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THE “WOMEN’S TRADITION” IN GREEK POETRY

LAUREL BOWMAN

SCHOLARSHIP ON THE ANCIENT GREEK FEMALE POETS has flourished in recent years.¹ It has become increasingly common for scholars working in this field to speak of a “women’s tradition” in Greek poetry, and to attempt exegesis of what female-authored poetry survives in terms of such a tradition.² Even those scholars who do not refer specifically to a “women’s tradition” tend to describe women’s poetry from the ancient world in terms that assume one.³ Definitions of such a tradition vary from a wide-ranging oral poetic tradition nurtured in the women’s communities of archaic, classical, and Hellenistic Greece, to a literary relationship between female poets who engage with the work of other female poets in their own.

This paper will examine the evidence that has been used to support the hypothesis of the existence of a “women’s poetic tradition” in the poetry of ancient

¹A brief survey of recent bibliography (setting aside the burgeoning field of Sappho studies), will serve to demonstrate this. For a general overview of the subject, see Snyder 1989. For the female poets of the Hellenistic period, see Luck 1954 and Barnard 1978. Most recently Stehle (1997) discusses Korinna and Sappho with reference to gender in performance and Gutzwiller (1998) discusses Nossis and Anyte in detail in her treatment of Hellenistic epigram. For individual poets: on Korinna, see especially Page 1953; Guillon 1958; West 1970; Allen and Frel 1972; Skinner 1983; West 1990; Clayman 1993; Rayor 1993; Henderson 1995. On Anyte, see Baale 1903; Gow and Page 1965; Geoghegan 1979; Gutzwiller 1993; Werner 1994. On Nossis, see Maas 1936; Carugno 1957; Smerdel 1965; Mosino 1967; Cazzaniga 1972; Gigante 1974; White 1980; Cavallini 1981; Degani 1981; Specchia 1981; Skinner 1987, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 2001; Snyder 1989; Furiani 1991; Giangrande 1992; Gutzwiller 1997; Bowman 1998. On Erinna, see Bowra 1953; Levin 1962; West 1977; Pomeroy 1978; Arthur 1980; Skinner 1982, 2001; Rauk 1989; Gutzwiller 1992, 1997; Stehle 2001.

²Barnard (1978: 204) claims that there was a “tradition of women poets in the Peloponnese” and argues (1978: 213) that Hellenistic female poets “follow the tradition of Sappho” in their writing. Snyder (1989: 156) expresses hope that her book has pointed the way to “the origins of the tradition of women writers in the West.” Skinner (1993: 136) argues that there existed a “widespread female oral tradition handed down from mother to daughter.” Hallett (1993: 56, 59) accepts the existence of both an “orally-rooted Greek female poetic tradition” and the “female poetic tradition [Sappho’s poetry] inspired.” Gutzwiller (1998: 86; cf. 1997: 203, 219–220) argues that the poet Nossis’ self-epitaph is “a plea for . . . a place within the tradition of women’s poetry,” and that Nossis’ work “owes much to the tradition of women’s poetry in early Greek culture.”

³Rayor (1993: 222), for example, argues that Korinna’s poetry is “woman-identified,” which she follows Diaz-Diocaretz (1985) in defining as work which “construct[s] a dialogue with other women’s texts.” Such a discourse “focuses on women’s experience, repossesses tradition, and addresses a female audience.” If Korinna’s poetry is constructing a dialogue with other women’s texts, as Rayor here describes, it is actively part of a women’s poetic tradition. Stehle (1997: 322) believes that we should think of Sappho as “a representative of a now-lost system of women’s discourse about women,” i.e., a women’s poetic tradition. Williamson (1995: 16) argues that the idea of a “specifically female” poetic inheritance does not arise until the Hellenistic era.

Greece, the theoretical basis for this hypothesis, and its use in the criticism of surviving female-authored poetry. I will distinguish two models for a women's poetic tradition: a segregated women's oral poetic tradition, and a text-based women's poetic tradition. I argue that the existence of a segregated women's oral poetic tradition is unverifiable. This is not to say that such a tradition cannot have existed, but only that its historical existence is not ascertainable on the available evidence, and any attempt to discern its influence on extant women's poetry must consequently be no more than speculative. There is, however, ample evidence of a women's poetic tradition defined as a text-based literary relationship between surviving works of female poets, beginning with Sappho. Establishment of the parameters and functions of this text-based tradition may be of assistance in criticism of surviving female-authored Greek poetry.

I. A POETIC TRADITION?

"What happens if one tries to write, or to teach, or to think or even to read without the sense of a tradition?"

"Why nothing at all happens, just nothing. You cannot write or teach or think or even read without imitation, and what you imitate is what another person has done, that person's writing or teaching or thinking or reading. Your relation to what informs that person is tradition, for tradition is influence that extends past one generation, a carrying-over of influence." (Bloom 1975a: 32)

A poetic tradition is a group of poets bound together in the relationship of influence Bloom describes here. That is, it comprises the work of a series of artists who refer to their predecessors and contemporaries in a continuous web of allusion and influence.

Influence between poets creates a poetic tradition, and only demonstration of such influence constitutes demonstration of a tradition. Similarities in location, era, or sex of the poets do not in themselves make a poetic tradition, though they may increase the likelihood that one existed. Absence of evidence of influence does not, however, constitute proof that a tradition did not exist, especially in study of the ancient world. Given how little ancient poetry has survived to our day, it is probable that many artistic traditions flourished and died in the ancient world without leaving a trace for the modern audience. Only a few examples now survive even of very popular, well-funded, and publicly-performed art forms, as for example tragedy. An orally-transmitted poetic tradition confined to a community largely segregated from the public world, such as the subculture of Greek women, would be unlikely to have left much evidence of its existence.

It is easy to believe that Greek women's subculture had its own tradition of song. Women's lives were lived in large part separately from those of men, and **there** is ample evidence of a rich religious and cultural women's tradition from which men were excluded. Such a subculture would have had ample

opportunity to develop its own poetry and songs. There is evidence that Greek women sang at the loom, during women's religious festivals, at work, and at other communal activities in which men did not join. There is fragmentary evidence of folk songs sung by women in the archaic and classical periods, including one that seems to have originated on Lesbos in Sappho's own time (*PMG* 869, and see Skinner 1993: 136). Evidence from cultures other than Greek, though it requires cautious treatment, suggests that it is a rare culture in which women do not sing. We need only recall that of the 12,500 songs and poems recorded in Yugoslavia by M. Parry and A. B. Lord in their research into the production of oral poetry, 11,000 were women's songs—in which the researchers had no interest (Lord 1948: 40). Though it seems, then, very likely that ancient Greek women's subculture had an internal tradition of song (cf. Gutzwiller 1997: 203), the existence of this tradition is, for lack of evidence, difficult to demonstrate.

The likely existence of an internal tradition of song in the women's subculture, however, does not mean that the surviving female-authored poems are examples of such a tradition. In order to demonstrate that a poet participates in a tradition, it must be shown that the poet is influenced by that tradition in some important way. I will argue that there is no certain evidence for the influence of a segregated oral tradition of women's poetry on the extant female-authored poems, and that those elements of female-authored poetry which have been ascribed to influence by a segregated oral tradition can be explained on other grounds.

The most widespread model of a "women's poetic tradition" to be advanced in recent scholarship is that developed most fully by Marilyn Skinner and cited largely with approval by other scholars.⁴ She argues that Greek society nurtured "a lively and continuous tradition of female authorship" from the archaic through the Hellenistic ages (Skinner 1993: 128). In this model, the female poetic tradition was nurtured in the largely segregated female subculture of ancient Greece and orally transmitted from one generation of women to the next.⁵ Compositions in this tradition were performed in song or, in the Hellenistic period, in readings, to a female or primarily female audience.⁶ Poetry from this tradition is argued to be distinguished by style, subject matter, and alternative

⁴ See most recently Gutzwiller 1997: 203.

⁵ Skinner (1993: 135) argues that "the compositions of Sappho and other women poets . . . formed part of a widespread female oral tradition handed down from mother to daughter, and that those compositions served . . . as a mechanism for opposing patriarchy." Women will have had the opportunity to develop a woman-centered perspective, she argues, because they were segregated from the larger public sphere except on ritual occasions, and relatively illiterate.

⁶ For Skinner's arguments for a predominantly female primary audience for female-authored poetry, see Skinner 1983: 13; 1987; 1991a: 81, 95; 1991b: 20–22; 1993. In an early article on Korinna (1983: 9), Skinner describes the "established tradition" of Greek women's poetry as "poetry aimed exclusively at female hearers, preoccupied with quintessentially feminine experience," and names Korinna and Sappho as the "explicitly certified representative[s]" of that tradition.

modes of subjectivity from the poetry of the public, and predominantly male-authored, poetic tradition.⁷ Deliberate and conscious assertions by female poets of their relationship to other female poets are explained as referring to their common ties in a female poetic tradition. The Hellenistic poet Nossis' self-epitaph (*A.P.* 7.718), for example, prominently cites Sappho, and is consequently held on this theory to be an acknowledgement by Nossis that her poetry is rooted in a women's poetic tradition (Skinner 1989: 7). The poetry of Sappho and other female Greek poets would in this model represent in mainstream Greek literature a women's poetic tradition that was otherwise for the most part ignored by the dominant culture. This model of a female poetic tradition, which I will term the "segregated tradition," has been adopted in whole or in part by several other scholars.⁸

Another model of a women's poetic tradition, which I will call the "text-based tradition," seeks to trace influence between female poets whose work has been preserved in the mainstream tradition of Greek poetry,⁹ and does not hold that these poets necessarily represent a now lost segregated women's poetic tradition. This model is of more immediate use in the criticism of the surviving female-authored poetry, as it does not depend on assumption of the prior existence of an oral tradition for which evidence is lacking.

The argument that there was a women's poetic tradition in classical and Hellenistic Greece has been strongly influenced by the excellent work done in the 1980s by readers of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century female poets and novelists.¹⁰ These scholars demonstrated that previous work on female writers of this era had located them in an almost exclusively male literary history. Only the influence on their work by male artists and their influence on males in turn was noted. Female authors' reliance and influence on other female artists was passed over in silence.

⁷For the difference between the poetry of the dominant tradition and Sappho in particular, see, for example, Rissman 1980; Stehle 1981; Winkler 1990; Snyder 1991; Skinner 1993. For Korinna's alternative treatment of myth, see Rayor 1993. For Nossis' differences from the dominant public poetic tradition, and her dependence on Sappho, see Skinner 1989.

⁸Several other scholars assume or argue for a predominantly female audience for female-authored poetry. Snyder (1991: 1), for example, argues that some of Sappho's poetry must have been intended for a woman-only audience. Winkler (1990: 165) argues that Sappho's poetry was the product of a female subculture, and was shared primarily or perhaps only with women. Rayor (1993: 229) argues that Greek women poets' primary audience was "their close community of other women." Gutzwiller (1997) reiterates that Sappho's poems were performed in "a private setting" (202), and implies that this setting was female (208).

⁹See, for example, Gutzwiller, who argues for a tradition of female authors who are a tradition in virtue of the fact that they each construct a feminine poetic *persona*, focus on women's concerns, and allude in their poetry to the work of other female poets who do the same (Gutzwiller 1998). In her discussion of Nossis (1998: 86), for example, she points out Nossis' reliance on Sappho and possibly Erinna, both also poets some of whose work survives.

¹⁰See especially Moers 1976; Showalter 1991: 271–273; Spender 1986. On the isolation of the female author in traditional literary history, see Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 50.

The existence of female artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is, however, easily verifiable. A study of their influence on later female authors is made possible, and in fact imperative, by the availability of their work, and of passages from their diaries and correspondence that mention the influence of female predecessors.¹¹ It is one thing to restore to their proper place in a literary tradition novelists and poets who are known to have existed and whose work has demonstrably, both by internal evidence and biographical data, influenced later authors. It is another to assume a literary tradition for which we do not have such evidence, in order to attach to it the female artists who do survive and explain their work thereby. The latter course runs the risk, among others, of ghettoizing and trivializing what women's poetry has survived.¹²

Skinner's (1993) article "Women and Language in Archaic Greece, or, Why is Sappho a Woman?" seeks to provide theoretical support for the model of the segregated women's poetic tradition. To a model of a women's poetic tradition based on the research conducted in recent years on other oral poetic traditions, Skinner adds a survey of French feminist thought of the last two decades. Several French feminist scholars, of whom Irigaray has been the most influential for North American classical scholarship, argue that language, and the entire Western symbolic order, is a male-ordered construct.¹³ "Man" locates himself as the subject of all discourse, and "woman" is relegated to the subordinate object position, and defined only as "not-man." If, however, all use of language entails using a male subject position, it is impossible to recover female subjectivity from even a female-authored text, since even a woman must speak "as a man" in order to speak at all (Skinner 1993: 125–129).

However, in an interview given in 1977 (Irigaray 1985), Irigaray herself seemed to provide an escape from this linguistic model's apparently unavoidable conclusion that the female voice is irrecoverable from ancient texts. Here Irigaray hesitantly suggested that it might be possible for women to speak as women if they are in a female-only group.¹⁴ Skinner (1993: 130–131) uses this suggestion

¹¹Moers (1976: 42–66), for example, traces the influence of Elizabeth Barrett Browning on Dickinson, and that of George Sand on Browning and George Eliot. Spender (1986) studies the development of the English novel through the many female novelists previously neglected in literary histories.

¹²Baym (1991: 155) points out the grave risk involved in beginning with a "theory of difference" between male-authored and female-authored texts. All observed differences will be ascribed to the gender difference whose importance is assumed *a priori* and difference will inevitably be observed. Gillian Beer (1989: 65) discusses the theoretical confusion inherent in the pretense that women's writing is autonomous. On the dangers inherent in hypothesizing, or mandating, a women's canon, see Altieri 1990: 63–65 and Aiken 1986: 296.

¹³Skinner (1993: 125–126) singles out Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray for particular attention. Their position generally accepts as its basis Lacanian psychoanalytic theory; see Mitchell 1982 and Moi 1985: 99–101 for brief and lucid exegesis. Irigaray, however, should not be taken strictly as an apostle of Lacan, from whose school, *l'école freudienne*, she was expelled in 1974 (Moi 1985: 127).

¹⁴Skinner (1993: 130) cites Irigaray (1991b: 137): "It is certain that with women-among-themselves . . . something of a speaking (as) woman is heard." Irigaray did not provide a theoretical

as the basis for her model of a women's poetic tradition, arguing that women can be restored to the Greek literary tradition as the "historical consequence of women-among-themselves speaking (as) woman." A women's poetic tradition is thus possible, Skinner argues, if we imagine it as originating in a segregated community of women. Female-authored poetry that preserves a female subjective stance could therefore be produced, as long as it was composed and initially performed in secluded female-only groups. This poetry would in Skinner's model (1993: 132) be disseminated to the entire community by later public performance. As society became literate, women's poetry, so disseminated, would acquire a legitimate, although subordinate, place in the written tradition. Meanwhile, an oral tradition of women's poetry, including the works of Sappho and other female poets, would continue to be handed down independently from mother to daughter within the segregated women's communities (1993: 135). The works of these female poets would thus continue to offer women an "authentic female subject position," which in turn explains the emergence of other Greek women poets in succeeding centuries (1993: 136). To summarize Skinner's position, she argues that the Greek female poets whose work survives are the products of a segregated women's poetic tradition. Therefore, on the basis of Irigaray's suggestion that women can speak as women within female-only groups, it is theoretically possible to recover the female voice from their texts.

Skinner (1993: 129–130), however, accepts the Lacanian linguistic model with some reasonable misgivings. Indeed, Irigaray's suggestion that speaking as a woman is possible in a female-only group is untenable in the terms of her own theoretical framework. If language is inherently masculine, as she argues elsewhere,¹⁵ women cannot speak as women when they use it, even in a female-only group. If the inherent masculinity of language is a product of infant psychological development,¹⁶ its character cannot be altered by the absence of men from the room. Irigaray's model is thus flawed on its own terms, and cannot be used as the theoretical support for the legitimate goal of recovering the female voice from ancient texts.

Skinner's adoption of Irigaray's remark leads her to underline the importance of a separate women's oral tradition in which an authentic female subject position could be preserved. But this attempt to preserve both Lacanian theory and the possibility of an authentic female subject position in ancient texts leads to a model of a women's poetic tradition that is based on an untenable theoretical position, and moreover has unwelcome consequences. If we accept as theoretically valid the

framework for this suggestion, which appears in its context to be rather an observation than an elaboration of the basic theory.

¹⁵Irigaray 1991a: 131: "woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to 'masculine' systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and to other women."

¹⁶Mitchell 1982: 5.

position that only in female-only groups can women speak as women, then only female-authored poetry which originated in a segregated women's community can reflect an authentic female subject position. Any female-authored poetry that does not seem to originate in such a community must then be rejected from consideration, as failing to preserve a genuine "female voice."

Skinner's Lacanian model is the most radical construction of a women's poetic tradition. Other scholars argue the case for a segregated women's poetic tradition without relying on a psychologically-based linguistic model,¹⁷ on the basis of the internal evidence of surviving female-authored poems. The evidence used by these scholars to support the hypothesis that a segregated women's poetic tradition existed, and that the surviving female poets are examples of that tradition, can be divided into the following general categories: 1) the list of names of female poets; 2) the focus on "women's concerns" in female-authored poetry; 3) the evidence of women in performance; and 4) references in the work of female poets to the work of other female poets.

II. THE LIST

The most common form of evidence used to show the existence of a segregated tradition is the list of names of female poets.¹⁸ Among ancient authors, Antipater of Thessalonica's list of nine female poets has been used as evidence of a female canon known in Alexandrian times:

Τάσδε θεογλώσσους Ἑλικὴν ἔθρεψε γυναῖκας
 ὕμνοις, καὶ Μακεδῶν Πιερίας σκόπελος,
 Πρῆξιλλαν, Μοιρῶ, Ἀνύτης στόμα, θήλυν Ὅμηρον,
 Λεσβιάδων Σαπφῶ κόσμον εὐπλοκάμων,
 Ἥρινναν, Τελέσιλλαν ἀγακλέα, καὶ σέ, Κόριννα,
 θοῦριν Ἀθηναίης ἀσπίδα μελψαμένην,
 Νοσσίδα θηλύγλωσσον, ἰδὲ γλυκυαχέα Μύρτιν,
 πάσας ἀενάων ἐργάτιδας σελίδων.
 ἔννεά μὲν Μούσας μέγας Οὐρανός, ἔννεά δ' αὐτάς
 Γαῖα τέκεν, θνατοῖς ἄφθιτον εὐφροσύναν. (A.P. 9.26)

¹⁷ See, for example, Snyder 1991, Winkler 1990, and Rayor 1993, all arguing that the primary audience for women's poetry was the community of women.

¹⁸ To this may be added the appeal to authority, in the form of the citation of a list of modern authors who have produced a list of female poets in support of the argument that a tradition existed. Skinner (1993: 128–129) thus cites the work of Snyder (1989) and Baale (1903), and Skinner (1989: 11) cites Hallett (1979: 460) and Barnard (1978) in support of her thesis that a segregated women's poetic tradition existed in Greece. Hallett (1993: 56) similarly claims that Snyder (1989) illuminates a "female poetic tradition." But of the authors cited, Baale, the earliest (1903), simply lists the names of all female poets mentioned in ancient authors up to the end of the Roman era. Snyder (1989) and Barnard (1978) similarly merely list the female poets of, respectively, the classical and Hellenistic worlds, without demonstrating links between them. Hallett (1979: 460 and n. 54) also argues for a similarity in the subject matter of female poets.

These are the divine-voiced women that Helicon fed with songs,
 and the rock of Macedonian Pieria:
 Praxilla, Moero, the mouth of Anyte, the female Homer,
 Sappho, glory of the beautiful-haired Lesbian women,
 Erinna, renowned Telesilla, and you, Korinna,
 who sang the onrushing shield of Athena,
 female-tongued Nossis, and sweet-sounding Myrtis,
 all craftswomen of eternal pages.
 Great Ouranos gave birth to nine Muses, and these nine
 Gaia bore, deathless delight for mortals.

Skinner asserts that the epigram is based on an Alexandrian “canonical roster of major women poets” (Skinner 1993: 128; cf. Gutzwiller 1997: 202). She argues that this list is parallel to epigrams *A.P.* 9.184 and *A.P.* 9.571, which list the nine lyric poets (eight males and Sappho) generally thought to be canonical.

The use of the word “canon” to refer to any list of poets, male or female, from the Hellenistic period is of course anachronistic (Pfeiffer 1968: 206–208), but a list of authors can have the cultural authority of a canon without being so termed. As the term is now used, a list of authors or works can be considered “canonical” in force if the knowledge of its contents is an important index of an individual’s cultural literacy, and if those texts form an integral part of the culture’s literary tradition—that is, if engagement with those texts, by influence, direct reference, or reaction, is necessary in any later work likely to be taken seriously.¹⁹

It is clear that *A.P.* 184 and *A.P.* 9.571 list nine lyric poets who were “canonical” according to the above criteria, on the basis of evidence external to the epigrams themselves (i.e., allusion, influence, and direct reference by later authors, and treatment by Hellenistic scholars). It is certainly possible, though not necessary, that Antipater’s list of nine female poets in *A.P.* 9.26 was written on the model of *A.P.* 184 and *A.P.* 9.571.²⁰ But that does not make *A.P.* 9.26 also a canonical list. Evidence external to the epigram of the cultural importance and literary influence of these poets would be necessary to establish their canonicity, either to

¹⁹For the importance of canonical literature to a literary tradition, see Bloom 1975a: 32–38 and 1975b: 96–121; Kolodny 1985a. Of the scholarship done in the last thirty years on canonical literature, and its relationship to female-authored works, see especially deJean 1988 and Rutherford 1992 on the effect of standardized school curricula in canon formation; Baym 1985 on the importance of critical schools of thought in canon formation; Robinson 1985 on different feminist challenges to the canon; Russ 1983: 62–67 on methods of excluding female authors from the canon; Showalter 1985: 243–270 on the different female authorial responses to canonical literature; Smith 1984 on the cultural influences on and function of the canon; Zetzel 1984 and Winders 1991 on the subversion of the canon; and Kolodny 1985b: 46–51 and Robinson 1985: 106–108 on the possibility of alternative literary traditions (and canons).

²⁰Though as Gow and Page (1965: 2.42, it ad 236) point out, other possible analogies are to *A.P.* 9.58, a list of the seven wonders of the world, or *A.P.* 7.81 and *A.P.* 9.366, lists of the seven sages. The number of poets in *A.P.* 9.184, *A.P.* 9.571, and *A.P.* 9.26 is presumably, and in 9.26 consciously, chosen with reference to the number of the Muses (*A.P.* 9.26.9–10).

the mainstream tradition of Greek poetry, or to a segregated tradition of women's poetry. Nor can *A.P.* 9.26 be itself used as evidence of the existence of a segregated tradition of women's poetry for which the poets it names can then be assumed to be canonical; this is a circular argument. Whatever model Antipater used for *A.P.* 9.26, to argue further that the poets he listed there were canonical (in the above sense) to some tradition, and to try to adduce from the list of names characteristics of the tradition assumed, is impossible without more information than we have.

III. COMMON INTERESTS AND APPROACHES IN WOMEN'S POETRY

It has been argued that the focus by female poets on women's concerns, and their use of approaches and subjective modes not found in male-authored poetry, shows that they are inheritors of a common women's poetic tradition in which such concerns and approaches are frequent.²¹ Female-authored poetry does not, however, always focus on "women's concerns," nor does it display approaches or subjective modes differing appreciably from those of male-authored poetry. Even when it does, these similarities need not be attributed to participation in a segregated female poetic tradition.

Some female poets do concern themselves with the details of women's lives, and with relationships between women or within groups of women. Sappho certainly does so in much of her extant poetry, and, it has been further argued, shows evidence of woman-centered co-operative erotics in her love poetry.²² Erinna, who writes about her childhood games with her friend Baucis and her grief at the other young woman's death shortly after her marriage, also focuses on the lives and relationships of women.²³ Nossis writes dedicatory epigrams in which women's gifts are prominent.²⁴ Other female poets, however, do not foreground women's experience or their concerns. Korinna seems (in what fragments are left to us) to be most concerned with retelling Boeotian legends in which women,

²¹For example, Skinner 1989: 11: "[Nossis] places herself squarely in the tradition of Greek women poets headed by Sappho, a tradition that assigns the highest aesthetic value to the celebration of beauty and erotic feeling." Cf. Hallett 1979: 460: "What remains of Greek 'women's' poetry . . . celebrates, in strikingly affirmative fashion, not only female beauty but also the loveliness of nature and all things divine, the pleasures residing in day-to-day living, the emotional rewards deriving from close companionship." For woman-centered subjectivity and co-operative rather than adversarial erotics in Sappho and their origin in a female poetic tradition, see especially Skinner 1993: 131–135.

²²On Sappho's concentration on women's relationships and concerns, see Hallett 1979; Stigers (Stehle) 1979; Stehle 1981; Winkler 1990; duBois 1984; Snyder 1991. On woman-centered or alternative modes of subjectivity in Sappho, see especially Winkler 1990; duBois 1984; Skinner 1989, 1991a, 1993; Greene 1994, 1996b; Stehle 1996. On co-operative erotic paradigms in Sappho, see most recently Greene 1994 and 1996b; see *contra* Carson 1996.

²³On the presentation of women's lives and relationships in Erinna's poetry, see West 1977; Barnard 1978; Pomeroy 1978; Arthur 1980; Stehle 2001.

²⁴On Nossis' focus on women's concerns, relationships, and erotics, see especially Barnard 1978: 210–213; White 1980; Skinner 1987, 1989, 1991a, 1991b; Gutzwiller 1998: 74–88. On Nossis' use of an authoritative female voice, see Skinner 2001.

when they appear, perform the usual female functions of bearing male heroes to divine rapists and rescuing Zeus from Kronos. This type of story, which reinforces Greek gender stereotypes, is also known to us from poets like Hesiod in the predominantly male-authored public poetic tradition.²⁵ Anyte was a highly influential and innovative early Hellenistic epigrammatist, who may have been the first poet to publish her epigrams in book form and the first to create an authorial *persona* for herself through a series of epigrams. Her interest in the landscape of Arcadia and its inhabitants, as well as her use of women, children, and animals as subjects of her work, fundamentally altered the genre of epigram.²⁶ However, her innovations are not for the most part gender-dependent, nor do they seem to arise from a women's poetic tradition.

The work of many, even most, female poets gave prominence to women's concerns. This choice of subject matter was undoubtedly based in part on their individual life experiences, but it will have been influenced also by the poetic tradition of which they formed a part. It is not necessary, however, to believe that a tradition that valorized women's concerns and suggested them as a fit subject for poetry must have been a segregated women's poetic tradition. The mainstream tradition also validated women's writing about themselves, as can be seen by its preservation of female-authored poems on women's concerns. Female poets who chose to write about women's concerns could have found ample antecedent and inspiration for this choice in the work of other female poets preserved in the public, text-based tradition.

All of the female poets whose work survives wrote poetry that used the forms—the genres, metres, style, and approaches—of the mainstream, that is, of the primarily male-authored public poetic tradition of the period in which they were writing. This is powerful evidence that they were not isolated from, but on the contrary very interested in and influenced by, the poetry of their mostly male peers and literary predecessors in the mainstream tradition.

IV. WOMEN'S POETIC PERFORMANCES

Arguments concerning the venue and audience of women's poetic performances have been used to support the hypothesis of a female poetic tradition. It is frequently argued that a segregated women-only group was the primary audience for female-authored poetry, and that surviving female-authored poetry reflects the interests and concerns of that audience. A segregated female poetic tradition of works composed for a female audience can then be imagined. This poetry would be passed down within the women's community from one generation to the next,

²⁵ See Skinner 1983 for a fuller exposition of this view; see Rayor 1993 for an appealing argument *contra*.

²⁶ See especially Gutzwiller 1993 for insightful discussion of Anyte's innovations in epigram and her influence on later Hellenistic poets (reprinted in revised form in Gutzwiller 1998: 54–74).

either memorised or modified by each new female performer, and influence the poetry produced by the next generation in turn.²⁷ Discussion along these lines has tended to focus on individual poets from which a general case is then made. Thus Skinner argues that Sappho's poetry responds exclusively to the concerns and experiences of her female audience (Skinner 1983: 13),²⁸ and argues that Nossis was "a woman who chose to speak specifically to members of her own sex" (Skinner 1991b: 20).²⁹ In an article on Korinna, Rayor similarly argues that Greek female poets in general wrote poetry "limited only by what they knew and by what interested their close community of other women" (Rayor 1993: 229). The ancient evidence used to support the argument of a female-only audience for women's poetry includes *παρθένεια*, individual poets, and references to female predecessors.

Some aspects of these choral songs, composed for performance by young women at festivals, have been used to support the hypothesis of a female-only audience for women's poetry, and thus of a segregated women's poetic tradition. Although no complete *παρθένεια* remain, fragments often show characteristics suggestive of a segregated female community and of a feminine subjective stance. The singer, as a female chorus, has a feminine *persona* (e.g., Alc. *P. Louvre* E 3320.85–86) and the poems often contain addresses to other women (e.g., Alc. *P. Louvre* E 3320.73), as well as expressions of desire for other women who are extravagantly praised for their beauty (e.g., Alc. *P. Oxy.* 2387 fr. 3 col. ii). These characteristics can lead the reader to imagine an all-female performance context for the poems. Several scholars have made this argument. Judith Hallett, for example, uses primarily evidence from *παρθένεια* to support her argument for a segregated women's poetic tradition in which women's poetry was directed at a primarily female audience and had as one of its main functions the socialization of young women to their sexual role in marriage.³⁰

Rayor (1993: 223) uses Korinna fr. 655 (*P. Oxy.* 2370) to support her thesis that Korinna's poetry was directed towards a female audience. This argument in turn implicitly supports her contention that female-authored poetry in ancient Greece in general was directed to the female community (Rayor 1993: 229). In fr. 655, the poet, or narrator, claims to have been bidden by Terpsichore to sing to

²⁷For the fullest development of this construction of a female poetic tradition, see Skinner 1993: 136.

²⁸Hallett (1979: 460) cites LP 150 and 160 as evidence of Sappho's female audience. Snyder (1991: 1), while not arguing that all Sappho's poetry was intended for an exclusive female audience, argues that the most woman-centred of her poems, which have proven the most resistant to later interpretation, were intended for a private, woman-only audience. See also Winkler 1990: 165–166 on the possibly segregated audience for Sappho's poetry.

²⁹See also Skinner 1991b:20–21, where she argues that Nossis' poetry assumes a purely female audience, and Skinner 1991a: 95, where she argues that Sappho and Nossis both had female audiences who were different in kind from the "civic or sympotic contexts of male poetic activity."

³⁰Hallett 1979; see *contra* Parker 1993: 334.

the “white-robed women of Tanagra” (Ταναγραῶσσι λευκοπέπλως, 655.3), and says that she begins (the songs?) for the παρθένουσι (655.11). However, Korinna fr. 655 is clearly modelled on a παρθένειον, and the claim to sing to the women of Tanagra must be seen in that context.³¹

In fact, evidence from παρθένεια cannot be used to support the hypothesis either of a female-only audience, or of a segregated women’s poetic tradition. Composition of παρθένεια was not restricted to the women’s community, nor even to female authors. Though some παρθένεια are attributed to female poets,³² more surviving or attested examples of παρθένεια are male-authored.³³ Further, the addresses to and praise of other women, and the use of a feminine narrator’s *persona*, in παρθένεια do not indicate a female audience or a segregated women’s poetic tradition.

Choirs of unmarried women were a cultural institution in many places in the archaic and classical Greek world,³⁴ and may customarily have been led, or trained, by a married woman with high status in the community.³⁵ Stehle (1997: 71–107) has persuasively argued that παρθένεια gave young women the opportunity to “perform their gender” in socially acceptable ways. Performance of these choral songs allowed them to demonstrate their readiness for marriage, and taught them and represented to the community the acceptable ways of enacting feminine gender identity within the strictures of the culture. The audience of παρθένεια was not segregated, according to the available evidence, but rather comprised the whole community. Internal evidence in the poems or knowledge of the festival at which the chorus sang makes it clear that both men and women

³¹I accept the linguistic arguments of West (1970 and 1990) and Page (1953) and the recent discussion of Clayman (1993) supporting a third-century date for Korinna. See *contra* Allen and Frel 1972; Rayor 1993. The παρθένειον as a performance text for a chorus of young women had fallen into disuse by the Hellenistic period (see Calame 1997: 208–210). Korinna as an archaizing Hellenistic poet has imitated the genre of the παρθένειον in fr. 655, and therefore includes the mention of Tanagran women and girls.

³²For Sappho’s choral songs for young women, see Lardinois 1994 and 1996; Stehle 1997: 278–282. All of Sappho’s epithalamia can arguably be considered παρθένεια (104–117 *PMG*), and Lardinois argues that far more of Sappho’s poetry may be choral in nature than is usually thought. Fr. 17 and 96, for example, can easily be seen as fragments of παρθένεια. See especially Lardinois 1994: 61–73. Telesilla’s only fragment more than one word in length contains the address “ὦ κόραι” (Campbell fr. 717), which makes its source very likely to be a παρθένειον, but no ancient source attributes παρθένεια to her (see Calame 1997: 212–213). On Korinna fr. 1 (*P. Oxy.* 2370) as a possible παρθένειον, see most recently Stehle 1997: 100–104.

³³Alcm. *P. Louvre* E 3320 and *P. Oxy.* 2387 fr. 3 col. ii; Pindar fr. 94b SM; Bacchylides 13: 91–99 SM describes παρθένοι singing a hymn to Aegina. According to ps.-Plutarch (*Mor.* 1136f), παρθένεια by Simonides and Bacchylides were also known in Plato’s time.

³⁴See Calame 1997: 207–263 on the institutional and pedagogical functions of girls’ lyric choruses in Greece.

³⁵Elektra in Euripides’ *Elektra* refuses to go to a festival where she will be expected to “set up the chorus” (στᾶσα χοροῦς, *El.* 178) with the young women of Argos. Why she would be expected to play this role is not clear to the modern audience, but her position as a married woman and a daughter of the royal house may be factors. Cf. Stehle 1997: 87 and n. 54.

were present at the performance.³⁶ The praise of women’s beauty in Alcman, for example, is intended to direct the gaze of male audience-members to the marriageability of the young women of the chorus (cf. Stehle 1997: 36–39). The extant *παρθένειον* by Pindar (fr. 94b SM) was composed for the public festival of the Daphnephoria in Thebes.³⁷ In Korinna fr. 655 the poet claims to be singing to the women of Tanagra, but the next line continues *μέγα δ’ ἐμῆς γέγαθε πόλις / λιγουροκω[τί]λυσ ἐνοπῆς* (fr. 655.4), “and the city rejoiced greatly in my clear-tittering voice.” The context of a public performance is implied.

Since *παρθένεια* were also, and perhaps primarily, male-authored, their existence does not imply a segregated women’s poetic tradition. Since *παρθένεια* are known to have been performed for the whole community, the addresses to women they often contain cannot imply an exclusively or primarily female audience. Stehle argues that the young women in the chorus were simultaneously sexualized by the performance and divorced by it from knowledge or use of their own sexual power. Their sexual and reproductive powers were thus subordinated through the performance of *παρθένεια* to the needs of the male-centred dominant culture (Stehle 1997: 85–86). It was not the agenda of a segregated women’s community but that of the public culture which was served by the performance of *παρθένεια*.

If the feminine narrator’s *persona* and the addresses to and erotic praise of other women in *παρθένεια* do not imply a primary female audience for these poems, these characteristics in other poems cannot be held to imply *prima facie* a primary female audience or a segregated women’s poetic tradition. Individual female poets such as Sappho, Telesilla, Korinna, and Nossis have also been argued to have an exclusively or primarily female audience.

Sappho

There is much debate concerning the makeup of Sappho’s audience, with arguments made for every possibility from a female-only to an entirely public audience.³⁸ The main evidence for an exclusively female primary audience for at least some of Sappho’s poems is the frequent use of female addressees, and the focus in the poems on women’s interrelationships and concerns. Two texts in particular are cited in support of an exclusively female audience. In fr. 160V the

³⁶ See, for example, *Hymn Hom. Ven.* 119–120, in which Aphrodite, in her guise as a maiden, claims that she and many other young women were dancing and “a great crowd” (ὄμιλος ἀπείριτος, 120) circled around them, presumably to watch.

³⁷ For discussion, see Stehle 1997: 93.

³⁸ For a female-only audience, see, for example, Skinner 1983; for a different audience for different genres of poetry, see, for example, Snyder 1991 and especially Stehle 1997: 262–318; for a public audience for poetry which is argued to be at least possibly entirely choral, see Lardinois 1994 and 1996. See Parker 1993 and Stehle 1997: 262–318 for an overview of the discussion and bibliography. See Parker 1993 and Stehle 1997: 262–278 for a thorough refutation of the frequently expressed theories that Sappho’s milieu and audience were the equivalent of a girls’ school of which she was headmistress, and that the subjects of her erotic poetry were her students.

singer claims “I will now sing these things beautifully to my female companions” (ἑταίραις ταῖς ἕμαις . . . ἀείσω). In fr. 150V the singer, whom Maximus of Tyre identifies as Sappho (Max. Tyr. 18.9), identifies her household as one of those who serve the Muses (μοισσοπόλων). Fr. 71V (*P. Oxy.* 1787 fr. 6) seems to claim that “sweet song” (μέλ[ο]ς τι γλυκέρων) is an attribute of the group (of women?) associated with Sappho.³⁹ Fr. 55V condemns another woman to ignominy in death because she does not share in the roses of Pieria, i.e., in poetry.⁴⁰ These passages taken together give reason to believe that there was a circle of female companions associated with Sappho, that this group valued poetry and song, and that Sappho, perhaps, was not the only poet in the group.

To argue on the basis of fr. 150 or 160V, however, that all of Sappho’s poetry must have had an exclusively or even a primarily female audience, is surely to overstate the case.⁴¹ Lardinois argues to the contrary that a case can be made that all of Sappho’s poetry was performed for a public audience, either chorally or with choral support, and singles out for special attention precisely the “erotic” poems⁴² which are often assumed to have had a private female audience. Both Stehle (1997: 262–318) and Snyder (1991), on different grounds, divide Sappho’s poetry into three broad categories, and assign a different audience to each category; both give a female audience (or readership) to only one of the three categories.⁴³ This approach, which acknowledges the variety of genres, subjects, and metres of Sappho’s extant poetry, and the much wider variety of the work attested for her,⁴⁴ seems more likely to reflect the historical reality of Sappho’s poetic performance than one that assigns a uniform audience, whether exclusively female or exclusively public, to all her work.

In keeping with the hypothesis that Sappho’s audience was entirely or mostly one of segregated women, it has been argued that Sappho was the inheritor of a long women’s oral poetic tradition.⁴⁵ Even if she did have a segregated audience for some poems, and an oral tradition of women’s songs behind her, however, the oral poetic tradition in which she participated was not confined to women, but was shared with male poets. Sappho inherited from her tradition not only—perhaps not even primarily—content, but also genre, language, and the many metres she

³⁹ On this passage, see especially Stehle 1997: 286–287.

⁴⁰ Οὐ γὰρ πεδέχθη βρόδων / τῶν ἐκ Πιερίας, fr. 55.2–3.

⁴¹ Hallett (1979: 460) and Skinner (1983: 9 and n. 5) argue for an exclusively female audience for Sappho, and Winkler (1990: 165) does not rule out the possibility.

⁴² For example, fr. 31 and fr. 96 LP, with Lardinois 1996: 162–163 and 167–169.

⁴³ In fact they divide the poems into different categories, and assign a female audience to different poems. Their point of agreement is that we should not assume that all of Sappho’s poetry was aimed at, or heard by, the same audience in each case. See also Parker 1993, supporting this approach.

⁴⁴ The Suda, for example, says she wrote nine books of lyric poetry, epigrams, elegiacs, iambics, and monodies.

⁴⁵ Skinner (1993: 131) says that Sappho will have inherited her position from “a long line of female predecessors.” Stehle (1997: 322) agrees, arguing that we must envision a tradition behind Sappho’s poetry, and think of her as a “representative of a now-lost system of women’s discourse about women.”

employed, none of which are found in her poetry alone, but also in the poetry of her male contemporaries and successors. Alcaeus, for example, of Sappho’s generation, uses many of the same metres found in Sappho’s poetry. If, as must be the case, Sappho is the inheritor of a long oral poetic tradition, it is one Alcaeus inherited also, at least in part. Sappho’s inherited tradition, like her audience, may have been in part segregated, though there is no firm evidence for this, but on the evidence of her use of metre, it cannot have been wholly so.

Telesilla

Pausanias and Plutarch say that Telesilla was admired “among women” (ἐν ταῖς γυναιξίν, Paus. 2.20.8)⁴⁶ or “by women” (ὑπὸ τῶν γυναικῶν, Plut. *Mor.* 245d) for her poetry. This could indicate a separate female audience. Pausanias and Plutarch both write six centuries after Telesilla’s *floruit*, and it is difficult to know the reliability of their source(s) and their interpretation. All the preserved fragments of Telesilla are on mythological subjects, where the subject matter can be ascertained,⁴⁷ and one, which addresses “κόρραι” (*PMG* 717) may be a *παρθένειον*. The predominance of mythical references could very easily be an accident of preservation, since mythological data are most likely to be preserved by authors like Pausanias and Apollodorus, sources of three of the six relevant fragments.⁴⁸ However, choral songs are after epic the genre most likely to use myth. The extant fragments thus suggest that at least some of Telesilla’s poetry took the form of choral song and *παρθένεια*, which likely had a public rather than an exclusively female audience.⁴⁹

Korinna

Korinna, or the narrator, claims in one fragment to sing for the “white-robed Tanagran women” (ἄισομ[έναν Ταναγρίδεσσι λ]ευκοπέπλυσ, fr. 655.3), and to begin the stories “for the maidens” (*παρθ[έ]νυσι*, fr. 655.11). In another fragment the narrator says she sings “the virtues of heroes and heroines” (ἰώνει δ’ εἰρώων ἀρετὰς χειρώαδων, 664b). It has been argued that this claim differentiates her from male poets, who sing for the most part only of heroes, and that she sings of heroines to suit the tastes of her female audience.⁵⁰ A second-century c.e. papyrus fragment tells us that Korinna “and the other poetesses” (καὶ ἑτέρας ποιητριάς,

⁴⁶ Cited in, for example, Hallett 1979: 460.

⁴⁷ The rest for the most part preserve grammatical variants and are only one word long (e.g., fr. 722 *PMG*, βελτιωτέρας, which Hesychius informs us Telesilla used for βελτίους).

⁴⁸ Paus. 2.35.2 and 2.28.2; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.46s.

⁴⁹ Telesilla’s reputed military success in leading the Argive women to defend the city against the Spartans under Cleomenes (Paus. 2.20.8) cannot be used as evidence for a public audience for her poetry, since her venture into the public sphere here occurred explicitly in the absence and indeed after the death of every able-bodied Argive male.

⁵⁰ See Raylor 1993 for the argument in favour of a female audience for Korinna. See Skinner 1983 for an alternative view.

P. Oxy. 2438 col. ii) say that Scopelinus was the father of Pindar.⁵¹ This last fragment has also been used as further evidence of a segregated, separately-transmitted women's poetic tradition.

On Korinna's claim to sing to the women of Tanagra, see above, 11–12. Whether fr. 655 is a *παρθένεια* or a Hellenistic imitation of one, the claim to address an exclusive or primary female audience is negated both by the known public performance context of *παρθένεια* and by 655.4, in which the entire *polis* is acknowledged as her audience. Korinna's poems may have given a subversive woman-centred slant to traditional Boeotian myths,⁵² but that does not necessarily imply a female audience. If, as seems most likely, she was a Hellenistic poet, a new slant on traditional local tales will have been appreciated by the well-educated public readership for whom it was primarily intended. The papyrus fragment claiming that female poets gave a different father for Pindar than male poets did is probably the result of a transmission error, as Clayman demonstrates.⁵³

Nossis

Nossis is called *θηλύγλωσσος* (*A.P.* 9.26.7), "female-tongued," by Antipater in his epigram listing nine female poets. One of her eleven surviving epigrams addresses a group of women (*ἔλθοίσαί . . . ἰδόμεθα*, "let us (women) go," *A.P.* 9.332). Many of her epigrams highlight women's concerns and mother-daughter relationships.⁵⁴

Antipater's epithet for Nossis suggests that the focus on women and their interrelationships in her surviving epigrams reflects the content of her entire *oeuvre*, or as much of it as was available to him two centuries after she wrote. However, it does not suggest that her audience was exclusively or primarily female. In fact, Nossis' choice of genre, the epitaphic or dedicatory epigram, is a public one. Any member of the community who could read had access to the inscriptions on tombstones or on objects dedicated in temples. Female-authored or at least female-signed epitaphs and dedications are found in Greece from classical times if not earlier.⁵⁵ Skinner (1991b) argues, I believe correctly, that Nossis herself collected her epigrams into book form for publication to a wider audience. Both the initial choice of genre and the subsequent publication of the collection must then represent a decision on the poet's part to disseminate her work, not to a female-only audience, but to the wider community. The predominance of women and their concerns in Nossis' epigrams, and the poet's self-representation

⁵¹ On this fragment, see especially Clayman 1993.

⁵² See Rayor 1993 for a stimulating discussion of Korinna's use of myth to present a female perspective.

⁵³ Clayman 1993: 636, n. 12.

⁵⁴ See especially Skinner 1991b for the argument in favour of a female-only primary audience for Nossis' poetry.

⁵⁵ See Stehle 1997: 114–118 for a discussion of female-authored epitaphs and dedications as a form of public "performance," in which women could speak to, if not for, the community.

as one of a group of women in *A.P.* 9.332, has been argued to show that Nossis' primary (pre-publication) audience was a group of female friends (Skinner 1991b: 21), to whom the poetry was originally directed. Only later was it collected for publication. There is evidence that women in the Hellenistic period had a relatively high literacy rate,⁵⁶ particularly in the aristocratic class to which Nossis probably belonged,⁵⁷ and in a city (Locri) in which there is some evidence that women held higher status than was the Greek norm.⁵⁸ Thus it is certainly possible that Nossis could have had a circle of female friends who were capable of appreciating her highly literate and allusive poetry. Nossis' poetry, however, need not be assumed to have been necessarily designed to appeal specifically to the tastes of that circle. Depictions of the interrelations of a female circle appealed also to the tastes of male Hellenistic readers. The public genre and dissemination of her work give reason to believe that her poetry was designed to address public tastes as well as, if not more than, women's interests.⁵⁹

V. SURVIVAL

All poetry remaining to us from the ancient world was disseminated through the almost entirely male-authored public tradition. To survive, female-authored poetry must somehow have become part of this "mainstream" public tradition. Poetry that was heard only by the segregated female audience would not have become publicly disseminated, and so would not have been transmitted to us. Scholars' explanations of the mechanism of dissemination of female-authored poetry into the mainstream tradition vary with the poet. Skinner (1993: 137) suggests that the public tradition transmitted Sappho's work because of the novelty and pleasure of her alternative subjective stance. Stehle (1997: 323–325) argues that Sappho was preserved because, unlike other poets of her day, she not only wrote her poetry down, but explored the possibilities of written poetry to create a convincing poetic *persona* which was compelling for male readership also. Thus, as text, Sappho's poems could circulate relatively uncorrupted, and their novelty of style and content would assure them a mainstream readership. Skinner (1991b) argues that Nossis first read her epigrams to her circle of close female friends, and only then published them in book form.⁶⁰ Gutzwiller (1993)

⁵⁶ On literacy among women in the Hellenistic world, see especially Pomeroy 1977 and 1984: 72–75; Cole 1981: 228–234; Harris 1989: 130–141.

⁵⁷ Cf. Cazzaniga 1972; Gigante 1974; Degani 1981: 49; Skinner 1991b: 23.

⁵⁸ Oldfather (1926) and Maas (1936) assume an unusually high status for Locrian women, but the question of their precise standing, and how it might have differed from the position of women in other Hellenistic Greek cities, has never been resolved. See most recently MacLachlan 1995 for discussion.

⁵⁹ See Bowman 1998: 48–51 on Nossis' use of the depiction of a women's community to appeal to the tastes of the mainstream Hellenistic audience. Skinner (2001) discusses the reception of Nossis' work by Theocritus and Herodas; Gutzwiller (1997) demonstrates the adoption of her innovations by mainstream poets.

⁶⁰ For a description of "publication" in the Hellenistic world and later, see Easterling and Knox 1985. In the case of Nossis and Anyte, "publication in book form" means simply that the epigrams

convincingly argues that Anyte's work was also published as a book. Korinna's work was collected, perhaps by the poet herself, and disseminated as a book in the Hellenistic era.⁶¹ Praxilla's work survives only in fragments, most of them also apparently drawn from genres which would have been performed for the public or male community.⁶² Telesilla's work also survives only in a few fragments, probably from choral songs. The mechanism of survival for the work of these two has not generally been a topic of debate because it has for the most part been lost.⁶³

It is difficult to imagine the mechanism by which poetry from the earlier period by any author, male or female, public or private, began to be circulated in book form. A persuasive mechanism for transmission from a truly segregated tradition to the dominant tradition is even more problematic. All of the female poets whose work has survived, however, were composing largely or entirely in genres which imply public performance for the entire community. The aspects of their poetry used as evidence that their work was intended for an exclusively or primarily female audience do not, on examination, necessitate that hypothesis. If we take as our hypothesis, rather, that the female-authored poetry that survived did so because it was part of the public tradition from the beginning, the difficulty of explaining its survival is much eased.

VI. REFERENCES TO FEMALE PREDECESSORS

References to female predecessors in women's poetry, or indications of influence by one female poet on another, are also used as support for the hypothesis of a segregated women's poetic tradition. Poetic influence on successors or contemporaries is the constitutive feature of a tradition. Such influence, however, is not evidence of a *segregated* women's poetic tradition unless it can be demonstrated that the most probable channel of transmission of influence was via the segregated tradition. However, in each case where one female poet seems to have been influenced by another, the earlier poet was known to and disseminated via the well-attested public poetic tradition. It is thus not necessary to hypothesize a

were collected and arranged by the authors in the desired order, with an initial and perhaps a final programmatic epigram appended to the collection. They will then have been made available to copyists through the usual channels of the period.

⁶¹ See West 1970: 277 and 280 on the possibility that she herself produced the archetype from which the extant poetry derives. Fr. 655 may have been the programmatic first poem of the collection, which would indicate that Korinna herself collected and arranged her work.

⁶² Fr. 748 *PMG* is drawn from a dithyramb, a choral genre; fr. 749 and 750 *PMG* are drawn from drinking-songs attributed to Praxilla; fr. 751, 752 and 753 *PMG* preserve mythological variants and thus are probably drawn from choral lyric; fr. 754 *PMG* is most probably from an epithalamion, another publicly-performed choral genre. Only fr. 747 *PMG*, apparently from a lament for Adonis, may have been performed for a female-only audience at the Adonia.

⁶³ Campbell (1992: Praxilla test. 2, n. 1, p. 371) does suggest that Praxilla may have been a *hetaira* because drinking-songs are attributed to her.

separate, segregated mode of transmission for the earlier poet's work.⁶⁴ These indications of influence cannot therefore be used as evidence of a segregated women's poetic tradition. However, they should be assessed in their own right as elements of Greek literary history and as evidence of a text-based women's poetic tradition.

The fourth-century poet Erinna was the best-known and most admired female poet of antiquity after Sappho.⁶⁵ She modelled her poem *Distaff* (*PSI* 1090) on Sappho in its feminine narrator's *persona*, its concern with the interrelationships of women, and most importantly its dialect, a mixture of Doric (Erinna's native dialect) and Aeolic (Sappho's dialect).⁶⁶ The relationship between her work and Sappho's was noted in ancient sources (e.g., *A.P.* 9.190) and misinterpreted by the Suda, which says that she was ἑταίρα Σαπφούς καὶ ὁμόχρονος (Suda *s.v.*).⁶⁷ Erinna in turn may have influenced Anyte. If the papyrus fragment *P. Oxy.* 8.4–7 is to be attributed to Anyte, its mix of Aeolic and Doric dialects may be modelled, like Erinna's, on Sappho, or may be modelled on Erinna herself, as West (1977: 114) suggests. Gutzwiller (1998: 66) argues that Anyte's epigram on the death of a grasshopper and cicada (*A.P.* 7.190) may have been modelled on a lost poem by Erinna.⁶⁸ Nossis' work may also show recognition of Erinna's. Nossis' programmatic epigram *A.P.* 5.170 alludes to Sappho in structure, vocabulary, and declaration of erotic intent,⁶⁹ but it may also be read as specifically distancing the poet from the nonerotic, virginal *persona* accepted in the Hellenistic period for Erinna, who was believed to have died young and unwed (cf. *A.P.* 7.12, 7.13).⁷⁰ Nossis' four epigrams dedicating women's portraits (*A.P.* 6.353, 354; 9.604, 605) may be modelled on Erinna's epigram on the portrait of Agatharchis (*A.P.* 6.352), unless one follows West (1977: 115) in attributing *A.P.* 6.352 also to Nossis.⁷¹ Nossis was certainly cognizant of Sappho's work, and shows its influence in her

⁶⁴ Skinner (1993: 136) seems to suggest such a separate mode of transmission when she argues that Sappho's poetry, passed down within the women's community, would continue centuries after her death to offer women an authentic female subject position, and thus "explains the emergence, century after century, of yet other Greek women poets, for whom their archaic foremother served as enabling prototype and fount of inspiration."

⁶⁵ For ancient interest and praise for Erinna, see *A.P.* 9.190 on her life and poetry; *A.P.* 7.11 (Asclepiades) on the same; *A.P.* 7.12 and 7.13, epitaphs for her; *A.P.* 11.322 on the interest Alexandrian grammarians showed in her; and the lengthy if uninformative entry on Erinna in the Suda.

⁶⁶ See Suda *s.v.* on the mix of dialects; cf. West 1977: 117 on the sophistication implied in her use of the blend of dialects.

⁶⁷ On Erinna's relationship with Sappho, see also Rauk 1989 and Arthur 1980: 52, n. 1.

⁶⁸ Gutzwiller's argument (1998: 66, n. 53) is based on Pliny's testimony (*HN* 34.57) that Erinna wrote a poem about a tomb for a grasshopper and cicada. Other scholars have argued that Pliny simply misattributed Anyte's epigram to Erinna.

⁶⁹ On *A.P.* 5.170's allusions to Sappho, see most recently Skinner 1989: 7–9 and Gutzwiller 1998: 76.

⁷⁰ For discussion of Erinna's image in the Hellenistic era, see Gutzwiller 1998: 77, 87.

⁷¹ See *contra* Pomeroy 1978: 21. Gutzwiller (1998: 78) and Skinner (2001) accept the attribution to Erinna.

focus on women's concerns and interrelations, and in her vocabulary. She also acknowledges Sappho's influence directly in her self-epitaph (*A.P.* 7.718), in which she asks that her name and the fact that she was "loved by the Muses" be carried to Mytilene, Sappho's homeland.⁷² Her development (Gutzwiller 1998: 114) of a female poetic *persona* through a collection of poems may have been influenced by Anyte's epigram collection, which was perhaps the first to construct a *coherent persona* for an author of epigrams. Finally, an intriguing fragment of Korinna says:

Μέμφομη δὲ κῆ λιγουράν
 Μουρτίδ' ἰωνγ' ὅτι βανά φουῶ-
 σ' ἔβα Πινδάροι πὸτ ἔριν (PMG 664 (a))

I blame even clear-voiced (?) Myrtis, because although she was a woman, she competed with Pindar.

The significance of this passage is debated,⁷³ but it is clear that Korinna is speaking of another female poet, in a context which must imply that Korinna thought some behaviour, or style of poetry (Clayman 1993: 641), inappropriate to her because she was female. If it is Myrtis' style which Korinna criticizes here, the passage might imply that a "women's style" of poetry existed, to which Korinna unfavourably compares Myrtis' work. Alternatively, Korinna's criticism might be prescriptive; no distinctive "women's style" of poetry existed, and Korinna was attempting to create one. The fragment may be programmatic, in that it may define Korinna's poetic strategy in opposition to that of a female predecessor or contemporary. Without the context of the passage, it is impossible to speculate farther.

Certainly some female poets knew and were influenced by some of their female predecessors. Sappho influenced Nossis, Erinna, and perhaps Anyte; Erinna in turn may have influenced Nossis and Anyte; Anyte may have influenced Nossis; Korinna was aware of Myrtis. Sappho and the other lyric poets were publicly circulated in written form from the fifth century on, if not earlier,⁷⁴ and standard editions of the canonical lyric poets, including Sappho, were available in the Hellenistic period. Erinna composed in writing from the outset, as did the

⁷² For a thorough treatment of Nossis' use of Sappho's model, see Skinner 1989; cf. also Bowman 1998. West (1977: 114, n. 36) claims that *A.P.* 7.718 may not be Nossis' work, presumably because of the common practice of writing poets' epitaphs as a literary exercise. See, for example, *A.P.* 7.712 and 7.713 for Erinna, or *A.P.* 7.29 and 7.30 for Anacreon, etc.

⁷³ For discussion, and a survey of recent literature, see Clayman 1993: 634 and 640–641. Clayman argues that Korinna believes that, because she was a woman, Myrtis' poetry ought to be λιγύς, a quality Korinna's contemporary Callimachus also valued, but instead Myrtis has emulated Pindar's richer and more complex style. Rayor (1993: 229) suggests that the passage may be a fragment of a παρθένειον.

⁷⁴ See Pfeiffer 1968: 27, citing the evidence of vase paintings depicting figures reading scrolls labelled with the names of the authors, among whom Sappho is found.

Hellenistic poets who followed her; and, as West (1977: 117) remarks, "It is probably true to say that the *Distaff* would not have reached the public if it had not been written for it." All of the female poets under consideration except, perhaps, Myrtis, were thus publicly available in written form to their successors. We need not, therefore, construct a hypothesis of a segregated women's poetic tradition to account for what evidence exists of influence by Sappho upon Erinna or by Erinna upon Nossis.

VII. CONCLUSION

It remains to ask whether the extant evidence indicates the existence of a public, text-based women's poetic tradition. The answer to this question must be made for each poet individually.⁷⁵ However, one factor that must be taken into account in the answer is that no female poet was *only* influenced by her female predecessors. All female poets whose work has survived were strongly influenced by their male predecessors. All female poets whose work has survived have more in common with their male contemporaries than with any female predecessor.⁷⁶ The female poets whose work we have were, without exception, well educated in the canonical poetry of the predominantly male-authored public poetic tradition, and allude and respond to it in their own work. Insofar as Sappho is important to two of them, it may be because Sappho was, as well as being female, a lyric poet accepted as canonical by the public tradition.⁷⁷

Sappho and her contemporary Alcaeus were the inheritors of a Greek lyric poetic tradition that stretched back to the eighth century if not earlier.⁷⁸ Sappho's work shows her fully versed in the premiere "public" poetry, that of Homer, to which her own poems allude and on which she has been shown to make subversive comment.⁷⁹ Erinna's *Distaff* uses a variation of Sappho's Aeolic dialect, but is written in dactylic hexameter, the metre of the public genre of epic. Her work has been shown to make use of Homer (Skinner 1982) and it is also an early example of the *epyllion*, a favourite Hellenistic genre. In other respects too her

⁷⁵ As Ellen Moers (1976: 45) remarks of female writers of the Victorian era, "In the case of some women . . . women's literature has been their major tradition: in the case of others—and I think quality has nothing to do with the difference—it has mattered hardly at all In the case of most women writers, women's traditions have been fringe benefits superadded upon the literary associations of period, nation, and class that they shared with their male contemporaries."

⁷⁶ See Pomeroy 1977: 56 and Barnard 1978: 205 on the lack of distinctive subject matter or style in the Hellenistic female poets, as compared to their male contemporaries.

⁷⁷ On the formation of the "canon" in the Hellenistic period, see Pfeiffer 1968: 200–205, and cf. *A.P.* 9.184 and *A.P.* 9.571, which list the nine lyric poets of the Greek canon, of whom Sappho was the only woman. For Nossis' possible motives in aligning her poetry with Sappho's, see Bowman 1998: 45–46.

⁷⁸ For a lyric tradition from the eighth century B.C., see Fowler 1984: 9–13.

⁷⁹ On Sappho's use of Homer, see especially Rissman 1980; Winkler 1990; Schrenk 1994. Winkler argues that Sappho was privy to two poetic traditions, women's (muted) tradition and the mainstream.

work is well judged to appeal to the tastes of her period.⁸⁰ Korinna is associated in the ancient sources primarily with Pindar, whose work she obviously knew (*PMG* 664 (a)) and whom she is variously credited with teaching (Plut. *Mor.* 347f–348a), sharing a teacher with,⁸¹ and defeating in competition either once (Paus. 9.22.3) or five times (Suda *s.v.*; Ael. *VH* 13.25). While the testimonia should not be taken as proof of a fifth-century date for Korinna (Clayman 1993), they do demonstrate that Korinna was associated in ancient thought with Pindar. The association could be based simply on their common identity as Boeotian choral lyric composers. More probably Korinna's conscious identification of her poetry as different from Pindar's, as is shown in her blame of Myrtis⁸² and perhaps also in the stories of their competition, accounts for the ancient association of the two. Anyte's epigrams, as Geoghegan (1979) has shown, are heavily laced with Homeric allusion. She was probably also acquainted with the epigrams attributed to Simonides and Anacreon (Gutzwiller 1998: 56–57).⁸³ Nossis, although self-consciously referring to Sappho, also alludes to Hesiod and Homer, and possibly Alcaeus and Anacreon, and either influences or is influenced by her contemporaries Leonidas, Mnascalces, and Hegesippus.⁸⁴

The female poets whose work has survived functioned as part of the public poetic tradition, influenced by it and in turn influencing both male and female successors. Within that context, it seems very probable that some female poets—Nossis and Erinna are two likely candidates—also saw themselves as participating in a text-based women's poetic tradition. Female poets could well have used participation in such a tradition to validate the worth of their own work.⁸⁵ However, no female poet whose work survives participated *primarily* in a women's poetic tradition; all of them, by their allusion to the work of male predecessors and by the similarity of their work to that of male contemporaries, were participants

⁸⁰West (1977: 117) points out that the interest in domestic life and ordinary people, and the romantic sensibility of the piece, appeal to the artistic tastes of the fourth century. For Erinna's influence on subsequent Hellenistic poetry, see Gutzwiller 1992 and 1997.

⁸¹Both were said to be students of Myrtis (Suda *s.v.* Korinna and Pindar).

⁸²Clayman (1993: 640) argues that “go into strife with” (ἐβα . . . πόνερον) in fact means “emulate,” as it does in Theocritus 7.47–48; cf. Guillon 1958. Thus Korinna blames Myrtis for trying to emulate Pindar in style, where she herself uses a style more appropriate to women. Deliberate variation from a predecessor, like emulation of one, constitutes acknowledgement of that predecessor's influence and thus participation in a poetic tradition.

⁸³Gutzwiller points out that the same phrase, εὐρύχορος Τεγέα (*Anyte A.P.* 6.153.2) occurs in the genitive in the same metrical position in *A.P.* 7.512, attributed to Simonides. She also argues for similarities in phrasing and subject matter between *A.P.* 6.153 (*Anyte*) and *A.P.* 6.139 (*Anacreon*), and between *A.P.* 6.123 (*Anyte*) and *A.P.* 6.141 (*Anacreon*).

⁸⁴Nossis uses Homeric vocabulary in *A.P.* 6.265 (cf. Skinner 1991b: 23), and *A.P.* 5.170.1–2 alludes skilfully to Hesiod (Cavallini 1981: 179–183). *A.P.* 6.132, a dedication of the arms of the conquered Bruttii, makes use of the trope of the weapons which mourn (or otherwise) for their lost masters, found also in *A.P.* 6.131 (Leonidas), *A.P.* 6.125 (Mnascalces), and *A.P.* 6.124 (Hegesippus), and perhaps alludes also to Alcaeus *LP* 428 and Anacreon 381b; see Skinner 1991b: 31 and n. 30.

⁸⁵See Bowman 1998 for a discussion of Nossis' use of Sappho to this end.

first and foremost in the predominantly male-authored public poetic tradition that preserved their work for posterity.

Eva Stehle, in her exhaustive study of gender and performance in archaic and classical Greece, concludes that public poetic performance was only permitted to women in three areas. As *παρθένοι*, they could participate in choral poetry performed before—and for the use of—the community. As married women, they were permitted to sing laments. Finally, women could set up funerary and dedicatory epigrams (some of which they probably wrote themselves), which at least the literate segment of the community could read (Stehle 1997: 71–118).

It is striking that almost all of the surviving female-authored poetry from not only the archaic and classical periods, but also the Hellenistic era, fits the genres of poetry which Stehle's research indicates were permitted to women in public performance.⁸⁶ Perhaps most of Sappho's surviving poetry is choral. Erinna raises her voice specifically as a *παρθένο*; and the *Distaff* is a lament, a permissible genre for women. The longest remaining fragment of Praxilla is three lines of a lament for Adonis. Anyte, Moero, and Nossis all wrote epigrams, either dedicatory or funerary. Some of Korinna's surviving poetry, and perhaps all of it, seems to have been modelled on *παρθένεια*. We are told, and know from the fragments preserved by grammarians, that all these women and others wrote and sang in many more genres and styles of poetry than have been preserved. Surviving female-authored poetry is, however, almost without exception preserved in genres in which the Greeks, from archaic times, found a woman's voice non-threatening.

Future students of ancient women's poetry could profitably consider what conditions a female-authored text needed to fulfil, if it was to remain long in the realm of Greek public poetic discourse. Research in this area could shed light not only on the individual female-authored texts, but on the nature of their relationship with each other and with the predominantly male-authored public poetic tradition in which they primarily participated.

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⁸⁶ See most recently Lardinois 2001 on the use of women's public prose speech genres in Sappho.

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