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Sappho's Amatory Language

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Translated by William Robins

At times, Sapphic poetry—most particularly the amatory lyric of Sappho—has been injured by its own extensive success. It has come about, in other words, that, confronted by such an imposing phenomenon, ancient as well as modern criticism has abdicated its proper nature as an interpreter in order to surrender itself to the "ardent" and "ineffable" tones of dithyrambic exaltation, of mawkish sentimentality, of decadent *sensiblerie*. A patient (and petulant) excerptor of the vast specialist literature on the topic could compile without too much difficulty a small anthology of bad taste within the field of so-called imitative criticism. Even a critic as sober, moderate, and cautious as D. L. Page let himself take part at one point, introducing in two pages of his *Sappho and Alcaeus* a description of the "society" of Lesbos fit for the pen of J. A. Symonds, which seems directed less by any kind of critical necessity than by the "Mediterranean" myths of a nineteenth-century Englishman: "exquisite gardens, where the rose and hyacinth spread perfume; pine-tree-shadowed coves, when they might bathe in the calm of a tideless sea."[1] Welcome, then, are the calls for methodical sobriety put forward by Max Treu at the beginning of the brief interpretive essay included in his edition of Sappho,[2] and according to which Page's book is, in fact, to such a great degree informed.

From another angle, due to an incomprehension already current in antiquity about the historicosocial context within which to place Sappho's poetry for a correct evaluation of its contents, criticism took the road of

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1. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 140–41.
2. Treu, ed., *Sappho* 137–38.

a more or less sensitive or fervent or scandalized denunciation, or more often a hazy and evasive psychologism of a kind that strove (and strives, for this is not a closed chapter) to illustrate "amorous fullness," to reconstruct the interior history of a "beautiful soul." In this choir there is no lack of voices, animated by chivalric indignation, that in response to any "calumny" point to the "skilled housewife"[3] in Sappho, the "madame landlady" for some pensioned Edwardian, a second Madame de Maintenon, the "lady professor" of literature and belles-artes. Nor does it seem that any better service has been rendered to the interpretation of Sappho's poetry by those modern critics who have made a great display of the latest Freudianisms.

Thus whoever today would reconsider in its complexity what is usually improperly called *Sapphofrage* is tempted to repeat, albeit with amused irony and with different motivation, some words that Gunther Zuntz wrote in his tastefully disdainful Latin: "Philologorum in mores inquisituro luculentam sane hae interpretandi rationes praebent materiam: ad Sappho nihil pertinet."[4] If, among other things, it is true that "the eternal feminine" is exalted more willingly in criticism written, for example, in Italian, in criticism written in German hints of *südliche Glut* (southern passion) frequently appear.

Naturally, there have been many espousals of positions that were supposed to "de-dramatize" the question and bring it back to more appropriate terms. So, for example, Erich Bethe in an article that remains fundamental[5] (but also Beloch, DeSanctis, and Marrou, to mention some names) has clarified very lucidly the place that homosexual love occupied in archaic Greek society—in Sparta as well as in Chalcis, in Lesbos as well as in Crete, within both male and female communities or associations—where it constituted one of the bonds and at the same time established itself as an important pedagogic instrument. Typical of this historical moment in Greek civilization is the tendency to consider the learning process as the work of a careful and overshadowing vigilance exercised on the ἐρώμενος by the ἐραστής, who for his own sake is pledged to make himself worthy of his role as a guide. However, the idealization of this picture as wrought by the idyllic or "prude" moralism of various later sources should not blind our eyes to the reality of the amorous relations to which archaic lyric attests with complete naturalness.

As far as regards Sappho in particular, the question has been restudied recently by Reinhold Merkelbach, who in a long article, "Sappho und ihr Kreis," reexamined the internal and external evidence that enable a reconstruction, around the poetess, of a *Mädchenbund*, a circle held together by communal life and by sacral bonds, within which they could (no, indeed, they had

3. See *POxy.* 2506.48.III.42–43, and Treu, "Neues über Sappho" 10–11.
4. Zuntz, "De Sapphus carminibus" 88–89.
5. Bethe, "Die dorische Knabenliebe."

to) establish those particular erotic tensions that the poetry of Sappho reveals. Unfortunately, behind this *Mädchenbund* the still-unexorcised specter of the *Mädchenpensionat* rises again in some way, even if *cum grano salis*, and Merkelbach avoids a direct engagement through comparisons with the nature of Sapphic eros, to which he quickly nods in a note that proves sybilline to me.[6]

On the other hand it is to say the least curiously indiscrete, and not generally justified by language parallel to ephebic poetry, for Page to presume to find in the fragments of Sappho any "evidence for practice" beyond evidence "for inclination" for homosexual love.[7] For if, for example, Solon or Anacreon can be very explicit,[8] yet in the ephebic collection that closes the compilation of Theognis (and where Sapphic imitation is widely evident, as I will discuss more thoroughly below) one finds rather rare "evidence for practice" in the sense intended by Page. Moreover, and just to ironize a little in such a "compromising" situation, Sappho certainly did not mean to provide a kind of sociological documentation on the sentimental and sexual initiation of the girls on Lesbos in the manner of Margaret Mead, or like that furnished so prolixly by Mary McCarthy concerning the girls at Vassar College.

And, it might be said in parentheses, one needs to proceed cautiously here as in any analogous case of using fragments to reconstruct a "biography" that might otherwise run the risk of being "romanticized." For example, in fragment 121[9] it is certain, it seems to me, that the lady speaking in the first person, rejecting love or marriage with a younger man, is not Sappho. K.J. Dover has recently urged a salutary caution in interpreting the fragments of archaic lyric where the poet seems to speak *in propria persona*, citing rather conveniently fragment 10.1 of Alcaeus, ἔμε δείλαν, ἔμε παίσαν κακοτάτων πεδέχοισαν, where the feminine form shows that the person who speaks is not Alcaeus.[10] The problem of the right age for marriage appears in a typical Hesiodic sequence (*Op.* 695 ff.) and recurs with frequency in Greek poetry, as is shown by, among others, the τμῆμα of Stobaeus who cites the Sapphic fragment (4.22.5; IV pp. 542 ff. Hense). Likewise in the case of Sappho, who gives a joking variation of it in her famous fragment 105, one ought to think rather of an epithalamic motif.

I therefore would not like to investigate here the "amorous life" of Sappho or the "life" of the *thiasos*, but would rather like to attempt a reconstruction,

6. Merkelbach, "Sappho und ihr Kreis" 3 n. 2.

7. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 144.

8. Respectively fr. 12.2 D. and fr. 407 P. (43 Gent.)

9. Unless indicated otherwise, Sappho and Alcaeus are cited according to the edition of Lobel and Page.

10. Dover, "The Poetry of Archilochus" 206 ff.

which will be based above all on data provided by the language (given that others have already clarified the historicosocial assumptions) of the environment and conditions in which a very specific poetic experience, though by no means unique in the archaic Greek world, matured. The problem of the name with which to define the Sapphic circle does not seem truly essential. It could be called θίασος, it could perhaps be called ἑταιρεία; ἑταίρα recurs three times in Sappho (frs. 126, 142, 169), and there is also the masculine συνέταιρος in the fragment on the marriage of Hector and Andromache (44.5) with which she to a certain degree can make available some "concrete experience"[11] of her own time even in the description of a mythic past. Fragment 160, "I shall now sing for my ἔταιραι this beautiful song of joy"[12] —τάδε νῦν ἑταίραις ταὶς ἔμαις τέρπνα κάλως ἀείσω—is a precious testimony of the precise audience to whom Sapphic poetry was originally addressed. Nor do I know if it is simply a coincidence that the feminine συνεταιρίς, attested only once in Greek, appears in Corinna,[13] a woman poet in whom the influence of Sappho is evident in various aspects.

In another Sapphic fragment (150) the expression μοισοπόλων οἰκία (ο δόμος) occurs: "It is not right that there should be a lament in a house of μοισοπόλοι," οὐ γὰρ θέμις ἐν μοισοπόλων †οἰκίαι / θρῆνον ἔμμεν'. Our source, Maximus of Tyre, affirms that Sappho here speaks to her daughter Cleis, so there would be no reason to think of other "boarders" of the οἰκία. But, by speaking of herself as μοισοπόλος, I do not think Sappho is using simply some generic term for designating herself as a "poetess,"[14] but shows herself belonging within a cultic association whose members count among their bonds that of the cult of the Muse; μοισοπόλος occurs with precise cultic significance in an epigraphic document described by Franz Poland.[15] But the divinity that appears with typical prominence in the fragments of Sappho is, as is well known, Aphrodite, who was also, for example, worshiped at Athens and at Ephesus with the appellation ἑταίρα; for ἑταῖροι and ἑταῖραι, or as Athenaeus attests, συνήθεις καὶ φίλαι of noble lineage, were joined together in her name.[16] If the constant copresence in Sappho's poetry of

11. Mazzarino, "Per la storia" 41.

12. If ἑταίραις ταὶς ἔμαις is in fact dative. Even if the conjectural τέρποισα of Sitzler, for example, is accepted, the testimony remains fundamentally the same.

13. *AP* 7.7 = fr. 5.7 D.

14. The term occurs with its meaning now faded in Eur. *Alc.* 445 and *Phoen.* 149, and a pair of times in the *AP*.

15. Poland, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens* 206–7; *IG* 7.2484 (second century B.C.E.).

16. For Athens, see Ath. 17.571c = Apollod. fr. 244 B 112 *FGrH*. For Ephesus, Ath. 13.573a = Eualc. fr. 418.2 *FGrH*. See also Hesych. Phot., s.v. Ἑταῖρας (Ἀφρ.) ἱερόν; and Dümmler, s.v. "Aphrodite," PW 1.2:2734.

the Charites and the Muses (whose ties with Aphrodite are attested ever since the Homeric hymn to Apollo)[17] shows that Sapphic eroticism, however intense and "ineluctable,"[18] is nevertheless free from the mysterious and relentless frenzy that, for example, Eros connotes in the verses of Ibycus,[19] and if in ode 1 Aphrodite appears in order to temper rather than to stir up the "aches of the heart," then the choice of Aphrodite as the divinity typically appropriate and almost unique among the Sapphic circle could not have been fortuitous. Page's anxiousness to deny that Sappho might have had an official role as a "priestess"[20] hinders him from then giving a positive evaluation of the place occupied by this divinity in her poetry.

Now, except for a fragment where she is invoked as goddess of the sea (fr. 5), Aphrodite is, in Sappho's poetry as in Homer or in the *Hymns*, the goddess who *subdues* with the torment and passion of love.[21] And if ode 1 could make us think of a particular and personal type of Sapphic religion, the fragment from the Florentine ostracon (2) brings us back to a precise cultic environment, as is guaranteed by phrases such as the ἔναυλον ἄγνον of lines 1–2, and so also to a precise occasion or circumstance in which Sappho and the ἔταιραι of her circle celebrated the divinity to whom their existence was most closely linked, in the space sacred to her and in the fullness of her attributes.[22]

Merkelbach has underlined some coincidences, in elements improperly called "descriptive," between the fragment from the ostracon and fragment 5 of Ibycus, where the description of an "untouched garden," where Cidonian apples blossom irrigated by flowing waters, serves as a backdrop to the frenzy of Eros.[23] Yet rather than to the "gardens of the nymphs" of which Merkelbach thinks, I believe that fragment 2 of Sappho refers

17. Ll. 189–96. For Muses, Graces, and Aphrodite within the sphere of ephebic eros, see e.g. Plut. *Amat.* 758c.

18. Fr. 130: Ἔρος ... ἀμάχανον.

19. Fr. 5.10 P.: αἴσσων παρὰ Κύπριδος ἀζαλέαις μανίαισιν ἐρεμνὸς ἀθαμβής.

20. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 126–28.

21. Δάμνα, fr. 1.3; δάμεισα ... δι' Ἀφροδίταν, fr. 102.2. For δαμνάω in this sense, cf. Hom. *Il.* 14.199, 316; Hes. *Theog.* 122.

22. At this point I ought to insert a retraction of what I wrote in "L'ostracon fiorentino" 87. I still believe that there are good probabilities for maintaining that the ode of the ostracon ended with l. 16, and that in the text of Ath. 463e the τούτοις τοῖς ἑταίροις ἐμοῖς τε καὶ σοῖς following the Sapphic citation should be referred to the συνιοῦσι καὶ ἡμῖν of 463c, and does not constitute a free citation from a succeeding strophe of Sappho. But it does now seem to me likely that when Athenaeus introduced the mention of ἑταῖροι he might have had present the earlier part of the ode, which is unknown to us, and reproduced its situation freely; and what I then said in haste concerning the "intimate and personal" character of the religion of Sappho now seems to me entirely unsatisfactory.

23. Merkelbach, "Sappho und ihr Kreis" 26–27.

to a clearly Aphrodisian environment, where elements that in other contexts and other periods would be "landscapist" have a cultic meaning that has already been emphasized by Bruno Gentili with particular reference to the amatory language in Anacreon's poetry and archaic lyric, where the mention of apples or roses always alludes to the presence or power of Aphrodite.[24]

Besides fragments 4 and 5 K of the *Cypria*, already cited by Gentili, where the "spring flowers"—crocuses hyacinths violets roses narcissi lilies—embellish the clothes and form the crowns that adorn the φιλομμειδὴς Ἀφροδίτη and her ἀμφίπολοι, Nymphs and Charites, I would like to recall the passage of the Διὸς ἀπάτη[25] where, to conceal the embrace of Hera and Zeus, the earth miraculously makes fresh grass and flowers of lotus and crocus and hyacinth shoot up under them. And also in Hesiod's *Theogony* (l. 279), Poseidon possesses one of the Hesperides "on a soft field and in the middle of spring flowers," ἐν μαλακῶι λειμῶνι καὶ ἄνθεσι εἰαρινοῖσιν, a passage to which lines 9–10 in fragment 2 of Sappho bear comparison: "there a field where the horses graze blossoms with spring flowers," ἐν δὲ λείμων ἱππόβοτος τέθαλε / ἠρίνοισιν ἄνθεσιν.[26] That, besides the apples and roses of line 6, the "field where the horses graze," λείμων ἱππόβοτος, ought also to be linked to a sacral Aphrodisian environment, and gains confirmation not only from the image of the "horses of Aphrodite" of the girls ready for love in a new fragment of Anacreon,[27] but also from a quatrain of the ephebic collection of Theognis (ll. 124 ff.), where the commentators generally refer to Anacreon, although here, as is often the case, the most notable similarities are with Sappho:

> Παῖ, σὺ μὲν αὔτως ἵππος, ἐπεὶ κριθῶν ἐκορέσθης,
> αὖθις ἐπὶ σταθμοὺς ἦλυθες ἡμετέρους
> ἡνίοχόν τε ποθῶν ἀγαθὸν λειμῶνά τε καλόν
> κρήνην τε ψυχρὴν ἄλσεά τε σκιερά.
>
> O youth, like a horse, since you are sated with fodder, turn again to my stables, desiring a good rider and a beautiful field and a fresh spring and shady woods.

Here, besides the coincidences of κρήνην ψυχρήν / ὕδωρ ψῦχρον (Sappho 2.5) and ἄλσεα σκιερά / ἐσκίαστ' (Sappho 2.7), we can observe λειμῶνα τε

24. Gentili, ed., *Anacreon* 184 ff. Besides the passages cited there, compare also Bacchyl. 17.114–16; Hesych. s.v. Ἄνθεια· Ἀφροδίτη, παρὰ Κνωσίοις.

25. *Il.* 14.347 ff.

26. The conjecture ἠρίνοισιν, which, a few years ago in "L'ostracon fiorentino," I accepted only with some reluctance given the hopeless paleographic situation of the text, now seems less unlikely to me.

27. 346.8–9 P. = 60 Gent.; see also Gentili's commentary on pp. 183–87.

καλόν / ἐν δὲ λείμων κτλ. (Sappho 2.9). The αὖθις will also be noted, which corresponds to the typical δηῦτε with which Sappho indicates with a nearly formulaic insistence the recurrence of a well-known situation. And I would also like to note that a word so rarely attested in Greek outside of medical literature as κῶμα, which is in line of the ostracon fragment to indicate the drowsiness that falls from the rustling leaves, appears significantly in the above-cited section of the Διὸς ἀπάτη (l. 359)[28] to indicate the drowsiness that welcomes Zeus after his embrace with Hera.

Fragment 2, where all the elements allow us to reconstruct a precise sacral environment where everything defines Aphrodite as the goddess who bestows love (and already Page, referring to fr. 96.26 ff., Ἀφροδίτα / καμ[ ]νέκταρ ἔχεύ ἀπὺ / χρυσίας, underlined the recurrence and typicality of the situations that prescribe poems of this kind in the Sapphic environment),[29] can open our understanding for all those fragments, which it is not necessary to cite here in their entirety, where Sappho represents herself and the girls of her circle who adorn themselves and enjoy the flowers sacred to the goddess. In particular in line 11 of fragment 94, to which I will turn again later, Sappho recalls for a girl who is leaving part of the κάλα of their past life, the crowns of violets and roses, the garlands of flowers, and immediately afterward also the "satisfaction of love's longing" (ll. 21–23); and here Page has clearly shown that the ἐξίης πόθο[ν of line 23 can mean nothing but "you freed yourself from your desire by giving it satisfaction," as the analogy with the Homeric ἐξ ἔρον εἶναι reveals.[30] That πόθος in Sappho takes on a specifically erotic meaning is made clear above all from fragments 48.2 and 102.2, where it is associated with the typical δάμναμι (I am overcome). So also fragment 126, "sleeping (you would sleep?) on the breast of a tender friend," δαύοισ' (δαύοις?) ἀπάλας ἐτάρας ἐν στήθεσιν, seems able to be interpreted in the sense of a tender amorous yielding, at least if, in our ignorance of the context (which in the fact of the matter renders every interpretation conjectural), some light is shed for us by its repetition by Theocritus in the *Epithalamium of Helen*, so rich in Sapphic reminiscences: "Sleep breathing love and passion, one on the chest of the other," εὕδετ' ἐς ἀλλάλων στέρνον φιλότατα πνέοντες / καὶ πόθον (ll. 54–55).[31]

Thus, the μοισοπόλος Sappho addresses herself above all to the ἔταιραι united to her both by the ties of the cult of Aphrodite and also sometimes

28. As well as in a rather significant passage of the *Odyssey*, 18.201.

29. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 44.

30. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 79–80; cf. also Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie* 31 n. 8.

31. The Sapphic fragment should not, however, be attributed to an epithalamium, because there is no instance of ἑταίρα = νύμφη in Sappho. Cf. Treu, *Sappho* ad loc. For πόθος with an amatory meaning in Archilochus, see Broccia, *Πόθος e ψόγος* 20–21.

by ties of a love that cannot in any way be identified with a "maternal tenderness,"[32] and who were part of the very life of the ἑταιρεία. And once these amorous ties, like those of the cult, became an object of poetry, this ought to have provided an adequate expressive instrument, a language that could respond to the needs of an experience of a new and particular situation. Merkelbach suggests a comparison between the love poetry of Sappho and troubadour or *stilnuovo* lyric:[33] one might be confronted here with an analogous escape into an "impossible love" in environments where, at moments historically, culturally, and socially entirely different, amorous passion did not find satisfying the answer to be had in a relation with a beloved man or beloved woman destined to then become spouse and companion for life. Apart from all the necessary cautions in comparing completely different cultural situations, apart from the "sublimation" of Sapphic eroticism, which Merkelbach starts to introduce in this way but which I cannot share, I believe that this suggestion might be partly used in a different sense. Just as troubadour and *stilnuovo* lyric develop particular languages typical of these schools and constituting one of the elements distinguishing them from other "styles" of amorous lyric, so in Sapphic lyric one can isolate the elements of a series of amatory representations articulated in a language in which Homeric, Hesiodic, and Archilochean precedents are yoked together to characterize a new situation. In this situation they acquire a new resonance by the unusual frequency with which they are employed to function as thematic words, by the new meanings with which they are invested, and also by the copresence of newer terms dictated by the needs of a changed situation.

A language of this kind naturally finds significant correspondences in Anacreon and in the ephebic lyric of Pindar and Theognis, which accordingly ensure which meanings are to be read in the amorous lyric of Sappho. On the other hand, the "imitations" and later applications of this language, for example by Alexandrian poets, should be examined with greater caution, because in the literary game of allusion, embedding, and citation a twist away from the meaning of the original might always be at work. An analysis of this language should be linked both to the environmental considerations mentioned above and also to a series of researches such as those of Turyn, Treu, Kazik-Zawadzka, and Marzullo, which, even in the diversity of methodological bases and of results, have contributed to defining the historical position of Aeolic poetry, and of Sapphic poetry in particular, in its relations to the epic tradition.[34]

32. Latte, review of Fränkel 37.

33. Merkelbach, "Sappho und ihr Kreis" 16.

34. Turyn, *Studia Sapphica*; Treu, *Von Homer zur Lyrik*; Kazik-Zawadzka, *De Sapphicae Alcaicaeque elocutionis colore epico*; Marzullo, *Studi di poesia eolica*.

It is still necessary to warn, in relation to our specific problem, that vague appeals to "universal laws of the human heart," as well as gleanings of *loci similes* such as those contained in the *Studia Sapphica* of Turyn, which illustrate the persistence of several topoi up to late Latinity with parallels in the Romance literatures, are insufficient for the aims of a precise evaluation of the amatory lyric of Sappho. Just to present a macroscopic example, one might try to pair the φώναι / σ' οὐδ' ἔν εἴκει of Sappho's fragment 31.7–8 with the "ogne lingua deven tremando muta" (every tongue becomes mute in trembling) of the *Vita Nova*. It will be seen that what might perhaps be thought of as a mere physiological response valid in every case, or in the case of every "sensitive soul," in Dante expresses his reverential inhibition before the terrestrial image of Paradise, while in Sappho it is integrated into a very different framework of "signs" as will be analyzed below.

Likewise, nothing is more frequent in amatory lyric than the topos of "love and death," and even in Sappho it recurs with particular insistence. Yet if the "it seems to me I am almost dead," τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης / φαίνομ', of the ode handed down by Longinus (fr. 31.15–16) used to appear as the unrepeatable impulse of desperation of a "solitary soul," the Berlin papyrus has since reinstituted two "variations" on the same theme: in fragment 94.1, "truly I wish I were dead," τεθνάκην δ' ἀδόλως θέλω, and in fragment 95.11–13, "a longing to die holds me, and to see the dewy banks of Acheron flowering with lotus," κατθάνην δ' ἵμερός τις [ἔχει με καὶ / λωτίνοις δροσόεντας [ὄ/χ[θ]οις ἴδην Ἀχερ[. But the characteristic expressive "conventionality" with which the motif is handled by Sappho reveals that the relative fixity of its formulation expresses a moment typical of the Sapphic experience of eros, destined to repeat itself more times in analogous situations: to be precise, the ἀμαχανία (helplessness; fr. 130) when faced with the necessity of separation, institutionally germane to the Sapphic circle, or when faced with the impossibility of possession, which thus suggests as a solution the desire for death.[35] The motif is taken up again, as is well known, by Anacreon, who, perhaps because he uses it outside of a situation or context immediately clear to his listeners, introduces with γάρ a clarification that Sappho does not find necessary: "Might I die, for I can find no other release from these sufferings," ἀπό μοι θανεῖν γένοιτ'· οὐ γὰρ ἄν ἄλλη / λύσις ἐκ πόνων γένοιτ' οὐδαμὰ τῶνδε (fr. 411a P. = 29 Gent.). Similarly, the young girl of the new parthenium of Alcman (3 P.), which even more clearly than the previous example attests to an interlacing of impassioned amorous relations among the instigators,

35. On this see also Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 83, who has called attention to the frequency of the motif; but in my point of view he excessively "de-dramatizes" Sappho's text.

is gazed at "more consumingly than sleep or than death," ταχερώτερα / δ' ὕπνω καὶ σανάτω (ll. 61–62).[36]

As is the case with a large part or with all the rest of erotic Greek poetry, the amatory language of Sappho has in common with the Homeric-Hesiodic tradition some terms such as δάμναμι, ἔρος, ἵμερος, πόθος, and φιλότης, or for example an adjective such as λυσιμέλης (limb-relaxing) to characterize Eros (an epithet attested in this sense beginning with Hes. *Theog.* 121, 911). These terms were so diffuse that it is superfluous to cite parallel passages; it is more interesting to try to note how they recur with typical frequency in texts that mention analogous situations to those described in Sappho's poetry, as in the already-cited parthenium 3 P. of Alcman (ll. 61–62): "she gazes at me with passion that loosens my limbs," λυσιμελεῖ πόσωι[37] ποτιδέρκεται, and in the Chalcidian popular song (fr. 873 P.), where love for the παῖδες who lack neither nobility of origin nor the favor of the Charites[38] is likewise called λυσιμελής. One could also note, with all the caution demanded by the fragmentary state of the testimonies, that in the Sapphic lexicon (in which, to the degree it is known to us, the greater part of the terms are attested to only once) words such as δάμναμι, ἔραμαι, ἔρατος, Ἔρος/ἔρος, πόθος, ποθήω recur with a significant frequency,[39] equal only to the frequency of appearance of terms that connote other characteristic aspects of Sapphic sensuality such as ἄβρος, ἅδυς, ἄπαλος, γλύκυς, and, naturally, κάλος. And it might perhaps be a coincidence ascribable to the tastes and the particular criteria of choice of the later sources, but Sapphic neoformations such as δολόπλοκος[40] (weaver of wiles) to denote Aphrodite, or γλυκύπικρος

36. On this see Gentili, "Aspetti del rapporto poeta" 78 n. 18.

37. λυσιμέλης πόθος is already in Archilochus, fr. 118: ἀλλὰ μ' ὁ λυσιμέλης, ὦ 'ταῖρε, δάμναται πόθος.

38. So also ephebic love, like Sapphic eros, is tied to *charis*, and thus represents, differently from heterosexual love, an element of moderation dear to an aristocratic environment such as one can reconstruct around Sappho, just as at Chalcis (873.1 P.: πατέρων λάχετ' ἐσθλῶν), at Sparta (see among others Plut. *Lyc.* 18d: ὥστε καὶ τῶν παρθένων ἐρᾶν τὰς καλὰς καὶ ἀγαθὰς γυναῖκας), in the Megara of Theognis, etc.

39. Two instances for δάμναμι: 1.3 and 102.2; five cases for ἔραμαι, ἔραννος, ἔρατος: 16.4, 49.1, 132.3, 16.17, 81b.1; twelve instances for Ἔρος/ἔρος: 15b.12, 23.1, 47.1, 54 test., 58.26, 73a.4 (prob.), 112.4, 130.1, 159, 195, 198; seven instances for πόθος, ποθήω, πόθεννος: 15b.11, 22.11, 36, 48, 74b.2, 94.23, 102.2; eight instances for ἱμερόεις, ἵμερος, ἱμερρω, ἵμερτος: 1.27, 17.10 (prob.), 31.5, 78.3, 95.11, 96.16, 112.4, 137.3 (though in 137.6 the term has a strong ethical coloring, in 78.3 the context is unknown, in 17.10 the integration is uncertain, and in 95.11 ἵμερον does not have an erotic meaning).

40. Fr. 1.2. The term reappears in Simon. fr. 541.9 P., in the *Adesp.* 919.7 (prob.) and 949 P., and in a passage from the second book of Theognis, who as always reshuffles the Homeric inheritance with Sapphic innovations: Κυπρογενὲς Κυθέρεια δολοπλόκε ... δαμνᾶις ... ἀνθρώπων πυκινὰς φρένας (ll. 1386–88).

(bittersweet; fr. 130.2),[41] ἀλγεσίδωρος (paingiver; fr. 172), or μυθόπλοκος (weaver of tales; fr. 188) to connote Eros, are also always dictated by this same need to express a particular experience without precise literary precedents.

Moreover, according to the historical process, already amply illustrated by others, that enables words from epic language to assume meanings partly or entirely new in the age of lyric, some terms from epic assume in Sappho a new amatory meaning. δονέω, which in Homer for example can be said of the wind that shakes or stirs the trees, of the pestering that puts heifers to flight, and so on, appears in Sappho 130.1 in its first attestation for the love that "stirs, shakes, upsets the soul"; the meaning recurs in Pindar (*Pyth.* 4.218–19), where the ποθεινὰ Ἑλλάς (desired Hellas), and so the passion for Jason, upsets (δονέοι) Medea "burned in the heart," ἐν φρασὶ καιομέναν, and in the *Ecclesiazusae* of Aristophanes (l. 954),[42] where a young lady, vainly awaiting a man, softly sings a love song in which she invokes her beloved to spend the night with her, "for a love upsets me with trembling," πάνυ γὰρ δεινός τις ἔρως με δονεῖ. K. J. Dover thinks the disposition of this Aristophanic love song, "δεῦρο δή, δεῦρο δή" (ll. 952, 960), to be typical of popular song,[43] but it is also clear that in this case the popular song was reelaborated by Aristophanes with an intent of literary parody (Μοῦσαι, δεῦρ' ἴτ' ἐπὶ τοὐμὸν, / μελύδριον εὑροῦσαί τι τῶν ἰωνικῶν, ll. 882–83; "Muses, come here to me, find an Ionian ditty"). This is shown by the interlacing of reminiscences and citations: line 956, "an extraordinary passion is (lies) in me," ἄτοπος δ' ἔγκειταί μοί τις πόθος, is to be compared with Archilochus, fragment 104 D.: "he lay miserable from the passion," δύστηνος ἔγκειμαι πόθωι. And the response of the youth, lines 973–74: "Oh my care, covered with gold, offspring of the Cyprian, bee of the Muse, raised by the Charites," ὦ χρυσοδαίδαλτον ἐμὸν μέλημα, Κύπριδος ἔρνος, / μέλιττα Μούσης, Χαρίτων θρέμμα, is to be compared, as van Leeuwen has already done, with fragment 7 P. of Ibycus: "O Euryalus, offspring of the blue-eyed Graces, care of the [8] of the beautiful locks, the Cyprian and Peitho with the soft gaze raised you among flowers of roses," Εὐρύαλε γλαυκέων Χαρίτων θάλος ⟨ ⟩ / καλλικόμων μελέδημα, σὲ μὲν Κύπρις / ἅ τ' ἀγανοβλέφαρος Πει- / θὼ ῥοδέοισιν ἐν ἄνθεσι θρέψαν. And if line 954 cited above truly contains, as I believe, a Sapphic reminiscence, this would make it equally believable that also in lines 877 ff. and 911 ff. Aristophanes freely echoes the famous δέδυκε μὲν ἀ σελάννα (the moon has

41. Compare Theog. 1353–54: πικρὸς καὶ γλυκύς ἐστι ... ἔρως, and then *AP* 12.109.3 (Meleager); 5.134.4 (Posidippus).

42. And then in Theoc. 13.65, where it is perhaps more Sapphic than Homeric, as Gow, ed., *Theocritus* ad loc., would hold.

43. Dover, "The Poetry of Archilochus" 221.

set; 94 D.), as well as assisting the argument of the supporters of the infinitely contested authenticity of the fragment.[44]

A significant convergence of terms and expressive modules that characterize in no uncertain way the passion of unreciprocated love is naturally found again in the famous ode cited in *On the Sublime* (31), although I would like to say that, as far as concerns the overall interpretation of this ode, I cannot persuade myself that we are in fact dealing with an epithalamium, even of some less traditional type. For it seems to me that at line 16 the refrain φαίνομ' ἐμ' αὔται (it seems to me), now fortunately restored by the new Florentine fragment,[45] excludes for the φαίνομαι of the first verse any such meaning as "appear, present oneself as" ("in die Erscheinung treten") that would entail interpreting the arrangement of the ode as a variation of the motif of the *makarismos* of the spouse, according to the interpretation maintained by Bruno Snell especially.[46]

The nature of the eros described by Sappho in this fragment should not be identified simply on the basis of the concretely physical or physiological aspect of the well-known sequence of the "signs" of amorous turmoil. The representation of an emotional state or of a cognitive act by means of its ensuing eruption in a concrete physical attitude is normal enough for the Greeks of the archaic age;[47] and for this reason, as Hermann Fränkel has aptly noted, a passion that is assessed on the plane of its realization does not then have to add anything such as "so much do I love you."[48] Such an addition is even less necessary since all the language of the ode, it seems to me, sets up a precise kind of reading, which later seems to have been that of the ancients generally—such as that of Theocritus in the second *Idyll*, just to cite from among many possibilities the example of a poet whom we have seen was influenced often by the amatory language of Sappho.

The ὠς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω (for when I look at you) of line 7 has a precedent in a section of the epic that has already been shown to be important for the interpretation of fragment 2, in the Διος ἀπάτη, where Zeus, facing Hera clothed in all of her seductiveness, is said to "hardly see her, love enwraps his prudent soul," ὡς δ' ἴδεν, ὥς μιν ἔρως πυκινὰς φρένας ἀμφεκάλυψεν (*Il.* 14.294).[49] It also finds a significant correspondence in the encomium for Theoxenus, in which the old Pindar confesses his melting passion for

44. See Marzullo, *Studi di poesia eolica* 53 ff.
45. Istituto papirologico G. Vitelli, *Dai papiri della Società Italiana* 16–17.
46. Snell, "Sapphos Gedicht" 71 ff.
47. Onians, *Origins of European Thought* 3, 17–18.
48. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie* 199–200.
49. See also, e.g., *h. Hom. Ven.* 56–57.

the ephebic beauty: "But because of Aphrodite I melt like the wax of the sacred bees beneath the sun, when I see the young limbs of the boys," ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τᾶς ἔκατι κηρὸς ὣς δαχθεὶς ἔλαι / ἰρᾶν μελισσᾶν τάκομαι, εὖτ' ἂν ἴδω / παίδων νεόγυιον ἐς ἥβαν (fr. 123.10–13). This, in Sappho as in Pindar,[50] is not the motif of "love at first sight," as one will find it later in its Theocritan reuse,[51] but rather the express registration in a nearly formulaic manner of the power of erotic seduction that the "bright" spectacle of beauty exercises on the senses and through the senses. However, "the bright love of the sun and beauty," τὸ λά[μπρον ἔρος τὠελίω καὶ τὸ κά]λον (fr. 58.26) in Sappho are not simply aesthetic longings; the "bright dazzling," ἀμάρυχμα λάμπρον (fr. 16.18)[52] of the face of Anactoria even in memory summons love again, as the "rays that dazzle," ἀκτῖνας μαρμαρυζοίσας (Pind. fr. 123.2–3)[53] from the eyes of Theoxenus immediately overwhelm in the waves of passion anyone who does not have a heart of iron. In Sappho it is not the image of the wave but that of the "bewilderment of the heart," expressed by a verb such as πτόαμι of "already ancient erotic specificity,"[54] the particular meaning of which has found confirmations in new fragments of Alcaeus and Anacreon,[55] but which was already attested earlier by a collage of the collection of Theognis where the turmoil from confronting ephebic beauty is expressed with linguistic elements drawn from Homer, Hesiod,[56] and especially Sappho: "Suddenly sweat runs unstoppably under my skin, and I am bewildered by the sight of the flower of youth, pleasant and beautiful together," αὐτίκα μοι κατὰ μὲν χροιὴν ῥέει ἄσπετος

50. And, perhaps, yet again in Sappho fr. 6.8 L.-P., ὤσιδῳ[, and in Alcman, fr. 3.79 P.,]α ἴδοιμ' αἴ πως μὲ̣..ο̣ν φιλοι.

51. Theoc. *Id.* 2.82, χὠς ἴδον, ὣς ἐμάνην, ὥς μοι πυρὶ θυμὸς ἰάφθη.

52. This particular experience of beauty must also have had a nearly formulaic expression in Sappho; cf. fr. 4.6–7,]σαντιλάμπην,]λον πρόσωπον.

53. The reference to the ἀμάρυχμα of Sappho is already, for example, in Bowra, *Pindar* 276. The term is attested for the first time in Hes. frs. 21, 94.6: Χαρίτων ἀμαρύγματ' ἔχουσα. The "bright" beauty that excites longing is also, for example, in *h. Hom. Ven.* 89–91: ὡς δὲ σελήνη / στήθεσιν ἀμφ' ἁπαλοῖσιν ἐλάμπετο, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι. / Ἀγχίσην δ' ἔρος εἷλεν κτλ.

54. Cf. Setti, "Nota" 534 n. 2; and also Broccia, "Per l'esegesi" 8 ff., which I was able to see only after the draft of my article was completed, and which already insisted on the parallel with Theog. 1018. This "specialization," pertinent to the domain of homosexual love, can be found down to late antiquity; cf. for example Ath. 13.601e: Κρῆτες γοῦν, ὡς ἔφην, καὶ οἱ ἐν Εὐβοίαι Χαλκιδεῖς περὶ τὰ παιδικὰ δαιμονίως ἐπτόηνται; and Harp., s.v. τοὺς σφόδρα ἐπτοήμενους περὶ τὰ παιδικά.

55. Alc. fr. 283.3, κἀλένας ἐν στήθ[ε]σιν [ἐ]πτ[όαισ-; Anac. fr. 346.1, 11–12 P. = 60 Gent., πολλοὶ πολ]ιητέων φρένας ἐπτοέαται. Cf. also Gentili, ed., *Anacreon* 191 and n. 1. For Sappho, cf. again fr. 22.14.

56. Cf. Hes. *Op.* 447, κουρότερος γὰρ ἀνὴρ μεθ' ὁμήλικας ἐπτοίηται.

ἰδρώς, / πτοιῶμαι δ' ἐσορῶν ἄνθος ὁμηλικίης / τερπνὸν ὁμῶς καὶ καλόν (ll. 1017–19).

The "sweat" that floods the limbs (Sappho 31.13) is, for example, already in the *Homeric Hymn* to Pan: "The soft desire to unite himself with the love of the nymph of the beautiful braids, daughter of Driope, flowered in him and assailed him," θάλε γὰρ πόθος ὑγρὸς ἐπελθὼν / νύμφῃ ἐϋπλοκάμωι Δρύοπος φιλότητι μιγῆναι (ll. 33–34), while the particular use of πῦρ (fire) at line 10 is entirely unique in archaic Greek[57] and might have, I believe, a meaning somewhat close to its meaning of "fever" as attested in the medical literature. And this matching with an entirely different technical language need not seem strange; even in ode 1.3, the term ἄσα, "agony" (also rather rare, and taken up later with an analogous meaning by Anac. fr. 347.8 P. = 71 Gent.) ought in part to be close to the physiological meaning of "nausea" attested in the medical literature, and ought to indicate something more than a "mental discomfort" since, as Page has already noted,[58] it recurs, tied as in Sappho to ἀνία, in a medical text that speaks of a man who is prey to "torments and agonies," ἀνιᾶται καὶ ἀσᾶται, through an alteration that exhibits itself in his physical equilibrium.[59] Here then is love as a partial "malady,"[60] not in the romantic sense of the term but in the concrete sense of a disturbance that invades the senses. In this sense certain expressions are still loaded with all of the expressive violence of their literal meaning, and at the same time are innovators with respect to preceding use even within the ambit of archaic lyric: expressions such as "my soul burned with passion," ἔμαν φρέναν καιομέναν πόθωι (fr. 48.2,[61] where the "soul," φρήν, that can be "devoured," βόρηται [fr. 96.17], or "tossed about," τινάσσει [fr. 47], by Eros as by a wind, is still obviously to be understood in a very concrete sense);[62] or the "cooking" of passion, ὄπταις ἄμμε of fragment 38, which will later be taken up frequently in Alexandrian literature[63] —for example, by Meleager, who plays with a rather baroque *pointe* upon the image of Eros as

57. And in Greek in general, where the term in this sense reappears in the Alexandrian age; see Theoc. *Il.* 2.82, 11.51; Callim. *Epigr.* 25.5 (ἀρσενικῶι θέρεται πυρί) and *Aet.* fr. 75.17, where πῦρ is the flame of the mysterious malady that burns Cydippe.

58. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 6.

59. Hippocr. *De morbo sacro*, vol. 6, p. 388, ll. 21–22 Littré. Hippocrates might also have used as technical terms expressions from poetic language, according to the process signaled by Leumann, *Homerische Wörter* 303 ff. (for a specific case see Janni, "Due note omeriche"); this does not however exclude the reverse possibility, of the poetic use of prosaic technical terms.

60. For analogies in Theocritus, see the commentary to *Id.* 2.84 and 30.2 in Gow, *Theocritus*.

61. Καίεσθαι in this sense is in Pindar in the passage from *Pyth.* 4.219 cited above.

62. On this see also Onians, *Origins of European Thought* 32–33, 54–55, although the latter pages do not seem at all acceptable to me.

63. Theoc. *Id.* 7.55, 23.34; Callim. *Epigr.* 43.5. In Ar. *Lys.* 839 the sense is highly ironic.

"cook" of the soul,[64] or employs, in a by then highly stylized manner, the contrast "to burn with love—to find relief in coolness."[65] This contrast is attested for the very first time in fragment 48 of Sappho: "You came, and it was a good thing; I was longing for you, and you gave coolness to my soul burned by passion," ἦλθες, εὖ δ' ἐπόησας, ἔγω δὲ σ' ἐμαιόμαν, / ὃν δ' ἔψυξας ἔμαν φρένα καιομέναν πόθωι, where it seems to me that the conjecture ὀνέψυξας[66] finds confirmation in a passage of the second book of Theognis (l. 1273), where he laments that the παῖς (boy) that has destroyed his νόον ἐσθλόν (good mind) later "gave coolness for a short while," ἄμμε δ' ἀνέψυξας μικρὸν χρόνον. And in the context of fragment 48, μαίομαι, which in Homer or in Hesiod (as in the rest of Greek poetry) indicates a rather general "going in search, pursuing," assumes, along the lines shown above for δονέω, the specifically erotic meaning of "to long for."[67] This meaning is guaranteed by its pairing with ποθήω in fragment 36, καὶ ποθήω καὶ μάομαι, which is known to us through the *Etymologicum Magnum* but is also found inscribed on one of the wellknown vases with ephebic inscriptions, the one attributed to Euphronius:[68] Λέαγρος καλὸς · μαμε καὶ ποτέω; and notwithstanding the poor accuracy of the transcription, it does not seem doubtful that here we find ourselves in front of a Sapphic citation, and that the author or the commissioner of the vase thus read in the text of Sappho a precise message of love.

Sapphic poetry could thus speak to the common reader who did not close himself to the comprehension of its contents with the same clearness with which it spoke to Pindar or to Theognis. And the selections that Sappho performed within the lexical patrimony of the epic, as the new linguistic means with which she gave expression to a world different from the epic world, were destined in their turn to be "leader of a school" and to become traditional. I have sought to isolate a few elements of this language and, by placing them in the tradition to which even a "marvel" like Sappho has to be associated, to characterize through them some aspects of Sapphic eros, the chorality and the concreteness of a particular erotic experience. I like to hope that the data of this study will also be of use to those who wish to study the poetry of Sappho with different methods.

64. *AP* 12.92.7–8, ὀπτᾶσθ' ἐν κάλλει, τὐφεσθ' ὑποκαόμενοι νῦν / ἄκρος ἐπεὶ ψυχῆς ἔστι μάγειρος Ἔρως.

65. *AP* 12.132.7–8 ἃ ψυχὲ βαρύμοχθε, σὺ δ' ἄρτι μὲν ἐκ πυρὸς αἴθηι, ἄρτι δ' ἀναψύχεις πνεῦμ' ἀναλεξαμένη.

66. Which pleases neither Pfeiffer, review of Diehl and Lobel 317, nor Treu, *Sappho* ad loc.

67. The same could probably be said for the πεδήπομεν of fr. 94.8, which finds no parallel in the current uses of μεθέπω.

68. Cf. Robinson and Fluck, *Greek Love-Names* 33.