

Subject and Circumstance in Sappho's Poetry*

André Lardinois
Princeton University

Holt Parker, in a provocative article in *TAPA* 123 (1993) 309–51, has questioned one hundred eighty years of classical scholarship on the relationship of Sappho to her addressees, if we take Friedrich Welcker's little monograph *Sappho von einem herrschenden Vorurteil befreit* as the beginning of modern scholarship on the subject.¹ Parker argues that there is no credible evidence that Sappho's audience consisted of young, unmarried girls (316), and instead proposes that she sang at banquets about her love for other adult women (324, 346).² The positive aspect of Parker's paper is that it forces us to reexamine the evidence and question some of the scholarly traditions about Sappho, which, as Parker rightly points out (312), were often born in ignorance, sometimes coupled with sexism and homophobia.³ It is my conclusion, after a review of the evidence, that Parker is correct in rejecting the 'Sappho school-mistress' paradigm as a plausible reconstruction of the performance circumstances of her poetry, but that the subject of her poetry is, nevertheless, young women or girls,⁴ and its occasion has to be sought in public performances rather than private banquets. Like Parker, I will first discuss the testimonia, then the fragments and the external evidence. I will finally measure this evidence against Parker's reconstruction of Sappho as a symposiast and against the other modern images of Sappho: teacher at a school, leader of a *thiasos*, and instructor of a chorus.

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¹Göttingen 1816, reprinted with a "Nachtrag" in *Kleine Schriften, Vol. II: Zur griechischen Literaturgeschichte*, Bonn 1845, 80–144. Also referred to by Parker (310 n.4, 313). For even earlier representations of Sappho, see DeJean.

²Parker's article brings to its logical conclusion a trend in modern Sappho studies to refer to the subjects of her poetry as "women," without specifying that they were probably young, adolescent women: Winkler 1981/1990, Stehle 1990, Snyder 1991. These studies, however, unlike Parker's, do not explicitly deny that these women were adolescent (cp. Stigers [Stehle] 1981: 45).

³Calder and DeJean (207–09, 217–19) had already made this argument where Welcker's and Wilamowitz's interpretation of Sappho as a chaste schoolmistress is concerned.

⁴By young women or girls, I mean women who in our sources, including Sappho's poetry, are referred to as κόραι, παρθέναι and sometimes παῖδες. They denote the age-group between puberty and marriage (roughly twelve to eighteen year olds): see Calame 1977: 1.63–64.

1. The Testimonia

Parker, to his credit, inserts a whole section on “the evidence” (316–25). By his own account there are seven testimonia that “present some sort of picture of Sappho consorting with ‘girls’” (321),⁵ but he forgets four: the *Suda* Σ 107 (= test. 2) and Themistius *Or.* 13.170d–171a (=test. 52) speak respectively about Sappho’s “pupils” (μαθήτριάι) and her *paidika*, while Philostratus *Im.* 2.1.1–3 (=test. 120 Gallavotti) is reminded of Sappho when he sees a picture of a female chorister (διδάσκαλος) leading a band of girls (κόραι) and Himerius *Or.* 9.4 (=fr. 194), similarly, portrays her as heading a group of young women (παρθένους) in what appears to be a musical procession. What can we do with this information? It has been a long time since scholars uncritically accepted what the ancients report about the archaic Greek poets. Welcker’s treatise on the modern prejudices about Sappho was actually one of the first to contain a critical examination of the *testimonia* of an archaic Greek poet. He argued that Athenian comedy was responsible for most of our information about Sappho’s life, including her alleged homosexuality.⁶ More recently, Lefkowitz has concluded that “virtually all the material in all the lives is fiction” and “the ancient biographers took most of their information about poets from the poets themselves” (1981: viii). They, as Parker puts it, were “turning poetry into biography” (321). Does this mean that “[a]s evidence the testimonia are valueless” (idem)?

The Greeks or Romans in subsequent ages probably knew little more than we do about events on Lesbos in the sixth century B.C. They had, however, one distinct advantage over us: they still possessed Sappho’s poetry in fairly complete form.⁷ Therefore, whenever they mention a fact which could stem

⁵Horace *Carm.* 2.13.24–25 (=test. 18), Ovid *Her.* 15.15–20 (=test. 19), *Tr.* 2.365 (=test. 49), Maximus of Tyre 18.9 (=test. 20), Philostratus *VA* 1.30 (=test. 21), Himerius *Or.* 28.2 (=test. 50), SLG 261A (=fr. 214B fr.1). All fragments and testimonia of Sappho are cited from D. A. Campbell’s edition in the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge MA 1982, unless noted otherwise.

⁶Welcker 1816/1845: 105–14; cp. Calder: 141–42. There were in Welcker’s time two explicit testimonia about Sappho’s love for (young) women: Ovid *Her.* 15.15–20 and 201–202 (=test. 19) and the *Suda* (=test. 2). In the beginning of the twentieth century, a papyrus was found which refers to rumors about Sappho being a “woman-lover” (γυναικεράστρια, test. 1). The weakness of Welcker’s argument was that, as far as we know, Sappho was not portrayed as a lesbian on the Athenian stage, but, on the contrary, as an extreme heterosexual: test. 8; cp. Lardinois 1989: 22–25.

⁷The Alexandrians had made a collection of Sappho’s poems in nine books, which, as the many papyrus fragments show, survived through most of the Hellenistic and Roman period. Parts of her poetry were still directly known in Byzantium in the twelfth century: see Garzya 1971, cited by Campbell 1982: 51 n.1, and more recently Garzya 1991.

from her poetry, it has to be treated as at least possibly valuable information. A case in point is their frequent portrayal of Sappho consorting with young women. This is something they could have gathered from her poetry. Christopher Brown has recently concluded on the basis of the diction in fr. 16.18 that Anactoria, who is the subject of this poem, must have been a young woman, and when Ovid (test. 19) and Maximus of Tyre (test. 20) come to the same conclusion, they may have done so on similar grounds.⁸

Parker argues, however, that the composers of our testimonia misread Sappho's poetry and practiced "something quite familiar to feminists: the wholesale restructuring of female sexuality and society on the model of male sexuality and society" (321). More specifically, they would have changed any reference to same-aged and power-free lesbian relationships in Sappho's poetry into a pederastic relationship between an older woman and a young girl (322). We have become much more aware than, for example, Welcker that all our testimonia are written by men who could have easily misunderstood, or deliberately distorted, expressions of female desire.⁹ The question is whether this is also the case with their interpretation of the age of the women in Sappho's poetry.

Parker adduces as parallels for the way in which the ancient commentators would have misread Sappho's lesbianism the virile portrayal of *tribades* in Roman literature (Hallett 1989, cited by Parker 321 n.24) and Lucian's similar representation of a homosexual woman from Lesbos in *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 5 (referred to by Parker *top*, p. 322). These portrayals of lesbian women are actually our best evidence *against* the supposition that the ancient commentators misconstrued the age of the subjects in Sappho's poetry. If Sappho indeed spoke about adult women in her poetry, as Parker assumes, there is no reason why Roman or Hellenistic poets and scholars had to change them into girls: as Lucian shows, they were perfectly well capable of imagining a woman from Lesbos in hot pursuit of other adult women.

If our sources collectively invented the notion that Sappho spoke about young women, it was not based "on the model of male sexuality" in their own

⁸The name Anagora, who is mentioned as one of Sappho's pupils (μαθήτριαι) in the Suda (test. 2), is probably also derived from references to Anactoria in Sappho's poetry (Lefkowitz 1981: 64).

⁹Anne Le Fèvre Dacier in her famous "Vie de Sappho," first published in Paris in 1681, already suggested that jealousy for a woman, "who not only surpassed all other women...but soared far and above the very best male poets," produced "the calumnies with which they attempted to blacken her" (1681/1716: 235; cp. DeJean: 57). She used the male bias of our sources to discredit any reports that Sappho was a lesbian, while Parker uses it to strengthen them.

society, where pederasty had become less acceptable than in the archaic Greek period,¹⁰ but by comparison with the male poets from that same period, who often sing about their love for boys in language very similar to Sappho's.¹¹ One testimonium explicitly states that Sappho praises her "paidika" the same way Anacreon did, and there may be something to this comparison.¹² As Parker points out (340), the ancients likened in particular Sappho's love poetry to that of the male (pederastic) poets.

There remains the problem that these commentators may be turning a poetic fiction into a biographical fact. Anactoria, who in fr. 16 is cited as an example of something the "I"-person loves (fr. 16.4), is turned by Ovid into one of the girls whom Sappho loved (*Her.* 15.18–19=test. 19). We do not know if the sentiments which Sappho in fr. 16 expresses for Anactoria are genuine.¹³ We do not even know if Sappho herself is the speaker. The ancient commentators were notorious in trying to identify every speaker with the poet/composer himself, which, as Karl Ottfried Müller already observed, is also the most likely origin of the story about Sappho's love for Phaon.¹⁴ There

¹⁰Flacelière 1960/1962: 197, Foucault 189–232. The Romans explicitly forbade pederasty with free boys in the so-called *lex Sca(n)tinia*, a law dating from before Cicero's time: see Bremmer (1980: 288 with notes) and Cantarella (1988/1992: 106–19) for the evidence.

¹¹See Lanata, Lasserre 1974, Giacomelli [Carson], Cavallini 1986: 17–67.

¹²Themistius *Or.* 13.170d (=test. 52). Parker dismisses this testimonium as another example of Sappho "being assimilated as much as possible to the male, in order to neutralize her" (322), but otherwise he encourages a direct comparison of Sappho to the male poets, arguing that she was a woman who "shares concerns and subject matter with Alcaeus and the other lyric poets" (346). Parker 318 himself compares Anacreon fr. 357 (about a boy who does not love him back) and Theognis 250–54 or 1299–1304 (about Cynrus) to Sappho fr. 1, when arguing that the woman she sings about was not necessarily part of a circle.

¹³Here, as Parker puts it, "[t]he question of 'sincerity' raises its pointless head" (333 n. 59). This is not a pointless question, but a very important one, which arises precisely when one starts questioning the move from poetic to biographical fact. Parker's objection that "no one has ever claimed that Alcaeus or Theognis was forced into writing homosexual poetry by convention" (334 n.59) is incorrect. Welcker (1826: Introd. 77–78) already suggested that Cynrus, Theognis' addressee, is not a real person but a foil for the audience, to which Nagy (1985: 33–34) has added that the figure of Theognis himself is probably a *persona*. All this does not bode well for the sincerity of Theognis' expressions of affection. In his review of Schneidewin's edition of Ibycus in 1834, Welcker further suggested that Ibycus' love lyrics should be read as public praise rather than private longing (cited by Kurke: 86, who herself points to the conventionality of Pindar's expression of love for Thrasyboulus in *Pythian* 6). See also Von der Mühl, and Lasserre 1974.

¹⁴Müller 1858: 231, cp. Bowra: 212–14, Nagy 1973/1990: 228–29, Lardinois 1989: 23. Phaon was a mythological figure who, just like Adonis, ranked among Aphrodite's lovers. We know that Sappho composed songs about the love of Aphrodite for Phaon and Adonis (fr. 211) and in one of the songs about Adonis (fr. 140a) the goddess is made to speak. It is very well possible that Sappho put into the mouth of the goddess a similar profession of love for Phaon, which was later misread as being her own.

are several impersonations of characters in Sappho's poetry,¹⁵ and in some of the fragments now attributed to Sappho they may be speaking rather than the poetess herself.

In the case of Sappho we are faced with the additional problem that we know that she composed choral poetry as well as what appear to be monodic songs.¹⁶ Page had argued that the two sets of songs were easily distinguishable and that "[t]here is nothing to contradict the natural supposition that, with this one small exception [i.e. marriage songs], all or almost all of her poems were recited by herself" (119), but his most important argument, the linguistic evidence, has in the mean time been questioned.¹⁷ There is no clear, metrical division between Sappho's choral and monodic poetry either, since we possess wedding songs (frs. 27 and 30) as well as supposedly monodic songs (fr. 1) in the same Sapphic stanza.¹⁸ This means that of most fragments it is impossible to say whether the speaker is a chorus or a soloist, who may or may not be Sappho.¹⁹ In all these cases the testimonia would contend that Sappho is the

¹⁵E.g. frs. 1.18–24, 140a.2 (Aphrodite), fr. 102 (a girl speaking to her mother), fr. 137 (a dialogue between a man and a woman). For more examples, see Tsagarakis 77–81.

¹⁶The only explicit reference to Sappho's monodic songs is in the Suda (test. 2), which places her *μονωδίαι*, however, outside of her nine books of lyric songs. There are, on the other hand, many references to her choral compositions: e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 9.189 (=test. 59), Demetrius *Eloc.* 132 (=test. 111 Gallavotti), Himerius *Or.* 9.4 (=test. 194), Philostratus *Im.* 2.1.1–3 (=test. 120 Gallavotti). It is further worth noting that when the third century B.C. poet Nossis wants to send a message to Sappho, she sends it to "Mitylene with the beautiful choruses" (*καλλίχορον Μιτυλήναν*, *A.P.* 7.718.1=Nossis, *Epigram* 11.1 Gow & Page).

¹⁷Page followed Lobel in his assessment that Sappho wrote in her Lesbian vernacular, "uncontaminated by alien or artificial forms and features," with the exception of some "abnormal" poems, to which most of the wedding songs (though not all: frs. 27 and 30) belonged (327). This distinction has been successfully challenged by Hooker, and Bowie 1981. It appears that all of Sappho's poetry is a complicated mix of old Aeolic, epic, and her local dialect, not unlike Alcman's (choral) poetry (on which see Calame 1983: xxiv–xxxiv).

¹⁸Not all of Sappho's wedding songs were assigned to Book Nine in the Alexandrine collection of her poems. Most of the other eight books were arranged by meter, and if the wedding songs fitted the meter of one of the other eight books, they were apparently assigned a place there. Such is the case with frs. 27 and 30, which, together with other poems in the Sapphic stanza, were included in Book One (Page 125). Sappho also used the dactylic hexameter for wedding songs (frs. 105, 106, 143) and for such a song as fragment 142, believed to be the opening line of one of her amorous songs (Campbell 1982: 157).

¹⁹The speaker in Sappho's poetry alludes a couple of times to songs which other women, whom the testimonia identify as her young companions, sing about each other (frs. 21, 22; in fr. 96.4 the person in Lydia is said to have compared Athis once to a goddess and it is not unlikely that she did so in a song). Were these their own compositions or did Sappho compose these songs for them, the same way she composed the marriage songs?

speaker.²⁰ In some fragments Sappho is mentioned by name (frs. 1, 65, 94, 133), in which case we can at least identify her as the speaker (not necessarily the performer), but such clarity is exceptional. I hope to argue elsewhere that most of Sappho's poetry was choral, i.e. sung and danced to by a chorus (cp. Philostratus *Im.* 2.1.1–3=test. 120 Gallavotti) or performed by a soloist who accompanies a dancing chorus (cp. *Anth. Pal.* 9.189=test. 59).²¹ In both cases Sappho can still be the narrator in the poem, but she need not be.

In fact, we do not even know for certain if Sappho as a person ever existed. An increasing number of archaic Greek poets (Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, Theognis) are believed by some to have been poetic *personae*, who may at some time have lived but soon became stock characters in the poetic tradition they were supposed to represent.²² Herodotus is the first author to declare that Sappho and her brother Charaxus lived in Mytilene at one time (Hdt. 2.135.6), but he historicized many mythical figures, including Heracles (Hdt. 2.44), Europa (1.2), the heroes of the Trojan War (1.3, 2.112f.), as well as Homer and Hesiod (2.53),²³ and the fact that Alcaeus addressed Sappho in his poetry and spelled her name differently from the way it is spelled in the poetry preserved in her name, could possibly be an indication that she was a poetic construct rather than a real life figure in sixth-century Lesbos.²⁴ But even if we

²⁰E.g. Demetrius *Eloc.* 167 (=fr. 110b) on Sappho fr. 110a (a wedding song); Servius in Verg. *G.* 1.31 on Sappho fr. 116: Sappho, quae in libro qui inscribitur Ἐπιθαλάμια αἰτ χαῖρε, νόμφα, χαῖρε, τίμιε γάμβρε, κτλ...

²¹Lardinois 1995. Hermann Fränkel already noted that “among the Lesbians too, then, there were songs fairly close to choral lyric” (1962/1975: 186 n.45), like Sappho fragment 16, “which meditates and argues like choral poetry” (172). More recently, Claude Calame (1977: 1.127, 368–69) has suggested that Sappho's circle was organized as a young women's choir which sang or danced to songs composed by Sappho, and Judith Hallett declared that “many of Sappho's fragments thought to be personal, autobiographical statements might in fact be part of public, if not marriage, hymns sung by other females” (1979: 463).

²²See in particular Nagy 1979: 296–300 (on Homer and Hesiod), 1982/1990: 47–48, 71 (on Hesiod), 1985: 33–34 (on Theognis), 1990: 79, 363–65 (on Archilochus), but, for example, also Lamberton: 23 (on Hesiod), who draws a parallel with the relationship of Anacreon to the *Anacreonta*. Orpheus is a good example of a legendary figure whose name was attached to a particular kind of poetry in the archaic Greek period, and who was historicized by the end of the fifth century B.C. (fr. 1A5 D.–K.)

²³Hdt. 2.134 (=test. 9) places Sappho and Charaxus together with the courtesan Rhodopis, whom Charaxus was supposed to have courted (=Sappho's Doricha?: frs. 7.1?, 15.12; Strabo 17.1.33 = fr. 202b), in the time of the Egyptian pharaoh Amasis (568–526 B.C.), which is actually later than the Parian Marble (test. 5) or most scholars want to date her: e.g. Lesky 1971: 167, Campbell 1982: xi, 1985/1989: 162 (floruit around 600 B.C.).

²⁴Σάπφοι, Alc. fr. 384, cp. Ψάπφοι, Sappho fr. 65.5, 133b; Ψάπφ', Sappho fr. 1.20, 94.5. The meter prohibits emending Alcaeus' Σάπφοι to Ψάπφοι. The existence of such metrical variants is typical of names which belong to an oral poetic tradition: cp. Ἀχιλλεύς/Ἀχιλεὺς, Ὀδυσσεύς/Ὀδυσεύς.

accept that Sappho really existed and composed all the poetry preserved in her name, we do not know if she was the speaker and/or performer in, for example, fr. 16 or if she meant it when she said that she would rather see Anactoria's lovely walk and the bright sparkle of her face than the Lydians' chariots and armed infantry.²⁵ One thing we can, however, be reasonably certain of, as a result of Brown's analysis and the plausible assessment of Ovid and Maximus of Tyre: Anactoria was a young woman. I will from here on concentrate on the subject and possible audience of Sappho's poetry, while assuming that, outside of the wedding songs, she is in most cases the speaker, although not necessarily the performer.²⁶

Besides objecting that the testimonia about Sappho's involvement with young women are male-biased and turn poetry into biography, Parker adds that they are chronologically late ("the earliest witness, Horace, is 600 years after Sappho").²⁷ The lateness of these testimonia is indeed problematic and should prepare us for possible anachronisms in their portrayal of Sappho's relationship with her subjects and addressees. A case in point are the testimonia that refer to Sappho as a teacher of young women (test. 2, 20, 21, 49, fr. 214B fr.1). As far as we know, there existed no schools for women in archaic Greece, and it is dangerous to assume on the basis of these testimonia alone that Sappho's Lesbos was somehow an exception.²⁸ The only "education" girls received outside of the house in archaic Greece was in choruses where they were taught songs and dances and, at least in Sparta, some gymnastics (Marrou: 57, Calame 1977: 1.385–420). From the fifth century onwards, we find repre-

²⁵Fr. 16.17–20. Sappho's preference for the personal (what she loves) over cavalry and ships is matched by the composer of the Apatouria song, which in the *Vita Herodotea* is ascribed to Homer (lines 426–27 Allen p. 211=*Ep.* 12 Markwald): ἵπποι δ' ἐν πέδιφ κόσμος, νῆες δὲ θαλάσσης, / χρήματα δ' αὔξει οἶκον.

²⁶On fr. 16 as possibly performed by a chorus, see Fränkel 1962/1975: 172, 186, Hallett 1979: 463 and Lardinois 1995. Stern's objection that the priamel is voiced too personally for choral poetry is answered by Bundy 6 n.19, if Pindar's epinikia are choral (on which see most recently, and sensibly, Morgan 1993).

²⁷Parker 321. One of the readers pointed out to me that the reference to Sappho, "teaching the noblest women not only from the local families but also from families in Ionia" (παιδεύουσα τὰς ἀρίστας οὐ μόνον τῶν ἐγχωρίων ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἀπ' Ἰωνίας), preserved in a fragment of a second century A.D. Sappho commentary (SLG 261A=fr. 214B), may actually be older, since its author cites the Hellenistic scholar Callias of Mytilene (lines 14–15), although not necessarily for the part about Sappho's teaching: cp. Gronewald 114.

²⁸This is basically the position that Marrou (71) adopts. Parker correctly notes that "nowhere in any poem does Sappho teach, or speak about teaching, anything to anyone" (314), in the sense of any formal education. Sappho does sometimes provide gnomic advice to her internal addressees (frs. 81, 150), but not very often and not more than, for example, Archilochus or Alcaeus.

sentations of women who teach girls how to dance or to play an instrument, and there are some indications of girls being instructed in reading and writing (Beck 155–62 with plates 78–88). Women teachers are attested for Roman Egypt (Cribiore).

One can easily imagine that ancient commentators, anxious to explain Sappho's familiarity with a number of girls in her poetry, took as their model the women teachers they found in their own society. (Welcker and Wilamowitz basically did the same.) The long-time association of pederasty with the education of young boys must have helped connect Sappho's homoerotic poetry with her supposed rôle as a teacher, as e.g. Maximus of Tyre shows (=test. 20).²⁹ At the same time, it is possible that in all these references to Sappho as a teacher there is a memory preserved of Sappho's involvement with the setting up of young women's choirs. This is certainly suggested by Philostratus VA. 1.30 (=test. 21), who claims that a certain Damophyla, "like Sappho, had gathered around her young women disciples and composed love-poems and hymns" (τὸν Σαπφῶς τρόπον παρθένους θ' ὁμιλητρίας κτήσασθαι ποιήματα τε ξυνθῆναι τὰ μὲν ἐρωτικά, τὰ δ' ὕμνους). The only problematic, because anachronistic, term in this description is ὁμιλητρίας.

We may conclude that there is much distortion and misinformation in the testimonia, but that we do not have to reject them entirely. They are based on Sappho's poetry, so that any plausible information they provide, which may have come from Sappho's poems, must be taken seriously. One such piece of plausible information is their identification of the subject of Sappho's poetry as young, adolescent women.³⁰ With regard to their assessment of the speaker of Sappho's poems we have to be much more careful. Not only is there a tendency in all the ancient testimonia to attribute every sentence to the poet/composer himself, but they also tend to read them as personal revelations. Finally, the repeated portrayal of Sappho as a teacher in the testimonia could be an anachronistic interpretation of her involvement with young women's choruses.

²⁹Maximus compares Sappho's amorous relationship with Gyrinna, Atthis, and Anactoria to those of Socrates with Alcibiades, Charmides, and Phaedrus. About all three women, whom I believe to be girls, some erotic-sounding fragments are preserved: Gyrinna (=Gyrinno?): fr. 82a; Atthis: 49.1, 96, 131, cp. test. 2 and 19; Anactoria: frs. 16, cp. test. 19.

³⁰Although Parker rejects the testimonia as late, male distortions of female relationships, he still feels the need to question our understanding of them. He notes that Ovid (*Tr.* 2.365=test. 49, *Her.* 15.15=test. 19) and Horace (*Carm.* 2.13.24f.=test. 18) speak of Sappho as in love with *puellae* but that, "*puella*, of course, is used equally of girls, mature women, and goddesses, especially as objects of love" (321). This is true, but the context in Ovid *Tr.* 2.365 (=test. 49), where we are told that Sappho "taught" (*docuit*) her *puellas* to love, as well as the other testimonia, strongly suggest that in this case *puellae* does refer to young girls.

2. The Fragments

The most important evidence about Sappho is of course the poetry itself. All attempts to reconstruct a life of Sappho and a performance situation are ultimately intended to understand this poetry, and the best reconstruction is the one that takes account of most of the fragments and explains them consistently. In the following paragraphs I will ask again two questions: who are the subjects of Sappho's poetry, and what possibly was Sappho's relationship to these subjects? Parker (323) lists six references to the age of the women to whom or about whom she is singing, outside the wedding songs, biographical or mythological fragments.³¹ First there is fr. 140a: κατθνάσκει, Κυθήρη', ἄβρος Ἄδωνις· τί κε θεῖμεν; / καττύπτεσθε, κόραι, καὶ κατερείκεσθε κίθωνας ("Delicate Adonis is dying, Cythera, what are we to do?"; "Beat your breasts, girls, and tear your clothes"). Parker rejects the idea that κόραι in this fragment means "girls," because "the Adonia was everywhere that we know of a festival of adult women" (323). This statement is incorrect, and Winkler, to whom Parker refers (323 n. 26), does not support Parker's claim. Winkler remarks (about the Athenian Adonis-festival) that "[t]he celebrants, it seems, were not organized according to any city-wide rule but simply consisted of neighbors and friends..." (1990: 189). Winkler does not say that girls were excluded from these festivities because he knew better: on p. 191, he cites the opening of Menander's *Samia*, in which a young man tells how he got a young girl pregnant while she was present at the celebration of the Adonis festival in her neighbor's house.³² Parker (323 n. 26) further mentions "the same use" of the word κόραι in Telesilla fr. 717 Page/Campbell (an address to the goddess Artemis), but the context here does not specify what is meant by the term any more than in Sappho. However, given the universal use of the term for young women in archaic and classical Greek (and the close connection of Sappho and Artemis with young, adolescent women), Campbell's translation of the term

³¹These are frs. 17, 49.2, 56, 122, 140a and 153. Add frs. 58 and 93 Voigt. Parker further mentions frs. 27, 30, 105, 107, 113, 114 and 194, "where the youth and the virginity of the bride are mentioned" (add fr. 112.2: bride is a παρθένος). In fr. 132 παῖς refers to Sappho's daughter, Cleïs (see Hallett 1982, Lardinois 1989: 22), in fr. 104a.2 to an unspecified child of a mother, in fr. 155 to "the daughter of the house of Polyanax" (Gorgo or Andromeda: her "rivals"), in frs. 1.2, 16.10, 103.3 Voigt, and 164 ("perhaps Eros," Campbell [1982] ad loc.) to mythological figures.

³²The girl is referred to as κόρη, 36 and παῖς, 49 Sandbach. Winkler, in his footnote 2, mentions Pausanias' report about the women of Argos not as evidence that the Adonia were celebrated by adult women, as Parker suggests, but to show that "in other times and places" the festival may have had a more public character. This may have been the case on Lesbos as well, and fr. 140a was probably performed in public (Page 119, Campbell 1982: xiii, 1985/1989: 162).

with “girls,” both in Sappho and the Telesilla fragment, seems reasonably secure (1982: 155; 1992: 79).

The next question is: to whom does this word refer? Parker says that “[i]t would, in any case, presumably apply to the poet as well” (323 n.26). This is actually highly unlikely. As Page remarks (119 n.1), the dialogue form of the fragment “could be used as evidence for choral recitation” (cp. fr. 114: a wedding song), and, as in Sappho’s wedding songs, the I-person (actually a “we”-person) does not include the poetess but consists precisely of young women.³³ If Sappho participated at all in the performance of this song, she may have played the part of Aphrodite, telling her chorus (the κόραι) to beat their breasts and tear their clothes.³⁴ This fragment confirms Sappho’s composition of songs for girls’ choruses outside the wedding songs. The composition of such a song would have entailed the training of the girls and probably the participation in the performance as a singer and/or the accompanist (see below).

In some of the other fragments Sappho speaks *about* young women. In fr. 17.14 (a hymn to Hera), “the reference is not necessarily to the celebrants” (Parker 323), but given the fact that Sappho’s maiden choruses were involved in the performance of other hymns to the gods (fr. 140a), it certainly could be.³⁵ In fr. 49, Atthis is mentioned as one of Sappho’s beloved (49.1) and perhaps she is identified as being a *pais* at that moment (49.2),³⁶ while in fr. 96 this same Atthis is described as having performed a song-dance (μόλπαι, line 5) in which a woman who is now in Lydia took much delight.³⁷ These are two very important fragments because they explicitly connect one of Sappho’s beloved with musical activity. Of course, we do not know for certain that Atthis performed her “song-dance” in one of Sappho’s choirs, but it is a distinct possibility.³⁸ Frs. 153 and 56 speak, respectively, about a “sweet-voiced girl”

³³Compare fr. 30.9 “let us see” ([ἴ]δωμεν) to which the word πάρθεναι in the nominative in line 1 is probably related, and 27.8: στήτειχομεν γὰρ ἐς γάμον. On the performance of Sappho’s wedding songs by age-mates of the bride, see Page 120, Calame 1977: 1.161 n.230 and Contiades-Tsitsoni 40–41, 100. Parker agrees: 331–32.

³⁴Bowra 212, otherwise, suggested that the part of Aphrodite was played by a priestess.

³⁵Compare fr. 30.1 (a wedding song) for a similar self-reference: πάρθεναι. Fränkel 1962/1975: 181 already suggested that this poem, which has been variously interpreted as an unspecified hymn to Hera (Page 61–62) or a *propemptikon* (Merkelbach 23–25), may have been sung by a chorus.

³⁶I agree with Parker 323 that these two lines do not necessarily belong together.

³⁷The “you” of line 4 and 5 probably has to be identified with Atthis, whose name is mentioned in line 16: Page 92, Saake 1971: 172. Atthis is also identified as one of Sappho’s “companions or girlfriends” in test. 2, 19 and 20.

³⁸The Suda (test. 2) in fact distinguishes between Sappho’s pupils (μαθήτριά) and her “three companions and friends [including Atthis], through whom she got a bad name for impure friendship” (ἐταῖραι δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ φίλαι γεγónασι τρεῖς, Ἀθίς, Τελεσίππα, Μεγάρα,

(πάρθενον ἄδύφωνον) and a girl (πάρθενον) with much skill (σοφίαν), “probably poetic” (Campbell 1982: 91 n.1). Parker is right that the context of these poems is unknown, but given Sappho's involvement with the setting up of choruses of, precisely, *parthenoi*, it is not too far-fetched to assume that these two fragments somehow relate to the girls whom she dealt with in her choruses. Finally, Parker mentions that the *pais* who is described in fr. 122, “may well be mythological” (323), but according to Athenaeus, who preserved the fragment, Sappho (read: the speaker in the fragment) had said that she saw the child herself (καὶ Σαπφῷ φησιν ἰδεῖν· ἄνθε' ἀμέργοισαν παῖδ' ἰᾶν ἁπάλαν, Athen. 12.554b).

There are two more fragments (frs. 58 and 93 Voigt) that mention *parthenoi* and *paides*, outside the wedding songs, biographical or mythological fragments. Of these two fragments, fr. 58 looks most promising.³⁹ Line 11 mentions *paides* with beautiful gifts, either of the deep or violet-bosomed Muses.⁴⁰ The speaker (a woman) says that she is overcome by old age and no longer able to do like the young fawns (probably to dance⁴¹). A similar-looking poem is preserved among Alcman's fragments. Here the speaker (according to Antigonos, who preserved the fragment, Alcman himself) addresses a group of “honey-tongued, holy-voiced girls,” telling them that “his limbs no longer can carry” him.⁴² I submit that Sappho in this fragment invokes the same image and that the *paides* of line 11 make up the chorus which is dancing while she is singing.⁴³ There thus seems to be ample proof in the

πρὸς ὧς καὶ διαβολὴν ἔσχεν αἰσχροῦς φιλίας), but this probably represents an attempt by the Suda or its source to account for the two Hellenistic traditions about Sappho: Sappho as teacher and Sappho as tribade. One may compare Aelian V.H. 12.19 (=test. 4), who claims that there were two Sapphos of Lesbos: one a poet and the other a prostitute.

³⁹Fr. 93 Voigt (not included in Campbell 1982) preserves a first person singular verb in line 4 (ἔχω) and the word *parthenoi*, seemingly in the genitive plural, in line 5 (παρθένων): no further details.

⁴⁰Di Benedetto 147–48. It is not unlikely that this line constitutes the actual beginning of the poem (idem: 147, Gallavotti 1962: 113). Page (129) also begins the poem in this line.

⁴¹ῥ[η]ση': Edmonds' conjecture in line 16, cited by Voigt and Campbell ad loc.

⁴²οὐ μ' ἔτι, παρσενικαὶ μελὶγάρυες ἰαρόφωνοι, / γυῖα φέρην δύναται, Alcman fr. 26.1–2a Page/Davies. Compare Sappho fr. 58.15: γόνα δ' [ο]ὐ φέροισι. Antigonos (cited by Davies [1991] ad loc.) further specifies that Alcman speaks this poem, “being weak from old age and unable to whirl about with the choirs and the girls' dancing” (φησὶν γὰρ ἀσθενὴς ὢν διὰ τὸ γῆρας καὶ τοῖς χοροῖς οὐ δυνάμενος συμπεριφέρεσθαι οὐδὲ τῇ τῶν παρθένων ὀρχήσει). Calame 1983: 474 already noted the similarity between this poem and Sappho fr. 58.

⁴³Sappho fr. 21 describes a similar situation (χρόα γῆρας ἤδη, 21.6b=58.13b), and here it is clear that we are dealing with some kind of an exchange, for in line 11–12 the speaker calls on another woman (λάβουσα, line 11, cp. Fr. 22.9–11) to “sing about the violet-robed one” (according to Campbell 1982: 73 n.3 Aphrodite, otherwise perhaps a bride: cp. fr. 30.5). According to Di Benedetto (148–49), line fr. 58.11 opened with an invitation to the chorus to

fragments that Sappho not only composed songs for young women's choruses, both in and outside of her wedding songs, but also spoke about girls and sometimes addressed them directly.⁴⁴

Parker opposes to this evidence five fragments which, he argues, show "Sappho surrounded by age-mates" (323). The first one is fr. 49.1, ἡράμαν μὲν ἔγω σέθεν, "Ἄτθι, πάλαι ποτά" ("I loved you once, Atthis, long ago"), which he interprets as pertaining to Sappho's love for Atthis while *both* of them were still young. Parker bases this interpretation on a remark by Terentianus Maurus, who recast this fragment as: cordi quando fuisse sibi canit Atthida / parvam, florea virginitas sua cum floret ("when she sang that she loved little Atthis when her virginity was in flower").⁴⁵ Parker concludes that "the *virginitas sua* is Sappho's" (323), but I am not so certain about this. The possessive pronoun *suus* can refer to other persons besides the subject of a sentence, particularly in late Latin and in subordinate clauses.⁴⁶ This could well be the case here, since "parvam" (qualifying Atthida) announces the content of the subordinate clause and by enjambment draws Atthis, the last mentioned topic, into the same line.⁴⁷

Of two of the other four fragments (frs. 23 and 24a), Parker says: "The speaker may not be Sappho, though I am assuming that she probably is, and it is not impossible that these two, like 27 and 30, are *epithalamia*" (324 n.28). If, however, these fragments are wedding songs, like 27 and 30, they were

sing (e.g. γεραίετε) and line 12 contained the instruction to "take up the song-loving, clear-sounding lyre (...λάβοισαι] φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνην). Calame 1977: 1.127, 369, citing *Anth. Pal.* 9.189 (=test. 59), already suggested that Sappho may have sung some of her poetry in public while her chorus danced. One may compare for this type of musical performance Demodocus' song about Ares and Aphrodite, which is sung by Demodocus and danced to by a group of young Phaeacian men (*Od.* 8.262–64), the wedding song in *Od.* 4.17–19, or the execution of the Linos song in *Il.* 18.569f. For some applications of this type of performance to other archaic Greek poetry, see Davies 1988: 62–63.

⁴⁴One should add the many names of persons whom the testimonia identify as girls: Anactoria (fr. 16, cp. test. 2?, 19, 20), Gongyla (fr. 22, 95, cp. test. 2, fr. 213), Megara (fr. 68a, cp. test. 2), Atthis (frs. 49.1, 96.17, 131, cp. test. 2, 19 and 20).

⁴⁵Ter. Maur. 2154–55 = 6.390.4–5 Klein, quoted by Parker 323.

⁴⁶Leuman, Hofmann & Szantyr: 2. 175; Klenin 115: "Despite occasional claims to the contrary, there is no subject condition on Latin reflexivization, although antecedents are often also subjects; apparently the basis of their eligibility to trigger reflexivization involves empathy relations as described by Kuno and Kaburaki ["Empathy and Syntax," *Linguistic Inquiry* 8.4, 1977, 627–72]." I owe this reference to Brent Vine.

⁴⁷Of course, even if Terentianus Maurus meant Sappho's virginity with "*sua virginitas*," we cannot be certain that he understood the poem correctly and, for example, did not confuse the speaker, who may not have been Sappho but one or more of Atthis' companions (cp. frs. 21, 22). It is interesting in this respect that we are told in fr. 96.4 that Atthis once was praised, probably in a song, by a woman who now dances in Lydia (one of her former companions?).

probably *not* spoken by Sappho but by age-mates of the bride, as Parker himself admits on p. 332. He assigns fr. 23 to a same-age addressee because one of the two *comparandae* is Helen (the other is Hermione), and “[n]o male lyric poet compares his *pais* with the adult male gods or heroes” (324). For the same reason Atthis and the woman in Lydia would be adults in fr. 96 (because they are compared to goddesses) and Leto and Niobe, who are called dear companions (φίλαι...ἑταίραι) in fr. 142, the *comparandae* of two same-aged friends. Parker wisely adds “lyric” to poet, because otherwise he would have had to admit that Phoenix already compares his pupil Achilles to the married hero Meleager in Book Nine of the *Iliad*. His statement is not even true for lyric poetry, however, since the boy victor in Pindar *Ol.* 10, to whom Parker refers in note 29, is not only compared to Ganymede but also to Patroclus (*Ol.* 10.19). This passage, which compares Patroclus and Achilles to, respectively, the boy victor and his trainer, demonstrates that age plays no determining rôle in mythological *comparanda*, while Alcman's *partheneia* show that girls can be compared to adult gods and goddesses (fr. 1.41, 71, 96f.).⁴⁸ Of all five fragments Parker adduces, not one is proof that Sappho in her poetry spoke about same-age women. Contrast this with the eight fragments about κόραι, παρθέναι or παῖδες (frs. 17.14, 49.2, 56, 58, 93, 122, 140a, 153; outside the wedding songs, the biographical or mythological allusions), and the different poems addressed to women whom the testimonia identify as girls (Anactoria, fr. 16, cp. test. 2?, 19, 20; Gongyla, frs. 22, 95, cp. test. 2, fr. 213; Megara, fr. 68a, cp. test. 2; Atthis, frs. 49.1, 96.17, 131, cp. test. 2, 19 and 20), and the

⁴⁸σειδής in Alcman fr. 1.71 closely resembles θέαι σ' ἱκέλαν in Sappho fr. 96.4 and the comparison of the woman in Lydia with Selanna (Sappho fr. 96.8) matches that of Agido and the sun (Alcman fr. 1.41). Even if fr. 142 (about Leto and Niobe) refers to two same-aged companions, we would still not know whether they were pictured as two adult or two young women at the time. Athenaeus (13.571d) adduces the fragment in order to show that “free women *as well as girls* call their intimate and dear friends companions” (καλοῦσι γούν καὶ αἱ ἐλεύθεραι γυναῖκες ἔτι καὶ νῦν καὶ αἱ παρθέναι τὰς συνήθεις καὶ φίλας ἑταίρας, ὡς ἡ Σαπφώ...). Parker's suggestion that the commentary preserved as fr. 90.10a (=90d Voigt) would somehow reveal that Sappho compared herself and Atthis to these two mythological figures (339 n.78), is highly speculative at best. The fragment does not mention the names of Sappho or Niobe. It preserves Atthis' name in line 15 and the letters]λατῶσ in line 3 without there being even the slightest suggestion that the two are somehow connected. Fr. 23 not only compares the addressee to Helen but also to Hermione, Helen's daughter. The comparison is cumulative (you are as beautiful as Hermione, no as Helen herself) and, I would argue, suits a young woman just as well, if not better, than an adult. It may be that this fragment is derived from a wedding song (cp. Parker 324 n.28), in which case it would probably refer to the bride: Lucian (*Symp.* 41) in a wedding song also compares the bride to Helen. It is, furthermore, not unlikely that Helen in fr. 16 is the *comparanda* both for the speaker and Anactoria (MacLeod 217–19, Carey 368–69, Dane 192 *contra* Parker 324 n. 28), who has been positively identified as a young woman (Brown; cp. test. 19 and 20).

verdict is clear: young women are in all likelihood the subject of most of Sappho's poetry.⁴⁹

The question next becomes: what relationship(s) did Sappho have with these young women? The minimum we can say is that she composed songs for them to perform, like the wedding songs, the Adonis hymn, and fr. 58. From fragments like fr. 1, as well as the testimonia, we can further deduce that Sappho expressed desire for some of them in her poetry, although we do not know for sure if her young lovers were also part of her choruses: the only tenuous piece of evidence are the fragments that speak about Atthis as both her lover (fr. 49.1) and a performer (96.5). The crucial fragment is, in my opinion, fragment 94. In this fragment Sappho inserts her own name (Ψάπφ', 5), so the persona of the narrator is beyond doubt. Sappho speaks to a woman who is leaving her (ἄ με...κατελίμπανεν, 2) and reminds her of all the pleasant things they did together: stringing flower-wreaths (12f.), putting on garlands (15f.), wearing perfumes (18f.), going to holy places (25, 27) and possibly performing there.⁵⁰ Parker is right in resisting any attempt to read "a course description" (315) into these words, but the activities are compatible with those of a chorus and one can even read a linear progression into them, starting with the preparations and leading up to musical performances at temples and in other places. Sappho would be reminding a girl of previous performances perhaps at the very moment that she and her choir, of which the girl no longer was part, were performing again a song-dance.⁵¹ In the middle of all this (between the perfume and the holy shrine) we read the words: "and on soft beds, tender...you would satisfy your longing..."⁵² If these words indeed refer

⁴⁹There are, of course, other types of songs as well: marriage songs, hymns, satires about "rivals" and girls who threatened to leave her, songs about her daughter Cleïs and her brothers Charaxus and Larichus, and mythological tales: see Lardinois 1989: 16–17.

⁵⁰At the end of line 28 the word ψόφος ("sound") is preserved and Theander proposed reading κροτάλων] ψόφος here (cp. fr. 44.25: see Voigt ad loc.). The end of line 27 may contain the word χορός, but this is uncertain (Voigt ad loc.). The "we" in "we took care of you" (πεδήπομεν, 8) could indicate that Sappho and the woman were not alone; Page (78): "If the plural is strictly interpreted, the implication will be that Sappho is speaking on behalf of her companions," or at least others besides herself (cp. Burnett 312 on the first person plural in fr. 96.21). The "we" in "we were absent (from no shrine)" (ἄμ]μες ἀπέσκομεν, 26) may also include these "others," who with Sappho and the addressee could have been the chorus of line 27.

⁵¹We find a similar situation in fr. 96 where the speaker also reminds the addressee of her previous performances (5, 26f.?) and of a dance which it imagines to go on right now in Lydia (on ἐμπρέπεται in line 6 as suggestive of dancing, see Calame 1977: 1.91). Fragment 94 has been identified as a "farewell song," which invokes memories of previously shared experiences: most recently, Rauk 1989.

⁵²καὶ στρώμν[αν ἐπὶ μολθάκαν / ἀπάλαν πα.] ...ων / ἐξίης πόθο[ν] .νίδων, fr. 94.21–23. From the structure of the preceding strophes we can determine that these words

to sexual longing, which Sappho had satisfied,⁵³ they would show that the girl was not only once a member of Sappho's chorus, but that she at the same time had a homoerotic relationship with Sappho.

3. Historical Parallels

In order better to understand the relationships Sappho may have had with her addressees, scholars have resorted to comparisons with other communities and known, archaic Greek practices, or at least with what they claim to be archaic Greek practices. Such comparisons are always a highly subjective undertaking, because scholars select from the scattered information about archaic Greece those elements which correspond best to their own perception of Sappho. This does not mean that the information is incorrect or the comparison necessarily invalid, but it is important that one first determines, independently of the other evidence, what there is in Sappho's poetry. I have argued in the previous section that Sappho in her poetry speaks about young women for whom she expresses desire (an expression which may be highly stylized and conventional itself) and composed songs for girls' choruses. It is for parallels to these two aspects of her work that I will be looking.

One comparison, already suggested by Welcker (1816/1845: 96), is that of Sappho with noble women (καλὰς καὶ ἀγαθὰς γυναῖκας) in Sparta who, according to Plutarch, had sexual relationships with girls (παρθέναι) similar to those of the men with young boys.⁵⁴ There are two (meager) pieces of evi-

belong together. Every strophe seems to contain one pleasant thing Sappho and the girl did together.

⁵³See Burnett (298 n.56) for some other suggestions. To her examples of πόθος expressing sexual desire in Sappho (frs. 36 and 48), add frs. 22.11 and 102. ἀπάλαν (either a feminine genitive plural or singular accusative) could refer to a person (cp. frs. 82a, 122, 126); fr. 126 is particularly relevant in this regard: δαύοις ἀπάλας ἐτά(ι)ρας ἐν στήθεσιν. On the other hand, one can already in Homer experience desire (ἔρος) or longing (πόθος) for other things besides sex. Since the expression ἐξίημι πόθον means "to get rid of a longing by indulging in it" (Page 79) and the woman lies in a bed (στρωμνή), the best alternative seems to be that the girl is taking a nap: cp. *Il.* 13.636f.: ὕπνου κτλ...τῶν πέρ τις καὶ μάλλον ἐέλδεται ἐξ ἔρον εἶναι / ἢ πολέμου. (This was also the reading of Wilamowitz: 50.) Lasserre's recent suggestion (1989: 136–37, 140) that the girl is playing with dolls (reading παρ[ᾶ πλ]αγ[γ]όνων in line 22), has to be rejected: see Liberman 234–35, Rösler 1990: 197–98. Even if this fragment is inconclusive, there is in my opinion enough other evidence (particularly fr. 1) to suggest that Sappho presented herself as having homoerotic relationships with some of the young women she sang about in her poetry.

⁵⁴Plut. *Lyc.* 18.9: καὶ τῶν παρθένων ἐρᾶν τὰς καλὰς καὶ ἀγαθὰς γυναῖκας. Calame 1977: 1.434 has suggested that a comment by the Academic philosopher Hagnon, preserved by Athen. 13.602e in a lengthy disposition about male homosexuality, corroborates Plutarch's report. Hagnon apparently stated that "it is the custom (at Sparta) to have intercourse with girls before their marriage as with *paidika*" (πρὸ τῶν γάμων ταῖς παρθένοις ὡς παιδικαῖς νόμος

dence from the archaic period itself which support this remark. First, Alcman is said to have used the term *aītis* for beloved girls (τὰς ἐπεράστους κόρας) according to a scholion to Theocritus 12 (=Alcm. fr. 34). According to the same scholion, the masculine equivalent, *aītas*, was used for beloved boys (τοὺς ἐρωμένους).⁵⁵ The scholiast therefore already equates the two terms and, although Parker is right that Alcman does not explicitly say that the girls are the beloved of other women (326 n.34), there is a distinct possibility. Another piece of evidence is a vase from Thera, dated around 600 BC, which portrays two women, the one making to the other an inviting gesture that is known from similar representations of men and women or men and young boys.⁵⁶ Finally, there are Alcman's *partheneia* in which a group of young women express their desire for their chorus-leader.

Plutarch's report and this evidence have led a number scholars to posit a possible analogy between archaic Sparta and/or Alcman's *partheneia* on the one hand and Sappho's Lesbos on the other.⁵⁷ Parker (326) rejects these analogies out of hand, because, in his opinion, they constitute "a form of sexual essentialism" (the idea that "all female homosexuality is the same") and are "anthropologically naive" (why would Lesbos and Sparta be the same?). To answer the last objection first, no scholar claims that archaic Sparta and Lesbos were the

ἐστὶν ὁμιλεῖν). The reason why Calame believes this refers to the same type of relationships as Plutarch discusses and not to anal intercourse of men with women, is the specification "before marriage" (πρὸ τῶν γάμων). If this refers to the Spartan predilection for anal intercourse (Parker 327 n.38, following Devereux [not: Devereaux] and Dover), it is strange that the custom was supposed to have stopped once they married the women, although I agree that the Greek favors such an interpretation.

⁵⁵τοὺς ἐρωμένους αἴτας ἔνιοι καλοῦσιν, ὡς Θεσσαλοί. καὶ γὰρ Ἀλκμὰν τὰς ἐπεράστους κόρας λέγει αἴτιας, Schol. Theocr. *argum. carm.* 12, cited by Campbell 1988 and Davies 1991 *ad* fr. 34 Alcman. This scholion does not say that "the masc. αἴτιας is a Thessalian (not Doric) term for the ἐρώμενος" (Parker 325 n.34); it gives the Thessalians as an example and explicitly says that there are others who use the term in this way as well. Parker 326 n.34 cites Gallavotti's 1978 article for a possible Laconic attestation. The term is also used by Alcaeus in fr. 346.2 (for the shortening of the iota, to which Page 307 objected, see Hamm [Voigt] 64). Vogliano proposed to read the same term in Alcaeus fr. 358 at the end of line 1, cited by Voigt *ad loc.*

⁵⁶The vase is depicted in Dover (no. CE 34) with other similar vases showing a man and a woman (no. CE 33) and men and boys (e.g. B271).

⁵⁷Diels 1896: 352–53 already compared the erotic language in Alcman's *partheneia* to Sappho's poetry and, following Welcker 1816/1845: 96, drew a parallel between the Spartan women and Sappho. More recent examples are: Pomeroy: 55–56, Calame 1977: 1.427–32, 2.94–97, Hallett 1979: 461–64, Bremmer 1980: 292–93, Gentili 1985/1988: 72–89, Sergent: 14–24, Lardinois 1989: 25–30.

same: still they may be *comparable*.⁵⁸ Secondly, in the case of Sappho and Alcman's chorus, we are talking about the *representation* of female homosexuality: nobody is claiming that the actual experiences of these women are the same, only that these experiences are similarly represented in Spartan and Lesbian poetry, and this is not so far-fetched.⁵⁹

Another comparison worth considering is between Sappho and the leaders of young women's choruses. In the archaic Greek period, the composer of choral songs was also responsible for the training and, very often, for the accompaniment of the chorus in performances.⁶⁰ Since we know that Sappho composed choral songs, she must have been involved in similar activities.⁶¹ Calame, following a suggestion of Merkelbach (3–4), has compared Sappho's "circle" to young women's choruses, although he admits, unnecessarily, that Sappho taught more than simply song and dance.⁶² Such choruses sang hymns

⁵⁸When Parker says that "Sappho [is] lumped in with Alcman" and "their societies held to be identical" (326), he presents a caricature of earlier scholarship. For example, Calame 1977: 2.97 has tried to account for the fact that in Sparta a distinction was made between the poet who instructed the girls (e.g. Alcman) and their female lovers; in Lardinois 1989: 28, I pointed out that in Sparta the pederastic relationships of young boys and girls were more strictly organized than in other parts of Greece, including Lesbos.

⁵⁹Several scholars have commented on the similarity in language and representation between the homoerotic relationships depicted in Alcman's *partheneia* and those in Sappho's poetry: Calame 1977: 2.94–97, Hallett 1979: 461–64 and Cavallini 1986: 17–20. The differences between Alcman's *partheneia* and Sappho's poetry to which Stigers [Stehle] 1979: 469–71 and Skinner 133–34 have pointed are noteworthy but do not measure up against the many similarities. Given the fact that only two sizable fragments of Alcman's *partheneia* survive, one should not make too much of the fact that certain images such as fruits or flowers do not occur in them (Alcman, like Sappho [fr. 96.8], does compare his women to female heavenly bodies: the Pleiades, fr. 1.60). When reversing the direction of the comparison, Stigers has to allow for exceptions both where the supposedly non-combative nature of Sappho's love is concerned (fr. 1.28) and the exclusion of men from its environment (fr. 31.1; men are also absent from the scene depicted in Alcman fr. 1, where the only outside figure mentioned is a woman [73]). I also disagree with Stigers [Stehle] 1979: 169 and Skinner 133–34 that the erotic interaction between the speaker in Sappho's poetry, the beloved and/or a third party is essentially different from the depiction in Alcman: cp. Hallett 1979: 463 and Burnett 1983: 312 on Sappho fr. 96 and Lardinois 1995 on fr. 31. That there originally was a third party in Alcman fr. 3 is only a conjecture (Calame 1977: 2.92).

⁶⁰See Calame 1977: 1.394–95 on poets as chorus leaders. There are some representations of women accompanying choruses on archaic Greek vases (idem: 1.131–32).

⁶¹There are a number of testimonia that picture Sappho as leading a chorus of (young) women: *Anth. Pal.* 9.189 (=test. 59), Philostratus, *Im.* 2.1.1–3 (=test. 120 Gallavotti), Himerius *Or.* 9.4 (=Sappho fr. 194).

⁶²I do not understand how Parker can say about Calame that "the civic *choeurs de jeunes filles* that he studied have, by his own admission, simply nothing to do with Sappho" (332). One citation may suffice: talking about Sappho's circle and that of other female poets, including Sappho's rivals, Calame says, "plusieurs poétesses, spécialement en Grèce orientale, semblent avoir regroupé autour de leur personne un certain nombre de jeunes filles qui...se livraient, dans

to the gods, paeans, dithyrambs, citharodic nomes, laments, wedding songs and other choral compositions (see Calame 1977: 1977: 1.143–67 for evidence). Both hymns and wedding songs are attested among Sappho's fragments, while frs. 94, 95 and 96 have been compared to laments.⁶³

The question is how we can reconcile Sappho's choral activities with her erotic relationships. In Sparta the functions of poet and lover (whether in the group, or as one of the "noble women" outside the chorus) were separate. Calame has suggested that Sappho had a homoerotic relationship with one girl in the chorus, which somehow would be the model for the whole group and in which the group would share by reciting the poetry (1977: 1.427–32). He points on the one hand to the dominant relationship in Alcman's first *partheneion*, between Hagesichora and Agido; on the other, to groups of boys which formed around one aristocratic boy and his adult lover at Crete, as reported by Ephorus.⁶⁴ Neither parallel is exact: Sappho is no Agido, who is herself a girl and a member of the chorus, and the Cretan groups are not choruses, but taken together these two parallels could explain something of the way Sappho, her "circle" and her lovers interacted.⁶⁵

un cadre souvent culturel, à une activité musicale qui confère à leur association une forme très proche, *si ce n'est identique*, de celle du chœur lyrique" (1977: 1.372; my italics, cp. 27, 126–27, 367–70, 390–91, 400–04, 420). I regard Calame as the most important representative of the choral model, which I also find the most appealing. The reason why many scholars such as Calame believe that Sappho was more than a poet who instructed choruses is largely due to two testimonia which tell of pupils coming to her from abroad (test. 2, fr. 214 B 1). I agree with Parker 320 that these testimonia have to be rejected, although we clearly disagree about their possible origin: see Parker 320 n.22. Merkelbach (4) tried to argue on the basis of frs. 102 and Inc. auct. 17 that Sappho taught her girls also weaving, but Inc. auct. 17 refers to the goddess Athena and fr. 102 is spoken by a daughter to her mother (!). Spinning and weaving were skills which young Greek women learned at home.

⁶³Rauk (110) calls fr. 94 a "lament" and compares it to other laments in Greek literature. Merkelbach 12f. refers to these poems as "Trostgedichte" or "Trostlieder," "ähnlich wie wir auch heute noch Leidtragende nach einem Todesfall zu trösten...suchen," and Stigers [Stehle] 1981: 57–58 describes them as "mourn[ing]" the elusiveness of happiness and taking as their subject "the loss of the beloved by parting," comparing them to fr. 140a (the song for Adonis). In fr. 96, Atthis, the addressee, may actually be dead, if $\kappa\alpha\pi\iota\ \sigma\alpha\iota$ is the correct reading in line 17 (cp. *Il.* 22.210–11, *Od.* 4.502, Alc. fr. 38A.7). Fr. 2 is probably a hymn (Page 42, Merkelbach 28); fr. 5 a *propemptikon* (Merkelbach 24 n.1, Governi, Snyder 1989: 17–18, Lasserre 1989: 191), as is perhaps fr. 17 (Merkelbach 23–25, Fränkel 1962/1975: 181, contra Page 1955: 61–62, who reads it as an unspecified hymn to Hera); fr. 16 has been compared to Pindar's *epinikia* (Fränkel 1924/1968: 90–94, 1962/1975: 186, Bundy 5–6, Howie esp. 209–14) and frs. 31, 47 and 130 to *enkomia* (Lasserre 1974: 23). All these songs could have been performed with the help of choruses: see Lardinois 1995.

⁶⁴FGrH 70 F. 149 = Strabo 10.4.21, on which see Bremmer 1989: 3–5.

⁶⁵Parker criticizes the idea, implicit in this and other reconstructions of Sappho, that the relationships she would have had with her young lovers were only temporal and lasted until the

4. Modern Reconstructions of Sappho

There are four modern reconstructions of Sappho: Sappho the school teacher, Sappho the chorus organizer, Sappho the *thiasos* leader, and Sappho the sympotic poet. Of these four I find Calame's suggestion that she led young women's choruses the most attractive, because it agrees best with the testimonia, the fragments, and the historical period.⁶⁶ This would mean, however, that most of her poetry was composed for public performances and not for the privacy of her "circle," as is generally assumed.⁶⁷ There are two fragments which often are cited as evidence that Sappho did sing for her girls. In fr. 160 the speaker says something like: "I shall now sing these songs beautifully to the delight of my companions" (τάδε νῦν ἐταίραις / ταῖς ἔμαις †τέρπνα† κάλως ἀείσω). We cannot be sure that this is what Sappho actually said (τέρπνα does not fit the meter) or that Sappho herself is the speaker, but even if this were the case, to whom would she address these words? She does not use a second person plural (as the speaker does, for example, in fr. 41) and therefore may be speaking *about* her companions in the presence of a larger audience. In a similar way, the speaker of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* asks his dancing chorus, which consists of young girls (κοῦραι), to remind others how much his singing delighted them (τέρπεσθε): *h.Ap.* 3.169–70. If the *Anthologia Palatina* (test. 59) reflects an authentic tradition and Sappho sometimes sang her songs in public while her chorus danced, this fragment could have been part of such a song. (I proposed a similar interpretation of the performance circumstance of fr. 58 above.)

young women married. He traces this idea of "a homoerotic 'phase'...leading (being tamed/transformed) to 'normal' heterosexual, reproductive sex" to seventeenth-century European pornography (335), but it is much older than that and distinctly Greek. The male pederastic relationships throughout archaic and classical Greece were temporal affairs and ultimately the boys were expected to marry (Bremmer 1980, 1989). Respectable Greek women were supposed to get married as well, and the girls who made up Sappho's choruses will have formed no exception, regardless of whether they had a homoerotic relationship with Sappho or not.

⁶⁶Parker critiques the choral reconstruction of Sappho on pages 331–33, but begs the question by speaking about "standing choruses" (332) and "choral 'schools'" (333). Once we abandon the idea that young women came from overseas to study with Sappho (see n. 62 above), there is no reason to suppose that Sappho's choruses came together more frequently than, for example, those of Alcman; that is for brief periods of time, either to rehearse or perform particular songs or to participate together in certain rituals.

⁶⁷E.g. Page 119, van Erp Taalman Kip 1980: 340, Stigers [Stehle] 1981: 45, Burnett 209 n.2. The idea that Sappho performed her poetry at home for her girls seems to have originated in the French *salons* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose members recognized in Sappho a kindred spirit (Saake 1972: 15–16, DeJean 43f., 135–36). No one in antiquity supports this claim, not even Horace, who makes her sing in the underworld to her own lyre (*Carm.* 2.13.24–25=test. 18).

Another fragment which is sometimes cited is fr. 150, in which Sappho calls a house (if δόμῳ is the correct supplement for the unmetrical οἰκίᾱ) that of “the servants of the Muses” (μοισσοπόλων).⁶⁸ According to Maximus of Tyre, who has preserved the fragment for us, Sappho spoke these words to her daughter, which is probably why most scholars assume that she is speaking about her own house.⁶⁹ Yet, even if this were the case, the fragment does not say that it was in her house, and only in her house, that she performed her songs. We do not know what she means by the word μουσοπόλοι, but in a Boeotian inscription of the third century B.C. it refers to members of a theater group.⁷⁰

Finally, we may question whether any archaic Greek poet, male or female, would have composed poetry for something as intimate as a private group of young, adolescent women. Some scholars have wanted to draw a parallel between Sappho’s circle and the *hetairia* of the Lesbian poet Alcaeus,⁷¹ but there is quite a difference between a gathering of politically active, adult men and a group of young girls. If Sappho’s circle had a counterpart in any male organizations, it was in juvenile bands of boy initiates, not in adult clubs of aristocratic warriors. Such groups, like Alcman’s choruses, were trained for public performances and not for the privacy of the poet’s home.⁷²

Welcker’s and Wilamowitz’s reconstruction of Sappho as a school teacher has to be rejected, because it is anachronistic and lacks positive proof (Parker 316). Parker exaggerates, however, its impact on modern scholarship.⁷³ In my

⁶⁸Page 132 n. 1 is probably correct in assuming that οἰκίᾱ ousted another word and originally was a gloss to ἐν μοισσοπόλων, meaning by itself “in the abode of the servants of the Muses” (cp. Alcman fr. 1.73 for a similar genitive).

⁶⁹e.g. Welcker 1816/1845: 97, Wilamowitz 73, Kranz 88, Burnett 211.

⁷⁰IG VII. 2484, see Lanata 67, Calame 1977: 1.367, Lardinois 1989: 26.

⁷¹Most 95–96, Burnett 209, Gentili 1985/1988: 81.

⁷²Bremmer 1990: 138. It is worth noting that other female poets in the Classical period were credited with having composed songs for young women’s choruses as well: Calame 1977: 2.174, Snyder 1989: 40, 50 (Corinna), 54–55 (Praxilla), 60 (Telesilla).

⁷³Contrast Parker’s assessment with that of Lesky, who in 1957 could write in the standard handbook of the time: “Scholars are careful nowadays not to imagine Sappho’s group as a kind of educational institution” (1962/1966: 145=1957/58: 138, 1971: 174). Parker basically accuses anyone who believes that Sappho speaks about young women in her poetry of buying into the ‘Sappho schoolmistress’ paradigm, even if they reject this paradigm explicitly. Thus on page 318 n.19, Page is listed among scholars who hold “the widespread vision not just of Sappho’s Academy but of a Lesbos littered with warring boarding schools,” although Parker first credited him with “demolishing” this very same paradigm (314). This is what Page had to say on the page to which Parker refers: “Pre-eminent among her rivals is Andromeda, who was evidently another Sappho, the leader of a company of young women” (133). A “vision of Lesbos littered with boarding schools” is not a fair description of the viewpoints of the other scholars mentioned in this footnote either. Schadewaldt 1950: 11 speaks of “Mädchenkreise,” as do Mer-

opinion, the scholarship on Sappho after the Second World War has made a clear break with Wilamowitz and nineteenth-century German scholarship.⁷⁴ In the first place, the homoerotics in Sappho's poetry are now generally acknowledged,⁷⁵ thus removing the most important reason why Wilamowitz *cum suis* portrayed Sappho as "a friendly spinster teacher at a boarding school" (Parker 313). Secondly, as part of a growing awareness about the gap between our society and those of the ancients, classical scholars have collectively aban-

kelbach 5 and Lesky 1971: 174 (= 1962/1966: 145), who in the same paragraph explicitly rejects the comparison with an educational institution; Fränkel 1962/1973 is cited without page number, but on page 183 speaks of Andromeda as a rival of Sappho, who "also headed a group of girls"; Gentili 1966: 49 and 1985/1988: 80 identifies the groups as "tiasi" or *thiasoi*, as does Cantarella 1981/1987: 87 and 1988/1992: 79; Rivier 89–90, citing Merkelbach, refers to Sappho's group as "une société de jeunes filles" and that of her rivals as "une autre compagnie"; Calame 1977: 1.370 speaks of "un cercle de jeunes filles" of Sappho and her rivals, which he subsequently identifies as choruses (idem: 372); Podlecki 88, by Parker's own admission, "plays down the formal aspects of 'schools'" (that is: he explicitly rejects it) and concludes that they were "cliques of aristocratic women." Burnett on p. 212 does indeed speak about "houses" and "schools," but earlier on she compares Sappho's "group" to the Spartan *agelai* (210), a *thiasos* (211) and to Alcaeus' *hetairia* (209). Yet, Parker 318 n.19 concludes that all these scholars "plunged headlong into creating rival girls' schools." My own suggestion that Sappho taught a choir of young girls is changed into her working with "the school choir," the *choragos* into "the head-girl at her boarding school" (335), even though I never use these phrases myself and explicitly argue against the idea that Sappho headed some kind of boarding school (Lardinois 1989: 26, 29).

⁷⁴I speak deliberately of *German* scholarship, because both in England (Mure) and France (Girodet, Deschanel, Lebey, Vivien, Louÿs) more liberal representations of Sappho co-existed with the chaste schoolmistress model: see DeJean 227, 239–51, 276–79. Nor could Wilamowitz in his days apparently convince all. Calder 155 cites an amusing account of Fredrik Poulsen, a Dane who heard Wilamowitz speak in the winter of 1902–03: "Wilamowitz defended Sappho's virtue. German, American, and English women were moved to tears. Frenchmen and Italians shrugged their shoulders or bit their lips in order not to laugh. The sons of the Balkan folk looked even more gloomy than usual" (1947: 13). On Sappho's reception in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Netherlands, see Everard. Here Sappho is also generally represented as a heterosexual and/or chaste, but in encyclopedia and commentaries the "other" Sappho does make her presence felt (Everard 344).

⁷⁵E.g. Page 80, 144–46 n.1 (still cautiously), Bowra 1961: 179, Fränkel 1962/1975: 175, Gentili 1966: 47, Devereux 1970, Pomeroy 1975: 55, Calame 1977: 1.427–28, Buffière 1980: 246, Campbell 1982: xi, 1985/1989: 162. Schadewaldt could write in 1950: "auch wenn ihr [= Sappho] in den letzten hundert Jahren nun wieder gutgemeinte Rettungen nicht fehlen [probably referring to Welcker and Wilamowitz], so ist das nun vor ihrer neuen Gegenwart ziemlich bedeutungslos geworden" (19). He points to new papyrus finds, which make it seem that: "Ihre Liebe steht vor uns in so reiner und übermächtiger Gegenwart, daß ein anderer Gedanke davon gar nicht aufkommt" (20). Calder believes that with Page's book "the tide [did] change" (132). DeJean agrees where England (and the United States?) is concerned (303), while in France and Germany, "the chastity theory can be counted among the casualties of the Great War" (301; meaning the First World War).

doned Wilamowitz's boarding school and focused instead on more authentic organization forms, such as *thiasoi* or choruses.⁷⁶

Parker compares different themes in Sappho's poetry with that of other archaic Greek poets (344–45), meaning to show that Sappho's poetry was composed for banquets as well. However, Parker's inclusion of Alcman among his examples shows that references to feasts, sacrificial meals, garlands, myrrh and wine, are as much at home in choral poetry, intended to be performed by young girls in public, as in so-called sympotic poetry.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, it is possible to make a distinction between Sappho fr. 2 and the other poems which Parker cites as speaking about a *θαλία*, without resorting to "special pleading" (345): only in Sappho does the speaker invoke a god to come "hither...to this shrine" (δεῦρον...ἐπὶ τόνδε ναῦον) in order to share in the festivities.⁷⁸ Of course, had Sappho addressed and spoken about same-aged women in her poetry, as Parker tried to claim, the plausibility that she recited her poetry at a banquet-like setting would have been considerably better. Since this is not the case, we can safely dismiss Parker's reconstruction of Sappho as a sympotic poet.

The last reconstruction I would like to discuss is the representation of Sappho as the leader of a *thiasos*, which is probably the most popular in

⁷⁶Parker 313 lists four post-World War II scholars to whom the 'Sappho Schoolmistress' paradigm would have passed unaltered: Flacelière 1962: 125=1964: 99, Campbell 1967: 261, Gerber 1970: 161, and Arthur 1973/84: 42. The only two scholars who legitimately can be said to belong to this list are Flacelière, who says that Sappho was "in charge of a kind of residential college for girls," and Arthur, who compares Sappho's "circle" to a "finishing school." Campbell speaks about "a literary coterie of women" and says explicitly that "[e]vidence for a formal appointment as teacher or as priestess is hard to find"; Gerber is also critical: he says that "[t]he evidence is seldom clear and its interpretation is often largely subjective," and then offers the two contrasting opinions of Page and Merkelbach. (Parker may have picked up these references from Lefkowitz 1973/1981: 63 n.7, who maintains that Campbell and Gerber here "treat it [Sappho's school] as a serious possibility," which in my opinion is already stretching the meaning of their words.)

⁷⁷I say "so-called" sympotic poetry because the term is often used for poems whose performance circumstances are really unknown but which are assigned to symposia for lack of a better suggestion; thus it is far from certain that *all* of Alcaeus' poetry was designed for performances at symposia, in particular the hymns: see Bowie 1983: 184, van Erp Taalman Kip 1983: 398 *contra* Rösler 1980: 39 n.39.

⁷⁸I agree with Page 42 and Merkelbach 28 that the setting of this poem is a real shrine, however dreamlike this shrine is subsequently represented. It is worth noting that one of the most fabulous lines, that Aphrodite is pouring nectar into golden cups for those present (fr. 2.13–16), seems to be echoed in fr. 96.26–28, where it refers to an experience which the speaker of this poem shared with Atthis (cp. Page 44).

modern scholarship on Sappho.⁷⁹ Parker's main argument against the *thiasos* reconstruction is that "[t]his word is never used anywhere in any of the poems of Sappho (or Alcaeus) nor is it ever used in any ancient source about her" (338; cp. Calame 1977: 1.367). One might add that the term is used too indiscriminately both for Sappho's school (Wilamowitz 51) and for Alcman's maiden choruses (Gentili 1985/1988: 72). If it is defined as "a (female) organization, involved in some religious activities" one, of course, cannot go wrong.⁸⁰ If, however, one wants to compare Sappho and her girls to any of the historical *thiasoi*, either the Dionysiac cult groups attested in the Classical Greek period, or the religious fraternities or sororities which we find in the Hellenistic period, a case is much harder to make.⁸¹ The god Dionysos figures only once in the extant fragments of Sappho (fr. 17.10, together with Hera and Zeus) and the type of private, religious cult groups, so typical of the Hellenistic period, are alien to the spirit of archaic Greek religion and not attested anywhere else (Calame 1977: 1.363). It therefore seems better to avoid this term.

Conclusion

We may conclude that there is no reason to doubt that Sappho talked about young, adolescent women in her poetry. This is confirmed by eleven testimonia which, although late, could have easily inferred this from her poetry. Parker's hypothesis that our classical sources misread Sappho's poetry in this respect, changing adult women into girls, lacks positive proof and is actually contradicted by other representations of homosexual women in the Roman period. The fragments also speak overwhelmingly about *paides* and *parthenoi* and, in one or two cases, address them directly (frs. 58 and 140a). There are, furthermore, among her poetry at least two types of songs, the wedding songs and the hymns, which must have involved her in the setting up of young women's choruses.

Reviewing the different modern reconstructions of Sappho, one has to reject both the schoolmistress' model as basically anachronistic and Parker's

⁷⁹For a list of representatives, see Parker 339. Add Gentili 1966: 49 and 1985/1988: 72. Parker 333–34 defines a fifth modern reconstruction, that of Sappho as Sex-Educator, as evidenced in the studies of Hallett 1979 and Burnett. (I prefer Hallett's own term: "sensual consciousness raiser.") I see this model, however, more as an extension of the kind of education that according to Merkelbach and Calame took place in Sappho's choruses. I agree with Parker that these scholars, including Merkelbach and Calame, probably exaggerate the amount of formal teaching going on in Sappho's group.

⁸⁰As Parker 342 rightly points out, any archaic Greek organization had a religious component.

⁸¹For the Dionysiac cult groups, see Hdt. 4.79, Eur. *Ba.* 680 with Dodds' commentary *ad loc.*; Versnel 140–42, 149. On the Hellenistic associations, see Calame 1977: 1.363–67.

reconstruction of Sappho as a singer at banquets because it lacks proof and is contradicted by too many fragments and testimonia. The reading of Sappho as a leader of a *thiasos* is either too vague or unhistorical. The model which can best be reconciled with the fragments, the historical period and the testimonia, is that of Sappho as an instructor of young women's choruses. I would therefore suggest that we continue speaking of Sappho's "circle" (which is at least reminiscent of the Greek terminology of choruses: Calame 1977: 1.77–79) or, indeed, of her choruses, which probably included her young lovers.⁸²

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⁸²The term circle, although not original by him (cp. Schadewaldt 1950: 11), was first made popular by Merkelbach's 1957 article: "Sappho und ihre Kreis."

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