Apostrophe and Women's Erotics in the
Poetry of Sappho*

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One of the most compelling issues in Sappho criticism during the last two decades has been the question of how Sappho's gender has shaped the nature of her poetry. Recent scholars have provided compelling arguments for showing how Sappho's poetry is not merely the spontaneous effusion of a passionate woman. These scholars have pointed up the many formulaic and conventional aspects of her poems that link Sappho to rather than separate her from the poetry of her male counterparts.[1] As Jack Winkler argues, however, Sappho redefines the cultural norms expressed in the social and literary formulas of archaic poetry from the perspective of her "private" woman–centered world. Winkler does not deny the public, performative character of Sappho's poetry and her use of the emblems of male, public culture, but he defines, aptly, how Sappho's poetry may be regarded as "private":

> And yet, maintaining this thesis of the public character of lyric, we can still propose three senses in which such song may be "private": first, composed in the person of a woman (whose consciousness was socially defined as outside the public world of men); second, shared only with women (that is, other "private" persons...); and third, sung on informal occasions, what we would simply call poetry readings, rather than on specific ceremonial occasions such as sacrifice, festival, leave–taking, or initiation (165).

Although Winkler argues for the gender–specificity of Sappho's poetic discourse and cultural attitudes, he nonetheless attributes to her a "double con-sciousness"—an ability to speak bi–lingually, that is, in the languages of both the male public arena and the excluded female minority. I believe, however, that Winkler does not take his views far enough about how Sappho's marginal status as a woman produced a version of desire significantly different from male archaic poets. Recent feminist scholars, while acknowledging Sappho's in-

[1]Thus Calame, Carson 1980, Lasserre, Nagy 1973 and 1990, Svenbro.

debtedness to Homer and to the traditions of archaic poetry, contend that
Sappho's poetry presents what Marilyn Skinner calls a "woman–specific dis-
course...an elaborate complex of coding strategies differing perceptibly from
those of the dominant symbolic order" (131). Skinner describes those strategies
as "open, fluid, and polysemous—and hence conspicuously nonphallic" (131).
Similarly, Eva Stehle (1981) compares Sappho's erotic poems with those of
Archilochus, Ibycus, and Anacreon, and argues that a pattern of mutuality
emerges in Sappho's poetry in sharp contrast to an hierarchical mode of erot-
icism that is prevalent in male patterns of erotic discourse. Like Skinner, Stehle
maintains that by creating an "open space for imagining unscripted sexual rela-
tions...Sappho can represent an alternative for women to the cultural norms"
(1990: 108).

My own argument here will attempt to further the views put forth by
Stehle and Skinner by providing a theoretical framework for understanding
Sappho's fragments as offering an erotic practice and discourse outside of
patriarchal modes of thought. Through a close reading of Fragment 94, I hope
to show how Sappho constructs erotic experience outside male assumptions
about dominance and submission. I will pay particular attention to the apos-
trophic structure of the poem and show how it dramatizes an experience of
desire as mutual recognition. I will also discuss the last two stanzas of
Fragment 1—a poem thought by some critics to deviate from patterns of mutu-
ality in Sappho and to contradict the view that Sappho's mode of discourse
represents female homoerotic desire with its own symbolic systems and
conventions.

In her book *The Bonds of Love,* Jessica Benjamin's analysis of gender
and domination and her concept of "intersubjectivity" offer a theoretical per-
spective that, I believe, helps to clarify a women's erotics in Sappho. Benjamin
offers an illuminating, feminist analysis of the psychological underpinnings of
erotic domination; her discussion of the relation between gender and domin-
ation demonstrates the complex intertwining of sexual and social domination.
In her analysis, Benjamin identifies the unequal complementarity in which "one
is always up and the other down" not only as the basic pattern of erotic
domination, but also as a specifically *masculine* mode of thought and practice
that permeates all social organization. It is masculine because, as Jane Flax ob-
serves, "culture *is* masculine, not as the effect of language but as the con-
sequence of actual power relations to which men have far more access to
women" (103). Benjamin's concept of intersubjectivity—"that space in which
the mutual recognition of subjects can compete with the reversible relationship
of domination"—describes a mutuality between lover and beloved based on a

subject position for women that defies cultural norms and furnishes a substitute basis for organizing female experience (Skinner: 135).

As Skinner suggests, it is from Sappho's position of marginality that she is able to construct an alternative to the phallic representation of desire. In the segregated female world of the *hetairia*,[2] Sappho could express active female erotic desire and claim an authentic subject position—what Teresa de Lauretis calls an "eccentric discursive position outside the male...monopoly of power," a "form of female subjectivity that exceeds the phallic definition" of woman as *object* or Other (1990: 126–27). Furthermore, de Lauretis maintains the premise that women's *difference* is not a consequence of biology, but of their specific condition of exploitation and gender oppression, which affords them a position of knowledge and struggle that gives rise to possible alternative modes of structuring erotic discourse and practice. Thus, the Sapphic subject, because it speaks from a place of discourse located outside patriarchy, can construct a model of erotic relations that is as Marilyn Skinner puts it, "bilateral and egalitarian, in marked contrast to the rigid patterns of pursuit and physical mastery inscribed into the role of the adult male *erastes*, whatever the sex of his love object" (133). The model to which Skinner refers is undeniably homoerotic. De Lauretis, as well, posits the "eccentric" female subject as one that refuses the terms of the heterosexual contract. Indeed, in a society as male-dominated as Sappho's most likely was, one can easily see that the expression of active female desire was most accessible in the context of an autonomous and homoerotic woman's culture. I believe, however, that it is possible for contemporary readers of Sappho—both men and women—to discover in her articulation of female desire an alternative to the competitive and hierarchical models of eroticism that have dominated Western culture.

II.

One of the most striking features of Sappho's poetry is her use of apostrophe to play out the conflicts of her erotic drama. In his essay on poetic apostrophe, Jonathan Culler points out that literary critics have largely considered apostrophe a meaningless convention that is taken for granted as an inherited, acci-

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[2]See Parker for his compelling argument against the modern construction of a *thiasos* —with Sappho as a sort of cult leader. I agree with Parker that there is no evidence of a ritual or cultic function for Sappho's poems or that Sappho's social role was anything other than that of poet. Thus, Parker argues that Sappho "should be seen, not in a *thiasos* (whatever that might be) but, like Alcaeus, in a *hetairia*, an association of friends...a group of women tied by family, class, politics, and erotic love." I concur with Parker's view that a *hetairia* rather than a *thiasos* is a more appropriate construction of Sappho's "society."

dental characteristic of the genre.[3] Indeed, studying the role of apostrophe is crucial to an understanding of poetic discourse itself. As Culler argues, "Apostrophe is different in that it makes its point by troping, not on the meaning of a word, but on the circuit or situation of communication itself" (143). In other words, what Culler calls "the vocative of apostrophe" is a device which the poetic voice uses to dramatize its own calling, its ability to summon images of its own power so as to establish, with an object, a relationship which helps to constitute an image of self.

Thus, apostrophe poses the problem of the poetic subject as a problem of the addressee's *relation* to it. The addressee becomes a live presence only when poetic voice constitutes itself. The "figure of voice" dramatizes both its own speaking and its power to give life to inanimate objects or to make present an absent addressee. As Barbara Johnson puts it, "Apostrophe is a form of ventriloquism through which the speaker throws voice, life, and human form into the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness" (185). Apostrophe raises the question of whether the sheer act of utterance can animate lifeless objects and heal the pain of separation and loss. By conferring presence on an absent addressee, the lover transforms the beloved from an object into a subject, effecting in the process a discourse between two subjects. The idea that the vocative posits a relationship between two subjects is greatly intensified in the context of erotic poetry. The erotic subject is faced with the beloved's absence *and* with self–dissolution.[4] The act of apostrophe not only makes present the absent object of desire, but is also the mechanism through which the erotic subject constitutes itself.

Sappho's dramatic use of address and invocation in her erotic fragments shows the paradoxical relationship between the debilitating and fragmenting effects of *eros* on the self and the reconstruction of the self in the poetic act. In Sappho's poems, the speaker often associates the diminishing of verbal power—attendant on separation from the beloved—with a kind of death. Apostrophe—the recuperation of voice through memory—re–animates the "I" through a re–inscription of an individual poetic voice into a communal discourse. I shall argue that Fr. 94 shows a progression from third person narrative to second person address to the emergence of first person "we," and that this progression is inextricably bound up in the performative and communal context of Sappho's poems. That Sappho's narrator reconstitutes her frag-

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[3]Culler 136–54. Culler's chapter "Apostrophe" is one of the most influential studies of the use of poetic apostrophe, and has drawn attention to its importance as a literary device.

[4]From Homer through the early Greek lyric poets, erotic experience is closely associated with a loss of vital self, and even death. For an insightful discussion of this see Carson 1986.

mented self by establishing a relationship with her addressee *in the time of the apostrophe* refers us to the transforming and animating activity of the poetic voice. However, the inclusion of an audience (the "we") in the grammar of the poem—in the present moment of discourse—moves the speaker outside a radical interiorization and narcissism whereby the other is merely a projection of self (Culler 146).

Fragment 94 illustrates how Sappho's apostrophizing voice affirms the eroticism of her narrator by erasing the distinction between self and other, speaker and addressee, and creates an intimacy based, in Luce Irigaray's words, on a "nearness so pronounced that it makes all discrimination of identity, and thus all forms of property, impossible."[5] Sappho does not fantasize about the beloved as separate from herself, as an object either to gaze at or describe (Stehle 1990). Irigaray's assertion that "the predominance of the visual...is particularly foreign to female eroticism" (351) seems consistent with the way Sappho pictures love relations in 94 as an environment of mutual enclosure and reciprocity. The speaker's erotic fulfillment comes not from making the beloved a beautiful object of contemplation, but by drawing the beloved to her by making the beloved a part of the lover's interior world of memory and imagination.

τεθνάκην δ' ἀδόλως θέλω·
ἄ με ψιςδομένα κατελίμπανεν   2

πόλλα καὶ τόδ' ἔειπ . [
ὤιμ' ὡς δεῖνα πεπ[όνθ]αμεν·
Ψάπφ', ἦ μάν c' ἀέκοιc' ἀπυλιμπάνω.   5

τὰν δ' ἔγω τάδ' ἀμειβόμαν·
χαίροιc' ἔρχεο κἄμεθεν
μέμναιc'· οἶcθα γὰρ ὤc ce πεδήπομεν.   8

αἰ δὲ μή, ἀλλά c' ἔγω θέλω
ὄμναιcαι[...(.)] [..(.)]..αι
..[   ] καὶ κάλ' ἐπάcχομεν·   11

πόλ[λοιc γὰρ cτεφάν]οιc ἴων
καὶ βρ[όδων   ]κίων τ' ὔμοι
κα..[   ] πὰρ ἔμοι περεθήκαο   14

[5]Irigaray's work has been extremely influential in articulating ideas about the question of woman's *essence* and of a female sexuality. Her view of feminine sexuality which "supplants the logic of the gaze with the logic of touch" seems especially relevant to a discussion of the mutuality of desire in Sappho's poetry.

καὶ πόλλαις ὑπαθύμιδας
πλέκταις ἀμφ' ἀπάλαι δέραι
ἀνθέων .[   ] πεποημμέναις,   17
—
καὶ π . . . . .[   ]. μύρωι
βρενθείωι .[   ]ρυ[..]ν
ἐξαλείψαο καὶ βασιλήίωι,   20
—
καὶ στρώμν[αν ἐ]πὶ μολθάκαν
ἀπάλαν πα.[   ]...ων
ἐξίης πόθο[ν   ]. νίδων,   23
—
κωὔτε τις [   ]..τι
ἶρον οὐδυ[   ]
ἔπλετ' ὄππ[οθεν ἄμ]μες ἀπέσκομεν,   26
—
οὐκ ἄλσος.[   ].ρος
                    ]ψοφος
                    ]...οιδιαι   29

Honestly, I wish I were dead.
Weeping she left with many tears,

And said; 'Oh what terrible things
we endured. Sappho, truly,
against my will I leave you.'

And I answered: 'Go, be
happy, and remember me;
For you know how we cared for you.

And if not, then I want
to remind you... of the wonderful
things we shared.

For many wreaths of violets and
roses....
you put on by my side,

And many woven garlands
fashioned of flowers,
you tied round your soft neck,

And with rich myrrh,
fit for a queen,
you anointed...

And on a soft bed,
tenderly,
you satisfied (your) desire.[6]

And there was
no sacred place
from which we were absent,

no grove,
....dance,
....sound...'[7]

The fragment opens with the expression of a wish to die. Since the begin-
ning of the poem is missing, the poem does not tell us who speaks the first
extant line—the speaker or the other woman. Scholars who attribute the line to
the speaker interpret the poem as "a complex picture of longing and pain" and
view the speaker as a woman overcome by frenzy and grief. Burnett argues
persuasively that the other woman rather than the speaker utters the wish to die
in the fragment's opening line. As Burnett shows, "The disconsolate girl thinks
that parting is the end of life and love, but her wiser mistress commands her to
go her way rejoicing" (23). In accord with Burnett's view, Snyder argues that
"The poem, then, is hardly a 'confession,' but rather a recapturing of past plea-
sures through memory, by which the 'dreadful things' mentioned by the girl—
that is, the impending separation—are transformed into Sappho's 'beautiful
things' beginning in stanza 4." I concur that it is the other woman who speaks
the first line of the fragment, a line that plunges the poem into the realities of
separation and loss. Moreover, attributing the opening line to the other woman
heightens the tension in the poem between the two speakers, whose different
approaches toward the separation are reflected in their correspondingly dif-
ferent modes of discourse.

Indeed, the stark wish to die is expressed baldly, without the em-
bellishment of poetic images. The use of the word ἀδόλως initiates a conver-
sational diction and tone that accentuate the contingencies of circumstance. The
time–bound world of circumstance evoked here is reinforced by the speaker's
use of third–person narrative to describe a past event that is irreversible, the
painful departure and loss of her beloved. The vocative Ψάπφ' in line 5, al-

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[6]Line 23 is usually translated '*your desire,*' but the verb is active rather than middle, and so
may refer to someone else's desire. The ambiguity may well be intentional since, in the context
of mutual desire, it does not matter who is satisfying whom.

[7]The Greek text of Fragment 94 comes from Page, *Lyrica Graeca* (no. 216). The English
translation is my own.

though framed within a narrative in the past tense in which the beloved
addresses "Sappho," introduces an apostrophic element into the narrative. This
apostrophe in the narrative creates a sense of dramatic immediacy that begins
to bridge the gap between the past of narration and the now of discourse.

The drama of separation unfolds as we hear the distinct voices of the
speaker and her departing lover shift back and forth in nearly ritualized re-
sponsion.[8] The speaker's direct recollection of the time of departure locates
both the narrator and the woman who is leaving in a temporal sequence of
events in which they are each distinct characters within the narrative reported
by the speaker. The predominantly descriptive mode of discourse here pre-
serves the sense of separateness between the two lovers. This separateness is re-
inforced by the parallel structure of the first four stanzas, which all end in
verbs that function in response to one another.

The speaker's request in line eight that the woman remember (χαίροις'
ἔρχεο κἄμεθεν μέμναις') draws the poem away from the dramatic portrayal
of the woman leaving to the more inward situation of remembering. And
although we are still in the narrative frame, the speaker's verbal imperatives to
the woman (go and remember) are spoken as second person address. The
speaker has moved from reporting a past event in the third person to reporting
the reciprocal apostrophes spoken by the two lovers. These two modes of dis-
course—third person narrative and the reporting of second person address—
both remain within a temporal frame. It is not until the "we" emerges at line
eight that the speaker begins to turn away from narrative altogether. The "we"
of πεδήπομεν initiates a shift from reported speech to a detemporalized mode
of discourse in which the individual voices of the two lovers are no longer
clearly differentiated. Furthermore, "we" in πεδήπομεν connects the "I" and
the "you" of the poem to a communal context. There is much debate and specu-
lation in Sappho criticism about how and under what conditions Sappho's
poems were performed. But many scholars believe that her fragments were
performed either by Sappho herself or by a chorus of women to an audience
comprised of a community of other women.[9] Thus, the audience becomes
implicated in the poetic enactment of desire as the speaker includes the group
in a communal discourse that both depicts and arouses desire.

In stanza four, the pattern of shifting voices changes as the speaker's own
point of view and poetic voice take over. The speaker's assertion at line nine
that she will remind her beloved if she doesn't remember focuses attention on

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[8]McEvilley offers an insightful discussion of the way response between the two lovers
works in the poem.

[9]See Calame and Nagy 1990 for arguments that support a view of Sappho's poetry as choral.

the poetic voice and its ability to activate the past and make it come alive in the present. The word θέλω at the end of line nine, expressing the speaker's wish to remind her departing lover about their past happiness, echoes the earlier wish to die in the opening line of the fragment. The repetition of θέλω in the parallel contexts of death and memory suggests the active transformative power of the poetic voice as it replaces the will to die with the will to create.

In fact, it does not seem to matter whether the woman remembers or not. Aἰ δὲ μή at the beginning of the fourth stanza, conjoined to the emphatic ἔγω θέλω, suggests a negation of narrative temporality, by making the evocativeness of the speaker's own apostrophizing voice the central issue. The speaker turns away from narrative and addresses the beloved as a presence in a "time of discourse rather than story" (Culler 149). The speaker's clearly delineated voice offering her beloved an abstract consolation about how great the past was gives way to the dissolution of both their voices—voices that become subsumed within a detemporalized, intersubjective space inclusive of speaker, addressee, and an audience of women. As Culler points out, apostrophes displace the temporal sequences of narration by "removing the opposition between presence and absence from empirical time and locating it in a discursive time" (150). The move from empirical to discursive time is heightened in stanza four, which brings about a transition to a more remote time, and introduces a use of language that abounds in poetic images.

The picture in stanzas five through ten is one of idyllic beauty and blissful satisfaction. As against the clearly delineated voices and personalities at the beginning, here, the "I," "you," and "we" of the poem are all linked in the aura of sensations and erotic stimulation. Boundaries of person, object, and place seem to break down as everything in the environment dissolves into a totality of sensation. The speaker's erotic vocabulary—images of violets, roses, woven garlands, perfume, and soft beds—creates a song of seduction that enacts both the mesmerizing spell of desire and the power of the poet's voice to suspend time and draw the poem's audiences into what Dolores O'Higgins calls "the dangerous felicity of listening" (162). This atmosphere of sensual stimulation, however, does not seem to be placed in any actual environment; rather, the images of flowers, soft couches, perfumes, the shrine, and the grove all have a generalizing force that suggests remoteness from the world. Even the long series of flower images seems to function in isolation from nature, and does not seem to refer to any specific ritual function or purpose except for the sensual enjoyment of the lovers and its poetic enactment.[10] What is emphasized

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[10]Stehle 1977 discusses Sappho's use of flower imagery in an erotic context.

about the flowers is the way they are artfully fashioned into beautiful garlands for the lovers to wear.

In spite of the speaker's rapt absorption in the woman whose presence she invokes, there is no emphasis on describing the woman *independent* of the effect she has on the narrator herself, or separate from the atmosphere their shared erotic experience generates. In the last two stanzas of the fragment, the sense of fullness expressed in the repetition of negatives which negate the lovers' absence at the shrine, the grove, and the dance, contrasts with the emptiness implicit in the earlier verbs of abandonment and departure. The negation of place to denote presence suggests that it is the mutual experience of the two lovers that gives form to the world. The implication is that place comes alive only in the presence of the other.

Jessica Benjamin sees woman's sexual grounding in intersubjective space as her solution to the problem that woman's desire is not localized in space, not linked to phallic activity and its representations (130): "When the sexual self is represented by the sensual capacities of the whole body, when the totality of space between, outside, and within our bodies becomes the site of pleasure, then desire escapes the borders of the imperial phallus and resides on the shores of endless worlds." Indeed in Sappho's fragment, the space inhabited by the two lovers expands outwards to the seemingly endless spaces of streams, temples, and groves. The movement from the interior space connoted by the "soft bed" to the exterior space of the temple, the grove, and the dance reinforces the earlier link between the speaker, her addressee, and the circle of listening, perhaps, singing women. The effortless motion from interior to exterior space that suggests the dissolving of spatial boundaries correlates with the breakdown in clearly distinct positions of self and other, subject and object. Moreover, the connections in the poem between the personal and collective discourses of women suggests an intersubjectivity that embraces a cultural system significantly different from male models of competitive and hierarchical self–other relationships.

III.

It may be argued that Fr. 1 departs from a pattern of mutuality in Sappho's poems. Anne Carson (1980), for example, holds that in Fr. 1 Sappho portrays erotic relations as an endless game of flight and pursuit, thus presenting a model of erotic relations that involves the dominance of one over the other. This view is based largely on the famous lines in the next to last stanza spoken by Aphrodite to console the rejected or abandoned "Sappho": "For if she flees, soon she will pursue; and if she does not receive gifts, soon she will give them. And if she loves not, soon she will love even against her will" (21–24). Carson

sums up what she takes to be the usual interpretation of these lines: "Aphrodite is promising...an ideal erotic revenge in the form of a mutual reversal of the roles of lover and beloved" (136). Carson, however, argues that Aphrodite is not offering a "specific programme of revenge tailored to Sappho, but a general theory of lover's justice" (139). Carson believes that Aphrodite is not reassuring Sappho that she will eventually be reconciled with her beloved; rather, Aphrodite suggests to Sappho that her beloved will outgrow her position as beloved, become a lover herself (of some younger beloved, not Sappho), and experience the state of mind of the pursuer, the one taken by *eros* against her will. Moreover, Carson argues that Aphrodite's consoling words to Sappho dramatize the universal law of justice which guarantees, through the passage of time, that the beloved will grow too old to be pursued as an object of desire.

Carson's argument hinges on her observation that Aphrodite's statements to Sappho contain no direct object. In other words, Carson contends that Aphrodite does not say that *Sappho* will be the object of the girl's pursuit or the recipient of her gifts, only that the girl will someday pursue, give gifts, and love. Thus, from the "observation" that Aphrodite is *not* offering Sappho reconciliation with her beloved Carson infers that Sappho is *not* asking Aphrodite to turn the affections of the girl toward Sappho—rather Sappho is merely asking Aphrodite for justice or revenge.

Carson's observation that there is important significance in the lack of a direct object in Aphrodite's consolation of Sappho is, I believe, quite astute. But I think she has misunderstood its significance. The mere fact that Aphrodite does not *explicitly* mention a direct object does not exclude the possibility that Aphrodite is reassuring Sappho that her beloved will eventually desire her, Sappho, in particular. Indeed, Aphrodite's question to Sappho in lines 18–19 (τίνα δηὖτε πείθω...cαγην ἐc cὰν φιλότατα/Whom, again, am I to persuade to come back into friendship with you?) seems to imply that Sappho wants Aphrodite's help in turning the girl's love in Sappho's direction (ἐc cὰν φιλό-τατα). The cάν in line 19 suggests this specificity.

I think that the real significance of the lack of direct objects (of fleeing, pursuing, and loving) in these lines is that Sappho is suggesting that neither she nor her beloved are *objects* of each other's love. The speaker does not imagine that the consummation of (her) love involves *either* domination or submission. The beloved is figured as a *subject* whether she is fleeing or pursuing, giving or receiving. Indeed, it may be argued that the subject *she* in these lines can be either the speaker or her beloved. The speaker is describing, in general terms, the reciprocal movements of desire in which she and her beloved both par-

ticipate in the process of giving and receiving, loving and being loved—a process that, according to the grammar of the poem, involves *only* subjects. Moreover, the incantatory quality of the lines evokes what Charles Segal calls "the hypnotic effect of love's *thelxis*" (149). Segal argues that "the rhythmical echo between the first and third lines...almost seems to assure the success of this spell–like promise" (149). If it is true, as Segal argues, that the fulfillment of love means *thelxis*, then surely both lover and beloved must both fall under the same spell for love to be fully realized. By definition, it seems, the 'magic of eros' implicates both lovers in a circularity of desire that requires reciprocity.

Moreover, in the context of the whole poem it seems much more likely that Sappho seeks reconciliation rather than revenge. The initial and final stanzas frame the poem with Sappho's invocation of Aphrodite *in the present*. But the body of the poem is in the past tense. Sappho is remembering an earlier occasion when she called to Aphrodite and Aphrodite came to her. The body of the poem narrates that past encounter. We learn through Sappho's narration of the encounter that Sappho has called on Aphrodite before for the same purpose: to ask Aphrodite's help in persuading Sappho's beloved to turn her affections back in Sappho's direction. If it is merely erotic justice Sappho wants, then once Sappho recalls Aphrodite's "words of justice" from that earlier encounter she would have no reason to continue to call on Aphrodite again to enact the same revenge, the same universal law of justice; there would be no reason for Sappho to continue the invocation of Aphrodite in the last stanza. If, however, Sappho is asking for Aphrodite's aid in turning her beloved's affections toward her, then it makes perfect sense that Sappho should invoke Aphrodite once again. The present invocation differs from past invocations in that it involves a different woman whom Sappho wants Aphrodite to persuade.

The language of the last stanza of the poem reinforces this reading. It returns to the present moment of discourse and reminds us of Sappho's original prayer to Aphrodite in the first and second stanzas. Although the imperative ἔλθε in line 25 recalls the ἔλθε in line 5, the fact that the qualifying ἀλλά is absent here, that the verb is in the emphatic first position, and that there is a repetition of imperatives (λῦcον, τέλεccαι, ἔcco), suggests a far more powerful voice than the voice of helpless supplication we hear at the beginning of the poem. The narrator speaks with a confidence in the fulfillment of her desires; λῦcον along with τέλεccαι and τέλεcον stress this sense of release and fulfillment. There are no negative verbs here, as in the previous stanza, to suggest the possibility of defeat.

Sappho's use of military terminology in her request to Aphrodite to be her ally (cύμμαχoc) in the last line of the poem may seem to identify Sappho with masculine values of conquest and militarism.[11] I believe, however, that Sappho appropriates aspects of dominant cultural values for purposes that establish her resistance to such values. In asking Aphrodite to be her co–fighter or fellow soldier in the "battle" of love, Sappho asks Aphrodite to come into an alliance of mutuality with her. Although as allies, they are not equals, "Sappho" becomes capable of imagining herself eliciting desire in her beloved through her contact with Aphrodite. Thus, Aphrodite's descent in the third stanza of the poem may be regarded as a description of the speaker's ascent. The swiftness and rapid movement of Aphrodite's descent and its empowering effect on "Sappho" suggest that, through the power of her voice (her invocation), the speaker herself is taking flight and bringing heaven down to earth.

As Winkler notes, Aphrodite's descent in Fr. 1 recalls the scene in the *Iliad* where Aphrodite enters the battlefield and ends up retreating to Olympus to heal the stab wound inflicted by Diomedes. It may seem that by referring to Aphrodite as the speaker's potential cύμμαχoc, Sappho transfers masculine values of conquest to the sphere of love. But in light of Aphrodite's (Homeric) reputation for ineffectual, obstructive conduct in martial affairs and her clearly inappropriate presence in the exclusively male world of the battlefield, it would seem that Aphrodite's role as "Sappho's" ally would not follow the male model for cύμμαχoι. Thus, we cannot assume that an alliance between the speaker and Aphrodite involves the attempt to conquer an adversary. In addition, it is interesting to note that sparrows, instead of horses, drive Aphrodite's chariot as it makes its descent. This deviation from the Iliadic model reinforces the poem's resistance to values of militance and conquest.

Moreover, in line 3 Sappho asks Aphrodite *not* to subdue her with cares. Sappho uses the word δάμνα—a word often associated with conquest and domination—to express what she does *not* want from Aphrodite. It seems that Sappho negates the values associated with δάμνα and substitutes in its place an alliance with Aphrodite that turns the domination of one over the other into persuasion, the power to seduce another into a relationship of mutual desire. The identification with Aphrodite implied by the speaker's ability to imagine herself as Aphrodite's "ally" shows a change in the way the speaker sees herself. Here, as in Fr. 94, the operations of memory—recalling a past experience in which the speaker's desires were fulfilled—bridge the gap between speaker and goddess and between the lover and her beloved. In lines 21–24, the voices

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[11]See Rissman's analysis of military imagery in Sappho's poetry.

of Aphrodite and the speaker "Sappho" are no longer clearly differentiated. That Sappho does not clearly identify the speaker in these lines suggests a dissolving of the boundaries between the speaker and the goddess, and an incorporation within the speaker of Aphrodite's persuasive powers.

The speaker's assertive tone in the last stanza expresses a confidence in her own ability to conjure longing in the beloved. The ability to imagine herself in an alliance with Aphrodite elevates the speaker to a position of greater empowerment. The speaker asks Aphrodite to be her σύμμαχος not in order to conquer or dominate the beloved, and certainly *not* to make the beloved passively accept Sappho's affections. Rather, Sappho calls on Aphrodite to help stir the beloved from passive indifference into *active* affection. The speaker imagines a situation where her beloved actively pursues. And we should not assume that Sappho has to become passive if her beloved is to become active. That would be simply to assume the male model of dominance and submission. The poem itself in no way suggests this. On the contrary, the purpose of Sappho's alliance with Aphrodite is to rouse her beloved, so that *each* is to be both lover and beloved, active participants in a reciprocity of desire—both of them active, desiring subjects.

In her study of the historical and cultural context of homosexuality in ancient Greece, Eva Cantarella (1992) points to a sharp contrast between the social roles of male and female homosexual bonds. The male pederastic model, with its distinct roles of dominance and submission, served as an instrument in the educational and political development of young men. Sex between man and boy symbolized the transfusion of political power from the superior older man to his younger beloved (cf. Dover, Foucault 1985). By contrast, although homosexual erotic relations among women may also have had an educational and social role, those relations were not linked to the institutional structures of power as male pederastic relations were. As Cantarella puts it: "But what symbolic and social significance could be attached to love between women? Sex between women takes place on an equal basis, it does not involve submission, it cannot symbolize the transmission of power (not even the power of generation, the only power held by women)" (83).

Constructing the love between women expressed in the circumscribed context of an *hetairia* on the model of pederasty assumes an access to institutional power women did not have, and more importantly, assimilates female homo–eroticism to male power relations. Thus, the discursive position of even the most educated and cultured of women (e.g. Sappho) in the context of the male–dominated public sphere must surely have been *outside the center* as de Lauretis puts it. Perhaps it is the position of eccentricity that allows the Sapphic

subject to resist the eroticization of woman as 'other'[12] and thus to construct a language of desire beyond the binaries of self and other, a language that reinterprets categories of gender and reinscribes a place for women in cultural discourse.

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[12]Cf. MacKinnon, responding to de Beauvoir's assertion that "Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being...He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other." MacKinnon argues that gender is less a matter of sexual difference than an instance of male dominance and the appeal to biology as the determining "fact" of women's sexual specificity is an ideological consequence of the male epistemological stance of objectivity that reflects not only control through objectification, but also its eroticization of the act of control itself. Thus, "the eroticization of dominance and submission creates gender...The erotic is what defines sex as inequality, hence as a meaningful difference...Sexualized objectification is what defines women as sexual and as women under male supremacy."

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