Sappho in Athens
Reperformance and Performative Contextualizations of the New Cologne Papyrus, or Old Age and Rejuvenation through Chorality
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Summary
This paper gives a fresh perspective on the spectacular discovery of the New Sappho Papyrus and considers the various performance contexts of Sappho: that is, the primary context in Lesbos, then the secondary context in Athens at symposia and the Panathenaia. The papyrus is a document of early Sapphic reception in Hellenistic times, providing an anthology based on the thematic unity of Eros, death, and the overcoming of death through aesthetics, music, and dancing.

1. What is New About the New Sappho?
In 2002, the University of Cologne purchased a small collection of 25 papyri. In the process of preserving and deciphering the papyrus, it was possible to recover two fragments of Sappho from various scraps of a mummy wrapping.¹ The first eight lines of the first column clearly constitute the end of a poem (= A1). NS (New Sappho) 9–20 displays a partial overlap with fr. 58 V./L-P, already known since 1922. In volume 15 of the Oxyrhynchus papyri (P. Oxy.), 26 line endings have been published as fr. 1787. Lines 11–22, of which the left margin is largely lost, can now largely be reconstructed, so that a complete poem has been recovered (I will designate it as T, for Tithonos), which represents primarily a lament on old age. The metre is an acephalous Hipponactean with internal double choriambic expansion.

¹ The papyrus can be viewed as a high-resolution image at http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/NRWakademie/papyrologie/Verstreutepub/bilder/PK21351+21376r.jpg. Earlier versions of this paper were presented in Cambridge UK on 18 June 2008 and in Oxford on 20 June 2008 at the Core Group Conference of the Network for the Study of Archaic and Classical Greek Song; a longer German version was first published in 2009 as “Der neue Sappho-Papyrus aus Köln und Sapphos Erneuerung. Virtuelle Choralität, Eros, Tod, Orpheus und Musik” in electronic form on the CHS-website www.chs.harvard.edu/ under Online Publications). See also Yatromanolakis 2008a and the papers assembled in Greene and Skinner 2009. What I say about contexts of reperformance is mostly in agreement with Yatromanolakis 2008a, Boedeker 2005 and 2009, Lardinois 2009, Nagy 2009.
While *P. Oxy. 1787* originated in the second century **AD**, the new discovery is to be dated on the basis of palaeographical analysis—in part, it demonstrates epigraphic forms—to the Ptolemaic period, specifically early third century **BC**, and is thus the oldest extant fragment of Sappho. After the “old age” poem, which presents and ends with Tithonos as a mythical exemplum, comes a short space, in the second column after the eighth line, in another, less careful hand with larger and more rounded forms. There follows a further fragment of a poem with thirteen lines (here designated by O, for Orpheus), which is certainly not to be ascribed to Sappho. It does not display the typical Lesbian dialect form, nor are any of the Aeolian metres recognisable, while the diction is almost modern Attic, to some degree resembling *koine*, while Doric prevails in several forms, and Aeolian is occasionally attempted.

The new papyrus, around half a millennium older and originating from the Ptolemaic period, is particularly interesting in that it does not come from a scholarly edition, but rather is the product of an earlier Hellenistic performance or reading practice which might even trace back to earlier performance practices in the sixth and fifth centuries. Therefore we can detect a very interesting case of diachronically shifting receptions of Sappho. After its original setting in the female Sapphic circle around 600 **BC**, the oral text is copied and comes via Panionic cities in Asia Minor, and perhaps tyrannical courts like Polykrates’ Samos, to Athens, which grew into the new cultural hub of the Hellenic world under Peisistratos. Two new occasions of Sapphic reception were certainly of special significance: first, the symposium, and second, public festivals, particularly the Athenian Panathenaia. During the latter, Homeric epics were also presented to a larger audience in a relay performance by rhapsodes, who alternated in singing longer sections that became the basis of the later books (*Plato Hipparchus* 228b-c). Anakreon, Alkaios, Sappho, and other Archaic and Classical poets were recited as well, in a thematic arrangement of poems performed one after the other. It goes without saying that, already at this point in history, we recognize a shift from a female to a male public and interests. Athens becomes the center of Panhellenic values, and the texts now gain a new cultural status. In the symposium, they are assimilated

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to short skolia capped by sayings of wisdom; whereas at large, public festivals, some poems are adapted to showcase citharodic spectacles. Also in the context of festivals, one poem arises from the preceding poem in relay form, and in the latter Panathenaic venue we might have long performances of multiple selections arranged by subject. The great media revolution from a predominantly oral culture in reception to a literate culture, starting with the late fifth century and culminating in the new, Hellenistic culture with the establishment of the great Alexandrian library, is another decisive step in the reception of Sappho. Differing transmissions of the songs take place in papyrus rolls: the order of arrangement of the poems can now be determined by older performance traditions and also by the newer anthologies compiled according to modern, Hellenistic values. Literary refinement; an interest in the Panhellenic star status of the great woman poet; a focus on aesthetic and metapoetic topoi, especially on the subjects of music and self-referentiality; and religious concerns about the afterlife determine the selection of passages. Furthermore, literary tastes at this point do not even preclude adding a pseudo-Sapphic song contemporary with the literary transcript.

The Cologne papyrus thus affords an insight into how Sappho was performed or even read shortly after 300 BC. In the field of drama, in the early Hellenistic period extracts of choral and dialogue passages from diverse tragedies were collected according to thematic principles. These papyrus transcripts mirror new trends in performance, such as staging extracts regarded as the best and most popular parts as solo songs. We may imagine the performance practice to be reconstructed on the basis of the new Sappho papyrus as something similar. In the form of an anthology which included texts on the themes of eros, song, death, and immortality, Sappho stands beside other songs which were probably only composed at the time of copying the Cologne papyrus. In the slightly later canonical and scholarly Alexandrian edition in nine books, on the other hand, the texts were arranged according to metre, so that within each group the poems were copied alphabetically according to Sappho’s first lines. In this latter edition, the occasion of the performance is also a criterion for the arrangement: it concludes with wedding songs in book nine.

The “best of” selection is sung consecutively, while the theme of music itself forms the focus of the performance for a public obsessed with song. The self-referential reflection on

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6 See now Power 2010.
7 Gentili 2006a:37–72, esp. 37–49. See also Yatromanolakis 2008a:249-250.
the presentation underlines the virtuosity of the song. At the same time, the extant collection reflects contemporary taste in its inclusion of material concerning the needs and anxiety pertaining to the afterlife; the central element of the mystery cults is echoed here too.

This makes the selection a veritable religious testimony, not least in that, in the last anonymous poem, Orpheus is associated with Sappho. Previously, the lyric singer *par excellence* had never occurred in Sappho; he is first attested by Simonides (*Poetae Melici Graeci* 567). On the basis of a new evaluation of the question of the afterlife and the existence of mysteries of the Muses, our understanding of Sappho has recently been altered in a significant respect (Hardie 2004, 2005). The discovery of the Cologne papyrus was itself in part the catalyst for this reassessment. It raises the question of whether such connotations of mysteries and references to Orpheus may have already occurred in hitherto unknown poems—it may be recalled that the first book alone of the Alexandrian edition, probably based on Aristophanes of Byzantium, consisted of 1,320 verses (Yatromanolakis 1999), and we might ask whether such material was composed and assembled specifically in order to satisfy contemporary concerns and expectations. Some notion of the mysteries, coming from Asia Minor, Lydia, and Anatolia, which stood in a close cultural relationship with Lesbos, could have influenced Sappho directly. Orpheus and Orphism suddenly appear in the Greek world around Sappho’s time, and at least in the Hellenistic period Lesbos is closely associated with this mythological figure. Phanocles (CA, 106–108 Powell) reports that the head of Orpheus, who was torn to pieces by Thracian women, together with his lyre, was brought from the north to the shores of Lesbos by the waves. Terpander of Antissa had already made Lesbos renowned for its music decades before Sappho and Alkaios. He is famous notably for the invention of the seven-stringed lyre, which he developed from the *pektis*, a kind of harp which he had encountered among the Lydians. Arion, the citharode from Methymna of Lesbos, is also associated with mythical stories of Apollo, Dionysus, and Orpheus through the episode of his rescue by a dolphin (Herodotus *History* 1.24).

The particular interests of the anthology found in the Cologne papyrus are emphasized by its arrangement, which differs from the previously known Alexandrian editing practice. Aside from the good fortune that we now possess another, almost complete poem by Sappho (aside from fr. 1, 16, 31, and, in part, 94 and 96), which proves to be a lyric masterpiece, the new discovery affords a highly interesting view of early Hellenistic

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* See Hardie 2005:esp. 29–32.

* See e.g. Sappho fr. 22.11, 156; Pindar fr. 125; and West 1992:71–72.
performance practice, according to which songs were collected and presented together on the basis of thematic content.\(^{10}\)

In the following discussion, the entire discovery is also to be evaluated in relation to the changes of transmission it reveals. The overlaps (\(NS \ 9–20 = T\)) with \(P. \ Oxy. \ 1787\) confirm in a reassuring fashion the earlier philological reconstruction and interpretation of the lacunae in fr. 58 V. Many proposed emendations have proved correct, and the conclusion, based on external indications, that a new poem begins at fr. 58.11 can now be regarded as certain.\(^{11}\) Admittedly, that which stands before and after the text of \(P. \ Oxy. \ 1787\) and fr. 58 is distinct from it. Above all, however, a debate has arisen as to whether or not the last four lines of fr. 58 belong to poem T. Can the song as it is preserved in the Cologne papyrus end with the Tithonos myth, in order to give an intelligible and satisfactory resolution? In other words, is T (\(NS \ 9–20\)) complete as it is,\(^{12}\) or was something omitted in the anthology?\(^{13}\) Is it possible that the poem has been shortened? Greg Nagy has suggested—and I concur—that both versions are complete, but that they reflect different performance traditions.\(^{14}\) In Nagy’s view (2009:186), the longer version can be situated in the original choral context of the festival in Lesbos; the shorter might be performed at the private symposium or at the public Panathenaia. On both latter occasions, only excerpts from various songs were presented, taken from a thematic compilation in order to achieve smoother transitions from one excerpt to the next.\(^{15}\) In any case, no version is right or wrong, but one or another version

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\(^{10}\) See Poseidippus fr. 55.2 B.-A. Σαπφώιος ἐξ ὀάρων ὀάρους, “love songs by Sappho, which flow out of one another and continue themselves.” See Nagy 2009:187.


\(^{15}\) On anthologies that contain excerpts from poems, see the examples given by Lundon 2007:160n52 and Yatromanolakis 2008a:248–250. For the technique of borrowing, adaptation, and anthologizing in archaic performance composition, see Gentili 1984:64–66 (= 2006b:79–81), with the summary: “Una tecnica di tipo associativo o antologico che permetteva di riutilizzare testi già pronti, appartenenti al repertorio tradizionale o
could be used according to the context in which it was performed (Nagy 2009:186). Or was the arrangement even an answer to the needs of the time of its textual fixation shortly after 300 BC? The limits of a poem could thus be fluid, as the Cologne papyrus shows. The material was assembled according to the occasion and its requirements. In the Cologne papyrus, A1 stands before T. In P. Oxy. 1787 (fr. 58), however, there are ten other lines, of which we can decipher very little (A2), while instead of O there follow seven further lines (B): A2, T, and B.1–4 (the four-line coda) are printed as fr. 58; B.5–7 as fr. 59 V.

Even more interesting is the last part, which is included in view of its thematic association but which undoubtedly cannot be ascribed to Sappho. Three key themes are present which also characterize Sappho’s poetry as a whole: love, self-referential poetic reflection in relation to music, and notions of life after death. The presence of these motifs supports the thesis of an anthology that was composed for performance in symposia. There is evidence that Sappho was performed in this context. The Cologne papyrus could then represent the later transmission of such a collection. Love and love lamentations, reflections on music, and general questions of life, old age, death, and the afterlife are certainly prominent themes here, and when such songs were removed from their original context they could have been arranged according to these themes. We can only speculate about other possible occasions in which the Hellenistic compilation may have been performed, for example at symposia as before; at large, public festivals; smaller, informal gatherings; or those of intellectuals or Orphic initiates. In view of the nondefinitive and fluid *mouvance* form of the text (casual hand, corrections and improvements), Lundon (2007:160) regards the last part O as an early poetic attempt on a still blank part of the papyrus. Such poetry, suitable to the taste of the period in which it was written, might be loosely influenced by Sappho and her themes. In this case, the roll would not necessarily have served as the basis of a performance; rather, it is possible that the Ptolemaic scribe, finding pleasure in the text he was copying, simply continued to compose poetry. We would then have before us the traces of an anonymous, provisional autograph. The author (or

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16 On the performance of Sappho in the symposium, see Plutarch *Quaestiones conviviales* 1.622c, 7.711d; Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 19.9.3–4. On earlier, visual sources see Yatromanolakis 2007:esp. 51–164.

authoress?) was still working on this text, and later, he (or she) may have read it in a group of intellectuals, or perhaps, together with the Sappho poems, it would have been performed in a symposium. Or perhaps a writer had even tried to recall a new, improvised song which he had heard in such a context together with the two Sappho songs.\(^{18}\)

### 2. Primary and Secondary Reception: The Choral Context

The division between primary and secondary intention and reception of performance is relevant for the evaluation of the so-called “old age” poem T and fr. 58. We have to find an answer to what Sappho originally intended with such a text, and how the girls in her circle understood these words. The poem on old age demonstrates certain parallels with fr. 16, the famous priamel fragment.\(^{19}\) The girls are being prepared for their weddings, and in the chorus they are made conscious of the importance of an all-encompassing beauty. This instruction occurs not only through the didactic word but also by means of performance, which demands the engagement of their entire bodies, and which mediates a total experience through visual, acoustic, tactile, olfactory, and kinetic signals.\(^{20}\) Sappho thus assumes a living choral culture for the reception of her poetry, even when the songs are performed by a single singer.\(^{21}\) I designate this phenomenon as the “virtual chorus”;\(^{22}\) her songs may not have been sung by a chorus, but Sappho nonetheless notionally employs the girls’ chorus of her circle as a cultural reference point that is omnipresent for the girls.\(^{23}\) Perhaps the girls did, in fact, dance to the song as well.

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18. For the Hellenistic features of this poem, see now Clayman 2009.
23. On Sappho’s circle, see Merkelbach 1957, and now Gentili and Catenacci 2007.
In a traditional society which defined itself to a considerable extent through myth and ritual, it is precisely such mythic-ritual discourses in the choral *paideia* which assume central importance. Music, rhythm, and group movement to song and melody lead to a deeper experience by the community of the importance of beauty. The education in *bellezza* is also reinforced through premarital homosexual experience among the girls in the group. The attraction of the girls both for one another and between the perfect chorus leader Sappho and individual girls results in a comprehensive aesthetic training. In a manner similar to Plato’s depiction in the *Symposium*, through physical love one acquires increased sensitivity and greater insight into surroundings, nature, fragrances, the environment, and the cosmos. This experience also provides an aesthetic understanding of the media that strengthen these feelings—words, music, and dance—which together mediate visual poetry.\(^\text{24}\) In a permanent synaesthesia, attraction and experience combine in a cognitive awareness of *kallos* in an almost philosophical sense.\(^\text{25}\) The aristocratic girls are thus prepared for their marriages, for which they need both physical and inner beauty, and in the recollection of their shared experiences beauty is kept alive even after they have left the group.

In a secondary stage of reception, the aesthetic and philosophical potential of these poems within the female group can then influence the male sphere. Thus Sappho’s poetry found entry to the symposia and achieved Panhellenic status as a cultural achievement, so that it was also performed at larger festivals.\(^\text{26}\) In this process, the songs are removed from their original, pragmatic *Sitz im Leben* and can assume new functions and meanings. They can be combined according to internal criteria alone, without reference to their function within the girls’ group. Within a new, Hellenistic culture which began to concern itself with the “scholarly” editing of canonical poetry from the Archaic and Classical periods, such poetry in its unabbreviated form was considered a consummate masterpiece, according to the changed expectations of the recipients, and is accordingly preserved.\(^\text{27}\) The songs can equally be performed in other contexts in abbreviated versions, and together with contemporary compositions in the form of a thematically coherent collection.

\(^\text{24}\) On fr. 16, see Bierl 2003.


3. Relevance in the Context of the Leading Questions and Panels at the Athens Dialogues

The papyrus yields a completely new way of interpreting lyric poetry. Parallel to a paradigm shift in the humanities to reception, anthropology, performance, and images (the so called turns), we detach ourselves from reconstructing only a biographically fixed personality of the romantic poetess but put—in the words of Dimitrios Yatromanolakis (2007)—more emphasis on understanding “Sappho in the making.” According to Nagy (2009) and Yatromanolakis (2007) we can trace her in an evolutionary model of “textures.” The Sapphic text is grounded in a synchronic and diachronic flux of multilayered complexity. Only eventually and in a web of metonymic scannings and “interdiscursive” dialogues does Sappho become a viable entity, that is, a literary existence. In a still mainly oral and traditional culture, this diachronic development takes place in a continuous process of reperformance. ²⁸

However, I do not share commentators’ recent reservations about the usual efforts to reconstruct the original setting of Sappho. Such postmodern skepticism against unidirectional constructs of grand narratives and fictionalizations would exclude any possibility of understanding the primary context and intention. On the contrary, even with all the new, diachronic emphasis on reception, I regard it as even more vital to regain glimpses of the original meaning and context of the poem. Only thus can we differentiate it from later reperformances and enucleate the differentia specifica of Sappho’s poems and this particular text.

The new fragment is also relevant to the Athens Dialogues in several other ways. In particular, it deals with “Identity and Difference” and with gender issues. In many respects, Sappho is the “Other,” or better, the “closest foreign” (Hölscher 1965:81). Misunderstandings result mainly from inadequate concepts of female homosexuality²⁹ and from the modern view of lyric poetry. On the basis of romantic ideas, one reprojects the belief that it has to do with subjective and individual expression of inner and personal feelings.³⁰ In Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy (1996), Christopher Gill


³⁰ See Martini and Hügli 1980.
differentiates the modern criteria defining personality, subject, and free individuality from an objective and participatory perspective in antiquity, where social contexts and roles are more important than in modern times, where complete self-containedness, individual freedom, and independence come to the fore. Therefore, we will see that the centerpiece of the New Sappho is not the vexed outcry of the individual lamenting about old age; rather, it has to do with aesthetic education in the Sapphic circle and with ideas of rejuvenation. Moreover, the entire meaning is acted out against the foil of a living choral culture and chorality, where the education of young women in social roles and gender values takes place.

As far as “Stories and History” is concerned, the central myth is not just a narration, but an exemplary reflection, a piece of cultural memory that confers social memory and cohesion, acted out in the imagery of choral dance. Such a view is radically different from subjective and feminist approaches\(^ {31} \) that anachronistically reproject the modern view of the female individual to a traditional society of alterity, where gender roles are rather strictly defined.

In the realm of “Logos and Art,” with the emphasis on reperformance and reception we gain a fascinating picture of shifting meanings in different social and gendered contexts of performance. Furthermore, we see that diachronic receptions depend on changing political systems and cultural values. Thus, the aristocratic traditionality of Mytilene in 600 BC produces a completely different framework from that of tyrannical or later democratic Athens and then Ptolemaic Alexandria, with their new scholarly and ethical backgrounds. Moreover, these contexts should not be hastily identified with modern or postmodern conditions of life. Therefore, it is vital to initiate a dialogue between the text and the reader, and to explore the particular alterity of sociocultural conditions in the context of the original performance and later reperformances as phenomena of reception. For this purpose, we have to go through the text in detail.

4. The New First Part (A1)

A1 (= P. Köln col. I, 1–8 [new 1–11]) is apparently the end of a poem, in which Sappho returns to the present (νῦν) and at this point speaks of her position of honour as a poet in Hades after her death, which is identical to the prestige she enjoys in her earthly life.

now enjoyment of the celebration
beneath the earth
having the honour, as is only right,
as now, being still alive (upon the earth),
the light-toned, if reaching for the harp
beautiful, Muse, I sing.  

Sappho clearly returns to the frame and parameters of performance in a concluding
coda, in which she addresses the festive enjoyment of the chorus in singing and dancing.
She imagines herself in Hades after her death and vividly sees how, even there, she will be
granted a place of honour as a singer. She desires for herself the explicit admiration among
the dead that she still enjoys among the living. Her present fame parallels her reputation in
the realm of the dead; she is confident that she will be accorded the same glory in the
underworld after her death, or at least she hopes to be. In their mystery cults, the Muses
inspire conceptions of an existence in the afterlife which reflects the situation on earth
(Hardie 2005:esp. 22–32). This is more than merely the wish of κλέος ἄφθιτον, an ‘immortal
fame’, on the part of the poet. Sappho illustrates her situation when she crosses the
threshold of death in concrete terms: life there resembles that which she now enjoys. In
Hades, she will reach for her lyre and begin to sing, accompanied at least in imagination by
the dance of the girls’ chorus, just as she does now. She imagines how she will be admired
by the souls gathered about her, who will also form a choral round dance.

In the underworld as in this world above, Sappho needs the inspiration of the Muse. The
last two lines establish a chiastic mirroring of the first two lines of the following poem (=
T.1–2), which form the prelude to the song about old age. One motif proceeds from the

other, while the rhythm remains unchanged. As in A1, death and the overcoming of death, performance in the chorus, the Muse, immortality, and the recovery of youth are presented in a utopian, pastoral context.

5. The Poem on Old Age (T)

Following the reconstruction of West (2005), the centerpiece T of the papyrus reads thus:

 ýμμες πεδά Μοισαν ἠξόκολλησε τών κάλα δύρα, ταῖδες, ταῖς,
 σπουδάσθετε καὶ τὰγ φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνοντες,
 ἐμοὶ δ’ ἀπαλόν πρίν] ποτ’ ἡμετα, χρόνου, γήρας, ἵδη
 ἐπέλλαβε, λεύκα δ’ ἐγ]ένοντο τρίχες ἐκ μελαίνανς.

5 βάρχς δὲ μ’ ὀ [θ]ύμος πεπόηται, γόνας, δι’ ὧν φέρεις,
 τὰ δὲ ποτα λαίψηρ’ ἐξον ὀρχησθ’ ἰσα νεβρίοισι.
 τὰ γέμνη στεναχίσδω παμέως; ἀλλὰ τι κεν ποεῖν;
 ἀγήραυν ἀνθρωπον ἐννότ’ οὐ δύνατον γένε, εσθαίς.
 καὶ γάρ πιοῦ τὰ Τίθωνον ἐφαντο βροδόπεσθεν, Ἀὐλών.

10 ἔρωι φ., αθηείς αγελέν’ εἰς ἐσχατα γάς φ.’ ἐροισάβν,
 ἐνατ’ [κ]άλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ’ αὐτον ὕμως ἐμ.αρμέ,
 χρόνωι πόλιον γήρας, ἔχ[ν]γιν, ἀθανάταιν ἄσου κοίπιν.
 [You for] the fragrant-blossomed Muses’ lovely gifts
 [be zealous,] girls, [and the] clear melodious lyre:
 [but my once tender] body old age now
 [has seized:] my hair’s turned [white] instead of dark;
 my heart’s grown heavy, my knees will not support me,
 that once on a time were fleet for the dance as fawns.

This state I oft bemoan; but what’s to do?
Not to grow old, being human, there’s no way.
Tithonus once, the tale was, rose-armed Dawn,
love-smitten, carried off to the world’s end,
handsome and young then, yet in time grey age
o’ertook him, husband of immortal wife.

The poem is characterised by opposites. The girls should devote themselves to the Muses, who will help them to coordinate their movement. Sappho sets the rhythm and
melody with the lyre. The situation of the chorus is decisive. In contrast to the girls summoned to the round dance, the lyric “I,” who here is certainly Sappho—for a repeated performance, however, any woman can assume her place—positions herself opposite the group of young girls at the emphatic first verse position in line 3. Age has conquered her body, her skin: now it is weak, fragile, but once, like the young *paides* who engage in *paizein*, dancing, it was nimble and agile (*ἀπαλὸν πρίν ποτ’*). Initially, the entire body is addressed. The choral dance expresses itself entirely in body movement. Then the body is divided into three sections in the perspective *a capite ad calcem*:

1. The hair, the youthful glory which characterizes the beauty of the dancing girls, has become white. Above all, the earlier condition, black hair, which the girls have, is emphasized. White and black mark the beginning and end of the colon.

2. The heart, the *thumos*, localised in the diaphragm, represents emotional energy defined as an organ. As with *trikhes*, the noun is again placed at the center, while “heavy” stands like “white” as the predicate adjective in an emphatic first position. Just as abstract old age has overcome the “I” and the hair has been subjected to a process of change (*ἐγένοντο*), so here the entire drama is rendered in the passive perfect of *ποιεῖν*. The subject is helpless; she is delivered up to an inevitability which she endures. The mood, the gay disposition which manifests in the lightness (cf. *ἀπαλὸν*) of bodily movement, is dampened. Physical weight prevents gliding and rising into the air.

3. The knees, which metonymically and as synecdoche represent the legs, suggest the movement in dance. Following the *Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder*, they are explained with a relative sentence or with a deictic main sentence (6): “These were once light”—in chiasmus the often expanded *ἀπαλὸν πρίν* [ποτ’ in line 3 is resumed—“to dance.” The knees were like those of young deer."

In line 7, we come to the passive enduring of age that overcomes the victim, and the subject’s reaction: “I lament of this often—I sigh often and groan.” The “I” asks almost with resignation: “But what should I then do?” The question is rhetorical: Sappho cannot do anything against it. Aging is a natural process. There follows the asyndetically justifying

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33 Cf. fr. 16 *inert*. (Sappho or Alkaios) L-P: *Κρῆσσαί νὺ ποτ’ ὤδ’ ἐμμελέως πόδεσσιν / ὤρχηντ’ ἀπάλοις ἀμφ’ ἔρχετα βῶμον*, where the feet in the dance are described as nimble; similarly Hesiod *Theogony* 3–4, in the appeal to the Muses. The adjektive *ἀπαλὸς* thus belongs in the context of the chorus.

34 For the comparison, see now Méndez Dosuna 2008.
gnome: as in fr. 16.21, the formula οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι appears at the end (8). That which is most decisive is again placed in the first, emphatic position. As a human being (ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ';), one cannot become ἀγήραον (8); γένεσθαι refers back to the ἐγένοντο of the changing of the hair (4). The adjective, negated with the alpha privative, is with a further explicit negation effectively affirmed in a kind of litotes.

For this thesis, a mythic example is introduced, justified with γάρ (9). The myth, the authoritative word, is appealed to in the past tense:35 “And it was said, that once”—the ποτα is again taken up, contrasting with the here and now of the performance—“that Eos abducted Tithonos.” Tithonos is placed in extreme prolepsis: he is the decisive example. As a man, he will still grow old, although a goddess loves him and seeks to obtain immortality for him—forgetting in the process, however, to request that he also remain ageless. Eos is a companion of Helios: she passes over the heavenly course in advance. Moreover, she symbolises both the sunrise and the entire day, and pursues her entire journey with undivided attention on Helios, accompanied by her herald, the morning star Eosphorus. Love and sexuality are localised in the realm of night, of death, of the unconscious, dreams, and the ocean.36 Recreation is identified with the sexual. Following the effort of the journey, the aging of the day, one then retires to the shared bed, in order to return rejuvenated to the next day’s labours.

The abduction undoubtedly occurs as a result of erotic desire. The personified dawn, enflamed with love, transports the son of the Trojan king to the edge of the world, to Ethiopia. Eos abducts Tithonos under the effect of his beauty and youth (11), and she enjoys physical love with him at the end of the world. She must still return there daily from the West, like Helios, but in spite of the love of a goddess, Tithonos is in the course of time overcome with grey old age (12). The attribute “grey” refers back to the “greying” and the white colour of the hair in line 4.

The micro-narration is held to such a minimum that the circumstances of the tragedy are not explicitly mentioned. We know from the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite (221–224) that Eos forgot to ensure the agelessness of her beloved. In a traditional, oral society, the audience would have been familiar with the variations of the myth. In artistic representations, Tithonos is depicted as a beautiful young man, wearing a crown and holding a lyre in his hand. He is obviously also a servant of the Muses who brings them

35 Edmunds 2006. On the mythical example, see now Edmunds 2009.
36 On this aspect as well as the subject of rejuvenation, see Nagy 1990:226–262, esp. 260–262, to whom Gronewald and Daniel also refer (2004a:3). Cf. also Nagy 2009.
gifts. Eos’ conventional violence in catching male youths like Kephalos is transferred here to the terrors of aging: it attacks him even though he is the beloved of his immortal spouse. ἕμαρψε stands conspicuously at the end of the line; while it was initially Eos who captured him, now it is old age which does so.

The mythical example is manipulated and complex in a manner similar to the use of the Helen myth in fr. 16 (Bierl 2003:107–112). In the same way the allusions are unusually ambivalent. After beginning with a reflection on her own aging, Sappho compares herself clearly with Tithonos: once young and beautiful, now she too has grown old. Both figures are also characterized by the lyre-playing of the Muses and singing, and they continue to sing as they become older. Sappho, however, also reflects Eos, just as the speaking “I” in fr. 16 also stands in relation to Helen. Both are active as female subjects, and travel away over the sea for love. Helen also embodies the aspect of Eos-Aotis in Sparta. She is the symbol of the young girl in the initiation on the eve of her wedding. Like Helen, Eos embodies an aspect of Aphrodite: both go to the East, motivated by an insatiable longing, and enjoy themselves in bed with a Trojan youth. Like Eos, Sappho loves radiant young bodies. She takes pleasure in the dancing girls, and burns with desire for them. Moreover, she bears them away on artistic wings to the limits of the unconscious, into the pastures of the night, of dreams, and of a perfect aesthetics. The poetess even crosses the threshold of death, sinks like Eos into the flood, into the ocean of love, and draws out of it ever new love and youth. Eos has her “house and dancing places” (Odyssey 12.3–4) in Aiaia, at the edge of the world where the sun rises. The image of the χοροί (Odyssey 12.4) is probably very concrete: the sexually attractive goddess indeed leads rings of dancers and takes members of the chorus into her house, just like Sappho. Eos is the chorus leader of the girls gathered around her, who symbolize the attendant stars. After she has indulged in a night of love, she dances in the early morning together with her companions. As the sun rises, she shines upon them. In the course of the day, she becomes old, before recovering her youth in the underworld. From the journey through death, dreams, and the unconscious, she derives new energy. She

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37 See above all the famous painting of the pursuit of Tithonos by Eos on the red-figure oinokhoē by the Achilles painter (470–460 BC), found in Vulci (Louvre, G438).
38 See Bierl 2003:108n60, 111n74 for further literature.
39 See Alcman fr. 1.87 Davies (cf. also her possibly additional name of Orthria, verse 61), and Calame 1977b:122–127.
40 On fr. 16 and Helen, see Bierl 2003:106–111.
41 On Aia (and Aiaia) as the country of Eos, see West 2007.
is immortal, a chorus leader, daily above and below the earth (see A1). Therefore, Sappho identifies herself constantly with this mythic figure, or with Aphrodite. At least in the later tradition, Sappho is associated with Aphrodite. The poetess and her model are united in their love for pretty youths such as Adonis and Phaon, and it is repeatedly narrated how they pursue their beloveds, depicting the eternal perpetuation of their love. The erotic poetics of Sappho follows the logic of love as the discourse of absence, as defined by Roland Barthes (1979:13–17). It is a matter of imaginative seeking after the object of desire, and the limits can be overstepped through music, poetry, and other aesthetic expressions. Sappho thus moves in imagination within the sphere of death, which is reflected in concrete terms in her aging body, in order then through the sphere of music and love to obtain youth once more. Consistent with the approach of the Hellenistic tradition, the outcome of the story in the new papyrus remains open. It suggests the rejuvenation of Eos and Tithonos, and the continuing performance of music and dance. The deferral to the next poem on Orpheus also reflects to some extent the erotic poetics and the narrative through thematic allusions. The abrupt ending of the myth allows reflection on the subjects of eros, life after death or immortality, renewal, and music. The cyclical poetics of deferral is manifested in the antithetical juxtaposition with the possibility of renewal. Sappho finds new energy in her attention to the dancing girls. She may be old, yet in her enthusiasm for youth and in her appreciation of their glowing bodies, she can always overcome age. At the same time, in the primary reception within her circle, the pedagogical function which resides precisely within khoreia assumes an important role. The marriage of Eos is reflected in the situation of the young women who are being prepared for marriage. Sappho can also give them the message that both they and their future husbands will grow old. Through the later recollection of their shared activities, above all in dance and music, and through a continued devotion to beauty and the aesthetic, they can remain beautiful and young in spirit—and thus also desirable. At least, by reperforming the same songs, Sappho and the

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42 With Eos: Sappho fr. 103, 123, 157, possibly 6; with Aphrodite: among others, Sappho fr. 1, 2; on the jump from the Leucadian cliffs, T 23 Campbell = Strabo 10.2.9. On the parallelism Eos-Aphrodite, see Nagy 1990:246–250.
girls of whom she sings can preserve their virginal freshness. As long as the song is performed, it remains current, being performed by ever new figures: an aging chorus leader instructs young girls in dance, who continuously leave the group and are replaced by others. It is precisely in this way that Sappho lives on, even after she is dead. Thus she metapoetically anticipates her own literary success.

The song is influenced by other laments on old age, but is in itself not at all such a lament. A personal and resigned outburst of such feelings would have been in any case rather ineffective and counterproductive within Sappho’s circle. The composition is much more a pedagogical statement for the benefit of the young, aristocratic women in her group, and a self-referential poetic reflection against the foil of the girls’ chorus. The beautiful gifts of the Muses serve as inspiration for the aesthetics of movement, whereby Sappho is in a sense the tenth Muse, who as chorus leader performs at the head of the dancing circle, the image of the group of Muses. One remains beautiful when one orients oneself toward the beautiful. Sappho rejuvenates herself in exactly the same way as her παῖδες. Sappho’s poem, then, is not simply a “correction” of Mimnermos, but the image of extreme old age is merely the expression of the impossibility of choral and sexual union. Sappho’s lines therefore act out mutual desire, inspiration, and an erotic rejuvenation.

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46 Thus, Sappho’s “emphatic response ‘Nonethelless!’” that Latacz 2005 believes he can find in these lines is not warranted; similarly Preisshofen 1977:56–64, esp. 64; Meyerhoff 1984:187–198, esp. 194–196; Falkner 1995:102–107; Tsomis 2001:247–250, esp. 249. All of these interpretations assume that the last four lines of fr. 58 V., which are missing in the Cologne papyrus, belong to this poem.

47 For this reason, Schadewaldt’s biographical interpretation (1950:157–161) is misplaced: “Sappho ist alt geworden, jedenfalls so alt, daß sie, die so an Anmut und Jugend hing, die Dunkelheiten des Alters sehr empfand. Sie trauerte darüber in einigen ihrer Lieder…” (157).


6. The End of the “Old Age Poem” (B)

An abrupt ending, such as we find in the Cologne papyrus, can readily be appreciated from a more modern, or even a Hellenistic, perspective. However, the four-line coda (B.1–4) would certainly have stood within its original context. In the primary, didactic intention, the return to the “here and now”—the function of the poem within the circle of girls—assumes considerable importance. We may consider my exposition of fr. 16 and 31 (Bierl 2003:120–122). In P. Oxy. 1787, fr. 1.22–25 and fr. 2.1, the original ending is still preserved. The last two lines of the coda (= fr. 58.23–26 V.) were already familiar in the indirect tradition preserved by Clearchus (in Athenaeus 15.687b). The much-discussed question of whether critical indications can clarify whether these lines belong to the Old Age poem remains open. The single available piece of evidence is their content. I cite the four lines:

[ι̣μέναν νομίσδει ]
[αις ὀπάσδοι]
25 ἐγὼ δὲ φίλημ' ἀβροσύνα, τοῦτο καί μοι
tὸ λάμπρον ἔρος τῶελίω καὶ τὸ κάμφον λέφογχε.

.................................. (he/she) thinks
.................................. might give
but I love delicacy ... this and love has obtained for me
the brightness and beauty of the sun.

Translation Campbell

or

51 The left margin of P. Oxy. 1787, fr. 1 is lost, but for fr. 2, partially preserved. Here, there are traces of two paragraphoi after line 1 (= fr. 58.26 V.) and line 3 (= fr. 59.2 V.). There are no palaeographical remains of a coronis. Lobel 1925:26 introduces one; Lobel and Page (= L-P) 1963:42 place it in brackets (as a reconstructed lacuna); in Voigt (= V.) 1971:78 it appears again without brackets. Cf. Burzacchini 2007:102–104, who concludes correctly that, in view of the condition of the material, the question remains open (104). West 2005:3–4 justifies the separation of the coda on the grounds that there is no coronis—admittedly, the left margin of fr. 2 of P. Oxy. 1787 is so damaged that no certain interpretation is possible—and joins the verses to fr. 59 V. (= P. Oxy. 1787, fr. 2.2–4), thus forming a longer, but still fragmentary, poem (7–9). He is followed by Austin 2007:120.
But I love shining elegance, and you knew this, and me
has love of the sun allowed to share in the light and in beauty.

The four lines thus make explicit for the girls and the audience that which can only be imagined in the case of an open, abrupt ending: the singer is not dead but lives on. It is a matter of immortality and renewal. She continues to live not merely through κλέος ἄφθιτον, her fame as a poetess, but in the hope of life after death, in rejuvenation, and in her concrete influence on the present.

Like the famous priamel in fr. 16, the concluding verses could almost stand as a motto for Sappho’s entire poetic œuvre. Sappho, or the lyric “I,” says as chorus leader that she loves shining elegance. In ἀβροσύνα, the recollection of the radiant, oriental beloved is preserved, whether Phaon, Adonis, or Tithonos. In the original ending of the so-called Old Age poem, Sappho makes it quite explicit that she loves the beautiful from which radiance comes. Specifically, this means the girls. The chorus leader and the dancing girls are reciprocally bound to one another, and each desires the other. Yet this passion is far removed from any direct sexual satisfaction. Sappho styles herself an old woman, because she cannot and may not dance together with the girls as their equal. Of course she is older, but she is still captivated by the grace of the virginal, glowing bodies as they move during the dancing, from which a particular effect of grace and radiance proceeds. While Sappho sings beguilingly and accompanies herself on the lyre, the girls dance in graceful movement. The entire scene is pure aesthetics, perfect beauty. In a reperformance the speaker would have experienced this in the same way. Finally, we come to the curious sentence to the effect that love of, that is desire for the sun has allowed her to share in light and in beauty. In her desire for the highest beauty, concretised in the sun—here she almost anticipates Plato—she receives a share of it. Eos also acquired her radiance from her permanent devotion to the sun.

The solar dimension of the myth of Eos and Aphrodite, who take Oriental lovers, now becomes more apparent. This love can never really be fulfilled: one stumbles after the

53 Kurke 1992 interprets the word ἀβροσύνα (Attic ἄβροσύνη) not merely in material but also in political terms, in the sense of an aristocratic oriental luxury; on our passage, 1992:93–99. Maehler’s definition (1963:61) is comprehensive: “Die Gesamtheit der Werte, die sie in der Gemeinschaft mit ihren Mädchen pflegte.” On ἄβρος, Sappho fr. 2.14 (Aphrodite), 128 (Charites), 44.7 (Andromache as bride), 140.1 (Adonis), 100 (cloth).
“luminous” in longing and erotic ecstasy in the realm of desire and fantasies. Sappho’s poetics conceives this desire for the absent one, whom one can never obtain, as an eternal postponement. In Sappho’s fr. 1.21, pursuit and flight are concretised: “And if she flees, she will soon pursue.” Within her circle, she chases and longs for the bodies of the girls. Through her desire for the physical, she achieves aesthetic satisfaction, just as the girls do in their relationship to her. 54 Every girl who sings Sappho’s songs can identify with this message, and through the emphasis on artistic perfection and synaesthetic harmony, each enjoys participation in it like Sappho. Beauty has an effect in turn on the girls’ radiance and sex appeal, which are necessary for marriage in an aristocratic oikos.

Finally, Sappho seems to evoke a mystical notion in her image of the sun. In the afterlife, one gazes at the radiant light, takes delight in the blessed chorus, and lives on. Here, as in the context of the mysteries, there is a cosmic dimension. Does Sappho perhaps display evidence of early Orphic experiences, which in this period came to the Greeks from Asia Minor via Lesbos? 55 On the Orphic-Bacchic gold leaves, light, radiance, Helios, the stars, and the heavens are often mentioned. 56 In mythology, Orpheus is himself often closely


55 I distance myself here decidedly from Böhme 1970:esp. 143–163 (with numerous, definitely imaginative examples of motifs): e.g. he associates (148) fr. 58 with the imagery of cicadas and their light-toned song (λιγυρὴν ... ἄοιδήν 582), as described by Hesiod (Works and Days 582–584) with λιγυρὰν χελύνναν (T.2). Turyn (1942:esp. 313–318) had already associated Sappho with Orphism, and combined the description of the locus amoenus on the Florentine ostracon, Sappho fr. 2 V., with notions of paradise in Orphic eschatology, which in his opinion Sappho drew from Orpheus’ poem Κατάβασις εἰς Ἅιδου. Hardie 2005 presents concepts derived from Orphism similar to those offered here.

56 See the leaf from Petelia, c. 350 bc, 476 Bernabé, lines 6–7: “A child of the earth am I and of the starry heavens / but I have a divine descent ...”; cf. similarly the Thessalian lamella of unknown provenance 484 Bernabé, lines 3–4, and the leaf from Pharsalos 477 Bernabé, lines 8–9 (where the second part is replaced by “my name is ‘star-like,’” Asterios). On the first part, see the lamellae from Rethymnon 484a Bernabé, line 3; from Mylopotamos 481
associated with Helios. The sun, the moon, and night assume a significant role in both Sappho's poetry and in Orphism, an importance which is now confirmed by the Derveni papyrus. In the hermeneutics of a possibly reform-oriented Orphic devotee, the sun is the central principle. There it is placed on an equal footing with Uranus' phallus, which Zeus swallowed (col. 13; 16.1 KPT). The sun is the highest principle (col. 13.12 KPT). The explicit erotic statement of love for the sun in Sappho could be explained by such a context. Similarly, Phaon, the embodiment of the shining sun, is associated with Sappho’s fascination with the phallus (Sappho fr. 211c). In the Derveni papyrus, Helios is the principle of life, the giver of life as encapsulated fire, which lends movement and stimulation. Precisely in the obscure gold leaf Thurioi 2, 492 Bernabé, Helios and fire also stand at the centre of the cosmic interchange (line 4), the reciprocal exchange of opposites, in a manner similar to Heraclitus, who is cited in the Derveni papyrus (col. 4 KPT) and who is often associated with Orphic ideas. The sight of the sun means simply life (Sappho fr. 56; 65; Iliad 24.558), to which, as in the relevant passage in our poem, the highest significance is ascribed. Likewise, in view of the epithet denoting radiance, Eos assumes an important role in the extant fragments of Sappho (fr. 6, 103, 104a, 123, 157, 175).

The last four lines, extant only in P. Oxy. 1787, thus lend depth to this assertion. The whole context, however, does not necessarily have to do with consolation or with a farewell to youth and beauty, which is conventionally read into many of Sappho's fragments.

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58 Fr. 211c = Pliny Natural History 22.20 (on sea holly, Eryngium maritinum): portentosum est quod de ea (sc. erenge) traditur, radicem eius alteratrius sexus similitudinem referre, raro inventu, sed si viris contigerit mas, amabilis fieri; ob hoc et Phaonem Lesbium dilectum a Sappho. According to this story, Phaon became particularly attractive sexually because he found a root of sea holly which resembled the phallus, and thus Sappho fell so deeply in love with him.

59 On the notion of the vision of the sun as the expression of life, see Iliad 24.558, Sappho fr. 56. The indirect source of Clearchus (fr. 41 Wehrli), preserved by Athenaeus 15.687b, where the quotation occurs, has as explanation of “love of the sun” ἡ τοῦ ζῆν ἐπιθυμία.

60 Lardinois 2009:51–53; he situates the song in the context of the wedding, where Sappho playfully contrasts herself with the youthful bloom of the bride and the groom. At the same
Rather, these verses expand the statement to a philosophical and aesthetic level. The love of the sun and devotion to radiance implies at once a poetics both of loss and of deferral. It is never possible to possess the beloved entirely for oneself; one can only aspire to this, desire it. Sappho’s song is completely indebted to the poetics of Eros, the eternal discourse of Barthesian absence (Barthes 1979:13–17). In the pursuit of the erotic object and the sun, she obtains through her erotic Muse a share in beauty and radiance, by means of which she is continuously renewed and rejuvenated. With the help of the Muses and what is beautiful, death and old age can be overcome.

6. Orpheus and the New Part (O) of an Anonymous Lyric Poem

The section that is included in view of its thematic association, but which is certainly not to be ascribed to Sappho, remains something of a riddle in its fragmentary condition.

Chirping-whispering, slander weaving, sly, inventor of stories
Malicious boy ...
friend, I am going away/crawl away ...

5 dead/breathless
light of the stars and

time, it perhaps contains a warning for the happy pair, that they, too, will one day become old.
[the radiance], the fire-glowing, the sun 
completely I hear. ... Oia-
gros’ son Orpheus [bewitching
10 all the animals [and stones]
the beguiling [taken up with hands
the fine-sounding lyre
as help having [completely]

The first editors, Gronewald and Daniel (2005), regarded the text as belonging to the
“erotic theme” (8), particularly given the allusion to Sappho’s fr. 1 and to Eros at the
beginning. Rawles (2006b), on the other hand, related the text to Hermes because of the
epithets,” and thus to music and life after death, although these two motifs also constitute
an association with Sappho’s songs. I consider all of these three themes to be present, which
also characterize Sappho: love, self-referential poetic reflection in relation to music, and
notions of life after death. The presence of these motifs supports the thesis of an anthology
that might be composed for performance in symposia or for recital on other occasions. Love
and laments, reflections about music, and general questions about life, old age, death,
and the afterlife are certainly prominent themes here, and when such songs were removed
from their original context, they could have been arranged as extracts according to these
themes.

Gronewald and Daniel (2005: 8) structure the anonymous poem as follows: a long address
to a “youth” and “friend” (1–3), a part which speaks of the light of the stars and the fire-
glowing sun (6–7), after which Orpheus is mentioned (9), to which is added a reference to a
woman who plays her lyre as well as Orpheus did (11–13). The editors emphasize that these
lines connect smoothly with the end (A1, NS 7–8) and the prelude (T.1–2, NS 9–10). Orpheus
matches the motifs in T very closely. He is the mythical musician who crossed the threshold
do not, and with his singing even mesmerized the underworld in order to win back his
beloved. Yet, in spite of his legendary musical skill, he is doomed to fail, as the conditio
humana and the poetics of eros oppose any possibility of success. Following his brutal death
by mutilation, his head, borne on the waves to Lesbos, sings on. The principles of selection

61 Text (= P. Köln col. II, 9–21) and translation, with slight changes, following Gronewald and
166, Puglia 2008.

62 ψιθυριστής Demosthenes 59.39; δόλιος Aristophanes Thesmophoriazousai 1202.
and arrangement of this collection thus consist in self-referential reflection of the singer and lyre player, the overcoming of death, erotic pursuit, magical bewitching, the endless postponement of the unattainable object of desire, sublimation in the continuation of the personal lament through music even beyond one’s own death, and especially the Lesbian musical tradition.

The first editors suspected a “change of speaker or singer” (Gronewald and Daniel 2005:8) on the basis of the two obvious dicola after ἀφέρπω (3) and ἀκούω (8); two more in lines 4 and 5 are much less certain. In their opinion (2005:8n5), there would have been both a woman (A) and a man (B), perhaps Sappho and Phaon, or Sappho and Alkaios (cf. Sappho fr. 137 V.), as in a theatrical dialogue. Maybe Sappho was also performed dramatically like Homer. A reproaches B and is about to leave, whereupon B responds with an oath “by the sun (, moon,) and stars” and insists that he wants to listen. A then begins her song, like Orpheus. Gronewald and Daniel (2005:8) are nonetheless aware of the dicolon’s ambiguity and note that it could equally well have been used merely as punctuation, as in the mimetic poem “The Girl’s Lament” (P. Grenf. I 1 = P. Lond. Lit. 50 = P. Dryton 50). 63 It is therefore possible to interpret the song as a female solo, while πᾶς, as the only male form which might appear to contradict this view, can also be construed as πᾶσ. The Fragmentum Grenfellianum is also relevant in view of its contents, as Gronewald and Daniel recognised. The parallels considered by Lundon (2007:162–163) and Puglia (2008) are even more striking. The monologue of an abandoned woman who addresses herself characterizes both texts. Lundon (2007:162–163) adds as a further parallel the monody from P. Tebt. I 1, in which Helen, left alone by Menelaos, compares the happy past to the present in a long lament. 64 Rawles (2006b:9) views the two responses, emphasized through the dicola in lines 3 and 8, less literally and only as “verbal markers” of a change of speaker, in the sense of “your turn,” so that one speaker follows the other antiphonally. In his opinion, the song of the two musicians presents the mythical history of the lyre from its invention by Hermes to Apollo and Orpheus.

8. Conclusion

Like Orpheus, who as singer and lyre player par excellence in the underworld and on earth bewitches everything with his song, so the girl who embodies Sappho as singer in the

63 CA 177–180 Powell. A new critical edition by Esposito has appeared, which refers to this fragment (2005:11, 61, 101, 105, 111, 123).

64 Puglia 2008 also accepts this possibility and attempts a purely monodic reconstruction.
Hellenistic reperformance sings and captivates us, perhaps even as she bewitches Eros or the beloved youth. Yet even so, through her song she will never obtain the object of her desire; rather, love finds its expression only in the form of a lament. Eros is needed in order to inspire others to dance or to charm them through the musical performance. The singer is dead, or at least feels herself to be, yet continues to sing of love, just as Orpheus and Sappho did. Death can be associated in turn with old age. Through song and her focus on the cosmos, she will again become young.

The mention of Orpheus lends additional confirmation to the metapoetic and self-referential reading of Sappho’s new poem T. The girl in O almost becomes a Muse, who in a context of cosmic choral singing attains immortality in harmony with the planets, and much the same occurs with Sappho. Death, night, lament, love, song, music, and the cosmos—in short, all that Orphism represents—are the decisive themes that unite the fragments. Orpheus embraces in his cosmogonies above all the construction of harmony, resolution of conflict, and a balancing of opposites. On the other hand, lamentation and loss are prominent in the erotic poetics.

The deferral of love becomes its own song in the interruption and continuation of a reperformance. It is only in the anthological combination that a unity occurs which makes Eros dependent upon the artistic production of song. Even the interest in a further existence in the afterlife, which is usually the object of the mystery cults, is associated with the projection of the continued performance of music in the afterlife. The original pedagogical-didactic reception gives way to a secondary reception, determined by the circumstances of usage in the context of a Hellenistic cult of poets. Cyclical rejuvenation and the erotic poetics of absence and insatiability are reflected in the new, repeated practice of performance. Sappho and her song have lived on indeed, even until they have reached us today.

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Di Benedetto 2005:12–13 assumes that the story of Eurydice is mentioned in A2, the section preceding T in fr. P. Oxy. 1787, of which little is extant. Admittedly, we can only speculate about the context by means of the reconstructed forms φύγοις and δάξθην (fr. 58.5–6). He also perceives in the few letters of fr. 58.7 a reference to Orpheus’ mother Calliope (Καλλίπα).


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