DESIRE AND MEMORY (SAPPHO FRAG. 94)

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THE fragment that is numbered 94 in Voigt and in Lobel–Page has been a favorite since its discovery,[1] for it seems to preserve what many think of as the quintessentially Sapphic qualities. It has scenes of Lesbian life as soft as Swinburne's dreams, and it crosses these (or so we are told) with the sharp sense of anguish that today's scholar always seeks in Sappho's work. A favorite girl has gone and the poet, after a brave farewell, takes her lyre and confesses to us the depth of her despair, beginning τεθνάκην δ' ἀδόλως θέλω. The wish for death, according to the unanimous contemporary reading, strikes a deep chord that is held throughout the poem, adding shadows to the brighter melodies that are touched and put aside. This description is itself so seductive, with its tension between past pleasure and present despair, that few critics have attempted a closer interpretation of the piece; but there is one full and subtle reading, made along these lines, which I should like first to applaud and then to differ with.

Wolfgang Schadewaldt[2] discovers a song that is a triple portrait of the singer, placed against a background of triply layered time. He finds a frenzied grieving Sappho in a time of loss (the poetic present), a calm and gnomic Sappho in a time of parting (the recent past), and a tender, solicitous Sappho in a time of love (the deeper past). All melt together in a complex picture of longing and pain that is yet touched with irony, as the poet views both the old happiness and the old wisdom with the eye of her present pain. "Hier wurzelt auch jene sapphische 'Ironie,' die schon das Altertum gespürt und mit der sokratischen verglichen hat und die unser Gedicht fein schattiert."[3] The irony is really a form of *aidōs*, Schadewaldt explains, a modest and civil corrective that works upon a poem of passion to make it the reproduction "eines Gefühls, in dem Schmerz, Liebe und Gefasstheit der Seele unscheidbar in eins gehn."[4]

The magic of the critic's own passion, as he writes, is so great that for the moment it obscures all difficulties. When the air has cleared, however, and one turns back to the fragment, it is to discover that under Schadewaldt's reading the poem does not resolve itself into oneness, whatever may have happened to its "Gefühl." For Schadewaldt, the emotion that the poem reproduces first and last, the "Grundegefühl," is the anguish of loss; but

1. W. Schubart, "Neue Bruchstücke der Sappho u. des Alkaios," *SBBerl.*, phil.-hist. Kl., 1902, pp. 195 ff., esp. p. 202.
2. "Zu Sappho," *Hermes* 71 (1936): 363–73; cf. idem, *Sappho* (Potsdam, 1950), pp. 114–19.
3. "Zu Sappho," p. 373.
4. Ibid., p. 371.

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if this is so then one of its parts negates two others, for he would have this emotion repudiate the explicit lesson of the Sapphic lines and also undo their sensual influence. Sappho will be saying one thing to her listener's mind (and powerfully involving his senses in the reception of her words), while she denies her own statement with a counter-message sent to his heart. There is refreshment, even joy, in memory, says the rational, consoling Sappho of the parting scene. Separate, finite pleasures that have come to an end can be fused into an infinite pleasure ever available, says the description of the common life. But then, if we read with Schadewaldt, an assertion of present despair tramples both of these statements to the ground and labels them as error. The poem's own counsels are useless by its own demonstration—"es hilft nichts"[5]—and instead of receiving the revived delights of the past, the present invades that lovely past with its own misery. The piece is tragic, its conclusion finally that both the beauty and the wisdom of the past contained the seeds of this present agony—there is "ja eine Art Tod im Dasein in der Liebe."[6]

Has Sappho really spread the matchless *mille fleurs* tapestry of stanzas five through ten in order to stain it with her wish for death? I am unable to believe that she has, and this, along with a conviction that the tragic is not her mode,[7] is the true cause of my resistance to Schadewaldt's compelling reading. There are, however, several concrete points that have confirmed me in this stand. Consider the two stanzas that occupy lines 6 through 11 and contain the formal exhortation to memory and continuing joy—stanzas which Schadewaldt's poem will go on to discredit. These are, for him, on the fictional level commonplace farewells infused with a lover's particular meaning: an anxious and pressing "Do not forget me!" On another level they represent for him an attempt at self-mastery that fails, a mask of composure that is let slip as soon as the girl is gone.[8] This section of the poem, then, portrays the gnomic Sappho, an impotent creature upon whom the anguished Sappho of the present smiles with irony. When one listens without prejudice, however, these stanzas give no hint of being

5. Ibid., p. 370.

6. Ibid., p. 367. A second line of interpretation should be noted, though it is not so convincing as Schadewaldt's. According to it this is a song that holds a reproach in ambush among its remembered wreaths because the girl has defected to another school. "On sent, l'on devine," wrote T. Reinach, "que la poétesse a dû éprouver une déception et que, sous cette tendre évocation, se cache un reproche: après tant de souvenirs et sans doute de promesses, l'amie, l'élève, a dû trahir sa foi" ("Nouveaux fragments de Sappho," *REG* 15 [1902]: 60 ff., esp. 65). Since it is really impossible to hear any accusation or suggestion of betrayal in the words given to the Sappho of the song, Wilamowitz offered an altered scheme (*Sappho und Simonides* [Berlin, 1913], p. 50). Sappho would like to die because all she has tried to teach the girl has been forgotten (Wilamowitz took line 9 literally), but the song is meant to be sung, not to the departed girl, but to Sappho's still present circle. It is an admonition to those who have remained loyal: they should not repeat the girl's careless forgetfulness or they too will cause their mistress pain and agony.

7. Though Plutarch reports that the Mixolydian was her invention (*De mus.* 16 = *Mor.* 1136D), I do not believe that Sappho made of Eros an Erinys; that in the ancient world was a figure for impossibility (Demetr. *Eloc.* 132).

8. Note G. Perotta, *Saffo e Pindaro* (Florence, n. d.), p. 150, who describes a Sappho who suffers much more than the girl does, as she speaks her words of comfort, one who disguises the "ardent pain" of her heart as a melancholy memory of past joy.

other than what they seem: the formal presentation of that part of the poem's thought that is paraphrasable.

Nothing betrays weakness or pretense in the Sapphic lover who speaks here, and nothing suggests that she is alienated from the poetic persona who controls the final song. On the contrary, the lines themselves are firm and strong; they are fixed into the poem in such a way as to suggest that what they say is of significance; and they control the subsequent shape of the piece. The opening ἔγω (6) proudly identifies the voice as that of the poet-lover, and the near rhyme of the two clausulae, πεδήπομεν and ἐπάσχομεν (8 and 11), sets the stanzas apart as a pair with special affinities one with the other. They offer in effect a small closed system where the theme is plainly marked by the crowded repetition of μέμναισ' (8) and ὄμναισαι (10). The idea of intellectual control over experience is extended by the coordination of οἶσθα and αἰ δὲ μή that clasps the two units together, and it is associated with the emotions in the pairing of the participles, "rejoicing"[9] and "remembering," in lines 7 and 8. A claim is being made for the power of the mind; and, as if in demonstration, this pair of stanzas is sharply marked by wit. The second speaker, Sappho, takes up a phrase from the first, the girl, and caps it triumphantly as if they were engaged in formal stichomythy; and as a result the girl's trite δεῖνα πεπόνθαμεν (4) stands corrected and transformed. With her κάλ' ἐπάσχομεν (11), Sappho emends "the dreadful" to make it beautiful, while she reads "experience" not as suffering but as pleasure; and in this way she works the poem's transition into the stanzas of recollection. It is her exercise of mind that allows all the beauties of the past life to pour out now like fruits from a cornucopia, but her mind has also marked these beauties for her persuasive purposes. The sweet moments of the past are here in the Sappho-lover's speech in order that they may replace δεῖνα with κάλα. Revived in memory they will justify the exhortation χαίροισ' ἔρχεο (7), for Sappho has not in fact pled anxiously that *she* should be recalled. Rather, "Remember me!" has expanded, in the lines that follow, to become "Remember beauty and pleasure!"—and this larger remembrance is offered as a happy talisman that can be taken anywhere.

Such is the exhortation to remember. It is followed by a demonstration of memory in action, offered fictionally to the senses of the girl, and by the poem as a whole to ours. Sappho has suggested that remembering can bring joy, and she now makes her statement fact in a passage that provides all of the poem's immediate sensory pleasures, and that also leaves a permanent mark upon the listener's memory. Her song does not produce images of a grieving woman or a departing girl; instead it leaves behind the rich residue of impressions made by the perfumes and wreaths, the flowers and cushions

9. D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford, 1955), p. 77, reports that χαίροισ' cannot mean what it seems to mean, because rejoicing "would be out of place here." He gives the word its neutral, Attic, fifth-century usage, as a phrase of dismissal. Nevertheless, in every other Sapphic occurrence, the word has what Page himself calls its "old meaning." The wedding wishes are particularly telling here (frags. 116 and 117V); at 22. 14V and 96. 5V there is clearly a happy pleasure in the word, and at 155V the expression can only be ironic, as Maximus of Tyre tells us it is, if its overt meaning is strongly joyful.

and music of the stanzas of remembrance. We, in other words, have been turned into vivid proofs of the truth of her "gnomic" thesis, so how can the poem be treating that thesis as useless or invalid? On the other hand, if it is valid and proved to be so, why has the counsel of memory not had its effect upon both of the lovers equally? Why can the girl remember and rejoice, while the woman can only weep?[10]

The fact is that there is a radical disharmony between every preserved part of this song and its singer's wish to die. Gordon Kirkwood,[11] recognizing this, supposed that the closing stanzas contained a reversal wherein Sappho gathered herself together with new strength, after giving ear to her own advice. He believed that such a poem would be a testimonial to the power of its own teaching, but one wonders if it could be taken seriously. A sense of unsteady fluctuation would be created, as the lesson was shown to be ineffective in one moment, effective in the next; and meanwhile the opening wish would suffer such devaluation that it would seem a piece of silly affectation, easily relinquished. Denys Page also saw the problem of the ineffective counsel, but he attacked the question of how this pleasure-filled poem could contain a wish for death in another way.[12] The true purpose of the piece, he said, is the description of the Sapphic life, the parting is merely a fictional occasion, and the longing to die a commonplace expression. He has been resisted with amusing fervor[13] by certain critics who (exactly like himself) believe that a poet's "sincerity" is impugned if conscious artistry is attributed to him. For them Sappho either sings with a noose around her neck or else she is "insincere"; and, though Page is willing to find "nothing profound" in her work, they are not—they loyally demand "genuine suffering" from her.

On the point of convention, however, Page is certainly right. The literary wish to die is a useful turn of speech that allows one to mark the thing that makes life desirable. So Achilles says *αὐτίκα τεθναίην* (*Il.* 18. 98) when he can no longer be of service to Patroclus; and Mimnermus echoes *τεθναίην* (frag. 1. 2 Diehl) when the Aphrodite-days are past. Anacreon, probably for amorous reasons, prays for death's release (*ἀπό μοι θανεῖν γενοῖτο* 411*a* Page), and the Sapphic corpus too contains another example of this topos (95V), so there can be no real question about the traditional nature of the wish in fragment 94. Page is nevertheless wrong in thinking that a mere recognition of this fact will solve the problem of our poem's inner consistency. The question of whether or not the woman Sappho sought death has never been a proper one, nor could it be resolved by proving that she spoke of the matter in trite phrases. The legitimate question is whether or

10. If I understand C. del Grande correctly, he proposes that the memories should make the girl sad, if she retained them, but that they are soon to be effaced by "more violent joys and pains" (of which the poem says nothing), so that Sappho alone will remember and regret: ΦΟΡΜΙΓΞ (Naples, 1959), p. 123.

11. *Early Greek Monody* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1974), pp. 135–36.

12. *Sappho and Alcaeus*, p. 83.

13. H. Saake, *Zur Kunst Sapphos* (Munich, 1971), pp. 190 ff.; idem, *Sappho Studien* (Munich, 1972), p. 90. C. M. Bowra believed that this was the first, literal use of an expression that then became conventional (*Greek Lyric Poetry*[2] [Oxford, 1961], p. 192).

not Sappho's song presents its lover-poet as seriously wishing for death, and this question cannot be resolved by simply putting the test of conventionality.[14] A thought, a sentiment, or an emotion may find literary expression either in a new-coined or in a conventional way; in either of these cases, it may be given its whole self-claimed value or only a part of that value, but this evaluation is established by and important to the work (not the artist's life) and can be discovered only in that work.[15] In the present instance, our song may offer its familiar wish at full or partial value, and as long as it remains in the poet-lover's mouth we are faced with the same two possibilities. Either the message of memory is countermanded by a fully evaluated topos (as Schadewaldt and most others suppose), or else the wish to die is reduced to a mere fit of vapors by memory's medicine (as Kirkwood has suggested). Page and his "commonplace" have thus not resolved the problems of interpretation; and I think it is time to ask whether Sappho in fact does really say, in her poetic persona, that she longs to die.[16]

The words τεθνάκην δ' ἀδέλως θέλω are by a freak of chance the first to be readable in this Sapphic fragment. They are in actuality the second line of a stanza that may or may not have begun the poem, but they have assumed the dominance that belongs naturally to an opening line. They are generally taken as the de facto beginning of the poem, simply because critics like to think of them that way: "schwerlich wird dieser Anfang sich weit zurückerstreckt haben," says Schadewaldt,[17] confident that what he has called the beginning must be so. After the same fashion and with no better reason, these first surviving words are forced into the mouth of the poem's singer. The stanza in which they appear depicts a dramatic situation, and the line that follows the wish places us in the middle of a fully realized scene in which two speakers engage in direct discourse; but the wish to die is nevertheless plucked from this context and set out in naked prominence by every recent editor.[18] The words are to be sung in a voice different from that used

14. Note, e.g., G. Lanata, "Sul linguaggio amoroso di Saffo," *QU* 2 (1966): 72, who finds the wish-to-die topos to be expressive of "un momento tipico dell'esperienza saffica dell'eros"—at once serious and conventional.

15. See the vigorous and sensible remarks of S. Radt, "Sapphica," *Mnemosyne*, ser. 4, 23 (1970): 347: "Im Gedicht haben wir es also nur mit dieser 'imaginative experience' zu tun—ihr Verhältnis zur erlebten Wirklichkeit spielt für die Beurteilung des Gedichts überhaupt keine Rolle." He quotes R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York, 1949), p. 74: "The frequently adduced criterion of 'sincerity' is thoroughly false, if it judges literature in terms of biographical truthfulness, correspondence to the author's experience or feelings as they are attested by outside evidence."

16. One further attempt to coordinate the present wish to die with the past counsel of memory should be noted. It is that of G. Caduff, "Zu Sapphos Fr. 94 LP. (= 96 D.)," in R. Muth (ed.), *Serta Philologica Aenipontana*, vol. 2 (Innsbruck, 1972), pp. 9–12. Caduff argues that Sappho's desire for death is an outburst of jealous pain caused by an act of erotic treason newly discovered. Some fresh event has occurred, he says, between the time of the consolation speech and the present moment of despair; Sappho has learned that the girl, since her departure, has proved her forgetfulness by a new liaison.

17. Schadewaldt, "Zu Sappho," p. 370; see also H. Jurenka, "Die neuen Bruchstücke der Sappho und des Alkaios," *Zeitschr. Österr. Gymn.* 53 (1902): 291.

18. It seems to have been Reinach, acting on a suggestion from Henri Weil, who inaugurated the present way of reading the first surviving line: "avec H. Weil j'attribue ces paroles à Sappho, non à son interlocutrice; il est facile, malgré cette parenthèse, de rattacher le vers 2 à celui où l'amie devait être désignée" ("Nouveaux fragments," p. 65). Wilamowitz followed, and Schadewaldt, giving the line to Sappho, adds, "wie heute nicht mehr bezweifelt wird" ("Zu Sappho," p. 364).

for the rest of the song, we are told, for this is an aside, a kind of moan that rises from the very heart of the woman who performs for us.

The resulting effect has been so popular that the fragment is coming to be known as "The Confession Song," quite as if this were as objective a description of it as "The Ostrakon" is of fragment 2.[19] Nevertheless, neither text nor sense necessarily assigns the death wish to the singer, and the privilege of hearing Sappho admit to her terrible agony is bought at a certain price. When the first surviving line is in this way ascribed to the poet's own voice, there is an awkward jerk in the developing exposition of the scene, as the connection between line and line is broken. Schadewaldt asserts that this asyndeton is "ganz selbstverständlich" because of the poet's strong emotion,[20] but his argument has a certain circularity; and in fact the break is especially noticeable in this Lesbian form, where each new statement as a rule flows directly from the one before. When the wish to die is given to the extra-dramatic Sappho there is in addition an anomalous time shift between the two lines—a leap from a generalized present into an actualized past—and a further wrench as well, as the form of the discourse alters. An immediate, personal exclamation is replaced by a distanced and objective narrative, and a nameless "she" bounds onto the stage without any introduction or linguistic signal to ease our comprehension. These difficulties are real, and they are created by the accepted reading of the wish to die; they have, however, been glossed over by a host of scholars who were eager to hear Sappho confess to her total despair.

Or is there perhaps something about the wish itself that is necessarily appropriate only to the singer of the song? The fact that there is a second Sapphic wish to die might seem to establish a precedent in the poet's favor; but in truth the other passage is wholly unlike the present one, and a close examination of it leaves one less, rather than more, convinced of the accepted attribution in fragment 94. The second wish occurs in a poem that refers to Gongyla and is probably in some sense erotic in subject; the wish is not an aside, however, not an anguished moan from singer to audience, nor does it even belong to the surface-present of the poem. It is instead submerged in an elaborately artful scene between Hermes and the poet, a scene from the past in which she had asked him to take her down to Acheron: "I said to him, 'Master, . . . and a longing for death has taken hold of me . . .' " (95. 8–11V). The wish is, in other words, distanced and dramatic and wholly unlike the wish generally attributed to Sappho the singer of fragment 94. Indeed, if the Acheron wish suggests anything for the interpretation of our poem, it is that our wish too may belong to the dramatic scene, and this idea is strengthened by a verbal point as well. When speaking to Hermes, Sappho says very simply *κατθάνην δ' ἰμερός τις ἔχει με* (95. 11V). She does not have to assure him that she means all she says, and her plainness makes one wonder why, in an aside to her audience, she should protest her earnestness with the urgent adverb, *ἀδόλως*. The word is usually translated "honest-

19. Saake regularly refers to it as "das confessio-Gedicht."
20. "Zu Sappho," p. 364.

ly" or "truly", but it is uncommon enough to keep its explicitly privative sense.[21] It lays claim to an absence of guile, a refusal to use trickery, and, as it does so, it brings those very notions into play. To protest that one is straight is to depict a listener who suspects one of crookedness—surely a curious portrait of Sappho's audience of admiring girls, and yet it is to them that her assurance is offered, if the wish to die is hers.

Why ἀδόλως? The speaker with this word assures someone that her wish for death is neither trick nor trap, and it is not hard to catch the tone of her avowal, for the striking word betrays it. The notion of the δόλος has its Sapphic context in the Hymn to Aphrodite, where the goddess is given the epithet δολόπλοκος because she plays ensnaring tricks upon mankind. She may pretend to help or she may pretend not to hear, just as individual lovers may feign concern or jealousy or indifference in imitation of her tricks. The normal speech of love is full of the snares of exaggeration and placation—it is that πάρφασις ἥ τ' ἔκλεψε νόον that Aphrodite kept in her elaborate kirtle (*Il.* 14. 217)—and just because it is tricky, love's speech is likewise full of protestations of sincerity ("honestly" and "I really mean it"), though these too may be only a part of the game. Fragment 94 concerns the parting of two lovers, and so it is natural to suppose that its insistent reassurance belongs to this same amorous mode. The poem does not need to claim innocent guilelessness as it addresses posterity, nor does Sappho as she sings to a small group of friends;[22] but the girl who would persuade her mistress that she is loath to leave may feel called upon to "cross her heart and hope to die" as she speaks of her unhappiness. She alone can easily say τεθνάκην δ' ἀδόλως θέλω.

Since only opinion forbids it and so much in the poem recommends it, I propose to read the initial line of fragment 94 in the simplest way (the way of the first editor), as belonging to the girl:[23]

. . . . . .

"I don't deceive you, I want to die!"
Weeping she tried to leave me
and more than once she said,
"How frightfully we suffer, Sappho!
I go against my will!"

21. Generations of American students have recognized this quality with the inelegant but accurate translation, "no kidding." H. Fränkel reports that "protestations like 'in good faith' and 'truly' are frequent in Sappho" (*Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, trans. M. Hadas and J. Willis [New York, 1975], p. 179), but he does not supply citations. Presumably he refers to such turns of speech as ἦ μήν, but these are in no sense parallels for ἀδόλως.

22. Unless one assumes that Sappho is saying to her audience: "I tricked the girl with my counsel of memory, but I do not now trick you."

23. Arnold Gomme attempted to revive Schubart's way of reporting the wish for death, but the suggestion was made in the course of an article that contained a few rather imprudent remarks on other matters, and it was not taken seriously: see "Interpretations of Some Poems of Alkaios and Sappho," *JHS* 77 (1957): 255–66. I know of only two other scholars who give the words to the girl: Del Grande, ΦΟΡΜΙΓΞ, p. 24; and J. Danielewicz, "Sappho's Subjective Lyrics," *Eos* 58 (1969–70): 168: "She cites the girl's own words full of despair and sorrow τεθνάκην δ' ἀδόλως θέλω, as well as her own consoling answer. . . ." (Sappho's remarks about the common life are, according to this critic, "full of motherly cordiality"!) D. Gerber, *Euterpe* (Amsterdam, 1970), p. 175, says

The reassignment doesn't affect the girl at all. In her mouth the line is affectionately melodramatic and she remains the same effusive creature that she was. Her ἀδόλως is in the style of her ἦ μάν, both of them examples of the exaggeration and emphasis that might be thought of as typical of the very young. The poem, on the other hand, undergoes a considerable change when its persona is relieved of the solemn wish to die. As soon as the girl absorbs the line, her wise companion joins the Sappho who sings the song and we no longer have to apprehend a frenzied present singer divided against two peaceful selves from the past. The words that she addressed to the girl in the scene of farewell are now the real burden of the song, and they do not have to be heard accompanied by the performer's inharmonious lament. The garlands of the remembered life no longer wither under ironies, and the extreme artistry of the stanzas of recollection applies itself directly to a meaning that is luminous and clear. The poem, insofar as we have it, becomes a whole, and in it Sappho delivers one of her plainest lectures on love's philosophy.

The disconsolate girl thinks that parting is the end of life and love, but her wiser mistress commands her to go her way rejoicing. Memory can turn momentary pain into an enduring joy, and her continuing speech gives precise instructions in the discipline that is to shape this transforming meditation. "I should like to remind you," Sappho says, "of the facets of love which, when correctly recalled, can outlive our separation." She proceeds point by point, and just beneath her explicit program two rather surprising implicit conditions appear. The girl is to remember, not her lover but herself, and of herself, not her own person, not even vivid moments of her own history, but a schema of experience. She is to think of a series of three habitually repeated gestures, and these will lead her to an equally prismatic memory of satisfied desire.

Crowning oneself with flowers, at the side of the beloved (πὰρ' ἔμοι, 14), is the first gesture that thought should revive, for Sapphic flower crowns marked a girl as ready for love. Such wreaths were worn to seek favor from the Charites, dispensers of attractiveness (81. 6–7V),[24] and they were themselves redolent of desire (ἐράτοι, 81. 4V), like the crown that Alcman mentions, where a wanton Eros sports among the blossoms (58P). A flower crown was reminiscent of Aphrodite's own (of roses at Eur. *Med.* 840), and this is why the Horae put a wreath of spring blooms in Pandora's hair when she was sent out on her mission of seduction (Hes. *Erga* 73–75). The

"we should not completely discount the possibility . . . ," but he does not entertain it; Kirkwood, *Monody*, p. 263, takes the matter more seriously, admitting that the line could be given to the girl and that such an arrangement would ease the asyndeton. Finally, however, he dismisses the idea as "impossible" on the grounds that the "style of the beginning is so unlike the style of what follows," without explaining what he means. In *Frühgriechische Lyriker*, vol. 3: *Sappho, Alkaios, Anakreon*, trans. Z. Franyó, ed. B. Snell (Berlin, 1976), the Greek text as usual leaves the line outside the quotation, but the translation marks it as part of the girl's speech. (The referee of this article has kindly drawn my attention to Francis Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* [Edinburgh, 1972], pp. 50 ff.)

24. On the notion that the Charites bestow a *charis* that marks readiness for love, see Lanata's discussion of frag. 49V, "Linguaggio amoroso," pp. 63 ff.

second gesture to be remembered is the placing of the garland that will draw attention to a tender, vulnerable throat (ἀμφ' ἀπάλαι δέραι, 16),[25] again a re-enactment of one of Aphrodite's coquetries, though her decorations were of gold (*Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 88).[26] Such a garland took its name, *hypathymis*, from the fact that it hung down over the breasts, and the breasts and the body are the focus of the third gesture to be recalled, the application of perfumes. Both Alcaeus and Anacreon speak of myrrh poured upon the breast,[27] but here there seems to be a second and richer unguent as well, and one is reminded of Archilochus' ambiguous salute to the girl whose perfumed hair and breasts could rouse a greybeard's lust (48 West). Scented unguents and salves were the major ingredients in any recipe for provocation, which is why Hera begged perfumes from Aphrodite's *kistē* when she meant to numb Zeus's wits with sex (*Il.* 14. 171–72), and why Aphrodite herself applied scent before she journeyed to Anchises' hut (*Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 61–62). She took a pot of myrrh with her to the Judgment (Soph. *Krisis*, frag. 361 Pearson and note) and she gave a phial of the same sweet salve to Phaon who, using it, became the darling of the ladies of Mytilene (Ael. *VH* 12. 18). In *Lysistrata* oil of myrrh is a telling weapon in the women's arsenal, along with diaphanous frocks and foolish little shoes (946), and there is a girl in middle comedy who has a different scent for each one of her body's parts (Antiphanes *Thorikioi*, *CAF*, 2:53).

With her three remembered gestures the girl of Sappho's lesson marks herself as courting love, and in stanza eight she is taught to remember its achievement.[28] It is silly to quibble over the precise nature of the moments that the poem here recalls; all we need to know is that the Homeric phrase ἐξίης πόθον (23) conveys the idea of release by way of satisfaction, and that Sappho's own usage fixes *pothos* as erotic.[29] The Sappho of the dramatic scene thus tells the girl to think of the familiar triple preparation of crowning, garlanding, and perfuming, and in this way to reach the heartening

25. With this ἀπαλὴ δειρή compare the ἁβρὸς αὐχήν of the shorn boy of Anacreon 347P. On ἀπαλός, see M. Treu, *Von Homer zur Lyrik*[2] (Munich, 1968), pp. 178–83, who notes a change from the subjective Homeric meaning to the affective, erotic, Sapphic use.

26. At *Hymn. Hom.* 6. 10–11, Aphrodite makes all the immortals want her for their wife by thus bedecking herself: δειρῇ δ' ἁμφ' ἀπαλῇ καὶ στήθεσιν ἀργυφέοισιν / ὅρμοισι χρυσέοισιν ἐκόσμεον.

27. Alcaeus 362. 3V; Anacreon 363P. Note G. Zuntz, "De Sapphus Carminibus ē 3, ē 4, ē 5," *Mnemosyne*, ser. 3, 7 (1939): 87: "Ego pectoris quoque mentionem in v. 18 vel v. 19 fuisse coll. Athen. 674c et 678d sqq. divinaverim." At a symposium perfumes were applied chiefly to the head; but, where drinking was not the chief occupation, they were rubbed into the flesh (see Athen. 691F–692, citing Philonides' *On Perfumes and Wreaths*).

28. This is something like what Christopher Dawson perceived in Mimnermus 2: "the briefest of short stories: κρυπταδιὴ φιλότης, a quiet, stolen kiss or embrace; then μείλιχα δῶρα, further concrete inducements; and finally εὐνή, the consummation" ("Random Thoughts on Occasional Poems," *YClS* 19 [1966]: 49).

29. Attempts have been made to treat this Sapphic *pothos* as non-erotic: see, e.g., J. M. Edmonds, *Lyra Graeca*[2], vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass., 1928), p. 243, who thought the condition was hunger; Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry*[2], p. 191, who proposed a wish for absent friends; or C. Theander, "Studia Sapphica," *Eranos* 34 (1936): 59 ff., who suggested homesickness. These were presumably assuaged by eating, the exhaustion of the festival, and sleep, respectively. Nevertheless, it is generally recognized that lines like καὶ ποθήω καὶ μάομαι (36V) and ἦλθες, †καὶ† ἐπόησας, ἔγω δέ σ' ἐμαιόμαν / ὃν δ' ἔψυξας ἐμὰν φρένα καιομέναν πόθωι (48V) establish the erotic meaning beyond doubt: see, e.g., Zuntz, "De Sapphus Carminibus," pp. 89–90; Lanata, "Linguaggio amoroso," p. 70; Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, pp. 79–80.

memory of fulfilled desire. In the meantime the poem has moved through three stanzas that evoked but never directly described first the hair on which a crown would rest, then the throat that garlands might touch, and finally the sheen of anointed flesh. As a result, the couch of the eighth stanza receives the sinking weightlessness of an image at once powerfully sensual and perfectly insubstantial and, strangest of all, the figure seems to be alone. This soft cot is a place for lovemaking,[30] but as a partner for the girl's remembered self the poem proposes only the transparent companion of the initial garlanding (the ἔμοι of line 14).[31] All the ink spent in trying to remove the sexuality from this moment has indeed been wasted, for nothing can change the fact that sex both is and is not here.[32] The event is one that occurred, or rather is to be thought of as having occurred, repeatedly, but it has been removed from history, from narrative, and from any contact with the mundane world. The couch is neither indoors nor out; it rests upon nothing, neither carpet nor grass, because it does not contain lovers at all, but only the girl's seductiveness and its success. Sappho's art has already done for it what the trained memory will do, for it has taken from blunt objects and fleeting sensations their enduring essence.

This is not the end of the Sapphic lesson, however, for there is another and actual sense in which the past will endure. The passage that revives the frequent pilgrimages to the couch does not come to an end with that private culmination but moves forward instead to what is evidently its real goal in a burst of festal activity. The ninth and tenth stanzas are badly damaged, but the words "sacred" and "grove" are there, terms for musical sound and a dancing chorus can perhaps be recognized, and the rhetorical shape is clear: no sacred feast or celebration was held from which the lovers stayed away (26). These two public and festive stanzas thus cap the lines about escape from desire, outweighing them and drawing the remembered private acts of love into public and sacred scenes that the poem now imagines. It is as if the pair rose from the couch of their satisfaction and danced away into a populous complex of song and procession, or indeed as if their lovemaking

30. On the erotic associations of μαλθακός, see J. M. Bremer, "Meadow of Love," *Mnemosyne*, ser. 4, 28 (1975): 268 f.

31. This is denied by many, even F. Lasserre, who admits the erotic quality of ἐξίης πόθον, but insists, "Il ne s'agit pas d'un amour de Sappho." He is arguing for the conventional quality of the poem, but is unable to admit any middle ground between poems that were fully public, as choral poetry was, and poems that were the private record of actual and immediate emotion: see "Ornaments Erotiques," *Serta Turyniana* (Urbana, 1974), p. 24, n. 35.

32. See, e.g., Martin West, "Burning Sappho," *Maia* 22 (1970): 322, where the author attempts to answer questions that need never have been asked. He tries to follow Bowra in the notion that *pothos* means "a longing for one who is absent" and may therefore be satisfied by a reunion. Faced with the couch, he proposes that "in settling down to sleep in companionable proximity . . . they finally found contentment." Then he cites the undeniably amorous δαύοισ' ἀπάλας ἐταίρας ἐν στήθεσιν (126V). Finally he abandons the idea of a Girl Scout overnight by announcing: "It may be that still more intimate things sometimes occurred in the dark hours. The point . . . is that Sappho is not telling us so in fr. 94." (Night and sleep have entered his picture out of modesty and because he believes that the poem is a record of specific experience; there is nothing about either in Sappho's lines, so far as we can read them.) All of this speculation is as unnecessary as it is embarrassing because Sappho *does* tell us that erotic satisfaction is found, over and over again, on the couch; but she also makes it perfectly clear that we are not to take any interest in the precise nature of that satisfaction. See the splendid outburst of Zuntz, "De Sapphus Carminibus," p. 89.

had itself been a gesture, a part of some larger pageant of prescribed observances. The idea that individual lovers belong to a community of celebrants is thus enforced by the progress of the song, as private cult and public celebration are made one by poetic fiat.[33]

It is part of Sappho's instruction, then, that the girl should view herself and be viewed by others as a creature engaged in a repeated rite of embellishment, devotion, and celebration. The thrice reiterated "many . . . many . . . many . . ." (πόλλοις . . . πόλλαις . . . πόλλωι, 12, 15, and 18)[34] keeps the three actions balanced and equal each to the others, while it also creates the sense of habitual and ceaseless renewal. Love is not a discrete experience: it is a part of the common life of the *thiasos*, and of its common observance as well; and this last notion provides a final reason why the departing girl should rejoice, while suggesting as well an explanation for the last problem of the poem. "Go rejoicing and holding me in memory," Sappho says, "for you know how we followed after you!" (οἶσθα γὰρ ὤς σε πεδήπομεν, 8). The whole counsel of memory seems, in these lines, to hang upon the γὰρ clause, but the expression is a baffling one. It is often rendered, "You know how we have cherished you," just to get past the difficulty, though no parallel for any such meaning can be found.[35] A second interpretation proposes this as an erotic compliment meant to suggest that the entire company has been in love with the girl,[36] though this too depends upon a figurative use of the verb that is unexampled. If, however, μεθέπεσθαι is allowed to keep its literal sense, it will convey the idea that the girl has led them all much as a chorus leader might a dancing band. Perhaps Sappho means to remind her that she has been, for a time, the manifestation of *charis* among them, the one who danced first in the cult of love, who carried the sacred objects, performed the sacred acts, and set the pace for them all—the best, in other words, as Helen was among the Spartan girls (Theoc. 18. 24 ff.). When she is gone someone else will take her place in the *thiasos*, and presumably in Sappho's preference as well, but her own experience is indestructible. Within the large conceit of love as ritual, the individual episode is given permanence, for no single act can be rendered futile by completion since the cult will continue forever.

Neither grief nor regret is compatible with such a view of love, and so Sappho evokes the undeniable pang of parting, only to erase it with her song. The "sheer and absolute sorrow" and "abandoned hysteria"[37] that have been attached to its singer have no place at all in her poem, and even

33. Something of this sort is perceived by T. McEvilley, "Sapphic Imagery and Frag. 96," *Hermes* 101 (1973): 268, who writes, "Fragment 94 does not present exactly a rite nor exactly a party, but a private occasion which involved the symbolic objects common to both." Cf. Saake, *Kunst*, p. 200, who supposes that the gestures are part of an actual cult of the Muses.

34. It should be noted that the πόλλωι of line 18 is the conjecture of Achille Vogliano; Bowra prints πάνται.

35. See Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, p. 77.

36. Lanata, "Linguaggio amoroso," p. 65.

37. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry*², p. 197, and R. Bagg, "Love, Ceremony and Daydream," *Arion* 3 (1964): 47. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the scholarly determination to discover a miserable woman behind Sappho's poems is connected with the scholarly recognition of the nature of the love she refers to. The unexpressed reasoning seems to be: unnatural, therefore unhappy.

the figure of Sappho as lover dims, since it plays but an exemplary role in the exemplary fiction of parting. The poem is not *reportage* but thought cast into a poetic mode, its imagined "event" just firm enough to launch the poet's reflections, for the essential quality here is not raw emotion but perfected meditation. The same quality distinguishes all of the longer Sapphic pieces, and surely it was this presence of thought—this absence of immediate frenzy—that made Plato call the poet wise (Ael. *VH* 12. 19) and caused Horace to speak of her approvingly as *mascula*[38] (*Epist.* 1. 19. 28).

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38. E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), p. 346, n. 3, quotes the deathbed recantation of Philipp Buttman, who had suggested that the word was meant to describe Sappho's sexual preference: "Meine wirkliche Schuld gegen beiden [Sappho and Horace] gut zu machen, halte ich für eine meiner heiligsten Pflichten, ehe ich aus diesem Kreise der redenden Menschengeschlechter scheide; welche ich hiermit erfülle."