the spring of 1970 had the new option in the Final Honour School of *Literae Humaniores* of continuing the study of literature and combining it with either philosophy or ancient history. In the early years of 'new Greats', as it was then called, the 'Greek lyric, elegiac and iambic poetry' paper, now transplanted from the first public examination to the Final Honour School, was the only Greek literature paper on offer alongside a fifth-century period paper. To many it was more attractive than a paper in textual criticism, comparative philology, or archaeology, and I gave tutorials in it to many pupils both from Corpus Christi and from a few other colleges. I also gave University lectures from 1970 to 1974 on 'the historical background to Greek lyric poetry', a topic proposed by the sub-faculty partly to build a bridge between literature and archaic Greek history for those offering the latter as part of their ancient history option, partly to introduce those combining philosophy with literature to its historical context.

My work in preparing these lectures and tutorials made me aware of how much scholarship was now being produced in this field and how that scholarship was changing. When the 'Greek lyric, elegiac and iambic poetry' paper was a paper in Honour Moderations (last examined in 1969) the set text was still the same as it had been when I offered it in 1960 - the Oxford Book of Greek Verse! Doubtless the drafters of the syllabus had judged E. Diehl's Teubner Anthologia Lyrica Graeca (1952) too rebarbative and J. M. Edmonds' Loeb Lyra Graeca (1922) and Elegy and *Iambus* (1931) too unreliable. For the rejigged Final Honour School paper the recently published selection with a good commentary by David Campbell, Greek Lyric Poetry (1967) offered a solution, while for a fuller range of melic texts and testimonia students could exploit Denys Page's Poetae Melici Graeci (1962), as they had already been able to benefit from his volume co-edited with Edgar Lobel, Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta (1955), from his (albeit unsympathetic) discussion of the Lesbian poets and many of their poems in Sappho and Alcaeus (both 1955), and from his important Alcman. The Partheneion (1951). Only in 1982 did the first of David Campbell's five Loeb volumes Greek Lyric, with their good texts, helpful translations and generous *testimonia*, make study of the melic poets much easier; and only in 1999 were they joined by Douglas Gerber's equally useful Loebs Greek Elegiac Poetry (1999a) and Greek Iambic Poetry (1999b). But those who could read Italian could get further help from the series of texts and commentaries overseen by Bruno Gentili, inaugurated by his own Anacreon (1958), which was joined later by Tarditi's Archilochus and



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Prato's *Tyrtaeus* (both 1968), Vetta's *Theognidos elegiarum liber secundus* (1980), Calame's *Alcman* (1983, commentary in French), and the *Semonides* of Pellizer and Tedeschi (1990). Those who could read Spanish could get some assistance from Adrados 1956 and 1959.

Of other iambic and elegiac poets only Theognis was available in modern editions (Douglas Young, Teubner, 1961; B. van Groningen, Théognis. Le premier livre, 1966), until in 1971 and 1972 Martin West published his two volumes of Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati. These were soon followed by Hugh Lloyd-Jones' 1975 commentary on Semonides fr. 7 (enhanced by photographs of Marcelle Quinton's sculptures of 'females of the species') and by Martin West's companion volume to his edition, Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus (1974). It was with this volume's observations, when, on Martin's departure from Oxford to take up a chair at Bedford College, London (also in 1974), I took over his Oxford lectures on elegy and *iambus*, that I chiefly had to agree or disagree.² One with which I disagreed ab initio was his suggestion that there were up to eight different contexts for the performance of archaic Greek elegy. I argued in my lectures that only the symposium and ensuing κῶμος, 'street revel', were securely attested as performance contexts for shorter elegies, and I gave more attention than Martin to the evidence for the performance at public festivals of what I took to be longer elegies. Other points I emphasised in these lectures included the importance of thinking of elegies, like melic poems, as songs, and the related point that biographical reconstructions on the basis of what 'I' in these songs represented as the thoughts or actions of their singer were hazardous;³ equally hazardous, I insisted, was any attempt to use such songs as a basis for the history of Greek intellectual development, as had been done by Bruno Snell 1953 and Hermann Fränkel 1975.4

- ² There were few other recent book-length discussions of elegy and *iambus*, notably *Archiloque*. Entretiens Hardt Vol. 10, 1964; Kirkwood 1974; substantial parts of Fränkel 1975; Rankin 1977 (the first ever monograph on Archilochus, but disappointing). Maurice Bowra's Early Greek Elegists (1938a) like his Greek Lyric Poetry (albeit its 1961 second edition was more cautious than the first of 1936), seemed very much from a different generation, as did the papers collected in the posthumous Davison 1968b (all but one on melic poetry). Much more on elegy and *iambus* was to be available in the 1980s: Aloni 1981; Burnett 1993 (for a review see Bowie 1986c); Miralles and Pòrtulas 1983 (for a review see Bowie 1986b); Figueira and Nagy 1985; Herington 1985.
- ³ Contra e.g. Bowra 1961. This point had already been well made for Archilochus by Dover 1964. I was not aware of Diller's nuanced discussion (1962–3, repr. 1971) nor of Tsagarakis 1966, and I only encountered Tsagarakis 1977 and Rösler 1980b and 1985 when my own views had been developed.
- ⁴ A point made emphatically by Lloyd-Jones 1965, 266; caution was already evident in Bowra 1961.

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In developing these ideas in my lectures in 1974–5 and subsequent years I was aware that my good friend Oswyn Murray, then writing his book Early Greece (published 1980), was stressing the great importance of the symposium in archaic Greek society; but, so far as I recall, I was unaware of similar approaches by scholars in Italy – above all Gentili and his school – and Germany, where Wolfgang Rösler was writing his doctoral thesis on Alcaeus that became the book Dichter und Gruppe (1980a). But I had certainly read Bruno Gentili's paper 'Epigramma ed elegia' in the Entretiens Hardt volume L'Épigramme Grecque (1968), and doubtless the ideas about sympotic poetry that were developing in Rome and Urbino percolated to me in Oxford by various routes – not least via the then Regius Professor of Greek, Hugh Lloyd-Jones, who had good international connections and brought many scholars from overseas to give lectures in Oxford. But a decisive stimulus to fuller formulation of my thoughts about the sympotic performance of elegy came with the visit to Oxford of Chico (L. E.) Rossi, who had been appointed to the Nellie Wallace lectureship for Michaelmas (i.e. autumn) Term 1979. Much in his exciting lectures chimed with my own ideas, but they also introduced me to many others (e.g. the concept of 'meta-sympotic'; the phenomenon of the sympotic catena). It emerges from the introduction by Giulio Colesanti and Roberto Nicolai to Rossi's three-volume Scritti editi e inediti (2020) that it was in 1977, in conversation in Rome with Kenneth Dover, that Rossi formed his view of the symposium as a privileged destination of monodic poetry.⁵ It seems that our ideas were developing in the same direction at about the same time.

Another perspective that I shared with Chico Rossi was the view that teaching and not research should have the first call on a scholar's academic time. For a Tutor in an Oxford College with many classical undergraduates (often about thirty-five), even one who was not the only classics Tutor, this could involve around fifteen hours of College teaching weekly. Although several colleagues were more successful than I in producing articles and even books early in their careers, others were, like me, less rapidly productive in an environment where the pressure to publish was nugatory by comparison with that in recent decades – though equally there were almost no funded opportunities, other than sabbatical terms, for taking a substantial block of time out from teaching and administration

^{5 &#}x27;del simposio come sede privilegiata di destinazione della lirica monodica', Rossi 2020, i 12, n.27. In print Rossi 1983a, 11 (going back to a lecture of 1977), 1983b, 44 (from a 1982 conference).

⁶ Rossi 2020, i 12.



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in order to write a book. Moreover I was indeed giving talks on the Greek culture of the Roman Empire from 1964/5 and publishing on it from 1966.

Nevertheless, although my own scholarly work on all fronts was being slowed down by editing the Journal of Hellenic Studies (1977-83), I prepared a talk that was aired in the USA and in London and the greater part of which was eventually published in the Journal of Hellenic Studies 1986 with the title 'Early Greek elegy, symposium and public festival' (1986a, Chapter 1 in this volume). In it I argued that for our extant shorter elegies the evidence supports only performance at symposia, accompanied by a player on an αὐλός, (reeded) 'pipe' (as imagined by Theognis 237–43), and at post-sympotic κῶμοι, 'revels'. Other contexts suggested by West 1974 were rejected. I then examined the related questions of the meaning of ἔλεγος (elegos) and the performance of elegies at funerals, observing that little surviving elegy is lamentatory, and arguing that elegy's association with lament dates only from late in the fifth century. Finally, I drew attention to ancient evidence for longer elegiac poems, e.g. of Mimnermus (Smyrneis), Tyrtaeus (Eunomia), Semonides, Xenophanes, Simonides and Panyassis, poems narrating events both from a city's distant and from its more recent past: I suggested that these were intended for performance at public festivals.

Meanwhile, Oswyn Murray's work led him to organise a symposium on the symposium in Oxford in 1984. I decided to offer a paper on martial exhortatory elegy, and so this section of my work on the symposium was detached to become my contribution to the volume that emerged from that conference (Murray 1990). With the title 'Miles ludens? The problem of martial exhortation in early Greek elegy' (1990a, Chapter 3 in this volume), my paper complemented the arguments of Chapter 1, arguing that the performance context of early martial exhortatory elegy was not (as proposed by West 1974) some military situation with a battle imminent, but sympotic. I suggested that the opening of Callinus fr. 1, μέχρις τέο κατάκεισθε, 'How long will you lie idle?', by implication excluded a context when battle-preparations are already under way, and the verb κατάκεισθε may refer precisely to 'reclining', i.e. in a symposium, as first suggested by Reitzenstein 1893, 50. As for Tyrtaeus, Philochorus FGrH F216 and Lycurgus, In Leocratem 107 arguably refer to the same practice, i.e., the singing of Tyrtaeus' elegies by leading Spartans at a symposium in the king's tent when on campaign – competitive singing, with a polemarch awarding a prize to the winner (according to Philochorus). These singers were probably οἱ περὶ δαμοσίαν, 'those attached to the public (sc. tent)'. Once composed for, and first performed in, this context Tyrtaeus' elegies



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will have become part of the sympotic repertoire in Spartan symposia even when no war was in progress: their transmission, first in and then beyond Laconia, was thus secured. It is clear from pieces in the *Theognidea* that the theme of bravery in battle had a place in symposia in other cities too.

In 1990 I might have thought my main contribution to the study of elegy had been made and I could turn to other subjects. But in 1992 the publication of *P.Oxy.* 3965, simultaneously by Peter Parsons in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Vol. 59, and by Martin West in a second edition of his *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, gave us, once brought together with *P.Oxy.* 2327 (published by Lobel in 1954), a long narrative sequence by Simonides (at least forty-five lines) on the Spartan army leaving Laconia for the battlefield of Plataea in 479 – they get as far as the Thriasian plain before the papyrus gives out. It also gave us, on the same roll, new lines of a sympotic elegy whose $gn\bar{o}m\bar{e}$ had led it to be excerpted by Stobaeus (frr. 19–20) and two elegiac poems which had $\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$, 'erotic desire', as their central theme (frr. 21 and 22). Of these fr. 22, fantasising about reclining in an island *locus amoenus* with an adolescent Echecratidas, came near to countering West's suggestion in 1974 that elegy was not used for erotic narrative – near, but since this was fantasy, it left that idea largely intact.

The Plataea narrative was seen by some scholars as confirmation of my arguments for the importance of narrative elegy. It certainly confirmed the existence of such a form and the survival of some of its representatives until the date of the papyri, the second century AD, when Plutarch in his essay *On the mean-spiritedness of Herodotus* had in fact quoted some lines (frr. 15 and 16), lines that could now be given some sort of a context. But it confirmed only part of my hypothesis – that such elegies might treat recent history – and left unconfirmed the suggestion that a city's foundation might be treated at an early stage in such an elegy; and so it remains.

Thinking through the consequences of the 1992 papyrus publication led me to revisit the problem of narrative elegy in papers that appeared as 2001a ('Ancestors of historiography in early Greek elegiac and iambic poetry?', Chapter 8 in this volume) and as 2010b ('Historical narrative in archaic and early classical Greek elegy', Chapter 15 in this volume). This latter chapter, prompted by a conference on the relation between epic and history, looked especially at the ways in which narrative elegy might be seen as an early stage in the development of Greek historiography. But another reason for revisiting this subject once again in 2010 was the publication in 2005 of yet another sequence of elegiac narrative – this time securely attributed to Archilochus: an account not of recent fighting but of Telephus' defeat of an Achaean force which had mistaken Mysia for their



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objective, the Troad (Dirk Obbink's '4708. Archilochus, Elegies (more of VI 854 and XXX 2507)' in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Vol. 89). Unfortunately line 3 of the twenty-five lines preserved (which were certainly followed by more) is lacunose. It can be supplemented to include a first-person plural $\epsilon \ddot{\imath} \mu \epsilon \theta$ ', 'we rushed' (as was proposed by West), in which case the story of Telephus was in some way related to the singer's present situation (perhaps reflecting on a military defeat); or the first-person plural could have been a verb such as $\dot{\epsilon} \pi \iota \sigma \tau \dot{\alpha} \mu \epsilon \theta$ ', 'we know', or $\dot{\epsilon} \delta \epsilon \xi \dot{\alpha} \mu \epsilon \theta$ ', 'we have received (a tradition)', which might simply be a singer's way of anchoring his song in local or Panhellenic tradition.

Either of these latter supplements, which I have proposed, would put the poem in the category of self-standing mythical narrative. But as I explored in 2016a, 'Cultic contexts for elegiac performance?' (Chapter 31 in this volume) and 2017e ('Un contexte rituel pour le Télèphe d'Archiloque?': a shorter version of the same paper, so not reprinted here), the role of Heracles in the new Telephus narrative, as well as in the poem already known from *testimonia* telling how Heracles killed the centaur Nessus when he attempted to rape Deianeira, may not be coincidental. These poems, I suggested, may have been composed for first performance in Thasos' important cult of Heracles, and may confirm my earlier, tentative suggestion that narrative elegy might be expected to handle myth that was interwoven with the local history of a *polis* but not, perhaps, to treat purely Panhellenic myth.

My search for further evidence of archaic and classical narrative elegy meanwhile led me to two neglected names. The earlier is that of Sacadas of Argos, winner of the competition for playing the αὐλός, 'pipe', at the *Pythia* of 586, but defeated in that for αὐλωιδία, 'singing to the accompaniment of the pipe', by an Arcadian called Echembrotus. In 'Rediscovering Sacadas' (2014a, Chapter 28 in this volume) I urged acceptance of Athenaeus' attribution to Sacadas of an Ἰλίου πέρσις, 'Sack of Troy'; suggested that a hexameter fixing Troy's fall at full moon betrays its origin in Sacadas' poem by its use of the Doric *alpha*; and proposed that this poem's subject and dialect account for the Doric *alpha* found both in the elegiacs at Euripides' *Andromache* 103–16 (a miniature Ἰλίου πέρσις, sung from a female perspective) and in Callimachus' fifth *Hymn*, which celebrates the ritual bathing of Athena's cult-statue at Argos (one of many that were claimed to be the *Palladion* taken from Troy).

The later figure is Simonides of Eretria. In 2010g (Chapter 20 in this volume) I suggested that the *Gathering of Achaeans at Aulis* attributed by the Suda lexicon to an ἐποποιός, 'epic poet', Simonides of Eretria, could be



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another such elegy, bearing as it might on the local history of his Euboean city, across the water from Aulis, and that this Simonides belonged in the later fifth century – though his poem could, of course, have been hexameter, not elegiac.

My attention had been drawn to Simonides of Eretria by my keen and continuing interest in the corpus of elegiac poetry attributed to Theognis of Megara, a poet dated by the Suda to the third quarter of the sixth century. An important contribution to understanding the structure of that corpus was made by West's 1974 Studies, but I saw several problems in his solutions. I proposed some alternatives in 1997a (Chapter 6 in this volume), but that essay's chief focus was on how something excerpted from a longer text becomes a 'fragment', on the consequences of collecting such 'fragments' for the survival of complete texts, and on the probable history of the Theognidean corpus in the Hellenistic period. It was only a decade later that I realised the importance of the preservation in the corpus of three quite long poems, of which one is secured by quotations in Aristotle for Euenus of Paros, while the other two can be tentatively attributed to him, because all three are addressed to a Simonides. For me, this Simonides is probably Simonides of Eretria, and in 2012 I published a paper (2012a) entitled 'An early chapter in the history of the Theognidea' (Chapter 22 in this volume), arguing that Euenus, teacher of rhetoric and philosophy to the teenage sons of the Athenian magnate Callias towards the end of the fifth century, was responsible for assembling the long section of the Theognidea running from line 255 to around line 1002, including in it two of his own poems, which are among the few complete poems in the collection. I suggested that he assembled these elegies and (more often) excerpts from elegies so as to construct a morally edifying sympotic songbook for his elite Athenian pupils. This is a reconstruction in which I still believe; so too is the argument in the same paper that the homoerotic collection that follows 'Book 1' of Theognis in a single tenth-century Paris manuscript was not (as most scholars from Welcker to West have strangely believed) the outcome of Byzantine purging of indecent poems from 'Book 1', but a separate collection with a different history of transmission. That this short homoerotic collection was also assembled by Euenus now seems to me less likely, at least in the form that I then proposed.

So far I have said nothing about my interest in *iambus*. For that too 1974 was an important year, not only because of West's discussion in *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus*, where he suggested that the characters in *iambi* might be stock figures in traditional stories, but also because of his publication together with Reinhold Merkelbach of a Cologne papyrus on which



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were written the last fifty-four lines of one epode (fr. 196a) and the first five lines of another (fr. 188), secured for Archilochus by Hephaestion's quotation of the first two of these five lines. The longer fragment (fr. 196), narrating to an addressee whose name cannot be recovered the speaker's seduction of a girl in a flowery meadow, commanded more general attention, including, of course, in my own lectures and even in a school talk I gave. But it was on the shorter fragment that in 1987 I first published ('One that got away. Archilochus 188-192 W and Horace Odes i 4 & 5', Chapter 2 in this volume), arguing that metre indicated that its vituperative opening, vilifying an ex-lover, and an ensuing recollection of earlier infatuation were followed by a reference to the local story of a shipwrecked man saved by a dolphin, a story already known as one told by Archilochus from Plutarch and from an inscription on Paros, both quoting one line in an unusual metre. Metre and theme, I suggested, were picked up by Horace in Odes 1.4 and 5. That interest in Horace's reception of early Greek poetry has remained with me, and forms part of one of my most recent papers (2019a, Chapter 35 in this volume, noticed further in this Introduction).

Despite my caveats in 1986a (Chapter 1 in this volume) I was more inclined to take the dramatis personae of these two Cologne epodes as in some degree biographical than as stock or wholly fictional characters, but I saw no need to elaborate my case in print once several scholars published refutations of West's position, notably Carey 1986. What did draw my attention, however, was the contradiction between, on the one hand, the perception in much ancient testimony and modern scholarship of iambus as a genre chiefly characterised by invective, and, on the other hand, the surviving fragments, where narrative had a dominant role. For Archilochus this had already been clear since Lobel's publication in 1954 of P.Oxy. 2310 and 2311, the former certainly, the latter probably bearing a seduction narrative in iambic trimeters (frr. 23 and 48). The longer Cologne fragment (fr. 196a) reinforced the importance of narrative (in this case addressed, like that of fr. 48, to a friend), and in 2001b I presented a review of the early iambic corpus that emphasised its role ('Early Greek iambic poetry: the importance of narrative', Chapter 7 in this volume). How invective came to dominate later ancient perceptions of iambus was later well demonstrated by Andrea Rotstein (Rotstein 2010). That invective was also, of course, an important component remains undeniable, and that invective-laden epodes were used by Archilochus in political conflicts on Paros or Thasos was the major contention of 2008b, 'Sex and politics in Archilochus' poetry'

⁷ For others see Brown 1997, 40 n.102.



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(Chapter 12 in this volume). That paper also claimed *Theognidea* 1123–8 for Archilochus (a poet otherwise surprisingly absent from an elegiac collection which has pieces of two of our other three seventh-century elegists, Tyrtaeus and Mimnermus), and proposed that its comparison of its singer with a returning Odysseus who slaughtered Penelope's suitors was a threat to a love-rival Euphron, who may be named both there (reading Εὖφρων for εὔφρων in 1126) and at fr. 23.11 (ἀμφὶ δ' εὔφ[ρονος]).

My interest in the question of fictionality raised by surviving *iambus*, particularly by the longer Cologne fragment (196a), induced me to contribute to a conference on 'Lies and fiction' ('Lies, fiction and slander in early Greek poetry', 1993a, Chapter 4 in this volume). I did not, however, limit this investigation to *iambus*, but also made my only published foray into early Greek epic poetry, a subject into whose complexities I had been drawn by regularly teaching Homer to students in their first term (a class I gave for forty-two years, since I never took a sabbatical in Michaelmas Term). I challenged one of the prevailing orthodoxies, that epic bards were perceived by themselves and by others as repositories of truth, attempting like Serbo-Croatian singers to reproduce songs in the form they had learned them from others. Instead I put the case for Hesiod's *Theogony*'s showing full cognisance of the bard's ability to create fictions, a case reinforced, in my view, by the bard-like fictional narratives about himself spun by Odysseus in the *Odyssey*.

Many of my other papers published since 1993 have exploration of elegiac and iambic poetry at their core. In 1993b, 'Greek table-talk before Plato' (Chapter 5 in this volume), recognising the impossibility of recovering conversations that took place in an oral society before the medium of written prose was available to record them, I made inferences from surviving sympotic poetry (with a preliminary glance at Homer) concerning the subjects and modes of party-conversation in the archaic period. Praise (as is clear from Xenophanes' prescriptions for a well-ordered symposium in his fr. B1) was a frequent form of utterance in symposia, and in 2002b (Chapter 9 in this volume) I explored the diverse objects and techniques of sympotic praise. In 2007a, 'Early expatriates: displacement and exile in archaic poetry' (Chapter 10 in this volume), a paper that came out of a Corpus Christi College classical seminar on 'exile', I explored poetic responses to voluntary or involuntary departure from one's place of birth

⁸ Another exception is my review in the *Oxford Magazine* 1963 of G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer*, in which I questioned his attribution (p. 272) to Semonides of Amorgos of what *P.Oxy.* 3965 has now shown to be by Simonides of Ceos (frr. 19–20).

 $^{^{9}\,}$ A French version of this paper was published as 2003a (not reprinted in this volume).