Thanks everyone for allowing us to take a few minutes of your time.

We’re here today to very briefly demonstrate a lyric poetry mapping project, entitled Mapping Greek Lyric: Places, Travel, Geographical Imaginary, that we three Ph.D. candidates at Stanford – David Driscoll, Israel McMullin, and Stephen Sansom, headed by Natasha Peponi -- have created, which maps archaic and early Classical lyric activity and imagination.

So what is the map? The map in essence allows you to interact with visualizations of two kinds of information: on the other hand, the activity and movement of the poets themselves, and on the other hand the poetic “geographical imaginary,” that is those places that the poets themselves treat in their poetry. To achieve this, we have carefully reread the ancient sources to create a database consisting of XX poets, XX places, and XX links between poets and places. Using cartodb sql and gis mapping software, we visualize this dataset in an easy-to-use way that lets you easily see which places are the most active or most often mentioned in lyric poetry, and lets you see poetic travel from poets’ places of origin to where they are said to have been active.

We imagine the map might be useful as a teaching tool, in for example intermediate Greek courses on Greek lyric poetry, and also as a research aid, to quickly and easily get a sense of the broader trends of poetic activity.

It is probably easier to demonstrate the map and show its capabilities and potential uses than to spend too much time describing it. Let’s start with the “Places” map, which shows places associated with poetic origin or activity. The larger the place’s circle, the more poets are associated with it. So if you click ‘origin’ and look at Lesbos, you see that more poets are said to have come from Mytilene than the island’s other poleis. If you click on Mytilene you can see which poets those are: namely, Alcaeus, Aristokleitos, Phrynis and Sappho, and if you scroll down you can see which ancient source links each poet to Mytilene – so in the case of Alcaeus we have cited Strabo.

Now if you click ‘activity’ you can see not just the poets said to have come from that place but also all the poets the ancient sources link with that place. It’s not surprising that this is a huge number of poets for Athens – 44 non-native poets are said to have been active in Athens; but also a large number for Sparta, even down into the late 5th century, including Exekestides and Timotheus.

Let’s take a look at the second way of interacting with this data in the “travel” map. Here we represent travel as showing movement from a poet’s place of origin to all the places he is said to have been active. If you click on Simonides, for example, you can see that while no single ancient source discusses Simonides’ travel, putting a variety of sources together suggests that Simonides traveled from Ceos to at least seven other places, including surprisingly several locations in Thessaly – the only poet in our dataset to do so.

But there are also other ways to see poetic travel. Clicking on one of the places allows you to see poetic movement in and out of a city: clicking on ‘Athens,’ for example, shows you that while many poets travelled to Athens (the lines in red), many poets from Athens also traveled elsewhere in the Greek world (the lines in purple) – Athens not just as a black hole of poetic activity. While we see a similar story with Samos and Sicyon – these places as hubs of poetic activity are both importers and exporters of poets – if we zoom out a little further and consider poetic activity at the broadest regional level the story is a little different.

By clicking on ‘Aegean islands’ in the ‘geographical region’ box, you can see poetic travel in and out of all the Aegean islands. Here it’s clear that while there a handful of places that poets from elsewhere travel to – most obviously Delos and Samos – the abundance of purple on this map shows that many more poets left the islands than came to them. In contrast, if you click on ‘Mainland Greece’ the situation is nearly completely reversed. Poets from throughout the Greek world came to mainland Greece, and very few poets from mainland Greece travelled outside of it.

In our final section, the ‘geographical imaginary,’ we map all the references to specific locations in Greek archaic and classical lyric poetry (except the overwhelming Pindar and Bacchylides). Clicking on ‘all references’ most obviously shows that the imaginary world of the Greek poets is much more expansive than their travel, with a much greater interest in Cyprus and the East than is reflected in their movement, but we can learn more by focusing on the poetic world of specific poets. Anacreon’s poetic world is centered in Asia Minor and the coastal islands – you can click on a specific place to see what the poet says about that place, as for example clicking on Lydia shows ‘people living in Lydian style’ for Anacreon. Likewise if you click on Timotheus you see that again his poetic imagination focuses on Asia Minor and the adjacent islands. In contrast, though, Alcman’s poetic world is much more interested in mainland Greece and Cyprus, while Corinna’s is almost single-mindedly focused on Boeotia.

Hopefully this short tour of our mapping project has demonstrated its capabilities and possible uses. Visualization of the data not only shows some things we already knew in a way that is easy for undergraduates to grasp – like that Athens is the central hub of lyric activity, especially in the later part of our period – but also shows surprising results perhaps worthy of further investigation.