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CHAPTER FOUR

“SOMEONE, I SAY, WILL REMEMBER US”: ORAL MEMORY IN SAPPHO’S POETRY

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Sappho is often considered a central figure in the transition from archaic to classical Greek culture, especially by German scholars. Bruno Snell, for example, assigned her a prominent place in his discovery of the mind, while Hermann Fränkel hailed her as a proto-philosopher.¹ More recently she has been assigned an important role in the transition from orality to literacy, again mainly by German scholars, but British scholars such as Martin West and Robert Parker have committed themselves to this viewpoint as well.² These scholars argue that fragments of Sappho that express her confidence of being remembered in the future indicate that she wrote her poems down and expected them to be read by future generations. If this interpretation were correct, it would indeed mark a significant stage in the development of literacy in early Greece. It would present us with a poet of the early sixth century who not only committed her poetry to writing but could count on its continued popularity, distribution, and preservation to ensure her immortality in print. This would be a serious blow to those who argue that there were no readers of poetry in any significant numbers before the fifth century, such as Bruno Gentili, Rosalind Thomas, or Andrew Ford.³

I do not believe, however, that Sappho’s references to the recollection of her poetry in the future are related to its being recorded in writing. Building on arguments advanced by Herwig Maehler, Wolfgang Rösler, and Alex Hardie,⁴ I shall argue in this paper that Sappho first of all expected the *performances* of her poetry to be remembered in the future and secondly, perhaps, believed that she would be allowed to play

¹ Snell (1982: 46 ff.) and Fränkel (1968: 91); cf. Fränkel (1962: 212).

² West (1970: 315) and Parker (1981: 161). Cf. Stein (1990: 268-69). For earlier references, see Rösler (1980: 72 n.105).

³ Gentili (1988: esp. 3-23), Thomas (1992), and Ford (2003).

⁴ Maehler (1963: 59-63), Rösler (1980: 72-75), and Hardie (2005).

on as singer-poet in the underworld. I do not deny the possibility that Sappho knew how to write and used writing to record her poetry, but, if she did, such recordings were meant to enable her poetry to be re-performed and not to be enjoyed as literature-on-the-page.⁵ Bruno Currie argues the same for Pindar's recording of his epinician poetry, a full century after Sappho, and it was probably true for the recordings of the Homeric poems in the sixth century as well.⁶ The re-performance of Sappho's poetry would constitute a third way in which her name could live on.⁷ I doubt, however, that she would have staked her reputation on the written records of her poetry. For Sappho these written records would have constituted merely the librettos of her songs, not the final product.

Remembering Sappho

In order to assess the evidence, let us first consider the fragments adduced by those who argue for the memorization of Sappho's poetry in writing. Most important to their argument is fragment 55, which Sappho addresses, according to Stobaeus, to an uneducated woman (πρὸς ἀπαιδευτον γυναῖκα); according to Plutarch, who quotes the lines as well in two different treatises, they are addressed to a rich or to an uncultured (ἄμουσος) and ignorant (ἀμαθής) woman.⁸ They read as follows:

κατθάνοισα δὲ κείση οὐδέ ποτα μναμοσύνα σέθεν
ἔσσειτ' οὐδὲ πρόθα εἰς ὕστερον· οὐ γὰρ πεδέχης βρόδων
τῶν ἐκ Πιερίας· ἀλλ' ἀφάνης κὰν Αἶδα δόμῳ
φοιτάσης πεδ' ἀμαύρων νεκύων ἐκπεποταμένα.⁹

⁵ Cf. Andersen (1987: 39-40) and Schmitz (2002: 71-72).

⁶ Currie (2004: 56) and, for Homer, Nagy (1996: 29-112), who refers to written texts of the Homeric epics in the sixth century as "transcripts" of (re)performances. On the reperformances of archaic Greek poetry in general, see Herington (1985) esp. 48-50.

⁷ Jong (2006) has recently argued that the Homeric poet expected eternal fame through the reperformance of his epics.

⁸ Stob. 3.4.12, Plut. *Coniug. praec.* 145f-146a and *Quaest. conv.* 646ef, quoted by Campbell (1990: ad loc).

⁹ For the fragments and testimonia of Sappho, I have adopted the text of Campbell (1990), unless noted otherwise. My translations are also based on those of Campbell, with some adaptation. The reading οὐδὲ πρόθα in line 2 is uncertain (see Voigt 1971: ad loc.), but changing or removing these words does not affect my interpretation of fr. 55.

But when you die you will lie there and afterwards there will never be any memory of you nor longing later, since you have no share in the roses of Pieria; unseen in the house of Hades also, flown from our midst, you will go to and fro among the shadowy corpses.

Pieria is a mountain in northern Greece sacred to the Muses, and proponents of a literary Sappho suggest that by the words “roses of Pieria” she means her poems. Because Sappho composed such poems and they are preserved in writing, she will be remembered, unlike the “uncultured” (ἄμουσος) woman, to whom the lines are addressed. This woman did not record “roses of Pieria” and therefore will not be remembered after her death.

This interpretation of fragment 55 is defended with reference to two other fragments of Sappho. In fragment 147, Sappho would be expressing her confidence that she and whomever she is addressing will be remembered: *μνάσασθαί τινά φαιμι † καὶ ἕτερον † ἀμμέων* (“I say that someone (and the other?) will remember us”). In a related testimonium (fr. 193), the second century orator Aelius Aristides reports that one can hear Sappho boast, presumably in her poetry, that the Muses have made her truly blessed and that she will be remembered even after her death:

οἶμαι δέ σε καὶ Σαπφοῦς ἀκηκοέναι πρὸς τινὰς τῶν εὐδαιμόνων δοκουσῶν εἶναι γυναικῶν μεγαλαυχουμένης καὶ λεγούσης ὡς αὐτὴν αἱ Μοῦσαι τῷ ὄντι ὀλβίαν τε καὶ ζηλωτὴν ἐποίησαν καὶ ὡς οὐδ’ ἀποθανούσης ἔσται λήθη.

I think you must have heard Sappho too boasting to some of those women reputed to be fortunate and saying that the Muses had made her truly blessed and enviable, and that she would not be forgotten even when she was dead.¹⁰

Sappho’s honoured status as a poet and her fame after death appear to be the subject of fragments 32 and 65 as well. In fragment 32 some female personages have honoured the I-person by the gift of their works: *αἶ με τιμίαν ἐπόησαν ἔργα / τὰ σφὰ δοῖσαι* (“who made me honoured, having presented me with their gifts”). It has been plausibly suggested that these female figures are the Muses, whom Aristides also mentions in his testimonium as making Sappho blessed and enviable.¹¹

¹⁰ Fr. 193. Voigt (1971: *ad* fr. 55) believes that Aristides in this passage was thinking of the poem from which fr. 55 is derived. Lobel & Page (1955: *ad* fr. 193) relate the testimonium to fr. 147, but this connection is rightly rejected by Maehler (1963: 61 n.2) and Rösler (1980 72-73: n.107).

¹¹ Campbell (1990: *ad loc.*) and Aloni (1997: 66).

In the badly damaged fragment 65, both fame and the underworld are mentioned together. Sappho is directly addressed in line 5 and someone, perhaps the goddess Aphrodite,¹² promises her in the last two lines “fame everywhere (πάντα κλέος) ... even in the house (or on the shores?) of Acheron (καί σ’ ἐν Ἀχέρ[οντ].” Acheron is one of the rivers that flow through the underworld and is also mentioned in Sappho fr. 95.

These five fragments form the basis for the belief that Sappho expected to be remembered as a poet in the future. While they clearly speak about poetic activities and Sappho’s fame after death, however, some important questions remain: how do Sappho’s fame and her poetry exactly relate to one another? is she necessarily the speaker in all these fragments? and do the gifts of the Muses or the roses of Pieria, mentioned in fragments 32 and 55, necessarily refer to written texts through which Sappho will be remembered?

Memory in Sappho’s Other Fragments

In order to answer these questions I shall first take a look at some other poems of Sappho in which people are remembered, because memory is an important theme in Sappho’s poetry and recurs repeatedly.¹³ In all these cases the first person speaker refers to her recollection of the *performance* of a young woman, and I will argue that this is also what Sappho is primarily thinking of when she speaks about memories of her poetry after her death: the recollection of the performances of her poems by her near-contemporaries.

The first poem I would like to discuss is fragment 16 of Sappho. In lines 15-16 of this fragment something or someone reminds the first person speaker of a woman named Anaktoria, who is not with her: με νῦν Ἀνακτορίας ὀνέμναισ’ οὐ παρείσας (“... has reminded me now of Anaktoria, who is not here”).¹⁴ In the next strophe she recalls two particular features of Anaktoria: her lovely walk (ἔρατόν τε βᾶμα) and the bright sparkle of her face (κάμάρυχμα λάμπρον ... προσώπω). It

¹² Thus Campbell (1990: ad loc.) and Aloni (1997: 116-17). For a new and imaginative reconstruction of this fragment, connecting it with frs. 60, 66c, 67, and 86, see Ferrari (2007: 62-64). He also suggests that Aphrodite is the speaker.

¹³ Cf. Maehler (1963: 59-63) and Burnett (1983: 277-313).

¹⁴ The subject of this sentence is Eros, Aphrodite, or Helena; see Voigt (1971: ad loc.).

is these two features she would rather see than the chariots or armed infantrymen of the Lydians (fr. 16, 17-20). The bright sparkle of Anaktoria’s face betrays her age: Anaktoria was a young, marriageable woman, to whom such brightness of the face is often attributed in archaic Greek poetry.¹⁵ It has been suggested that she had recently left Sappho’s circle in order to marry. I find this suggestion entirely plausible, as long as we recognize that Sappho’s circle was not “ein Mädchenpensionat,” as Wilamowitz tentatively suggested,¹⁶ nor a gathering of adult, sympotic women, as more recently advanced,¹⁷ but a choral group which performed and danced to the songs of Sappho, as Reinhold Merkelbach and Claude Calame have argued.¹⁸

In accordance with this choral interpretation of Sappho’s group, Anton Bierl has recently proposed that into the description of Anaktoria’s lovely gait (ἔρατον βᾶμα) should be read a reference to her movements while dancing.¹⁹ Sappho or the first person speaker would be missing in particular the elegance and radiance Anaktoria displayed while dancing in the chorus line. I admit that this reading is speculative, but it gains support from two other fragments in which Sappho speaks about the recollection of young women. The first of these two fragments is fragment 96. Its opening lines read as follows:

]Σαρδ . [. .]	
πόλ]λακι τυίδε [ν]ῶν ἔχοισα	2
ὡσπ . [. . .] . ὠομεν , [. . .] ..χ[. .]	
σε θέαι σ' ἰκέλαν ἀρι-	
γνώται , σᾶι δὲ μάλιστ' ἔχαιρε μόλπαι·	5
νῦν δὲ Λύδαισιν ἐμπρέπεται γυναι-	
κεσσιν ὡς ποτ' ἀελίω	
δύντος ἀ βροδοδάκτυλος Σελάννα	
πάντα περρέχοισ' ἄστρα· φάος δ' ἐπί-	
σχει θάλασσαν ἐπ' ἀλμύραν	10
ἴσως καὶ πολυανθέμοις ἀρούραις·	

¹⁵ Brown (1989).

¹⁶ Wilamowitz (1905: 26). For the context of his remark, see Calder (1986).

¹⁷ Parker (1993), to be read with my reply in Lardinois (1994).

¹⁸ Merkelbach (1957), Calame (1997: esp. 210-14) and (1996). Following this choral interpretation of Sappho’s group, I have argued that there are among the fragments of Sappho more choral songs than is generally recognized (Lardinois [1996]). For example, I have argued that fr. 16 was probably sung by a chorus of female friends of Anaktoria: Lardinois (1996: 166-67) and (2001: 83-85).

¹⁹ Bierl (2003: 118) with earlier references.

ἀ δ' ἔεσσα κάλα κέχυται, τεθά-
 λαισι δὲ βρόδα κάπαλ' ἄν-
 θρυσκα καὶ μελίλωτος ἀνθεμώδης·

πόλλα δὲ ζαφοίταισ', ἀγάνας ἐπι- 15
 μνάσθεισ' Ἄτθιδος ἰμέρω
 λέπτταν ποι φρένα κ[α]ρ[τέρ]ω<ι> βόρηται.²⁰

... Sardis... often turning her thoughts in this direction... (she honoured) you as being like a goddess for all to see and took much delight in your song-dance. But now she stands out among Lydian women like rosy-fingered Moon after sunset, surpassing all the stars, and her light spreads alike over the salt sea and the flowery fields; the dew is shed in beauty, and roses bloom and tender chervil and flowery melilot. Often as she goes to and fro she remembers gentle Atthis and is consumed in her tender heart by strong desire (for Atthis).

In this case it is not Sappho nor the singer of the song who remembers the young woman named Atthis, but another woman, who currently resides in Lydia. She too may recently have left Sappho's group. What this woman in Lydia remembers in particular is the *molpa* or song-dance of the poem's internal addressee, who probably is Atthis.²¹ Memory in these fragments of Sappho for young women is based on the oral performance of songs, not their written record. Furthermore, the recollection of the girls, whether Anaktoria, Atthis or the woman in Lydia, is kept alive through song. It is through the performance of these songs that the audience is reminded of the young women and their earlier performances.

The next poem I would like to discuss is fragment 94 of Sappho, which contains a dialogue between Sappho and another woman who left her reluctantly, perhaps again in order to get married.²² The beginning of this fragment reads as follows:

...
 τεθνάκην δ' ἀδόλωσ θελω·
 ἄ με ψισδομένα κατελίμπανεν

2

²⁰ I have adopted in line 17 the supplement proposed by Kamerbeek (1956: 101). For my justification of this reading, see Lardinois (2001: 86 n.55). I further agree with Janko (1982) that *σελάννα* in line 8 most probably represents the personal name of the goddess and have adjusted Campbell's text and translation accordingly.

²¹ Page (1955: 92), Burnett (1983: 302-303), and Campbell (1990: 123 n.1). More likely than not, this *molpa* was a song-dance composed by Sappho.

²² Merkelbach (1957: 12-13); cf. Rauk (1989: 110) and Foley (1994: 135).

πόλλα καὶ τόδ' ἔειπέ [μοι·
 'ὦϊμ' ὡς δεῖνα πεπ[όνθ]αμεν,
 Ψάπφ', ἦ μάν σ' ἀέκοισ' ἀπυλιμπάνω.' 5

τὰν δ' ἔγω τὰδ' ἀμειβόμαν·
 'χαίροισ' ἔρχεο κᾶμεθεν
 μέμναισ', οἴσθα γὰρ ὡς σε πεδήπομεν·

αἰ δὲ μῆ, ἀλλά σ' ἔγω θέλω
 ὄμναισαι [σὺ δὲ] δ[ι]ή φρ]ασαι 10
 ὄσ[σ' ἴμερτά τε] καὶ κάλ' ἐπάσχομεν·²³

... “honestly I wish I were dead.”²⁴ She was leaving me with many tears and said this: “Oh what bad luck has been ours, Sappho; truly, I leave you against my will.” I replied to her thus: “Go and fare well and remember me, for you know how we cared for you. If not, well then I want to remind you, and you consider all the lovely and beautiful things we experienced.”

The next six strophes list some of the beautiful things Sappho and the young woman did together. Lines 21 to 23, in which Sappho speaks about a longing the girl satisfied on soft beds, have, for obvious reasons, drawn most critical attention, but the other activities Sappho mentions are just as important for the interpretation of the song: lines 12 and following speak about the stringing of flower-wreaths, and the next two strophes about the donning of garlands and the wearing of perfume. After the strophe about soft beds, there is mention of going to holy places, where there is sound (ψόφος) and perhaps choral activities (χ|όρος).²⁵ This whole list of activities, with the possible exception of lying on soft beds, is compatible with the activities of a choral group. One can even read a linear progression into them, starting with the preparations for a choral performance (the stringing of flower-wreaths, the donning of garlands and perfume) and leading up to musical performances at temples and other holy places.²⁶ It is of such performances that Sappho wants to remind the girl.

²³ I have adopted the reconstruction of Slings (1994) in lines 10-11.

²⁴ The speaker of this line could be either Sappho or the girl; see Lardinois (1996: 163 n.66) for a list of supporters of both points of view. The reference to Robbins (1980) there should be Robbins (1990).

²⁵ Cf. fr. 44.25-26: καὶ ψ[ό]φο[ς] κ]ροτάλ[ων, λιγέ]ως δ' ἄρα πάρ[θ]ενοι] / ἄειδον μέλος ἄγν[ου].

²⁶ Cf. Lardinois (1994: 70). I agree with Wilamowitz (1913: 50) that the girl in lines 21-23 is probably satisfying her longing for sleep (cf. Hom. *Il* 13.636-37). For this and other suggestions, see Burnett (1983: 298 n.56), Lardinois (1996: 164 n.70) and (2001: 86 n.51).

The bond between Sappho and the girls who have left her group thus rely on shared memories of performances of Sappho's songs. These performances are so vivid and, by implication, so good that they outlive the occasion and are remembered many years after. Such memories, of course, reflect well on both Sappho and the girls. It is her songs as well as the gait of Anaktoria and the voice of Atthis that are remembered long after the occasion. If we keep this function of memory in the fragments of Sappho about young women in mind and return to those that speak about the recollection of her poetry, we can see that they too relate in all likelihood to the *performance* of her poetry, which is long remembered after the event, and not to its recording in writing.

Remembering Sappho in Performance

The first poem discussed in the section on "Remembering Sappho" above was fragment 55, in which is addressed a woman of whom there will be no memory because she did not share in the roses of Pieria; instead she will flutter unnoticed among the corpses in the underworld. Sappho is not in this poem saying that the woman will not be remembered because she did not write poetry. Rather, I would suggest that the woman is not remembered because, unlike Atthis or Anaktoria, she did not participate in the performances of Sappho's songs. It is to such performances that the roses of Pieria, mentioned in this fragment, probably relate. It has been suggested that these roses refer specifically to a garland, such as the *stephanos* Sappho and the girl in fragment 94 string together.²⁷ Such a reading would fit my interpretation of the fragment as relating to the performance of Sappho's songs. At the same time, these roses probably bear a larger, metaphorical meaning as well, but I doubt that they refer just to her poems, let alone to poetry books. The roses of Pieria stand for all of Sappho's poetic activities, including the performance of her songs by groups of young women.

That we may suspect a group activity behind the image of the roses is suggested by the verb *πεδέχης*: the uneducated or ignorant woman has no "share in" / does not "participate in" the roses of Pieria.²⁸ Instead of sharing in the roses of Pieria with Sappho and her group, the woman

²⁷ Hardie (2005: 18 n.36) with earlier references.

²⁸ The verb *πεδέχω* is the Aeolic equivalent of Attic *μετέχω*, meaning "to partake of, share in."

shares her activities with the shadowy corpses in the underworld (πεδ’ ἀμαύρων νεκύων), where the same preposition πεδά (= Attic: μετά) recurs.²⁹ These underworld activities of the woman consist of “moving around unseen” (ἀφάνης... φοιτάσης), movements which may be contrasted with the radiant and memorable dancing of Anaktoria or Atthis, referred to in fragments 16 and 96.

It is, furthermore, quite likely that the woman did first participate in Sappho’s group but left it prematurely and against Sappho’s wishes, as do some other girls mentioned in her poetry.³⁰ According to Alex Hardie, this is what the participle ἐκπεποταμένα is meant to express “flown away,” or, as Campbell translates, “flown from our midst.”³¹ Hardie quotes fragment 131, where Sappho uses a similar verb and image for Atthis, who at this point had become unfaithful.³² The flying away of the woman in fragment 55 could refer to her premature departure from Sappho’s group, denying her the possibility of making an everlasting impression through her participation in the choral performances of Sappho’s songs.

Finally, I do not exclude the possibility that the speaker in this fragment is not Sappho but a chorus of young women: who better than they could point out to the girl what she is missing and contrast their own company, which may be dancing while singing this song, with the shadowy corpses among whom the “uncultured” girl will pass unseen in the future? The fact that Plutarch and Stobaeus say that it was Sappho who addressed these words to the woman hardly registers as counter-argument because ancient commentators are notorious in identifying the first-person speaker of archaic Greek poetry with the poet/composer himself and in reading the poems autobiographically.³³

If we look at the other fragments that speak about Sappho’s poetic activities and their remembrance in the future, we find that they too can better be connected with the performance of her songs than their recording in writing. In fragment 147, someone tells someone else that

²⁹ Hardie (2005: 17-18). My reading follows closely Hardie’s interpretation of fr. 55.

³⁰ E.g. frs. 71 and 131. For other fragments in which girls are mentioned who left Sappho’s group prematurely, see Page (1955: 133-36) and Rösler (1980: 73 n.109).

³¹ Campbell (1990: 98).

³² Hardie (2005: 19-20).

³³ Lefkowitz (1981: Introd. 8) and Lardinois (1994: 60-62) with examples from among the fragments of Sappho.

they will be remembered (μνάσασθαί τινά φαμι ἡκαὶ ἕτερον ἄμμέων). Again, it is far from certain that Sappho is the speaker in this fragment. The first-person speaker could just as well be a chorus, which expresses its confidence that it will be remembered, as a group, because of its brilliant performance and the possible re-performance of the song.³⁴ Even if the speaker is Sappho, however, she would be including at least one other person, if not the whole group, in the recollection of her, and the fact that she “says” or “declares” (φαίμι) that they will be remembered shows her reliance on the voice and the performance of this song to spread the news about their future fame. The same is implied by the word *kleos*, which the first-person speaker uses in fragment 65, line 9. This word is most often used, at least in the archaic age, for a report that is spread through oral communication.³⁵

That Sappho’s fame is related to her poetic activities is confirmed by Aristides’ report (fr. 193). Aristides says that the Muses have made Sappho blessed, enviable, and memorable, even after death, but whether this blessed state or memory is based on a written record or on the recollection of her performances is not specified. In fragment 32, Sappho speaks about gifts of the Muses, if they are the antecedent of the relative clause, as seems likely: with these gifts they “have made her honoured” (αἱ με τιμίαν ἐπόησαν ἔργα / τὰ σφὰ δοῖσαι).

For the nature of these gifts we may turn to the opening lines of the much-discussed “new Sappho poem” about Tithonos and old age, where Sappho talks about “gifts of the Muses” as well.³⁶ Unfortunately only the second half of these opening lines is preserved. According to the first editors of the newly reconstituted poem, the speaker, whom they identify as Sappho, makes a first-person statement in these lines about her own poetic activities to a group of children: “I bring these lovely gifts of the violet-bosomed Muses, children, picking up again the clear,

³⁴ Cf. Bakker (2002/2005) on the close connection between memory and performance.

³⁵ Olson (1995: 1-23) with reference to Snell (1955-: 1438-40) and Redfield (1975: 31-35). After the oral presentation of this paper at the conference in Auckland, Ruth Scodel objected that *kleos* was too strong a term for the oral report of a local performance of Sappho’s songs, but line 174 of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, in which the narrator promises to spread the *kleos* of the Delian maidens after he has heard them sing on Delos, constitutes a close parallel. On the significance of πάντῃ in fr. 65.9, see Rösler (1980: 74 n. 113).

³⁶ In reality this is not a new poem of Sappho, but a newly reconstituted one, based on an old Oxyrhynchus papyrus (fr. 58) and new fragments from Cologne, published by Gronewald and Daniel in 2004.

melodious lyre” (φέρω τάδε Μοίσαν ἰ|οκ[ό]λπων κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες, / [λάβοισα πάλιν τὰ]ν φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνναν).³⁷ Martin West, on the other hand, has suggested that Sappho is addressing the children and commands them with the words: “You for the lovely gifts of the violet-bosomed Muses, children, be zealous and for the clear melodious lyre” (“Υμμες πεδὰ Μοίσαν ἰ|οκ[ό]λπων κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες, / [σπουδάσδετε καὶ τὰ]ν φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνναν).³⁸ In both cases, however, the gifts of the Muses refer to poetry *in performance*. Sappho is producing these gifts and playing the lyre, while the children she addresses are probably dancing to her song. I shall return to this poem later. For now it is enough to have shown that for Sappho the works or gifts of the Muses consist of more than letters on a page. They include the whole performance context: song, music, and dance. It is because of these that she expects herself and her choruses to be remembered.

Remembering Sappho in the Underworld?

What the references in Sappho’s poetry to her fame after death primarily entail is the memory of the performances of her songs by her near-contemporaries. However, I do not exclude the possibility that Sappho in her poetry argued for a distinctive and better existence in the underworld, arising from her status as a gifted musician, as well. Wolfgang Rösler first advanced this idea and it has recently been proposed again by Alex Hardie.³⁹ The reason that Hardie decided to revive Rösler’s suggestion is the publication by Gronewald and Daniel of a Sappho fragment preceding the reconstituted poem about Tithonos and old age on the Cologne papyrus.⁴⁰ This fragment, unlike the Tithonos poem, constitutes a truly new poem of Sappho, which was not known previously. It has received, however, little critical attention, probably because it is so badly preserved. I have printed below the *editio princeps* of this fragment, which I have labelled Cologne Papyrus Poem 1. It is followed by two possible reconstructions of the poem, one by Hardie and the other by Martin West.⁴¹

³⁷ Gronewald and Daniel (2004a: 7).

³⁸ West (2005: 4).

³⁹ Rösler (1980: 73-74) and Hardie (2005).

⁴⁰ Gronewald and Daniel (2004a: 2 and 5-6).

⁴¹ Hardie (2005: 22-27) and West (2005: 1-3).

A. *Editio Princeps* of the Cologne Papyrus Poem 1

] . ο . [
] . υ χ . . [
] νῦν θαλ[ί]α γ . [
] . νέρθε δὲ γᾶς γε . [. . .] . .
] . . ν ἔχοισα γ γέρας, ὡς [ἔ]οικεν, 5
] . οίεν, ὡς νῦν ἐπὶ γᾶς ἔοισαν
] λιγύραν [α]ῖ κεν ἔλοισα πᾶκτιν
] . . . α . κάλα, Μοῖσ', ἀείδω .

B. Reconstruction of the Cologne Papyrus Poem 1 by Hardie (2005)

] νῦν θαλ[ί]α πα[ρέστω
] . νέρθε δὲ γᾶς περ[ί]σχοι
 μολπά μ' ἔτι Μοῖσει]ον ἔχοισα γέρας, ὡς [ἔ]οικεν, 5
 αὔθις δὲ με θαυμά]ζοιεν, ὡς νῦν ἐπὶ γᾶς ἔοισαν
 αἴνεισι μ' ᾄδον] λιγύραν [α]ῖ κεν ἔλοισα πᾶκτιν
] . . . α . κάλα, Μοῖσ', ἀείδω .

C. Reconstruction of the Cologne Papyrus Poem 1 by West (2005)

] νῦν θαλ[ί]α πα[ρέστω
] . νέρθε δὲ γᾶς περ[ί]σχοι
 κλέος μέγα Μοῖσει]ον ἔχοισαν γέρας, ὡς [ἔ]οικεν, 5
 πάντῃ δὲ με θαυμά]ζοιεν, ὡς νῦν ἐπὶ γᾶς ἔοισαν
 κάλεισι χελίδω] λιγύραν [α]ῖ κεν ἔλοισα πᾶκτιν
 ἢ βάρβιτον ἢ τάνδε χε]λύνην θαλάμοισ' ἀείδω .

Even if we consider just the bare text of the *editio princeps*, it is obvious that the poem draws a contrast between a *thalia* or festivity now (νῦν θαλ[ί]α in line 3) and something under the earth (νέρθε δὲ γᾶς in line 4), where some woman is holding a *geras* or honorary gift, while being in the same situation as she is now on earth (ὡς νῦν ἐπὶ γᾶς ἔοισαν, line 6) and singing (ἀείδω).

Hardie's reconstruction is very explicit about the poem's reference to Sappho's existence as a poet after death. In Hardie's reconstruction, the poem reads: "Now let a feast be present ... but below the earth may song-dance surround me, still holding the honour that comes from the Muses, as is appropriate, and may they [i.e. the dead] wonder at me afresh,⁴² just as now, when I am on earth, they praise me as a sweet singer, if, having picked up the lyre ..., I sing beautiful songs, o Muse."

⁴² Hardie (2005: 23) justifies this reading by pointing to a possible echo of this scene in Horace, *Od.* 2.13.29-30: *utrumque* (sc. Sappho and Alcaeus) *sacro digna silentio / mirantur umbrae dicere* ("the shades [in the underworld] marvel at each as

Martin West’s reading is not dissimilar and quite explicit about Sappho’s privileged position in the underworld as well. He reconstructs the poem as follows: “Now let a feast be present ... but below the earth may great fame surround me, holding the honour that comes from the Muses, as is appropriate, and may they wonder at me everywhere, just as now, when I am on earth, they call me a sweet-sounding swallow, if, having picked up the *pektis* or *barbitos* or this tortoise-shaped lyre, I sing in (bridal?) chambers.”⁴³

Both Hardie and West connect this poem with fragment 65, where someone speaks about the *kleos* Sappho enjoys everywhere, even in the house of Acheron. They argue that this *kleos* not only refers to the worldly fame that reaches Sappho in the underworld, but that she enjoys the same fame and reputation among the dead as she did among the living. This is a possible interpretation, but fragment 65 does not have to be read in this way, as we have seen, and their reconstruction of Poem 1 of the Cologne papyrus remains speculative. However, even if Sappho expressed such eschatological views, they have nothing to do with the recording of her poetry in writing. On the contrary, Sappho would be continuing her existence and enjoying her reputation as a singer and performer, not as a writer of poetry, in the underworld.

I would like to end this discussion by saying something about the newly reconstituted Sappho poem, whose opening lines I have already discussed above. One cannot write about Sappho these days without at least mentioning this poem, whose translation has figured in almost every newspaper and magazine since its publication in 2004. The poem is, however, relevant to the theme of Sappho’s poetic immortality. I will not discuss here the problems surrounding the reconstruction of the poem.⁴⁴ Instead, I have printed below text and translation as proposed by Martin West:

they utter things worthy of sacred silence”). Cf. Di Benedetto (2005: 7), who suggests reading ψῦχαι κέ με θαυμάζοιεν at the beginning of line 6.

⁴³ West reads the last line of the poem differently from Hardie and the *editio princeps*.

⁴⁴ For recent discussions of the poem, see Gronewald and Daniel (2004a), (2004b), (2005), Janko (2005), West (2005), Di Benedetto (2006), Rawles (2006), Bettarini (2007) and Ferrari (2007: 179-86 with earlier references). One of the biggest questions surrounding the new poem, to which I hope to return in the future, is whether or not it originally continued with four lines that follow in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus (fr. 58.23-26) but are absent from the Cologne papyrus: see the contrasting views of Bernsdorff (2005) and Edmunds (2006).

Ἕμμες πεδὰ Μοῖσαν ἰ]οκ[ό]λπων κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες,
σπουδάσδετε καὶ τὰ]ν φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνναν·

ἔμοι δ' ἄπαλον πρὶν] ποτ' [ἔ]οντα χροά γῆρας ἦδη
ἐπέλλαβε, λεῦκαι δ' ἐγ]ένοντο τρίχες ἐκ μελαίναν·

βάρυς δέ μ' ὁ [θ]ῦμος πεπόηται, γόνα δ' [ο]ύ φέροισι, 5
τὰ δὴ ποτα λαίψηρ' ἔον ὄρχησθ' ἴσα νεβρίοισι.

τὰ <μὲν> στεναχίσδω θαμέως· ἀλλὰ τί κεν ποείην;
ἀγήραον ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ' οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι

καὶ γάρ π[ο]τὰ Τίθωνον ἔφαντο βροδόπαχυν Αὔρων
ἔρωι φ⁴⁵.. ἀθῆισαν βάμεν' εἰς ἔσχατα γᾶς φέροισα[ν, 10

ἔοντα [κ]άλλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ' αὐτον ὕμωσ ἔμαρψε
χρόνωι πρὸ]λιον γῆρας, ἔχ[ο]ντ' ἀθανάταν ἄκοιτιν.

[You for] the fragrant-bosomed Muses' lovely gifts,
[be zealous,] girls, [and the] clear melodious lyre;

[but my once tender] body old age now
[has seized;] my hair's turned [white] instead of dark;

my heart's grown heavy, my knees will not support me, 5
that on a time were fleet for the dance as fawns.

This state I oft bewail; but what's to do?
Not to grow old, being human, there's no way.

Tithonus once, the tale was, rose-armed Dawn,
love-smitten (?), carried off to the world's end, 10

handsome and young then, yet in time grey age
o'ertook him, husband of immortal wife.

In the first two lines Sappho addresses a group of children, who are probably dancing while she is singing and playing the lyre. In the next four lines she explains that she has grown old and, as a result, is no longer able to dance. She has often complained about this situation, but at the same time reconciled herself to it, because, as she says, it is impossible for any human being not to grow old. She then illustrates this gnomic thought with the story of Tithonos, who married the Dawn goddess but nevertheless grew old.

Central to the interpretation of this poem is the question of how much of the Tithonos story we are meant to recall. Richard Janko has pointed

⁴⁵ My own observation of the papyrus and consultation of Michael Gronewald and Robert Daniel has convinced me that a *delta*, *labda*, or *alpha* should be read in this spot rather than the *phi* proposed by West.

out that according to a known version of the myth, Tithonos, as husband of Dawn, withered away and changed into a cicada, a creature that in Greek literature is often compared to singers and poets.⁴⁶ If we adduce this part of the myth, the similarities between Tithonos and the first person speaker increase and the poem would end with a surprising twist: like Tithonos, Sappho inevitably has grown old, but just like him she is still capable of singing and playing the lyre, as demonstrated by her performance of this song. If read in this way, the poem would comment on Sappho’s poetic survival as well. In this case it would not extend beyond the grave, but, like all other memories referred to in Sappho’s poetry, it is rooted in performance: both Sappho and Tithonos live on as long as their voices can be heard. The fact that we modern classicists have to settle for the tattered remains of silent papyrus columns does not mean that for an archaic Greek poet like Sappho they would have presented a viable alternative to the memory of her living voice.

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⁴⁶ Janko (2005). For criticism of Janko’s interpretation, see Edmunds (2006). Janko’s reading is supported by Rawles (2006).

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