Transactions of the American Philological Association 135 (2005) 249–265

Catalogues, Priamels, and Stanzaic Structure in Early Greek Elegy

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SUMMARY: Catalogues and priamels figure prominently in the longer fragments of early Greek elegy. In this brief study I survey a half-dozen of these elegiac lists and show that the early poets regularly use a five-couplet stanza to create a formal structure for their compositions. In some cases the catalogues appear to be "set-pieces" adaptable in the midst of performance to a number of different contexts.

SCHOLARS OFTEN NOTE the important role that catalogues and priamels play in the longer fragments of early Greek elegy. Indeed, compositions such as Solon's elegy on the "Ages of Man" (fr. 27), the priamel at the beginning of Tyrtaeus 12, or the thirty-line catalogue in the midsection of Solon 13 are often singled out as exemplary of the type.[1] No one to my knowledge has noticed, however, that early elegiac poets tend to fashion these catalogues as single stanzas of five couplets or as coordinated groups of such stanzas.

I am not the first to note the use of the five-couplet unit as a building block in the fragments of early elegy. Around the time of the American Civil War, Weil floated the hypothesis that many of the early elegists organize their poems into "strophes" of varying lengths that occasionally display a kind of responsion similar to that found in ancient Greek choral poetry.[2] He rightly

[1] E.g., Race 57–62 and 64–71, who discusses Tyrtaeus 12.1–10 ("one of the best known priamels"), Xenophanes 2, Solon 13.43–64, and Theognis 699–718.

[2] Weil. His ideas were rejected by subsequent editors and pointedly refuted by Clemm. See Linforth 242–44 for a concise overview of the controversy. Although this critical reaction was justified with regard to Weil's treatment of the fragments of Solon and others, his analyses of Tyrtaeus 10–12 and Xenophanes 1 were perceptive. See, for example, note 3 (for Tyrtaeus 10) and note 7 (for the first ten lines of Tyrtaeus 12), and for a full discussion Faraone 2005.

noted, for example, that Tyrtaeus uses three five-couplet "strophes" to lend structure to the first thirty lines of fragment 10, and that he coordinated and highlighted these stanzas by using similar phrases in the first lines of the first and last stanzas and the final line of the last.[3] Rossi, in a detailed study nearly a century later, confirmed this structural design of the fragment and suggested, in addition, that these five-couplet units correspond precisely to the alternating rhetorical pattern in the fragment, which begins with five couplets of meditation that describe a generic soldier in the third person, switches to five couplets of exhortation (composed entirely in plural imperatives and hortatory subjunctives), and then returns in the third section to a meditation that is formally identical to the first.[4] In fact, the central thesis of my current research on elegy is that we find consistent patterns of composition, especially in the earliest poets, where rhetorical patterns such as these fit neatly within the boundaries of five-couplet stanzas.[5]

In this essay I build upon the important insights of Weil and Rossi into Tyrtaeus' architectural use of the five-couplet stanza and show that Tyrtaeus, Solon, and the Theognidean poet often deploy the five-couplet stanza as a frame for various kinds of catalogues, some of which seem to serve as useful "set-pieces" that could be expanded or inserted into a longer poem and easily adapted to it, not at all dissimilar to the manner in which a Homeric bard, for example, deploys his similes or type-scenes to expand or organize a section of an epic poem.

To establish the basic form of this elegiac catalogue, I begin with a rather simple and poetically uninspiring example of a self-contained five-couplet catalogue found on an inscription of Roman date from Megara, which pre-

[3] Weil pointed out how the first line of the final unit (line 21) ended in a paroemiac (μετὰ προμάχοισι πεσόντα) that echoes very closely the paroemiac at the end of the first line of the poem (ἐνὶ προμάχοισι πεσόντα). And he noted in addition how the final line of the last unit echoed them both (ἐν προμάχοισι πεσών).

[4] Rossi 414–15: "i primi 30 versi si lasciano disporre in tre gruppi di 10 versi ciascuno; il gruppo centrale contiene una serie di esortazioni all'azione, i due laterali ciascuno una tesi e un'antitesi di carattere discorsivo."

[5] This essay is an extract from Faraone (forthcoming), a much longer ongoing study in which I argue that the five-couplet stanza was a regular structural device in the earliest elegists. My colleagues Danielle Allen, James Redfield, Laura Slatkin, and Peter White read early and tentative versions of this larger study and offered penetrating but encouraging criticism, and Deborah Boedeker, Edward Courtney, Mark Edwards, Douglas Gerber, Jim Marks, David Sansone, David Sider, Greg Thalmann, and Mark Usher all provided helpful criticism subsequent drafts. I am also grateful to the anonymous readers for *TAPA*, one of whom greatly improved the rhetorical shape of my argument in this extract.

serves a poem that was apparently composed around the time of the Persian Wars[6]:

Ἑλλάδι καὶ Μεγαρεῦσιν ἐλεύθερον ἦμαρ ἀέξειν
ἱέμενοι θανάτου μοῖραν ἐδεξάμεθα,
τοὶ μὲν ὑπ᾽ Εὐβοίαι καὶ Παλίωι, ἔνθα καλεῖται
ἁγνᾶς Ἀρτέμιδος τοξοφόρου τέμενος,
τοὶ δ᾽ ἐν ὄρει Μυκάλας, τοὶ δ᾽ ἔμπροσθεν Σαλαμῖνος
〈 〉
τοὶ δὲ καὶ ἐν πεδίωι Βοιωτίωι, οἵτινες ἔτλαν
χεῖρας ἐπ᾽ ἀνθρώπους ἱππομάχους ἰέναι.
ἀστοὶ δ᾽ ἄμμι τόδε 〈ξυνὸν〉 γέρας ὀμφαλῶι ἀμφίς
Νισαίων ἔπορον λαοδόκωι ᾽ν ἀγορᾶι.

While striving to foster the day of freedom for Greece and the Megarians, we received the portion of death, some under Euboea and Pelion, where stands the sanctuary of the holy archer Artemis, others at the mountains of Mycale, others before Salamis ... , others again in the Boeotian plain, those who had courage to lay hands on the cavalry warriors. The citizens granted us this privilege in common about the navel of the Nisaeans in their agora where the people throng.

This epitaph purports to be the words of the dead men who are honored by the inscription and it is framed by references to themselves as a collective—note the inclusive first-person plural verb "we received" (ἐδεξάμεθα) in the initial couplet and the dative pronoun "to us" (ἄμμι) in the last. In the body of the poem, however, the poet divides this large mass of troops into at least four discrete units of soldiers who died fighting the Persians in different battles. The three central couplets begin with a repeated pronoun (τοὶ μέν … τοὶ δ᾽ … τοὶ δέ), a hallmark, as we shall see, of such elegiac catalogues. The poet brings additional closure to the poem by referring to the Megarian people in the first and last lines (Μεγαρεῦσιν and Νισαίων), as if to reiterate the political unity of these warriors who died in different places and presumably at different times.

[6] Page 213–15 Simonides no. 16 and Campbell 1991 Simonides no. XVI. I give the text and translation of the latter. The poem is preserved on an inscription of late-antique date that purports to be a new copy of an epigram of Simonides, the original of which had become "destroyed with time." Page states ad loc. that, although the Simonidean authorship is probably fictitious, "there is nothing in the vocabulary, phrasing or metre incompatible with the early fifth century."

The first five couplets of Tyrtaeus 12 likewise seem to be structured as a complete elegiac catalogue:[7]

οὔτ᾽ ἂν μνησαίμην οὔτ᾽ ἐν λόγῳ ἄνδρα τιθείμην
οὔτε ποδῶν ἀρετῆς οὔτε παλαιμοσύνης,
οὐδ᾽ εἰ Κυκλώπων μὲν ἔχοι μέγεθός τε βίην τε,
νικῴη δὲ θέων Θρηΐκιον Βορέην,
οὐδ᾽ εἰ Τιθωνοῖο φυὴν χαριέστερος εἴη,
πλουτοίη δὲ Μίδεω καὶ Κινύρεω μάλιον,
οὐδ᾽ εἰ Ταντα λίδεω Πέλοπος βασιλεύτερος εἴη,
γλῶσσαν δ᾽ Ἀδρήστου μειλιχόγηρυν ἔχοι,
οὐδ᾽ εἰ πᾶσαν ἔχοι δόξαν πλὴν θούριδος ἀλκῆς·
οὐ γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίνεται ἐν πολέμῳ ...

I would not mention or take account of a man for his prowess in running or in wrestling, not even if he had the size and strength of the Cyclopes and outstripped Thracian Boreas in the race, nor if he were more handsome than Tithonus in form and richer than Midas and Cinyras, nor if he were more kingly then Pelops, son of Tantalus, and had a tongue that spoke as winningly as Adrastus, nor if he had a reputation for everything save furious valour. For he is not a good man in war …[8]

As in the previous example, the poet stresses the regular order and uniformity of the catalogue by placing strong pauses at the end of each couplet and by beginning each of the three middle couplets with the phrase "not even if" (οὐδ᾽ εἰ). These middle couplets, moreover, are highly structured with each hexameter and pentameter providing at least one point of comparison (for example, speed, beauty, or wealth) and at least one mythological exemplum of it (for example, Boreas, Tithonus, or Midas).

[7] For the fragments of Greek elegy, I print the text and translation of Gerber 1999 throughout, except where noted. Weil 9–10 was the first to note that lines 1–10 form a single unit, although other scholars seem to have intuited it. Jaeger 119, for example, observes that lines 1–10 are "a series of anaphoras whose irresistible crescendo does not come until line 10"—he is followed here by Tarditi 62—and Fowler 82 refers to "the strict symmetry of the first ten lines." Weil 9 and Fränkel 339 n. 8 note that the first twenty lines of the poem are divided into two equal parts, which end in similar declarations at lines 10 and 20. Race 57–59 and Adkins 1985: 74 refer to these lines as a complete priamel, although Race excludes line 10 from it.

[8] I have deviated here (for reasons elaborated in Faraone 2006) from the translation of Gerber 1999, who renders the last verse "For no man is good in war … ." The text continues on without a break into the next section, where we get a long apodosis: "if he cannot endure the sight of bloody slaughter … ."

Although the final couplet begins with the same "not even if," it breaks the pattern, because it introduces a summary statement that returns us to the generic man (1 ἄνδρα and 10 ἀνήρ), whose possible talents or skills are hypothetically described in the intervening verses. The three central couplets, moreover, provide specific mythical examples of these skills, much the same way that the three middle couplets of the Megarian epigram, while repeating the initial pronoun τοί, break down the collective "we" of the first and last couplet into smaller discrete groups that are identified more precisely by the site of their heroic deaths. In both poems, I should add, more than three examples are actually described within the three central couplets, but the repeating phrase or pronoun at the start of each couplet provides a regular rhythm or pattern to the series.

The final couplet of Tyrtaeus' catalogue differs, however, from the Megarian epigram in one important way: it sums up the list in order to reject every item on it, by saying "not even if he had a reputation for *everything* except furious valour."[9] This variant of the catalogue form is usually called a priamel, a poetic device consisting of a series of three or more paratactic statements of similar form that serve to emphasize the last, usually by denigrating the rest.[10] The final line of this catalogue from Tyrtaeus 12 does not, however, provide the closure and rhetorical punch that one might expect from a priamel, because the poet switches in the very next line to a description of the brave warrior, who does have the requisite valor to fight. This catalogue is not, in short, a poem complete in and of itself, but rather a rhetorical device that Tyrtaeus uses to launch himself into a description in the next stanza of the noble warrior who is, in fact, excellent in the art of war. The priamel is so artfully constructed, however, that were it stripped of its final couplet, we might not have known that it was part of a martial elegy. Indeed, one wonders whether another poet in a different context might just as easily have ended it with a reference to love-making or wine-drinking as the paramount activity, instead of warfare.

Another striking example of an elegiac priamel is found at *Theognidea* 699–718 (I have separated the verses for reasons that will become plain):

πλήθει δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀρετὴ μία γίνεται ἥδε,
πλουτεῖν· τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐδὲν ἄρ' ἦν ὄφελος,
οὐδ' εἰ σωφροσύνην μὲν ἔχοις Ῥαδαμάνθυος αὐτοῦ,
πλείονα δ' εἰδείης Σισύφου Αἰολίδεω,

[9] Race 57–59 gives an excellent discussion of lines 1–9, which he calls "one of the best known priamels."

[10] Race 9.

ὅς τε καὶ ἐξ ᾿Αΐδεω πολυϊδρίῃσιν ἀνῆλθεν
πείσας Περσεφόνην αἰμυλίοισι λόγοις,
ἥ τε βροτοῖς παρέχει λήθην βλάπτουσα νόοιο—
ἄλλος δ᾿ οὔ πώ τις τοῦτό γ᾿ ἐπεφράσατο,
ὄντινα δὴ θανάτοιο μέλαν νέφος ἀμφικαλύψῃ,
ἔλθῃ δ᾿ ἐς σκιερὸν χῶρον ἀποφθιμένων,
κυανέας τε πύλας παραμείψεται, αἵ τε θανόντων
ψυχὰς εἴργουσιν καίπερ ἀναινομένας·
ἀλλ᾿ ἄρα κἀκεῖθεν πάλιν ἦλυθε Σίσυφος ἥρως
ἐς φάος ἠελίου σφῇσι πολυφροσύναις—

οὐδ᾿ εἰ ψεύδεα μὲν ποιοῖς ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
γλῶσσαν ἔχων ἀγαθὴν Νέστορος ἀντιθέου,
ὠκύτερος δ᾿ εἴησθα πόδας ταχεῶν ῾Αρπυιῶν
καὶ παίδων Βορέω, τῶν ἄφαρ εἰσὶ πόδες.
ἀλλὰ χρὴ πάντας γνώμην ταύτην καταθέσθαι,
ὡς πλοῦτος πλείστην πᾶσιν ἔχει δύναμιν.

For the majority of people this alone is best: wealth. Nothing else after all is of use, not even if you have the good judgement of Rhadamanthys himself or know more than Sisyphus, son of Aeolus,

who by his wits came up even from Hades, after persuading with wily words Persephone who impairs the mind of mortals and brings them into forgetfulness. No one else has ever yet contrived this, once death's dark cloud has enveloped him and he has come to the shadowy place of the dead and passed the black gates which hold back the souls of the dead, for all their protestations. But even from there the hero Sisyphus returned to the light of the sun by his cleverness.

(Nothing else is of use), not even if you compose lies that are like the truth, with the eloquent tongue of godlike Nestor, and were faster of foot than the swift Harpies, and the fleet-footed sons of Boreas. No, everyone should store up this thought, that for all people wealth has the greatest power.

Like the previous example, this priamel lists many of the things that mortal men prize and provides each with a mythological exemplum—only to reject them all in favor of wealth, which is praised as the superlative acquisition in the first and last couplets. Commentators have often observed, moreover, that these twenty verses work well as an independent poem or rhetorical unit, beginning and ending with the assertion that to mortals wealth is the greatest thing (700 πλουτεῖν and 718 πλοῦτος).[11]

[11] E.g., Hudson-Williams ad loc., Race 67–68, and Henderson 86–88.

The verses that I have isolated in the middle, however, digress on Sisyphus' legendary journey to the underworld. The trigger for this narrative is, of course, the mention of the hero in the catalogue, which leads by way of a relative pronoun to the digression in the central section. This inserted story is precisely five couplets long and is framed by the repeated description of the hero's successful return from Hades, each time stressing his great cleverness:

ὅς τε καὶ ἐξ Ἀΐδεω πολυιδρίῃσιν ἀνῆλθεν 703

ἀλλ᾽ ἄρα κἀκεῖθεν πάλιν ἦλυθε Σίσυφος ἥρως
ἐς φάος ἠελίου σφῇσι πολυφροσύναις 711–12

Carrière pointed out long ago, however, that if we remove the five-couplet digression on Sisyphus, the remaining five couplets work even better as a concise and well ordered priamel:[12]

πλήθει δ᾽ ἀνθρώπων ἀρετὴ μία γίνεται ἥδε,
πλουτεῖν· τῶν δ᾽ ἄλλων οὐδὲν ἄρ᾽ ἦν ὄφελος, 700
οὐδ᾽ εἰ σωφροσύνην μὲν ἔχοις Ῥαδαμάνθυος αὐτοῦ,
πλείονα δ᾽ εἰδείης Σισύφου Αἰολίδεω,
οὐδ᾽ εἰ ψεύδεα μὲν ποιοῖς ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
γλῶσσαν ἔχων ἀγαθὴν Νέστορος ἀντιθέου,
ὠκύτερος δ᾽ εἴησθα πόδας ταχεῶν Ἅρπυιῶν 715
καὶ παίδων Βορέω, τῶν ἄφαρ εἰσὶ πόδες.
ἀλλὰ χρὴ πάντας γνώμην ταύτην καταθέσθαι,
ὡς πλοῦτος πλείστην πᾶσιν ἔχει δύναμιν.

Indeed, like the first ten lines of Tyrtaeus 12, this five-couplet priamel begins with a general statement ("Nothing else is useful") and then offers in quick succession four mythic examples of natural gifts that are inferior to wealth—wisdom, knowledge, eloquence, and speed. The first two of these exempla begin with the same phrase "not even if" (οὐδ᾽ εἰ) and then use a μὲν-and-δέ construction to allot their mythological examples either to complete verses (701 Rhadamanthys and 702 Sisyphus) or to full couplets (713–14 Nestor and

[12] Carrière 59 and 116–17 sees the digression as a scribal interpolation. The digression is so inessential to the catalogue that when Barron and Easterling 102 quote and discuss a translation of these verses, they leave out the Sisyphus section entirely without any detriment to their discussion. The digression is, in fact, imperfectly inserted into the catalogue, because the second protasis ("not even if" at line 713) has been moved so far from its apodosis in the first couplet that it is difficult to construe. In the translation given here, for example, Gerber 1999 is forced to reiterate the syntax of the catalogue after the digression by inserting a parenthetical phrase ("Nothing else is of use") to remind the reader of the wider construction.

715–16 Harpies and Boreads). It would seem, then, that these verses were originally composed as a five-couplet priamel (similar in structure to the catalogues discussed above), which was at some later point expanded to precisely twice its length by the insertion of the digression on Sisyphus. I would stress, in addition, something that other scholars have not noticed: the Theognidean poet seems to be working from a traditional repertoire of fairly fixed five-couplet stanzas—in this case a priamel and a well crafted digression on Sisyphus—that could be arranged or rearranged as part of the creative process of composing an elegiac poem.

Solon seems to have been especially adept at expanding and manipulating these five-couplet stanzas. In the second half of his famous "Hymn to the Muses," for example, he uses the frame of a traditional five-couplet catalogue to compose a continuous thirty-line sequence (13.33–62) that easily divides up into three separate stanzas.[13] The first gives examples of faulty human (self-) perceptions and the false expectations that attend them (13.33–42):[14]

θνητοὶ δ᾽ ὧδε νοέομεν ὁμῶς ἀγαθός τε κακός τε,
  †ἐν δηνην† αὐτὸς δόξαν ἕκαστος ἔχει,
πρίν τι παθεῖν· τότε δ᾽ αὖτις ὀδύρεται· ἄχρι δὲ τούτου
  χάσκοντες κούφαις ἐλπίσι τερπόμεθα.
χὥστις μὲν νούσοισιν ὑπ᾽ ἀργαλέῃσι πιεσθῇ,
  ὡς ὑγιὴς ἔσται, τοῦτο κατεφράσατο·
ἄλλος δειλὸς ἐὼν ἀγαθὸς δοκεῖ ἔμμεναι ἀνήρ,
  καὶ καλὸς μορφὴν οὐ χαρίεσσαν ἔχων·
εἰ δέ τις ἀχρήμων, πενίης δέ μιν ἔργα βιᾶται,
  κτήσεσθαι πάντως χρήματα πολλὰ δοκεῖ.

[13] Scholars have long debated whether fragment 13 is a single and unified poem and (if it is) how we are to identify its rhetorical or logical units. They generally see line 33 as the beginning of a new section that introduces the second half of the poem; see Gerber 1970: 124 and Anhalt 33–34 for a summary of earlier discussions. Although most editors would agree that line 33 begins a new section, few would say the same of line 43. West 1974: 181, for example, divides the poem as follows: 1–8, 9–24, 25–32, 33–36, 37–42, 43–64, 65–70, and 71–16. Allen 55–56 and Campbell 1967: 233–34, on the other hand, would probably agree, since they recognize lines 33–42 (a five-couplet unit) as one unit followed by another (43–62, a ten-couplet unit). Büchner 170–90 and Maddalena 1–2 likewise think that 33–62 are a single piece, but offer no subdivision of the thirty lines. Lattimore 166–67 and Mülke 295–98 recognize lines 43–62 as a complete unit.

[14] The verbal range and play of the Greek word δόξα is difficult to capture. Campbell 1967: 234 concisely summarizes its double meaning as follows: "Mortals, both good and evil, are (unlike Zeus, whose view is comprehensive) deluded by false beliefs and false hopes."

> And thus we mortals, whatever our estate, think that the expectation which each one has is progressing well(?), until he suffers some mishap, and then afterwards he wails. But until then we take eager delight in empty hopes. Whoever is oppressed by grievous sickness thinks that he will be healthy; another man of low estate considers that it's high and that he's handsome though his form is without beauty. If someone is lacking means and is constrained by the effects of poverty, he thinks that he will assuredly acquire much money.

Here, as in the Megarian epigram, Solon uses inclusive first-person verbs in the first two couplets to describe the larger group of humanity ("we mortals think …" and "we take eager delight …"), followed by three examples, each of which takes up a full couplet beginning with a pronoun that is linked syntactically as part of a regular series: χὥστις μέν (37), ἄλλος (39), and εἰ δέ τις (41).[15] The poet, moreover, enhances the unity of this section of the poem by replicating a key term and idea: Solon places the word δόξα in the first couplet to signal the beginning of his catalogue of (mis)perceptions, an idea that he reiterates in the last two couplets by using the cognate verb δοκεῖ to illustrate two specific cases, first in line 39 and then again in line 42, where it stands emphatically as the last word of this five-couplet unit.

If these five couplets had survived by themselves as a fragment of Solon's poetry, we would hardly think that they, like the Megarian epigram, constitute a complete catalogue, because we do not find here any sense of closure: the general introductory section has been expanded in size to two couplets, rather than one, and the summary statement is entirely missing. But like the Tyrtaean priamel—whose rhetorical ending was blunted to help segue into the next stanza of the poem—the lack of closure here is purposeful, because this initial catalogue is followed, somewhat abruptly, by another, in which Solon shifts his attention away from the expectations of mortal men to their various vocations. This section of the poem is ten couplets in length and can be separated on thematic and rhetorical grounds into two additional five-couplet stanzas (13.43-62):[16]

[15] Gerber 1999 ad loc. and other editors suggest that lines 39–40 refer to *two* different cases (hence the comma at the end of 39): the low-born man, who thinks he is noble, and the ugly one, who believes he is handsome. If this is so, it violates the one-person-per-couplet rule that we see in some of the other elegiac catalogues. But perhaps Solon has the stock Greek phrase καλὸς κ'ἀγαθός in mind here and has produced, albeit in a chiastic manner, its poetic opposite. If so, we should perhaps remove the comma and imagine a single person with two misperceptions: "And another man of low estate thinks himself noble and handsome, though he has a displeasing shape."

[16] Race 65–67 treats lines 43–64 as a complete ten-couplet priamel.

σπεύδει δ᾽ ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος· ὁ μὲν κατὰ πόντον ἀλᾶται
ἐν νηυσὶν χρῄζων οἴκαδε κέρδος ἄγειν
ἰχθυόεντ᾽ ἀνέμοισι φορεόμενος ἀργαλέοισιν,
φειδωλὴν ψυχῆς οὐδεμίαν θέμενος·
ἄλλος γῆν τέμνων πολυδένδρεον εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν
λατρεύει, τοῖσιν καμπύλ᾽ ἄροτρα μέλει·
ἄλλος ᾽Αθηναίης τε καὶ ῾Ηφαίστου πολυτέχνεω
ἔργα δαεὶς χειροῖν ξυλλέγεται βίοτον,
ἄλλος ᾽Ολυμπιάδων Μουσέων πάρα δῶρα διδαχθείς,
ἱμερτῆς σοφίης μέτρον ἐπιστάμενος·

ἄλλον μάντιν ἔθηκεν ἄναξ ἑκάεργος ᾽Απόλλων,
ἔγνω δ᾽ ἀνδρὶ κακὸν τηλόθεν ἐρχόμενον,
ᾧ συνομαρτήσωσι θεοί· τὰ δὲ μόρσιμα πάντως
οὔτε τις οἰωνὸς ῥύσεται οὔθ᾽ ἱερά·
ἄλλοι Παιῶνος πολυφαρμάκου ἔργον ἔχοντες
ἰητροί· καὶ τοῖς οὐδὲν ἔπεστι τέλος·
πολλάκι δ᾽ ἐξ ὀλίγης ὀδύνης μέγα γίγνεται ἄλγος,
κοὐκ ἄν τις λύσαιτ᾽ ἤπια φάρμακα δούς·
τὸν δὲ κακαῖς νούσοισι κυκώμενον ἀργαλέαις τε
ἁψάμενος χειροῖν αἶψα τίθησ᾽ ὑγιῆ.

Everyone has a different pursuit. One roams over the fish-filled sea in ships, longing to bring home profit; tossed by cruel winds, he has no regard for life. Another, whose concern is the curved plough, cleaves the thickly wooded land and slaves away for a year. Another who has learned the works of Athena and Hephaestus, the god of many crafts, gathers in his livelihood with his hands; another, taught the gifts that come from the Olympian Muses and knowing the rules of the lovely art of poetry, makes his living.

Another has been made a seer by lord Apollo who works from afar and, if the gods are with him, he sees a distant calamity coming upon a man; but assuredly neither augury nor sacrifice will ward off what is destined. Others, engaged in the work of Paeon, rich in drugs, are physicians; for them too there is no guarantee. Often agony results from a slight pain and no one can provide relief by giving soothing drugs, whereas another, in the throes of a terrible and grievous disease, he quickly restores to health with the touch of his hands.

Here, as in a number of the elegiac catalogues discussed earlier, we find a general statement ("Everyone has a different pursuit") followed by a list of examples. The first section describes four different human pursuits: the merchant (ὁ μέν), the plowman (ἄλλος), the craftsman (ἄλλος), and the poet (ἄλλος). And as in the previous stanza, Solon casts each of the last three descriptions as a complete couplet, each beginning with the same pronoun.

The language of this first section, moreover, and the order of the vocations seem to reflect, albeit weakly, the form of the five-couplet priamel discussed earlier: it catalogues three kinds of work (merchant, plowman, and craftsman), and then ends with the poet, which is, of course, Solon's own role. Although Solon does not emphatically single out poetry as any better than the rest, he nonetheless isolates and elevates it by treating the first vocation as dangerous (note the "cruel winds" that beset the merchant) and the second two as contemptibly banausic: the plowman "slaves away" at his job while the craftsman gathers his livelihood "with his hands," thanks to the "works" (50 ἔργα) learned from the gods. Only the final vocation, that of the poet, is the result of "gifts" (51 δῶρα) of the Muses and "lovely skill" (52 ἱμερτῆς σοφίης), a designation that recalls other programmatic statements in the *Theognidea* about the special craft of elegiac poetry.[17] Both the sequence, then, and the differences in tone between the first three vocations and the last poetic one suggest that this five-couplet stanza may have originally been composed as a priamel that boasted the virtues of elegiac poetry over other pursuits.[18] Solon, in short, seems to have taken a traditional elegiac priamel and adapted it as the first section of a longer catalogue of vocations that prizes but does not openly vaunt the work of the poet.

The second half of this catalogue superficially continues the pattern of the first—note how the pronouns ἄλλον and ἄλλοι introduce new vocations at the start of a couplet—but its form, content, and rhetorical purpose are somewhat different. In the first place, the brisk pace of the first stanza slows down considerably in the second. In the first, each worker was the subject of his own sentence, which (with the exception of the first) runs the length of a couplet. In the second stanza, however, we find only two vocations and they differ from the first four in grammatical case or number: the seer appears in the accusative singular (ἄλλον) and gets two couplets of description, and the healers appear in the nominative plural (ἄλλοι) and get three. More important, however, is the change in focus and purpose. This second stanza of the catalogue of vocations underscores the limits to or ambiguity of human efforts to pro-

[17] For σοφίη as the special skill of the elegiac poet see, e.g., Nagy 23–36 and Ford 82–83 and 89–93.

[18] Two Latin examples of the five-couplet priamel in elegiac form—Propertius 3.9.35–44 and Petronius, *Satyricon* 137.9.1–10—suggest that three foils may have been a typical number for a five-couplet elegiac priamel. Propertius, for example, lays out three themes that he refuses to treat. Each is treated to a full couplet or two that ends with a full stop, and each begins with a first-person verb: *non ego* … *findo* … *non flebo* (the Seven against Thebes) … *nec referam* (the Trojan War). The final couplet states his preference: he will sing like Callimachus. See Race 136–37 and 148.

tect or cure other mortals: the seer can predict the future but is unable to ward off fate, while the healers have helpful drugs but cannot guarantee the life of a patient. Despite such variations, however, these two stanzas were clearly composed as a coordinated pair, with the second picking up from the first the notion that some groups—craftsmen and poets in the first stanza, seers and healers in the second—receive their talents directly from their patron deities.

Solon, then, pieces together three somewhat different stanzas—each five couplets in length—into a fairly logical sequence: [19]

(i) a catalogue of faulty human (self-)perceptions or expectations (*doxai*);

(ii) a priamel-like inventory of vocations that ends with a subtly favorable description of the poet;

(iii) an extension of (ii) that turns into a meditation on the limitations of two additional god-given vocations.

None of these thematically coherent stanzas can, of course, stand as an independent poem. Indeed, Solon cleverly deploys them as interlocked units, through which the listener moves quite effortlessly, thanks to their shared linguistic structure. But at the same time he manages to vary each stanza by changing the focus, the type or case of the initial pronoun at the beginning of each, and the number of individuals or vocations described.[20] Signs that the middle stanza was originally composed as a short priamel suggest, moreover, that Solon, like the Theognidean author of the Sisyphus poem discussed earlier, may have creatively composed this three-stanza section by adapting pre-existing five-couplet "set-pieces" to the longer poem at hand.

Solon seems to use this same technique in his elegiac poem on the ten stages of a man's life (Solon 27):[21]

[19] Lattimore 165–68 gives a similar analysis, but he fails to note the regular stanzaic structure. He acknowledges, for example, the new start made with lines 33–36 and then he describes 37–42 as an extension of 33–36. He then goes on to treat 43–62 as a single continuous unit.

[20] Solon, too, brings some closure at the end of the long three-stanza sequence by mention the restoration to health (62 τίθησ' ὑγιῆ) of a man oppressed by terrible diseases (61 νούσοισι ... ἀργαλέαις), words clearly designed to recall the deluded man described in the first stanza, who although oppressed "by grievous sickness" (37 νούσοισιν ὑπ' ἀργαλέῃσι) thinks that he will be healthy (38 … ὡς ὑγιὴς ἔσται).

[21] It has not found much favor with modern readers. Campbell 1967: 246–47 is typical of the scholarly reaction ("rigid," "monotonous," "intractable material"). West 1992 ad loc. does not think this fragment is a complete poem and Adkins 1972: 128 rightly notes that it seems to lack a proper introduction, although he does seem to feel that line 18 is an adequate ending.

παῖς μὲν ἄνηβος ἐὼν ἔτι νήπιος ἕρκος ὀδόντων
φύσας ἐκβάλλει πρῶτον ἐν ἕπτ᾽ ἔτεσιν.
τοὺς δ᾽ ἑτέρους ὅτε δὴ τελέσῃ θεὸς ἕπτ᾽ ἐνιαυτούς,
ἥβης ἐκφαίνει σήματα γεινομένης.
τῇ τριτάτῃ δὲ γένειον ἀεξομένων ἔτι γυίων
λαχνοῦται, χροιῆς ἄνθος ἀμειβομένης.
τῇ δὲ τετάρτῃ πᾶς τις ἐν ἑβδομάδι μέγ᾽ ἄριστος
ἰσχύν, ᾗ τ᾽ ἄνδρες σήματ᾽ ἔχουσ᾽ ἀρετῆς.
πέμπτῃ δ᾽ ὥριον ἄνδρα γάμου μεμνημένον εἶναι
καὶ παίδων ζητεῖν εἰσοπίσω γενεήν.

τῇ δ᾽ ἕκτῃ περὶ πάντα καταρτύεται νόος ἀνδρός,
οὐδ᾽ ἔρδειν ἔθ᾽ ὁμῶς ἔργ᾽ ἀπάλαμνα θέλει.
ἑπτὰ δὲ νοῦν καὶ γλῶσσαν ἐν ἑβδομάσιν μέγ᾽ ἄριστος
ὀκτώ τ᾽· ἀμφοτέρων τέσσαρα καὶ δέκ᾽ ἔτη.
τῇ δ᾽ ἐνάτῃ ἔτι μὲν δύναται, μαλακώτερα δ᾽ αὐτοῦ
πρὸς μεγάλην ἀρετὴν γλῶσσά τε καὶ σοφίη.
τὴν δεκάτην δ᾽ εἴ τις τελέσας κατὰ μέτρον ἵκοιτο,
οὐκ ἂν ἄωρος ἐὼν μοῖραν ἔχοι θανάτου.

A boy while still an immature child, in seven years grows a fence of teeth and loses them for the first time. When the god completes another seven years, he shows the signs of coming puberty. In the third hebdomad his body is still growing, his chin becomes downy, and the skin changes its hue. In the fourth everyone is far the best in strength, whereby men show their signs of manliness. In the fifth it is time for a man to be mindful of marriage and to look for a line of sons to come after him.

In the sixth a man's mind is being trained for everything and he is no longer as willing to commit acts of foolishness. In the seventh and eighth, a total of fourteen years, he is far the best in thought and speech. In the ninth he still has ability, but his speech and wisdom give weaker proof of a high level of excellence. If one were to complete stage after stage and reach the tenth, he would not have death's allotment prematurely.

As we saw in several of the catalogues discussed above, this fragment has an obvious formal structure, allotting one couplet to each of the ten seven-year periods (the so-called "hebdomads") and beginning each with the appropriate ordinal number—with one glaring exception: in lines 12–13 Solon interrupts the pattern and crowds the seventh and eighth hebdomads into a single couplet, leaving us with a nine-couplet composition.[22]

[22] Campbell 1967: 247: "the structure of the poem collapses when the seventh and eighth ages are combined."

There are, in fact, internal indications that this poem was originally designed as a pair of five-couplet stanzas and that the rather lame combination of the seventh and eighth hebdomads in a single couplet is the work of a scribe trying to repair the loss of the full couplet that once described the eighth stage of life. The first five couplets of Solon 27, for instance, form a separate and coherent stanza (as I have printed them above). Indeed, although the two sections of this poem share the same rigid format, there are some subtle but important differences in content and emphasis, just as we saw in the twinned stanzas on human vocations in Solon 13: the first five couplets of the fragment deal only with the physical growth of a baby to a young man, focusing very tightly on various parts of his body: the teeth, the physical signs of puberty, the chin, the skin color, the strength, and the outward signs of maturity and manliness.[23] There is no mention at all of his mental or rhetorical skills. There are, moreover, hints of formal unity within the stanza: the second and fourth couplets close with similar rhyming phrases—(ἥβης ἐκφάνει) σήματα γεινομένης (4) and σήματ᾽ ἔχουσ᾽ ἀρετῆς (8)[24]—and all three of the middle couplets end with the same sound (-ης). Solon also frames his descriptions of the first five hebdomads by mentioning in the final couplet the need at this point to start having children (παίδων), a word that harks back to the first word of the poem (παῖς).

Just as in his catalogue of professions (13.43–62), where we saw signs that the first five couplets might have originally served as a freestanding priamel designed to boast the calling of the elegiac poet, here too Solon might have ended the catalogue after the fifth hebdomad if he so chose or if he needed it for another rhetorical purpose. But instead he goes on to describe the stages of the mature adult, focusing instead on a man's non-physical faculties: the training of the mind (νοῦς), the avoidance of foolishness, the skill in thought and speech (νοῦς and γλῶσσα), and in the ninth stage the waning of speech and wisdom (γλῶσσά τε καὶ σοφίη). And as in his catalogue of vocations, Solon creates verbal echoes between the two halves of the catalogue to develop this second section as a suitable but contrasting partner to the first. He brings up the idea of seasonality, for example, at the end of the putative second stanza (οὐκ ἂν ἄωρος ἐὼν) in a phrase that echoes the closing line of the first (ὥριον ... εἶναι).[25] And the phrase ἐν ἑβδομάδι μέγ᾽ ἄριστος at the

[23] Siegman 1970 points out the important differences in content between the first five couplets and those that follow.

[24] I follow Gerber 1999 and most modern editors, who print the manuscripts' σήματ᾽ here. West, on the other hand, prefers πείρατ᾽, a conjecture of Städtmüller.

[25] Adkins 1985: 131. One of the anonymous referees for this journal notes another example of this kind of responsion: the description of the "foolish child" (παῖς ... νήπιος)

end of the penultimate hexameter of the first stanza (line 7) is echoed by the nearly identical phrase ἐν ἑβδομάσιν μέγ' ἄριστος at the end of the second hexameter of the second section (line 13)—a repetition that in fact highlights the thematic differences between the two stanzas: "the very best *in physical strength*" is contrasted against "the very best *in thought and word*" (my emphases).[26]

In sum: the architecture of this fragment suggests strongly that Solon composed it as a pair of elegiac stanzas, and that he organized them as a regularly paced and continuous list that divides up human life into an earlier period of thirty-five years, during which the development and reproduction of the physical body is of paramount importance, and a later period of equal length, focused on the evolution and eventual devolution of a man's mental and rhetorical skills. Since Solon in every case but one grants a complete couplet to each hebdomad of the catalogue of the ages, and since he generally pursues this practice of equal representation in the catalogues in his "Hymn to the Muses," it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that at some point in its transmission from antiquity an entire couplet has dropped out of our text, a couplet that once described fully the features of the eighth hebdomad. Indeed, once we have observed the carefully developed architecture of Solon 13.33–62 and Solon 27, it seems rather obvious that the weak enjambment of the word ὀκτώ at the beginning of line 14 of the latter must be a sign that at some point early in its transmission a full couplet has dropped out of our text and that at a some later point in time a scribe, realizing that the eighth hebdomad was missing, rewrote line 14, and in so doing ejected yet another pentameter.[27] Was Solon 27, then, a complete poem, two stanzas in length? Probably not. His practice as illustrated in the "Hymn to the Muses" suggests that, like Tyrtaeus, he treated such catalogues as useful set-pieces that he could adapt and work into a longer poem whenever an appropriate need arose.

We have seen, then, how Solon, Tyrtaeus, and the Theognidean poet all use the five-couplet stanza to lend a regular structure to catalogues, and that they do so in a manner that nearly approaches generic composition: a couplet-by-couplet series of *exempla*, each beginning with the same or similar pronouns, or a

in the first line of the first half (1), seems to be recalled by and contrasted in the first line of the second half (11) with the "mind of the adult man (νόος ἀνδρός)," which "is *no longer* willing to commit foolish acts (ἔργ' ἀπάλαμνα)."

[26] See Adkins 1985: 130 for the repetition and the contrast.

[27] This thoughtful solution to the problem of the missing couplet was formulated by Mark Usher and I thank him for it. The same nine-couplet version of the fragment is preserved in the manuscripts of both Ph. *Op.* 104 and Clem.Al. *Strom.* 6.144.3.

summation that uses the first-person plural to include the poet ("we mortals") or the dramatic speaker (e.g., the Megarian dead) within the group. There are also traces of more specialized forms. Both Tyrtaeus and the Theognidean poet, for instance, compose priamels that contrast a single human possession ("furious valour" or wealth) with a list of the other prized, but ultimately inferior, attributes of famous mythological heroes. That these five-couplet priamels were used as a kind of elegiac "set-piece" is suggested by the first half of Solon's catalogue of vocations, where we detected the underlying structure of a similar priamel: three vocations described in somewhat negative terms followed by the fourth and final example of the poet, who is subtly praised above the others. It would seem, then, that the five-couplet structures long ago detected by Weil and Rossi in the Tyrtaean corpus are more widespread than these scholars imagined and that such stanzas may provide evidence for a kind of generic composition, whereby the poet could draw upon traditional building blocks—for example a priamel praising poetry or a digression on Sisyphus—to expand his composition in new and interesting ways.[28]

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[28] A slightly simplified form of this essay was delivered as a lecture in February 2005 at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Fordham University, and I am grateful to the audiences in both places for their stimulating questions and comments.

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