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Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi, Francesco Lupi,
Gherardo Ugolini

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Symmachos esso: Theatrical Role-Playing and Mimesis in Sappho fr. 1 V. (with a Glance on the *Symmachos*-Motif in Tragedy)

Anton Bierl

Abstract

The paper offers a new reading of Sappho's controversial and almost obscure fr. 1. It focuses on its structure, rhetorical strategies, and cultural implications for the primary and secondary recipients in a metapoetic perspective. The poem therefore emphasizes the concerns of Sappho as a poet and performer of love songs that have their 'Sitz im Leben' in the *hic et nunc* of the circle of maidens, but also aims at later receptions and the poet's afterlife. Through linguistic 'trickery', mimetic impersonation, and a final call on Aphrodite to become her fellow-fighter, Sappho reasserts her strength after self-humiliation. The song is theatre *in nuce*, theatricality in a completely different context from that of tragedy, where, according to a Dionysian perspective, the protagonists' behaviour is always problematic. Whereas the involvement in a dramatic role and plot can make it necessary to deploy the *symmachos*-metaphor in connection with a specific god in a situation of crisis, in Sappho it seems to be the occasion for the song itself. The article argues that fr. 1 does not reflect so much a single story about one girl as one single instance of unreciprocated love, an emotional cry for help. But Sappho sings about an endless chain of very personal visits that culminate in her last very intimate meeting with Aphrodite, when the goddess becomes her real ally, providing her with poetic inspiration and the poem with its performative essence (from the setting to the atmosphere, from the form to the content), deeply ingrained with an erotic aesthetics. By re-enacting this divine fellow-fighter in the very performance, the song makes Sappho merge with Aphrodite.

The thought and structure of Sappho's fragment 1 V. seems to be obvious and clear.[1] Sappho is in a situation of erotic distress, pre-

1 The jubilee is a connoisseur and aficionado of theatre, music, and opera. This piece about Sappho, that at a first glance does not have to do with his interests, but will address them in a different way. May the *honorandus* find pleasure in this modest offering, a gift of admiration and affection. I owe my thanks to Silvia Bigliazzi, the other great unfatiguing soul of the

sumably because of a girl who does not reciprocate Sappho's feelings. However, it is probable that the situation is not real but based on an "implicit fiction" (Burnett 1983: 243). Sappho calls on Aphrodite to come help so that she can be relieved from her sorrows and have her desires fulfilled. Surprisingly, she ends her prayer by asking the goddess to be her fellow-fighter (σύμμαχος ἔσσο, 28). But at a closer look the logic and the sense of this song are rather obscure (Schlesier 2011: 418-19); the erotic goals remain very abstract, general, and depersonalized (Schlesier 2011: 421-3). Sappho uses the traditional form of a *hymnos kletikos* ('a hymn calling a god to come') (Burnett 1983: 247-8; Ritoók 1995; Schlesier 2011: 417-19), but starts – in the invocation (1-5a) – formulating her wish already in lines 3-5a, first by giving a negative order, then by very succinctly inviting Aphrodite to appear to her. Then the ἔλθε ('come!') in line 5a is resumed very late in line 25 at the beginning of the last strophe (25-8), the so-called prayer. The long in-between passage comprised between lines 5b and 24 talks about past epiphanies.[2] The reason why Aphrodite should appear in person, though, and what she should perform remain rather vague: the song culminates in Sappho's poetic persona's final radical demand that she shows up, stays with her on earth, somewhere on Lesbos, and be a warrior on her side. Yet, in the central section of the poem, the so-called praise or *pars epica* (5b-24), Cypris is described as a rather delicate lady. Moreover, we know from the Homeric tradition, from *Iliad* 5, that she is all but a proficient fighter. Only a tiny scratch on her hand inflicted by Diomedes makes her leave the battlefield of Troy and come back to the bosom of her mother to find some consolation on Mount Olympus. Just the sight of some blood makes her almost faint (Hom. *Il.* 5.330-417). Thus Athena, a real female war-goddess, pokes fun at her (5.420-5) and Zeus gives

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Veronese circle, for improving and correcting my English. The secondary literature on Sappho's fr. 1 is vast; I used among others Schadewaldt 1950: 85-91; Page 1955: 3-18; Bowra 1961: 198-205; Krischer 1968; Privitera 1974: 27-83; Svenbro 1975; Burnett 1983: 243-59; Rissman 1983: 1-29; Lasserre 1989: 201-14; Schadewaldt 1989: 175-8; Ritoók 1995; Tzamali 1996: 36-90; Nagy 1996: 87-103; Stehle 1997: 296-9; Thomas 1999: 3-10; Hutchinson 2001: 149-60; Tsomis 2001: 38-44; Schlesier 2011; Nagy 2013, 122-9.

2 Page (1955: 18) regards it as a long and deviating digression.

his fine daughter the advice that in the future she should not care about war but about weddings (5.426-30).

In her oriental parallel forms as Astarte or Ishtar, the goddess' war-like aspect is much stronger. Ishtar indeed appears as a goddess of war with a beard. Greek cults that venerate Aphrodite as a goddess with weapons are rare. Much seems to be derived from Aphrodite's universal and cosmic dimension as well as from her union with Ares (Burkert 1985: 153; Breitenberger 2007: 14-15). Sappho on Lesbos is situated between East and West, but she, in allusion to the Homeric tradition, particularly helps establishing a view of Aphrodite as a delicate and sensuous young woman, the emblem of absolute beauty and love. However, war and love strangely intersect in the ancient poetic traditions (Rissman 1983). Achilles can be an ideal and eternal bridegroom who, as he dies on the battlefield to become a hero of *kleos aphthiton* ('undying fame'), will never marry (Nagy 2013: 98-108, 136-8). Ares can function as a model for grooms as well (Nagy 2013: 118-19). Death in epics has to do with beauty and aesthetics. Aphrodite's doings associated with beauty and aesthetics are thus also linked with war and fighting. Love and weddings can be assimilated to death in a figurative sense (Nagy 2013: 133-45). As a fundamental passion of both men and gods, love is invincible. Nobody can defeat it. Therefore, one epithet for Aphrodite is *amachos* ('invincible') (Soph. *Ant.* 799). She is like a warrior against whom you cannot win. *Eros* as "discourse of absence" (Barthes 1979: 13-17), eternal deferral, means suffering, *pathos*. Love enters through the eyes, hits one like a weapon. That is why Eros is typically represented with arrows. Separated by a never bridgeable distance from the desired person, lovers feel an eternal lack (Bierl 2006: 86-92). Thus, love hurts, tears one apart, and affects one with all sorts of bodily injuries (Bierl 2016b). Both the warrior in the moment of death and the bride together with her groom in the very moment of getting married at their wedding can be stylized as being equal to the gods (Nagy 2013: 109-45). Especially the maiden on the brink of womanhood being exposed to the all-encompassing passion of love can be viewed as being close to figurative death or to a god-like existence. Total love means Aphrodite's epiphany (Nagy 2013: 132-5), so to speak. Thus, when Aphrodite, the divine personification of love, is envisioned to appear, the woman experiencing her di-

vine presence is assimilated to the goddess. Jean-Pierre Vernant emphasized the complementary ideological functions of war and wedding in a gendered perspective. What war means for the ephebes is equivalent to marriage in the case of young maidens (Vernant 1980: 34). Both war and weddings embody the *telos*, the goal of their rites of passages to adulthood. We know that the girls in the Sapphic circle are educated to experience beauty, *kallos*, in a multimodal manner and in performances that appeal to all senses. The highest value of an overall *bellezza* (frs 16 and 58.23-6) is further supported by homoerotic tensions and relationships among the girls and also between Sappho, the leader of the group or chorus, and single members of the chorus (Bierl 2003; 2016c). They leave the circle to get married, the ultimate goal of the activities in the ritualized life of the group that stands under the auspices of Aphrodite (Calame 1977: 1.127, 369-70; Bierl 2016a: 302-3 with literature in n. 1).

Coming back to the final prayer that Aphrodite should appear as a fellow-fighter (28), I would like to focus on the surprising use of this word. *Symmachos* is a military term not yet attested in Homer.[3] In the Homeric tradition, an ally is an *epikouros*, a *doryxenos*, or an *arogos*. In epics, heroes are often linked to a god, an ally in war. Gods often have a special relation to a hero. Some are allies, other are antagonists. Whereas in mythic narration specific gods fight against heroes, in cultic terms the same gods are closely associated with them (Nagy 2013: 333-4). *Symmachos* is first attested in Archilochus' fr. 108 W. Hephaestus, Aphrodite's husband, shall be an ally in war and support Archilochus with fire in the battle, for example by burning down villages. According to the conceptual and cultural overlap of male and female domains, war and love/marriage, warrior and poet, the real and the figurative, Sappho as a female poet now wants Aphrodite to be her *symmachos*. As we will see, this term is often used for a god's military support of a human warrior. In an anthropomorphic view, gods are conceived to fight concretely together with their favourites. In a pair relation, the god is often viewed as the leading figure. But pairs of fighters also exist among Homeric heroes, especially in the case of charioteer and warrior. Despite the fact that

3 On *symmachiai* before the fifth century BCE, see Baltrusch 1994: 3-15.

sym-machos principally denotes a relation of equals, in fact often the *symmachos*, the fellow-fighter, is slightly superior or inferior. In most cases, a *symmachos* only helps the main figure (Hsch. *s.v.* σύμμαχος· βοηθός). Thus, we could say that Sappho's diction implies that Aphrodite should indeed only support Sappho or the poetic 'I' as the main figure, reversing the hierarchy between god and man. Later on, as may be found in numerous inscriptions, *symmachos* becomes a military and judicial term for any ally. In a legal sense, as the *symmachos* helps the main combatant he must not necessarily be at war with the third party (Baltrusch 1994: 3). Almost in all instances we encounter a concrete military support in a battle. But the *symmachos* can be transferred to other figurative contexts where war is always partially implied. The use of Aphrodite is surprising but also implies a partial appropriation of the male fighting activity.

In the following, I will argue that Sappho neither composes a purely cultic song about epiphanic experiences (Bowra 1936: 193-4; 1961: 202-3) or an "expression of a personal religious faith" (Burnett 1983: 246), nor follows a specific erotic goal – in the sense of a biographical approach to win back a specific girl (see Burnett 1983: 243 with n35), woo her in a veiled form (Schadewaldt 1950: 85-91), or provide a humoured self-criticism to not take love too seriously (Page 1955: 15-16) at a certain period of her life by means of a hymnic appeal to Aphrodite. Instead, Sappho pursues a poetic and self-referential agenda as a female singer and *choragos* of her female circle.[4] Appropriating the existing discourses in Lesbos' society and culture – the hymnic form, poetic performativity and its mimetic function, the concept of epiphany, the ritual and festive setting, choral, erotic, and aesthetic *paideia*, the polytheistic religion and the features of Aphrodite, the complementary overlap of war and marriage –, she creates an innovative song to assert and define her function as the woman leader of the female group and as a poetess totally dedicated to the realm of beauty, love, and Aphrodite. Appropriating and innovatively playing with different discourses that she uses dialogically, Sappho exploits the expe-

4 This dimension is only alluded to by Schlesier 2011: 426. On metapoetic concerns in the Cologne Papyrus (fr. 58A-D), see Bierl 2016c.

dient of divine epiphany to become equal to the goddess and play a performative trick of mimetic role-playing in narration so as to briefly turn into Aphrodite.[5] Thus, I will argue that by drastically reversing her initial feeling of emotional devastation and depression, she eventually can reassert herself as a self-confident *choragos* ('chorus leader') and poetic singer. The so-called pragmatic approach to lyric song focused on its actual performance broadened the discussion to the occasion, the here and now, that originated it (literature in Bierl 2003: 98n29). Perhaps, as some critics believe, the occasion for fr. 1 is the annual Pan-Lesbian festival of Messon, linked to the Kallisteia (Nagy 2013: 124-5 with 116-18). Sappho, or the poetic 'I' as *choragos*, performs a ritual pattern that can be annually re-performed. The chorus leader thus officially calls upon Aphrodite to appear so that she can become god-like and fulfil her function in aesthetic *paideia*. If so, τυίδε ('hither', 5) is the location in the 'here and now', and Aphrodite's sudden arrival from the sky through the air διὰ μέσσω (12) is perhaps an allusion to the site of Messon, the 'middle place'. But reception is a relevant issue from the start, so that the ritual setting, endowed with a general meaning for its annual re-enactment, may be re-used and re-interpreted also on new occasions, for example for personal addresses to the circle of maidens, or even the male symposium. Thus, the composition contains the poetic potential for later performances and re-signifying practices in other contexts. The "*prima donna*" as the *choragos* (Nagy 2013: 125) must be outstanding, merging with the persona of the female composer, who in this case is addressed by her own name. In the primary context of ritual, Sappho, by mentioning her speaking name – according to Greg Nagy, meaning little 'sister' (Nagy 2016: 489-92; Bierl 2016a: 306-7) – asserts her authority and momentarily transforms into Aphrodite, merging as a "diva" (Nagy 2013: 125) with the goddess as the ultimate *choragos*. At a later stage, the song, especially its mimetic address to 'Psapho', can be interpreted as a poetic self-assertion and a "*sphragis*" (Schlesier 2011: 421) through which Sappho defends her au-

5 Burnett (1983: 253) speaks about "the poem's own trickery" in a different sense, in respect to memorizing past epiphanies and condensing them in the last one.

thorship. This reading focused on her personal poetic agenda, on a diachronic level, again assumes a different meaning depending on whether we locate it in classical or hellenistic times. Yet, all potential meanings are already enclosed in Sappho's highly original and innovative song, that, as a ritual script, is also an interdiscursive text (Yatromanolakis 2007) referring to the poet's own poetry and religion. Archaic poetry, so to speak, prefigures the future.

1. A Closer View on Fr. 1

Let us first present the text in Voigt's edition and Rayor's slightly adapted translation (Sappho 2014):

⊗ Ποι˽κιλόθρο˽ιν' ἀθανάτ' Ἀφρόδιτα,
παῖ˽ Δ˽ί˽ος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
μή μ'˽ ἄσαισι ˽μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
πότν˽ια, θῦ˽μον,
ἀλλ˽ὰ τυίδ' ἔλ˽θ', αἴ ποτα κἀτέρωτα
τὰ˽ς ἔμας αὔ˽δας ἀίοισα πήλοι
ἔκ˽λυες, πάτρο˽ις δὲ δόμον λίποισα
χ˽ρύσιον ἦλθ˽ες
ἄρ˽μ' ὐπασδε˽ύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἆγον
ὤ˽κεες στροῦ˽θοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
πύ˽κνα δίν˽νεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνω ˽αἴθε-
ρο˽ς διὰ μέσσω·
αἶ˽ψα δ' ἐξίκο˽ντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
μειδιαί˽σαισ' ἀθανάτωι προσώπωι
ἤ˽ρε' ὄττ˽ι δηῦτε πέπονθα κὤττι
δη˽ῦτε κ˽άλ˽η˽μμι
κ˽ὤττι ˽μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μ˽αινόλαι ˽θύμωι· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
.˽.σάγην ˽ἐς σὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ
Ψά˽πφ', ˽ἀδίκησι;
κα˽ὶ γ˽ὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει,
αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
κωὐκ ἐθέλοισα.
ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον

ἐκ μερίμναν, ὄσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον, σὺ δ' αὔτα
σύμμαχος ἔσσο. ⊗

[You with varied embroidered flowers, Immortal
Aphrodite,
child of Zeus, weaving wiles: I beg you,
do not break my spirit, O Queen,
with pain or sorrow

but come – if ever before from far away
you heard my voice and listened,
and leaving your father's
golden home you came,

your chariot yoked with lovely sparrows
drawing you quickly over the dark earth
in a whirling cloud of wings down
the sky through midair,

suddenly here. Blessed One, with a smile
on your ageless face, you ask
what have I suffered again
and why do I call again

and what in my wild heart do I most wish
would happen: "Once again who must I
persuade to turn back to your love?
Sappho, who wrongs you?

If now she flees, soon she'll chase.
If rejecting gifts, then she'll give.
If not loving, soon she'll love
even against her will."

Come to me now – release me from these
troubles, everything my heart longs
to have fulfilled, fulfil, and you
be my ally.]

As said, Sappho uses the traditional tripartite structure of the *hymnos kletikos* (Furley and Bremer 2001: 1.50-63) according to the

ritual or a personal aesthetic agenda appropriating it for the specific needs of the ritual or her own needs. The first very short address to capture the attention has very specific tones that have to do with Sappho's own poetry, especially with this poem that plays a performative trick on the audience and goes beyond the traditional form of the genre. Sappho addresses Aphrodite as a goddess 'with a varied embroidered cloth' or 'who has varied embroidered flowers on her mantle' (ποικιλόθρον', 1), 'immortal' (ἀθανάτ', 1), 'child of Zeus' (παῖ Δίος, 2), 'weaver of wiles' (δολόπλοκε, 2). As a weaver she invents frauds, deceits, and tricks, but weaving is also a feature of the artful poet who devises clever strategies to go beyond formal and generic conventions. *Poikilia* means variety, the specifically varied manner to insert patterns into a garment and a text (Nagy 1996: 39). The flowers weaved into her mantle are a typical symbol of Aphrodite's beauty, fragrance, attractiveness, and sexuality. The cloth implies her outfit, her dress, as well as the texture of the poem as weaved text. Weaving (lat. *texere*) is a widely used image for textual poetic production (Scheid and Svenbro 1996: 131-55, 209-16; Nagy 1996: 64-5). The use of the first epithet *poikilothronos* is probably her first trickery of ambiguity. The first, and obvious meaning is 'on the coloured seat', 'on the throne of many hues', but it evokes the homonym derived from *throna*, flowers, with the more remote meaning 'with varied embroidered flowers' (Lasserre 1989: 205-14; Scheid and Svenbro 1996: 53-82; Nagy 1996: 101 with n40). The seated figure makes way to an active female weaver (from *plekein*) who also wears a richly decorated mantle fitting to her artistry. Whereas the actual prayer is usually deferred until the third part, the end of the hymn, in this case Sappho needs to utter her actual concern right at the beginning of the poem (2-5a), even before the *hypomnesia* or *pars epica* (5b-24). Fully in love, the poetic 'I' prays to the goddess ('You', λίσσομαί σε, 2) not to devastate and subdue her heart, not to overpower her spirit (θῦμον, 4) with pain or sorrow, with feelings of nausea, weariness, satiation as well as discomfort, distress, and anguish (μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα, 3), but to come 'hither' (*tuide*) (τυίδ' ἔλθ', 5). The emphasis on despair and subjugation – wherefore Aphrodite is called 'mistress' (πότνια, 4) – is particularly strong. She feels totally overpowered, weak and almost subjugated. The

preces are normally formulated in positive terms, but Sappho's distress is so overwhelming that she first pleads in negative terms to prevent her emotional enslavement. However, it can be expected that, had her 'mistress' Aphrodite appeared, the hierarchical gulf between god and cultic worshipper would exactly entail subjugation on the level of proxemics.

In poetry, as in real life, people usually seek relief from troubles caused by external forces by invoking a god to appear and bring help against these negative powers. Yet, in this case, it is Aphrodite who is called upon, although she is also the one who causes the pain. It sounds ironic that the originator, the goddess responsible for the distress, is summoned to come for rescue, not someone else. To solve this inherent paradox we could only imagine the goddess to stop her negative influence and change into a benign force. However, to our surprise, we hear much later, in the sixth strophe (21-4), that in this case of possibly unreciprocated love she will cause a radical reversal of the situation. Love will not cease, but the erotic hierarchy will be reversed, so that the beloved girl will be the one to suffer in the future. Yet, when Aphrodite is first invoked to come (5) we are unaware of this. The prayer focuses entirely on her epiphany. In most instances epiphanies are extremely dangerous, since the god in his unveiled appearance can even destroy the human adorant through light and sound. The direct encounter between man and god is doomed to have a deadly outcome. Therefore, the gods tend to assume a different persona, a human-like nature, to avoid killing the person to whom they manifest themselves. But in this case, Aphrodite does not change at all in her epiphanies.

In the *hypomnesia* or *pars epica*, Sappho does not talk about a single past instance of Aphrodite's appearance that could motivate her intervention also this time, but reports that Aphrodite had already appeared many times. The logical motivation of her urgent appeal with an 'if ever in the past' (αἴ ποτα κἀτέρωτα, 5) – perhaps once (Hutchinson 2001: 152) – is soon turned into a chain of innumerable cases. The temporal expression 'this time again' repeated three times (δηὖτε, 15, 16, 18) is striking, suggesting a countless and almost ritualistic repetition of similar events (Nagy 1996: 100-1). Aphrodite is reminded that she had heard

(ἔκλυες, 7) time and again Sappho's voice of lament (τὰς ἔμας αὔδας ἀίοισα, 6), that is, her poetry in performance, urging her to come from afar (πήλοι, 6). She had left Olympus, the house of her father, and harnessed her chariot to come (ἦλθες, 8) over and over again. She is viewed as a young *pais* (cf. 2, 7), just like the maidens in the chorus. As the bride leaves the house of the father, so she must leave it too (λίποισα, 7). In a patriarchal society, the focus is on the father, Zeus, who is still present in an all-female scene. Just like a warrior and charioteer, the *symmachos* in the Homeric tradition, she yokes her chariot (9), which technically allows her to travel and fight. But it is golden and delicate just as Zeus' palace – χρύσιον standing *apo koinou*. Beautiful and swift sparrows (κάλοι δέ . . . ὤκεες στροῦθοι, 9-10) swirling fast-beating wings (πύκνα δίννεντες πτέρ', 11), brought her (σ' ἆγον, 9) above the earth from heaven through mid-air (ἀπ' ὠράνω αἴθε - / ρος διὰ μέσσω, 11-12). The word δηὖτε ('this time again') could also indicate the repetition of the annual re-performance of the original ritual at Messon where the goddess is conceptualized as present coming through the cosmic middle realm, διὰ μέσσω (12). Straightaway the birds arrived (αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο, 13). It is as if Sappho's poetry, in the sacred time and space at Messon, the intermediate place, could mediate, through her appeal and hymn, between far and near, then and now, cosmos and earth. In holy time, differences are effaced in the abrupt event of epiphany. Suddenness (13) is a very important feature of all epiphanies and their poetic perception (Bohrer 1981; 2015: esp. 53-85). As in a flash of lightning, the divine manifests itself. In that very moment, just as in the fleeting seconds of death or marriage, mortals become god-like and gods and mortals converge (Nagy 2013: 109-38).

Repeatedly in the past, the goddess had suddenly stood in front of her female singer, her alter-ego. Time and again Aphrodite, the holy and blessed 'You', had smiled and asked what the matter was this time, why Sappho called on her and what it was that she wished for in her maddened heart (14-18). Aphrodite is addressed as μάκαιρα, 'blessed one' (13). This qualification excludes the usual reaction of terror to an epiphany. It implies a positive experience after death, a mystery cult, or a life after death (Bierl 2016a: 317n31). In each epiphanic instance that extends to

the actual call now Aphrodite is not frightful, but mild, competent, and friendly. Thus assuming the mood of her traditional epithet *philommeides* (Hom. *Il.* 3.424; *h.Hom.* 5.155), she now smiles with an immortal expression (μειδιαίσαισ' ἀθανάτωι προσώπωι, 14) (cf. *h.Hom.* 10.2-3), beyond human death. *Prosopon* is the face that one looks straight at. The confrontation is direct – one can stand her smile without getting destroyed – and through her smile Aphrodite makes her partner in the dialogue self-confident and happy. Although one would expect the worst from her unfiltered glance, the immortal goddess reacts very much as a human. Nonetheless, Sappho comes close to self-denigration and self-humiliation, annoying the goddess with her repeated calls for help and endless laments. It is no surprise that Aphrodite enquires about the reasons for such invocations each time she visits Sappho, this time too (ἤρε' ὄττι δηῦτε πέπονθα κὤττι / δηῦτε κάλημμι, 15-16), and she will probably do the same in the future. Love is suffering. Therefore πέπονθα (15) is a marked verb that signals this quintessential feeling of *pathos*. The verb κάλημμι ('call', 16) self-referentially highlights the actual speech-act of the *hymnos kletikos* itself, the prayer for Aphrodite's appearance. This repetition embodies the nature of the ritual. But in later receptions it can be understood as referring to a case study of numerous love stories happening in the Sapphic circle. This could be one reason why the Alexandrian philologists already set fr. 1 at the beginning of the collection arranged in nine books. The mention of Sappho's name (Ψάπφ', 20), despite the poem's different intention, was perhaps also read as a sort of *sphragis* that supported this view. Sappho's plea to Aphrodite to become her *symmachos* may also originally refer to Sappho's and thus Aphrodite's support of the maidens in their rite of passage to become mature women. Or it may imply both Sappho's and Aphrodite's involvement in stimulating the maidens' aesthetic sensibility in choral activity and making them win the beauty contest, the *kallisteia*, once they will be women in the future. But Sappho's prayer to Aphrodite to become an ally could also be understood with regard to many actual love affairs.

Sappho speaks about the lovelorn *mania* that sickens the heart (μαινόλαι θύμωι, 18) that craves for relieve. This erotic fren-

zy dangerously aligns the poetic 'I' with a maenad in the sphere of Dionysus (Nagy 2007: 256-8). In respect to wild suffering, lust, and ecstasy for the desired object that cannot be reached, within a discursive context where love rests upon absence, Aphrodite and Dionysus go together. Aphrodite insinuates that she could close the gap that separates Sappho from a beloved girl. Sappho's radical desire for fulfilment tears her heart apart with *pathos*, suffering.

This situation resembles much the first part of the recently found Cypris Song (1-6):[6]

πῶc κε δή τιc οὐ θαμέω̣c ἄcαιτο,
Κύπρι, δέc̣ποιν', ὅττινα [δ]ὴ φίλ̣[ηcι,]
[κωὐ] θέλοι μ̣άλιcτα πάθα̣ν̣ χ̣ά̣λ̣[αccαι;]
[ταὶc] ὀνέχηcθα;
[cὺν] c̣άλοιcί μ' ἀλεμά̣τω̣c δ̣α̣ΐ̣cδ̣[ηc
[ἰμέ]ρω⟨ι⟩ λύ{ι}cαντι γ̣όν' ὠμε̣-[x
. . .

[How could someone not be hurt over and over again,
Mistress Kypris, by anybody, whomever one really loves,
and not, above all, want release from the passions
that you sustain?
With shakes you pointlessly [brutally] tear me apart
through desire that loosens my knees? . . .]

In a rhetorical question Sappho laments love's corollary, and reproaches Cypris for her cruelty. Her bodily affliction is expressed in the strongest terms: the speaking 'I' feels like a Trojan hero hit, transfixed, and pierced on the battlefield, her flesh torn apart. In her suffering, Sappho prays for relief.[7] The typical attribute of love and its personification, Eros, is λυσιμελής, 'loosening the limbs'. Aphrodite's presence with respect to the beloved person seems to trigger extreme agony and *pathos* (see πάθα̣ν̣, 3 and πάθην, 10). ἄcαιτο in line 1 recalls μή μ' ἄcαιcι μηδ' ὀνίαιcι δάμνα, πότνια θῦμον, fr. 1.3-4.

6 The Greek texts follows the recent reading by Lardinois 2018 (my translation), which is rather close to Bierl 2016b.

7 This passage reproduces almost verbatim Bierl 2016b: 343.

In another article (Bierl 2016b) I argued that Sappho stylizes herself as Aphrodite's heroine attaining immortality through heroic death,[8] which entails the Homeric 'unwithering fame' (κλέος ἄφθιτον). In a notional death of love, that is, of a death that does not actually happen, the images of the epic hero and Sappho merge through the performance of *kleos* and love.[9] Manic passion and the feeling of being overpowered are responsible for the production of a poetic song in compensation for suffering, and aimed at Sappho's survival through poetic fame. While in the Cypris Song the lyrical 'I' becomes self-aware of the conditions that love entails (ἔγω δ' ἐμ' αὔται / τοῦτο σύνοιδα, 'this I know for myself', 11-12) and communalizes the experience of suffering for the group, her strategy in fr. 1 is to express closeness to the goddess in a hymn that integrates a narrated epiphany. In the Cypris Song, god-likeness is achieved by appropriating the model of the heroic death of the warrior; in fr. 1 the same effect is achieved by appropriating the model of the god's epiphany and then gliding into the discourse of heroic war (cf. Nagy 2013: 109-45).

To come back to fr. 1, with the question in line 18b the narrative abruptly shifts into direct speech not framed by introductory and concluding formulas (18b-24); the 'I' and the 'You' switch places so that in her song Sappho takes on Aphrodite's persona. During the performance, the poetic persona, or Sappho, even as an idealized and generalized persona as 'sister' for any re-performance, becomes Aphrodite. Through dramatic mimesis Sappho re-enacts the goddess, moving like her as well as assuming Aphrodite's own voice and uttering her own words: "Whom am I to persuade this time to lead you back to her love?" (τίνα δηὖτε πείθω / ..σάγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα; 18-19). Aphrodite has the power to make unreciprocated love happy through speech: it is her rhetoric, her entire charming appearance, in short, her *peitho* that can persuade one to return somebody's love. Peitho is a divine female fellow figure in the entourage of Aphrodite, and since Sappho enacts Aphrodite as Peitho during the performance of these words,

8 On the feeling and wish of death due to overwhelming passion and suffering caused by love, see Sappho frs 31.15-16, 94.1, 95.11-12.

9 See Nagy 2013: 55-69.

she *is* Aphrodite-Peitho. This is especially due to Sappho's rhetoric (Thomas 1999). And each chorus leader, the outstanding "*prima donna*" or "*diva*" (Nagy 2013: 125) who outshines the rest of her choral group, can also become Cypris-Peitho in an ongoing chain of new performances of Sappho's own poem. Mimesis and performance, therefore, have the effect of mediating between man and god. Thus, Sappho becomes god-like and becomes one with her divine model in a theatrical act (Nagy 1996: 87-103; 2013: 123-9). By doing so also the girls in the chorus or in the audience of the circle assume some of the charm, brilliance, and inner beauty, of their model. Having this capacity, one can magically manipulate anybody in the game of love. Then, the goddess, impersonated by Sappho, who is now playing both roles, asks her: "Who wrongs you, Sappho?" (τίς σ', ὦ / Ψάπφ', ἀδίκησι, 19-20). Sappho-as-Aphrodite thus ironically addresses herself by her own name, and in so doing she becomes a very close partner in her dialogue with the almighty goddess. While Sappho had called Aphrodite a tricking goddess (2), Aphrodite addresses her in intimate tones. But the main trickery of the poem consists in Sappho's sophisticated use of narration qua mimesis. Closely following her model, Sappho becomes a poetic 'weaver of wiles' (2). The magical lines (Petropoulos 1993) of the sixth strophe – "if she runs away soon she will pursue . . ." (21-4) – reverse all wrongdoing as well as the hierarchical role of lover and beloved. It culminates in the sentence that "if she does not love, soon she shall love even against her will" (trans. by Campbell in Sappho 1982) (αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει / κωὐκ ἐθέλοισα, 24). In performing the enchanting lines composed by "Sappho the sorceress" (Petropoulos 1993), but put in the mouth of Aphrodite, Sappho, suffering from love, gets respite from it. Emotional devastation cedes to both self-confidence and strength. Love involves a power struggle, almost a fight for life just like the Trojan war for the Homeric heroes. Someone does an injustice (ἀδίκησι, 20), but things may be repaired and vengeance plotted. The girl who now refuses to love her will desperately be in love with her, and at first she will not be loved in return. Only in the end will perhaps love become a mutual affection between two more or less equal female lovers.

By telling a story that happens time and again, and mimet-

ically playing the part of Aphrodite, Sappho becomes equal to the goddess and takes relief through her own enchanting words. Divine speech possesses great power and authority. In this case, the words are invented and performed by Sappho, herself a woman of craftiness, artfulness, and poetic stratagems. The trick she devises to overcome her own pain consists in projecting herself into her sacred idol. She explains how she has met her particularly close goddess. The relationship assumes a very personal note as Sappho designs her own, very personal image of Aphrodite. While epiphanies usually tend to be deadly, threatening, and frightful, Sappho moulds the repeated direct encounters with Aphrodite into highly personalized and artful scenes endowed with a 'miniature-like quality'. Whereas in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* the goddess as a superhuman, large divine figure reaches the roof of the house in her famous epiphany in front of Anchises (*h.Hom.* 5.170-5), in this Sapphic song she is downsized to miniature measures when she repeatedly manifests herself. The chariot (9) is drawn not by mighty horses, but, surprisingly, by erotic sparrows (10) (Erbse 1997; Hutchinson 2001: 153-4). The goddess sitting on such a chariot is almost reduced to her voice only. Her figure is pure magic, suggesting a refined aesthetics of delicacy, *abrosyna*.[10] While the *pars epica* usually relates a previous incident of help to incite the god to come again, in this case by adjusting the chain of precedents to the actual situation it becomes something completely new: a series of innumerable intimate conversations, reported utterances of the goddess invented and enacted by Sappho. Thus, the mimetic report about numerous instances of performed dialogues that promised reversal and relief becomes a self-assuring monologue. By speaking in Aphrodite's voice, Sappho impersonates this sophisticated female figure, while the goddess in her theatrical role performs her words in direct speech. In reciting those magical lines, Sappho becomes confident to possess this transcendental power herself as she appropriates the enchanting quality of the goddess.

10 See Sappho fr. 58.23-6; on ἄβρος, see Sappho frs 2.14 (Aphrodite), 128 (Charites), 44.7 (Andromache as bride), 140.1 (Adonis), 100 (cloth). See also Kurke 1992: 93-9 and Ferrari 2010: 66-71.

After this rearranged *hypomnesia*, Sappho moves on to a more traditional third part, the genuine prayer or appeal to the goddess (25-8). Aphrodite should come also now to deliver her from her anxieties and fulfil all that her heart desires (ὄσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι / θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον, 26-7). The double use of *telein* conveys a very general attitude towards accomplishment, but it also gives the phrase an almost mystic colouring, as this verb connotes the performance as a sacred rite. It communicates *telos*, a goal or a concrete object of desire in abstract terms. Like *telete*, it even serves as the *terminus technicus* for ritual, a service due to the gods; here it could imply erotic fulfilment, almost a *contradictio in adiecto*. But it also means the final point of a *rite de passage*, the marriage condensed in the wedding rite that Sappho probably wishes for her maidens. Due to her excessive desire, her heart has been torn apart and subjugated. Now the poetic 'I' formulates a prayer that Aphrodite should grant to her, Sappho (μοι, 26), everything her heart longs for. In performing this speech-act, Sappho seems to reach her goal. We remember that the prayer had already been uttered very early in the first part of the song; her present call on her to manifest herself (ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, 'come to me also now', 25) takes up the short appeal ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθ' ('come hither') in line 5. Her negative order not to overwhelm her heart with anguishes, however, does not need to be repeated, since Sappho has gained confidence through her song and theatrical trick. Thus, she puts her request in positive terms, asking to be released from these oppressive troubles (χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον / ἐκ μερίμναν, 25-6). Encouraged by the power of her magic speech-acts, Sappho eventually gains the upper hand over her beloved girl and Aphrodite. Love and war imply justice, the right balance, flight and pursuit (21), a material gift-exchange in taking and giving (22), just as a person who has done wrong to someone 'gives justice', *dike* (20) – in Greek δίκην δίδωμι – to someone who takes revenge for this. Receiving gifts of love or being rejected is a matter of honour. The reversal from heavy depression to deliverance from distress looks very close. The imperative λῦσον ('release', 25) resumes the Dionysian dimension of the *mania* (12) from which Dionysus as Lysios can successfully deliver people. The change of ἄσαι and ὀνίαι ('pain and sorrow', 3) into the general and neu-

tral μερίμναι ('troubles', 26), suggests a more general idea of anxiety, trouble or concern. Her actual sense of subjugation gives way to psychological problems difficult to bear, but easy to forget. By singing and performing in Aphrodite's role, Sappho has brought about a change in the hierarchical constellation of love. Finally, she prays that the goddess herself (αὔτα, 27) should become a *symmachos*, a fellow-fighter (28). This is a very strong and unusual expression of self-assertion. As an ally, Aphrodite is set at an equal level, while Sappho now seems to be in the lead. She is the warrior while Aphrodite is the charioteer, just like Achilles who is accompanied by his companion Patroclus (Krischer 1992). Therefore, Cypris is described as arriving on a golden chariot, seated (9-10). Love is war with different means, the lover-warrior metaphor is ubiquitous. Sappho uses this metaphorical overlap to compete at an intertextual level with the Homeric tradition (Rissman 1983). As a real Trojan fighter, Aphrodite is rather weak and almost hilarious in *Iliad* 5 (Winkler 1996: 92-6). Hit on the hand, she must retreat. Reshaping the Homeric Aphrodite, Sappho casts the goddess as a more efficient fighter metaphorically. In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, perhaps composed around the same time or shortly before Sappho's poems – the myth might have circulated long before –, the goddess stands entirely above the love affairs between men and gods before she too experiences that quintessential passion, herself falling in love with Anchises. As the embodiment of love, she, as Sappho's ally, should therefore fight against herself. But we know that nobody, not even Aphrodite, can defeat the terrible pain of love when one falls prey to it. Obviously, the battle does not aim at a total defeat but at a reversal of the emotional relation, and, perhaps, at reciprocal union. In order to reach this goal, it is vital to deploy *doloi*, frauds, and stratagems. Aphrodite is notorious for them. Sappho, as her alter-ego, has found the right device to cope with a situation of crisis through poetry and rhetoric (Thomas 1999).

The multifarious variations on the passion of love make fr. 1 a very apt song for the beginning of a collection in which love is the common thread. Sappho and Aphrodite as a sacred pair of *symmachoi* find poetic strategies to deal with love and to communalize the feelings for the purpose of *paideia* in the Sapphic circle. Thus, after

all fr. 1 is not about a real event and a real girl, but is a fictional construct endowed with a metaphorical content that uses cultic and religious language as vehicle. This is corroborated by the fact that the numerous epiphanies of her idol, with whom Sappho speaks about her own erotic sufferings on an equal footing, are condensed into one instance of a dialogue with the divine (Burnett 1983: 253). Yet, its tenor has less to do with politics, as Stehle (1997: 298) believes, than with the art of composing poetry itself and Sappho's self-assertion as a poetess qua lover in a context involving Aphrodite, aesthetic education, and a chorus of maidens with whom Sappho as *choragos* can fall in love. Initially, and primarily, the composition of the song is anchored in the *hic et nunc* of the Sapphic circle or even in ritual festivals, but it possesses the potential for detachment from the occasion and for ever new performances over time. Therefore, its metapoetic quality does not depend on a new textual dimension of Sapphic poetry (Stehle 1997: 262-318, esp. 288-311), compared to other early lyric songs, but is inherent in the intrinsically performative nature of its origin.

2. *Symmachos* in Greek Tragedy

It is striking that the constellation of gods and men as fellow-fighters occur more often in tragedy. In most cases, it is just a military alliance, but especially in Aeschylus' *Choephori* we also find a metaphorical treatment of this topic derived from the original context of divine help in the sense of an intense collaboration.

A rather close parallel to Sappho's use of the term *symmachos* can be found at the beginning of *Choephori*. Orestes is at the tomb of Agamemnon and would like to resuscitate the body of the murdered king as Erinys to take revenge on Clytemnestra. Therefore, he addresses the chthonian Hermes for direct help:

Ἑρμῆ χθόνιε, πατρῶι' ἐποπτεύων κράτη,
σωτὴρ γενοῦ μοι σύμμαχός τ' αἰτουμένωι·
ἥκω γὰρ ἐς γῆν τήνδε καὶ κατέρχομαι
. . . (3, bis)
τύμβου δ' ἐπ' ὄχθωι τῶιδε κηρύσσω πατρὶ
κλύειν, ἀκοῦσαι·

[Hermes of the nether world, you who guard the powers that are your father's,
prove yourself my saviour and ally, I entreat you
now that I have come to this land and returned from exile.
. . .
On this mounded grave I cry out to my father
to hearken, to hear me. (Trans. Smyth in Aeschylus 1926)]

Orestes calls on the chthonian Hermes as *psychopompos* and guard of the threshold between the lower and the upper worlds to become his saviour and fellow-fighter in order to bring back Agamemnon as a terrible force to requite murder with murder (Lloyd-Jones 1979: 132 *ad* 2). It is a paradoxical relationship involving a double *symmachia*, one with the god, who is responsible for releasing the dead king from Hades, and one with the dead king, openly invoked to become his *symmachos*. But at first Orestes does not seem to be aware of it, since he only wants to have contact with the dead father for whom the divine revenge must be performed. Moreover, he appeals to Hermes as *patroos* for help, since he is interested in the well-being and success of the house of Atreus. Later on, as he realizes that the chorus of girls is carrying *meiligmata* for the chthonian gods and his father, he prays that Zeus becomes his 'willing *symmachos*' (γενοῦ δὲ σύμμαχος θέλων ἐμοί, Aesch. *Ch.* 19) in his revenge plot. He shifts from the chthonian Hermes to the Olympian Zeus, who should finally be responsible for divine *dike* and punishment, since some strange ritual of appeasement of the nether powers, to prevent the chthonian gods from striking back, seems to be taking place through libations. As the highest principle of justice, Zeus should be a fellow-fighter stepping in to give Orestes justice. After the recognition scene with Electra at the end of the ensuing *kommos* that aims at arousing Agamemnon from the dead as a military helper of the rather weak and young siblings, Orestes calls on his father "to send either *dike* as *symmachos* to them as dear ones" (ἤτοι Δίκην ἴαλλε σύμμαχον φίλοις) or to "grant [them] in turn to get a similar grip on [his murderers], if indeed after defeat [he] would in turn win victory" (trans. Smyth in Aeschylus 1926) (ἢ τὰς ὁμοίας ἀντίδος λαβὰς λαβεῖν / εἴπερ κρατηθείς γ' ἀντινικῆσαι θέλεις, 497-9).

There is no possible alternative since *dike* in the *Oresteia* often means just revenge. At this point, Agamemnon is very clearly imagined as a fellow-fighter, as a king representing Zeus, the highest *symmachos*, who like a wrestler takes a grip on Clytemnestra and Aegisthus to seize and kill them. The conditional sentence is almost ironical: although now dead, defeated and murdered by his wife, his 'resurrected body' will turn him into a real *symmachos*, soon to become victorious in a counter-offensive. In *Eumenides* (289-91, 669-73, 762-4) we then encounter the real *symmachia* in the making between Athens, Athena's city par excellence, and Argos. Thus, Orestes presents a charter-myth for corroborating the existing military alliance of Athens, the city of the actual performance, with Argos against Sparta.

Preferably, the goddess best suited to a *symmachia*-relation with human beings is Justice (*Dike*). In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (342-3), King Pelasgus rightly regards the chorus' request to give them asylum in Argos against their pursuing cousins as a possible reason for war. The maidens reply that Justice protects her allies (ἀλλ' ἡ Δίκη γε ξυμμάχων ὑπερστατεῖ, Aesch. *Suppl.* 343). Later the chorus utter an appeal to the King "to take Justice as his ally and render judgment for the cause deemed righteous by the gods" (395-6; trans. Smyth in Aeschylus 1926). He will comply with their ritual supplication, but despite the just case, by defending the Danaids he will fall in the battle against the assailants, the sons of Aegyptus. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos* (273-5), Oedipus also appropriates Justice as his personal ally. In that situation of crisis, the political leader, who in the past had saved the city of Thebes, prays that "to all you, the loyal Cadmeans who are satisfied by these things" (trans. Jebb in Sophocles 1887) – i.e. his measures against the threatening plague about which he sent Creon to Delphi to interrogate Apollo – "may justice, our ally, and all the gods be gracious always" (ὑμῖν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοισι Καδμείοις, ὅσοις / τάδ' ἔστ' ἀρέσκονθ', ἥ τε σύμμαχος Δίκη / χοὶ πάντες εὖ ξυνεῖεν εἰσαεὶ θεοί). As we know, Oedipus initially seems to be a very positive ruler, pursuing justice and striving for the well-being of his people, but he will turn out to be the murderer and the cause of the defilement announced by the Delphic oracle. In the end, Justice will stand by the people against their ruler and the

royal household. Only some lines earlier had Oedipus reversed the order of a *symmachos*-relation between gods and men by boasting that he would prove to be the fellow-fighter of the god, Apollo, as well as of the dead man Laius through his providential measures (ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν τοιόσδε τῷ τε δαίμονι τῷ τ' ἀνδρὶ τῷ θανόντι σύμμαχος πέλω, Soph. *OT* 244-5). This amounts to hubris and arrogance in respect to the god (against Finglass 2018: 251 *ad* 244-5). Apparently, his statement already unveils one of Oedipus' many negative features in the first part of the play, anticipating his downfall. Moreover, it comes close to tragic irony that Oedipus as *miasma* is certain to have Apollo on his side, not even praying for the god's help, while the putative divine ally does everything to entangle him in the net of catastrophe.

Another rather close parallel for such a *symmachos*-relation between men and gods can be found at the beginning of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*. In terrible fear of the attackers, Polynices and his Argive allies, the desperate maidens of the chorus crouch in front of the statues in a gesture of supplication, almost to force the gods to become allies in the defence of the city (Aesch. *Sept.* 130-4, 145-50, 214-15, 255). In his rational view as well as fierce and aggressive criticism against this ritual and excessive behaviour, that, according to him, threatens the military discipline of the soldiers, Eteocles would rather like the gods to be not metaphorical but actual allies in the upcoming battle (*Sept.* 266).[11] This would equal to making the gods subject to the polis and human concerns. He wishes them to literally form the phalanx and reinforce the defence line, the wall, the towers, and the gates that give shelter to the people inside the city. Just like Oedipus' problematic attitude towards the gods, also his son Eteocles pursues a hubristic and impious design. His behaviour is especially questionable, since both brothers, focused on quarrels over who should be the legitimate ruler of Thebes, have been doomed to death by their father

11 On the sharp discrepancies between the king and the Chorus showing a deep divide in matters of religion and religious practices and ceremonies, see Brown 1977 against Hutchinson 1985: 73; for a broader discussion see Torrance 2007: 51-3 and Bierl 2019.

Oedipus.[12]

Conclusion

Yet, at least to some extent, Eteocles' wish parallels Sappho's example. As a matter of fact, the gods should be allies in both war and love affairs. However, Sappho merges with Aphrodite, since, in a bond of piety, Sappho is particularly linked to this single goddess who stands emblematically for *eros* and thus the female singer's absolute idol in matters of love. On the contrary, Eteocles – just like his questionable father Oedipus – would like to exploit the Olympian city gods for his own political and military agenda driven by an ideology that sets the concerns of the polis above anything else, even the gods. Through linguistic strategies and theatrical mimesis Sappho reasserts her strength after total self-humiliation. With Aphrodite, standing on her side, she now manages to become a master of love, magically reversing erotic hierarchies and relations. Suffering and despair cede to sovereignty and female empowerment. Sappho needs this self-assertion in order to manage the erotic affairs in her circle, which stands under the auspices of Aphrodite. Through her speech acts and by mimetically re-enacting Aphrodite, she, as it were, becomes Aphrodite, accomplishing the ultimate goal of all her pedagogical activity as chorus leader in her circle of maidens. And by doing so she may more effectively prompt the girls to pursue beauty. All this is theatre *in nuce*, theatricality in a completely different context from that of tragedy. Whereas the involvement in a dramatic role and plot can make it necessary to deploy the *symmachos*-metaphor in connection with a specific god in a situation of crisis, in Sappho that metaphor seems to be the occasion of the song itself. As we have seen, Sappho performs songs with the intent of aesthetically educating the young maidens in an all-encompassing and multimodal manner. Moreover, they are assembled in a female chorus with whose individual members Sappho as *choragos* is linked through erotic relations. Thus, Aphrodite is the ideal *symmachos* for any performance in this specific cultural con-

12 On this play in greater detail, see Bierl 2018.

text. Therefore, fr. 1 is not so much a single story about one girl as one single instance of unreciprocated love, an emotional cry for help. But Sappho sings about an endless chain of very personal visits that culminate in her last very intimate meeting with Aphrodite, when the goddess becomes her real ally, that is, her poetic inspiration and the essence of a performance deeply reflecting an erotic aesthetics in its atmosphere, setting, form, and content. Re-enacting this divine fellow-fighter in the very performance, the song makes Sappho merge with Aphrodite. Thus, in any performance Sappho becomes Aphrodite as the perfect singer full of poetic and erotic enchantment.[13]

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13 I can only end by greeting Guido Avezzù, a good colleague, a great friend, and *choragos* in Verona over many years, with whom I am connected by close ties via drama, theatre, *Thespis*, and *Skenè*: be our fellow-fighter and continue doing so also in the future!

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