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Sympotic Sappho?**The Recontextualization of Sappho's Verses in Athenaeus**

Stefano Caciagli

Abstract

In order to reconstruct the original context of Sappho's poems, it is important not only to examine the *testimonia* accurately, but also to analyse the sources that attest her *ipsissima verba*: those who quote Sappho's words could have adapted them to the context of quotation. Even though the thesis of a female *hetaireia* is based on fragments reported by Athenaeus, who probably reworked them heavily, this hypothesis is tenable through a comparison of Sappho to other poets and an accurate analysis of the *testimonia* and the contexts of quotation.

A turning point in studies about Sappho was reached 20 years ago, when a part of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, especially in North America, rejected the traditional understanding that this poet was a sort of schoolmistress. According to these scholars, especially Parker (1993) and Stehle (1997), all reconstructions of Sappho's audience in modern times stem from arguments of Welcker (1816 = 1845) and of Wilamowitz (1913): Sappho was a teacher surrounded by her pupils.¹ A crucial

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component of this reconstruction was the alleged age of Sappho's companions: in his seminal book, *Sappho von einem herrschenden Vorurtheil befreyt* ([1845] 97), Welcker equated the μαθήτριάι and the ἑταῖραι of *Suda* (σ 107 A.), identifying them with persons younger than the poet: Sappho was an adult, the pupils παῖδες and παρθένοι.

ἑταῖραι δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ φίλαι γέγονασι τρεῖς, Ἀτθίς, Τελεσίππα, Μεγάρα· πρὸς ἃς καὶ διαβολὴν ἔσχεν αἰσχρᾶς φιλίας. μαθήτριάι δὲ αὐτῆς Ἀναγόρα Μιλησία, Γογγύλα Κολοφωνία, Εὐνείκα Σαλαμινία.

(*Suda* σ 107 A.)²

According to Stehle and Parker, this idea is based only on late *testimonia*, and does not go back to Sappho's *ipsissima verba*. Further, if several sources represent the poet as being surrounded by young women, it is likely that Sappho's poems were oriented towards at least two different contexts and, consequently, two audiences: one consisting of adult companions in communal meetings of women, the other consisting of the bride's young friends along with her family and its allies at wedding feasts. The equation made by Welcker of μαθήτριάι and ἑταῖραι would then be wrong: in the words of Parker,

¹ Cf. Welcker (1816) = (1845), Müller (1841) = (1865) 364 ff., Schmid (1912) 198 f., Wilamowitz (1913), Bowra

(1936) 187-90, who he eliminates in (1961²) all references to *thiasos* present in (1936), Schadewaldt (1950) 11, Merkerbach (1957), Gentili 1984 = (2006) 138 ff., Calame (1977) I 363-385 = (1996), and Lardinois (1994): cf. Caciagli (2011) 299-303.

² *Suda* σ 107 A.: 'she had three companions and friends, Atthis, Telesippa and Megara, and she got a bad name for her impure friendship with them. Her pupils were Anagora of Miletus, Gongyla of Colophon, and Eunice of Salamis' (transl. Campbell).

there is absolutely nothing [...] to show that Sappho was an older woman (or) [...] that her addressees were young children, or that they left her care for marriage. This latter wide-spread assumption seems to be built entirely on the fact that she wrote epithalamia – as if that were all she wrote [...]. On this slender basis has been erected the whole tower of Sappho Schoolmistress.³

So, if we restrict ourselves to Sappho's *ipsissima verba* and dismiss the late *testimonia*, no young women surround the poet when she sang for her companions.⁴ Of course, the epithalamic poems mention παῖδες, παρθένοι and νύμφαι, but it is impossible to say whether these women were members of Sappho's group. Indeed, a bride's family might commission Sappho to compose a wedding poem simply because she was a famous poet. However, according to Parker, the fragments that imply a female community refer not to young women, but to φίλαι and ἑταῖραι, one example being fr. 160 V. τάδε νῦν ἑταίραις / ταῖς ἑμαῖσι †τερπνὰ† καλῶς ἀείσω. When in a poem we find companions, we have to assume that the audience consisted of age-mates of the *persona loquens*, because the word ἑταῖρος in Greek seems to imply a relatively equal status between the companions.⁵ By way of comparison it is never suggested that Archilochus' or Alcaeus' companions were young, so why would the situation be different, seeing that Sappho shares themes with such sympotic poets? At the conclusion of his essay, perhaps as a challenge, Parker even proposes a sympotic context for fr. 2 V., the famous garden poem, where Aphrodite is invoked to pour a libation.

³ Parker (1993) 322 f.

⁴ After Parker's and Stehle's publications, *P. Oxy.* 1787 (= fr. 58 V.) was joined to *P. Köln* 429+430: in this poem, as before as now, appears the word παῖδες. In my view, the new text does not change the question of the presence of young women in Sappho's community: in fact, it is difficult to say in which kind of context this song was performed.

⁵ Cf. Chantraine (1968-1980) 393; Calame (1977) I 76-77.; Caciagli (2011) 93-96.

Parker and Stehle's reading of the evidence deserves serious consideration, but it certainly goes too far. In first place, the complete assimilation between Sappho and the male poets that they propose fails to take into account fundamental differences in ancient Greece between the social roles of men and women. Second, it is difficult to dismiss the presence of young women in Sappho's community and to eliminate the evidence of the *testimonia*: the sources, of course, report unlikely and imaginative elements, but may also embed pieces of information from lost poems. If the *testimonia* are to be treated as authentic primary source material, the kind of rigorous *Quellenforschung* that Welcker established at the beginning of nineteenth-century with his aforesaid book is called for⁶: instead of dismissing sources, it would be important to consider how, in what context and for what reason a piece of evidence might have been fabricated in antiquity. In this way, it can be determined whether a *testimonium* stems from a text of a poet or is the product of mere speculation. Further, the idea that Sappho addressed herself to two different audiences – one consisting of female companions, the other nuptial – is hardly self-evident. If it is possible to assume that the poet composed wedding poems for her φίλαι – as I deduce from fr. 27 V.⁷ – it is nevertheless true that a Sappho who composes for brides to whom she has no ties of φιλότης suggests the possibility of a professional role. In my opinion, this professional role is difficult to demonstrate in archaic Greece at least until Anacreon and Polycrates' "court".⁸

Despite these problems, there is, **to be sure**, some truth in the criticism of 'Sappho Schoolmistress.' For this poet shares with others several themes; moreover, her audience shares

⁶ Cf. Calder (1998) 64 ff.

⁷ Cf. Caciagli (2009).

⁸ Cf. Sappho fr. 213Ag and, further, Ferrari (2007) 50-52: in any case, I am sceptical about the possibility of a sort of professionalism of archaic poets until at least Anacreon: if it is difficult to definite the status of Aleman in Sparta, poets like Archilochus, Alcaeus or Sappho seem to me to be the poetical voices of small groups, where real relationships of φιλότης bind their members: cf. Rösler (1976), (1980) 33-6, Caciagli (2011) 56 ff.

structurally similarities with the male communities of companions, both of which probably consisted of persons who came from the same family or alliance of families, i.e. from a sort of faction.⁹ A poem such as fr. 71 V., in this context, is revealing, displaying as it does the direct relationship between a name of a family and the concept of φιλότης.

x-~--~--~]μις σε Μίκα

x-~--~]ελα[. . .]λά σ' ἔγωϋκ ἔάσω

x-~--~]ν φιλότ[ατ'] ἦλεο Πενθιλήαν

4 x-~--~--~]δα κα[κό]τροπ', ἄμμα[.(.)]

(Sappho fr. 71.1-4 V.)¹⁰

Here, I cannot examine in depth the question of the composition of Lesbian feminine groups and their relationship with the aristocratic families of Lesbos, but I would like at least to sketch the outlines of the argument that Sappho's audience was likely a version of a *ἐταιρεία*, i.e. the female equivalent of the sort of male group that is well known in archaic and classical Greece.¹¹ Indeed, it seems likely to me that the members of Sappho's group were recruited from the female members of an alliance of Lesbian families, which surrounded a more influential one, perhaps the Cleanactidae.¹² In my view, these groups of *ἐταῖραι* and *φίλοι* represent the way that Lesbian society had "chosen" to organize the members of its aristocracy, divided in different factions: these communities were likely active in

⁹ Cf. Parker (1993) 343 ff.

¹⁰ Sappho fr. 71.1-4 V.: '... Mica... you / ... but I shall not allow you / ... you chose the friendship of ladies of the house of Penthilus / ..., you villain, ...' (transl. Campbell).

¹¹ Cf. Calhoun (1913), Sartori (1957), Ghinatti (1970), Welwei (1992), and Rösler 1980.

¹² Cf. Caciagli (2011) 212 ff.

several contexts, domestic, public, and sacral. This reconstruction is not in contrast to the fact that some of Sappho's companions were not Lesbian, since the relationship of ξενία between the faction of the poetess and others from abroad can explain this situation, especially if all her family was involved in seaborne trade, as Charaxus was.¹³ If we follow Parker in comparing Alcaeus' and Sappho's groups, we have to postulate that their audiences consisted of both young and adult members, at least in some contexts. In fact, Alcaeus' and Theognis' pederastic poetry testifies to the presence of young men – probably the relatives of ἑταῖροι – in the main meeting of ἑταιρεία, i.e. the symposium, where they served as cupbearers.¹⁴ On the other hand, when we consider together the evidence of Sappho's fr. 24a V., the recurrence of the word ἑταῖρα in her corpus generally, and a close reading of ll. 199-202 of Ovid's fifteenth *Epistle*, it is possible to postulate the presence of adult women in addition to παῖδες and παρθένοι in Sappho's group.¹⁵ If the structure of Sappho's group is similar to that of Alcaeus', there would seem to be significance in the fact that some fragments of Sappho attest gestures that recall sympotic ones, like pouring wine in fr. 2 V. or wearing a crown in fr. 94 V.

So, if the emphasis on Sappho's *ipsissima verba* seems to be unproblematic, we should not dismiss the *testimonia*, which should rather be evaluated through a study of their sources. However, the problem is not only the understanding of the sources, but also of the fragments: the latter could mislead, in the sense that the interpretation of a poem can be affected by the context of quotation. For example, the sympotic atmosphere that it is possible to detect in some of the fragments could be a

¹³ The Greek seaborne trade was based on ξενία in the Archaic Age: cf. Caciagli (2011) 261 f. and 269-74.

¹⁴ About the link between ἑταιρεία and symposium, cf. Murray (1983abc), (1991), and Schmitt-Pantel (1992) 17 ff.; about pederastic poetry, cf. Buffière (1980), Vetta (1982): given the existence of Alcaeus' pederastic poetry, it is impossible to eliminate the presence of young men in Alcaeus' sympotic audience. About the identity of young men in the aristocratic symposium, cf. Caciagli (2011) 92 ff. and 169 ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Caciagli (2011) 10 ff.

consequence of their being quoted in a sympotic context. In this respect, my present discussion is a sort of self-criticism: my understanding of Sappho's community as a sort of female *ἐταιρεία* is in part based on fragments where the word *ἐταίρα* appears, fragments mostly attested by Athenaeus, who seems to hint at a sympotic tradition in his *Deipnosophistai*.

Given these considerations, it is first of all interesting to consider the concept of “companionship” in Sappho. The word *ἐταίρα* is attested three times in her work, as well as in a *testimonium* to fr. 2 V. Thus we find it in fr. 126 V., quoted in a lexicographic context for *δαύω*.

δαύω· τὸ κοιμῶμαι· Σαπφῶ (fr. 126 V.)· ‘δαύοις ἀπάλας ἐταίρας ἐν στήθεσιν’ λέγει δὲ Ἡρωδιανὸς ὅτι ἅπαξ κεῖται ἡ λέξις παρὰ Σαπφοῖ

(*Etymologicum Genuinum Gen.* AB (46 Calame) = *Etym. Magn.* 250.10 f.)¹⁶

Here, it is possible only to say that the addressee of the *persona loquens* is, at least, a *παρθένος*, because of her physical maturity. It is on the other hand difficult to identify the speaker owing to the easy confusion made by the sources between the *persona loquens* and the author of a poem.

The word *ἐταίρα* also figures in frr. 142 and 160 V., transmitted by Athenaeus in a passage to be analysed presently. Sappho fr. 160 V. is essential for the reconstruction of Sappho's audience; the performative future *ἄείσω* and the audience consisting of companions promise a context that could recall a performance at symposium. This context is not so different from what we see in fr. 22 V., i.e. it is possible to postulate for Sappho a sort of domestic gathering very similar to male ones.

¹⁶ *Etymologicum Genuinum* AB (46 Calame) = *Etym. Magn.* 250.10 f.: ‘δαύω, “sleep” : “May you sleep on the bosom of your tender companion” Herodian says that the word occurs once only in Sappho’ (transl. Campbell).

Incidentally, Athenaeus uses ἑταῖρος when he finishes the quotation of Sappho's fr. 2 V.: this poem, or better its quotation in *Learned Banqueters*, will also be analysed below.

With regard to the use of word ἑταῖρα and the audience that it implies, it is hardly a revelation that, in a work entitled *The Learned Banqueters*, Sappho would appear to be a sympotic poet: the manner in which her *ipsissima verba* are excerpted from the original context and reworked in the new one could deeply affect their meaning. In addition, there is another problem, one that concerns the textual tradition of the Sapphic fragments quoted by Athenaeus. According to Nicosia ([1976] 29 ff.), all of her fragments as well as those of Alcaeus that we know derive – directly or indirectly – from Alexandrian editions. This interpretation holds generally, apart from *P. Köln* 429+430. However, we may also note that Athenaeus knows sympotic anthologies, such as the *Carmina convivalia Attica*, which circulated from the 6th century for the use of symposiasts: the *Theognidea* may have the same origin.¹⁷ The *Carmina convivalia Attica* is of great interest in the context of the tradition of Aeolic poetry, because here a “quotation” of Alcaeus' fr. 249 V.¹⁸ appears, with some variants in comparison with *P. Oxy.* 2298 fr. 1. As to the *Carmina convivalia Attica*, we should imagine a sympotic tradition, especially if – as argued by Fabbro ([1995] XLII) – these poems were probably collected during the 5th century, i.e. before the Alexandrian edition of Alcaeus.

In any case, it is conceivable that, out of their original context, Sappho's poems have been seen as erotic ones suitable for *symposium*: in fact, Plutarch (*Quaestiones convivales* 622c)¹⁹ and

¹⁷ Cf. Fabbro (1995) XXV and Colesanti (2011) 219-241.

¹⁸ *Carmina convivalia*, PMG 891 = Ath. 15.695a (cf. Alc. fr. 249 V.) ἐκ γῆς χρῆ κατίδην πλόον, / εἴ τις δύναιτο καὶ παλάμην ἔχοι. / ἐπεὶ δέ κ' ἐν πόντῳ γένηται, / τῷ παρεόντι τρέχειν ἀνάγκη.

¹⁹ Plut., *Quaest. conv.* 622c ἐζητεῖτο παρὰ Σοσσίῳ Σαπφικῶν τινῶν ἀσθέντων, ὅπου καὶ τὸν Κύκλωπα “μούσαις εὐφώνοις ἰᾶσθαι” φησὶ “τὸν ἔρωτα” Φιλόξενος.”

Aulus Gellius (19.9)²⁰ seem to attest the presence of Sappho in the poetical *corpus* that was sung during symposia in Roman Age. If we trust in the story handed down by Aelian (fr. 190 Domingo-Forasté),²¹ it is also possible to postulate that the insertion of Sappho in a sympotic context was not only a Roman custom, for he relates that Solon listened to a boy singing a μέλος of Sappho during a symposium and wished to learn it by heart. Does this setting really come from a long tradition, one that begins in Archaic Age? Is Athenaeus, in a sense, an inheritor of this long tradition? According to Yatromanolakis (2007), the symposium was a fundamental moment for Sappho's tradition, maybe more than comedy, which is thought to be mainly responsible for the distorted image of this poet from Welcker onwards. In any case, some vase paintings in the late 6th century testify to the presence of Sappho's poems in Attic symposia: these vases have a sympotic shape and represent a female figure with the label "Sappho".²² Moreover, Sappho is not unique in this respect, for Anacreon is also represented on Attic pottery, interestingly during a time in which he lived in Athens. The earliest mentions of Sappho in Greek literature pose perhaps insoluble questions: in fact, if the mention of Sappho by Alcaeus (fr. 384 V.) is far from being certain,²³ the origin of the story about Charaxus in

²⁰ Gell. 19.9 *ac posteaquam introducti pueri puellaeque sunt, iucundum in modum Ἀνακρεόντεια pleraque et Sapphica et poetarum quoque recentium ἐλεγεία quaedam erotica dulcia et venusta cecinerunt.*

²¹ Ael. fr. 190 Domingo-Forasté Σόλων ὁ Ἀθηναῖος Ἐξηκестίδου παρὰ πότον τοῦ ἀδελφίδου αὐτοῦ μέλος τι Σαπφοῦς ἄσαντος, ἦσθη τῷ μέλει καὶ προσέταξε τῷ μειρακίῳ διδάξει αὐτόν. ἐρωτήσαντος δέ τινος διὰ ποίαν αἰτίαν τοῦτο σπουδάσειεν, ὃ δὲ ἔφη “ἵνα μαθὼν αὐτὸ ἀποθάνω”.

²² Cf. Yatromanolakis (2007) 63 ff.: the label 'Sappho' is on a *kalpis* (Warsaw, National Museum, inv. 142333: 510-500 BC), on a *kalathos-psykter* (Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, inv. 2416 : 480-470 BC), on a *krater* (Bochum, Ruhr-Universität, Kunstsammlungen, inv. S 508: 580-470 BC), on a *hydria* (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 1260: 440-430 BC).

²³ The reading Σάπφοι is problematic for linguistic reasons in Sappho fr. 384 V.: cf. Liberman (1999) 169 n. 339.

Herodotus (2.135)²⁴ and the way in which Plato (*Phdr.* 235c)²⁵ knew her work are equally difficult to ascertain. The example of the former *New Sappho* (*P. Köln* 429+430) is interesting in this regard, since it could show the insertion of our poet into a 3rd century B.C. anthology, perhaps of sympotic origin.²⁶

Although the elements are unclear and difficult to understand, it is likely that the symposium was an important moment of Sappho's tradition as it was of Alcaeus', Solon's, Mimnermus' or Anacreon's. If this hypothesis has merit again, it is conceivable that this tradition has affected the manner in which Athenaeus quotes Sappho: it is possible that the manner of excision from the original poems itself assimilates her to sympotic poets. In view of the direct link between sympotic groups and *ἐταιρεῖαι* in 6th and 5th centuries B.C., the assimilation of Sappho's audience to a *ἐταιρεία* suggested above could be also the last consequence of the reworking that turned Sappho to a sympotic poet. This being the case, Sappho's *ipsissima verba* as quoted by Athenaeus would be unreliable out of context, a point that is very important for arguments of Parker and Stehle and – finally – for my own reconstruction of the social background of Sappho's poetry.

In what follows, I shall adduce three examples, from which it is possible to observe different ways in which Athenaeus reworks Sappho's poems. The first comes from the beginning of the 13th book of the *Deipnosophistai*, the topic of which is *ἔρωσ* and *κάλλος*.

²⁴ Cf. Lidov (2002). The so-called *Brothers Poem*, published by Obbink (2014 and 2016), testifies the presence of the name of Charaxus in her *corpus*, along with that of Larichus. Without accepting Lidov's scepticism about the story of Charaxus and Doricha, the new text doesn't allow a certain link between this new poem and Sappho fr. 5, 15 V., although I think that this link is very likely: cf. Caciagli (2011) 249 ff.

²⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus* 235c δῆλον δὲ ὅτι τινῶν ἀκήκοα, ἣ που Σαπφοῦς τῆς καλῆς ἢ Ἀνακρέοντος τοῦ σοφοῦ ἢ καὶ συγγραφέων τινῶν.

²⁶ Cf. Aloni (2008) 154 ff.

περὶ τῶν ὄντως ἑταιρῶν τὸν λόγον πεποίημαι, τουτέστιν τῶν φιλίαν ἄδολον συντηρεῖν δυναμένων, ἃς ὁ Κύνουλκος τολμᾷ λοιδορεῖν, <τάς> μόνας τῶν ἄλλων γυναικῶν τῇ τῆς φιλίας ὀνόματι προσηγορευμένας [ἦ] ἀπὸ τῆς παρὰ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις καλουμένης Ἑταίρας [τῆς] Ἀφροδίτης. περὶ ἧς φησιν ὁ Ἀθηναῖος Ἀπολλόδωρος ἐν τοῖς περὶ Θεῶν οὕτως. ‘Ἑταίραν δὲ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην τὴν τοὺς ἑταίρους καὶ τὰς ἑταίρας συνάγουσαν· τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶν φίλας’. καλοῦσι γοῦν καὶ αἱ ἐλεύθεραι γυναῖκες ἔτι καὶ νῦν καὶ αἱ παρθένοι τὰς συνήθεις καὶ φίλας ἑταίρας, ὡς ἡ Σαπφώ (fr. 160 V.)·

τάδε νῦν ἑταῖραις

ταῖς ἐμαῖσι τερπνὰ καλῶς ἀείσω.

καὶ ἔτι (fr. 142 V.)·

Λατὼ καὶ Νιόβα μάλα μὲν φίλαι ἦσαν ἑταῖραι.

(Ath. 13.571c-d)²⁷

After an introductory section, the *deipnosophistai* Myrtilus and Cynulcus engage in a debate. The first (563d) finds fault with the Stoics because they refuse relationships with women, but love young boys; afterwards, he praises the beauty of women and men. Cynulcus (566e) replies that Myrtilus’

²⁷ Ath. 13.571c-d: ‘What I have described are instead actual courtesans, which is to say, women capable of maintaining a friendship not based on trickery, but whom Cynulcus dares to insult, even though they are the only women addressed as “friendly”, a name they get from the Aphrodite known in Athens as Hetaira (‘the Courtesan’). Apollodorus of Athens in his *On the Gods* (FGrH 244 F 112) says the following about her: “Aphrodite Hetaira, who brings together male and female companions (*hetairai*), that is to say female friends (*philai*). Even today, at any rate, free women and girls refer to their friends and associates as *hetairai*, just like Sappho (fr. 160 V.): “I will now sing these / † pleasant † songs beautifully for my *hetairai*.” Furthermore (Sappho fr. 142 V.): “Lato and Nioba were very close *hetairai*”.’ (transl. Olson, reworked).

scholarship is not a real πολυμαθία, but πορνογραφία: he accuses him of spending his time in wine shops, not with his friends (ἑταίρων) but with courtesans (ἑταιρῶν).²⁸ Myrtilus retorts that he would like to discuss only the ἑταῖραι in the original sense of the word, linked to the concept of φιλία and companionship. It is for this reason that he quotes the two examples from Sappho because, like her, ‘even today [...] free women and girls refer to their friends and associates as *hetairai*’ (transl. Olson). With these words, Myrtilus ultimately assimilates Sappho’s group to Athenaeus’ *deipnosophistai*, both consisting of companions, and so subverts the beginning of Cynulcus’ speech about ἑταῖροι and ἑταῖραι.

Do the Sapphic fragments come from a sympotic tradition? Of course the subject of courtesans is typical of the symposium, but the structure of Myrtilus’ speech seems to be related to a different tradition: the sophist explains the real meaning of ἑταῖρα and gives several examples in a way that recalls a treatise. In any case, Athenaeus – or his source – could have reworked the *ipsissima verba* of Sappho in such a way that it is now impossible to catch their original meaning and their audience. Out of context, for example, it is hard to determine the kind of performance hinted at in fr. 160 V. and the kind of relationship the companions have with Sappho; further, it is also difficult to say whether Sappho really is the *persona loquens* in this fragment or another woman. So, at least in this case, it is difficult to determine the context of the *ipsissima verba*.

My second example comes from the 15th book of the *Deipnosophistai*.

²⁸ Ath. 13.567a σὺ δέ, ὦ σοφιστά, ἐν τοῖς καπηλείοις συναναφύρη οὐ μετὰ ἑταίρων ἀλλὰ μετὰ ἑταιρῶν, μαστροπευούσας περὶ σαυτὸν οὐκ ὀλίγας ἔχων καὶ περιφέρων αἰεὶ τοιαυτὴ βιβλία Ἀριστοφάνους καὶ Ἀπολλοδώρου καὶ Ἀμμωνίου καὶ Ἀντιφάνους, ἔτι δὲ Γοργίου τοῦ Ἀθηναίου, πάντων τούτων συγγεγραφότων περὶ τῶν Ἀθήνησι Ἑταιρίδων.

ἐστεφανοῦντο δὲ καὶ τὰ στήθη καὶ ἐμύρουν ταῦτα, ἐπεὶ αὐτόθι ἡ καρδία. Ἐκάλουν δὲ καὶ οἷς περιεδέοντο τὸν τράχηλον στεφάνους ὑποθυμίδας, ὡς Ἀλκαῖος (fr. 362.1 f. V.) ἐν τούτοις:

ἀλλ' ἀνήτω μὲν περὶ ταῖς δέρασι

περθέτω πλεκτὰς ὑποθυμίδας τίς

καὶ Σαπφῶ (fr. 94.15 f. V.):

καὶ πολλαῖς ὑποθυμίδας

πλεκταῖς ἀμπ' ἀπαλαῖ δέρα.

καὶ Ἀνακρέων (PMG 397):

πλεκτὰς δ' ὑποθυμίδας περὶ στήθεσι λωτίνας ἔθεντο.

Αἰσχύλος δ' (fr. 202, 235 R.²) ...

Σαπφῶ δ' ἀπλούστερον τὴν αἰτίαν ἀποδίδωσιν τοῦ στεφανοῦσθαι ἡμᾶς, λέγουσα τάδε (fr. 81.4-7 V.):

σὺ δὲ στεφάνοις, ὦ Δίκα, περθέσθ' ἐραταῖς φόβαισι

ὄρπακας ἀνήτοιο συνεργαῖς ἀπαλαῖσι χερσίν.

εὐανθέα γὰρ πέλεται καὶ Χάριτες μάκαιρα

μᾶλλον προσόρην, ἀστεφανώτοισι δ' ἀνυστρέφονται.

ὡς εὐανθέστερον γὰρ καὶ κεχαρισμένον μᾶλλον τοῖς θεοῖς παραγγέλλει στεφανοῦσθαι τοὺς θύοντας.

(Ath. 15.674c-e)²⁹

²⁹ Ath. 15.674c-e: ‘They put garlands around their chests as well, and covered them with perfume, since that is where the heart is located. They referred to the garlands they wrapped around their necks as *hupothumides*, as for example Alcaeus (fr. 362.1 f. V.) in the following passage: “But let someone place *upathumides* woven / of anise about our necks.” Also Sappho (fr. 94.15 f. V.): “and many woven / *upathumides* around my soft neck.” And Anacreon (PMG 397): “They placed / *hupothumides* made of *lotos* about their chests.” Aeschylus ... Sappho (fr. 81.4-7) offers a simpler explanation of why we wear garlands, saying the following: “Wrap anise shoots together into garlands, Dica, / with your soft hands, and place them around your lovely hair; /

The book begins with a discussion of the sympotic game of cottabos; then Cynulcus (669c) proposes to talk about crowns, because the παῖδες are bringing crowns and unguents to the banqueters: it is the typical act that begins a symposium after a banquet. After a section about lovers with crowns and about the plant *agnus castus*, Democritus notices that it is possible to put crowns on the breast: these crowns have a particular name, ὑποθυμιάδες. In this regard, he quotes verses from Alcaeus (fr. 362.1 V.), Sappho (fr. 81.4-7 and 94.15 f. V.) and Anacreon (*PMG* 397), in which the actions represented are very similar: with Anacreon and Alcaeus, we are faced with a practice peculiar to a symposium. What about Sappho? We could think about an assimilation of the actions represented by Sappho to sympotic practices, in particular with regard to the acts that begin a symposium; in this regard, it is quite interesting that Sappho is quoted in this series. However, the original meaning of Sappho's fr. 94 V., from which the quotation is excerpted, has a context that can be hardly related to a symposium: in fact, the Sapphic ὑποθυμιάδες scene concludes with an erotic involvement on στρωμαί (l. 21), which cannot be directly assimilated to sympotic κλῖναι, because στρωμνή means only "bed", i.e. a 'place where you lie down for the night.'³⁰ Furthermore, the wine is absent. On the contrary, it is likely that Sappho represents in this poem a female communal scene that leads to an erotic

with fine flowers † for it is † and the blessed Graces / more [corrupt], but turn away from those who wear / no garlands." For she recommends that people making a sacrifice wear garlands, because whatever has more flowers is more appealing to the gods' (transl. Olson).

³⁰ Cf. Page (1955) 79. Sappho fr. 94.14-23 V.: ... π<ε>ρεθήκα<ο> / καὶ πόλλαις ὑπαθύμιδας / πλέκταις ἀμφ' ἀπάλα δέρρα / ἀνθέων ε[- 6 -] πεποημέναις / καὶ ... / ... / ... / καὶ στρώμν[αν ἐ]πι μολθάκαν / ἀπάλαν πα... [-]ογων / ἐξίης πόθο[v -]νε]ανίδων, 'you ... and round your tender neck you put many woven garlands made from flowers and ... and on soft beds ... you would satisfy your longing for tender young women' (transl. Campbel, reworked).

involvement in a – possibly – sacral or domestic atmosphere.³¹ In any case, what is represented in Sappho's fr. 94 V. has several similarities with a sympotic scenario, with the hints at unguents, crowns and *στομναί*, which are different from but – of course – recall sympotic *κλῖναι*: it is possible that these elements favour a reworking of these lines in a sympotic way.

Nevertheless, Athenaeus' passage in its entirety does not concern only the actions that characterize a symposium, but also sacral ones, related with a sort of sacrifice. In fact, when Democritus explains why human beings have to crown themselves he explains that gods look with favour on those who do it: on this subject, he quotes Sappho's fr. 81 V., identifying its context with a *θυσία*. If the context is clearly different from a sympotic one, the topic of fr. 81 V. is nevertheless consistent with the beginning of a symposium: in fact, a convivial male meeting was characterized by a sacral *aura*, as we infer from the *incipit* of the *Theognidea* or of the *Carmina convivalia Attica*. In any case, this passage is probably similar to the previous example: the quotations of Anacreon, Sappho and Alcaeus seem to be quoted by Athenaeus or his source for linguistic reasons, i.e. because the word *ὑποθυμιάς* appears here. So Athenaeus would not collect sympotic passages, following a thematic approach, but possibly used a source about crowns and *ὑποθυμιάδες* in general, maybe a *σύγγραμμα*, in which the verses of these poets were already connected.

The last example is from the 11th book and is more remarkable than the previous ones. The *deipnosophistai* settle down on *κλῖναι* and one of them, Plutarchus, introduces the topic of the current symposium, i.e. the cups. As we are going to see below, the latter Sapphic excerpt seems to recall all the previous quotations and provide a good conclusion for Plutarchus' opening words. In what is quoted below, I have highlighted in bold the words that recall those of Sappho's fr. 2 V. at the end of the passage. Furthermore, it is important to note that the Sapphic quotation is not complete: I suspect

³¹ Cf. Ferrari (2003) 64, Caciagli (2011) 175 ff.

that Athenaeus hints at what is omitted through passages that precede Sappho, especially though Xenophanes' poem. So I have underlined in the passages that precede the Sapphic quotation the words that appear in what Athenaeus omits of fr. 2 V.

ὄρῶν οὖν ὑμῶν καὶ αὐτὸς τὸ συμπόσιον κατὰ τὸν Κολοφώνιον Ξενοφάνη πλήρες ὄν πάσης
θυμηδίας (fr. 1 G.-P.).

νῦν γὰρ δὴ ζάπεδον καθαρὸν καὶ χεῖρες ἀπάντων
καὶ **κύλικες**· πλεκτοὺς δ' ἀμφιτιθεῖ στεφάνους,
ἄλλος δ' εὐῶδες μύρον ἐν φιάλῃ παρατείνει·
κρατήρ δ' ἔστηκεν μεστὸς εὐφροσύνης·
ἄλλος δ' **οἶνος** ἔτοιμος, ὃς οὔποτε φησι προδώσειν,
μείλιχος ἐν κεράμοις, ἄνθεος ὀσδόμενος·
ἐν δὲ μέσοις ἀγνὴν ὀδμὴν λιβανωτὸς ἴησι·
ψυχρὸν δ' ἐστὶν ὔδωρ καὶ γλυκὺ καὶ καθαρὸν.
πάρκεινται δ' ἄρτοι ξανθοὶ γεραρὴ τε τράπεζα
τυροῦ καὶ μέλιτος πίονος ἀχθομένη·
βωμὸς δ' ἄνθεσιν ἂν τὸ μέσον πάντη πεπύκασται,
μολπὴ δ' ἀμφὶς ἔχει δώματα καὶ **θαλίη**.

...

οὔτι μάχας διέπειν Τιτήνων οὐδὲ Γιγάντων
οὐδέ <τι> Κενταύρων, πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων,
ἢ στάσιας σφεδανάς, τοῖς οὐδὲν χρηστὸν ἔνεστι,
θεῶν <δὲ> προμηθεῖην αἰὲν ἔχειν ἀγαθόν.

καὶ ὁ χαρίεις δ' Ανακρέων φησὶν (fr. eleg. 2 W.²).

οὐ φιλέω ὃς κρητῆρι παρὰ πλέῳ οἰνοποτάζων

νείκεα καὶ πόλεμον δακρυόεντα λέγη,
ἀλλ' ὅστις Μουσέων τε καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης
συμμίσγων ἐρατῆς μνήσεται εὐφροσύνης.

καὶ Ἴων δὲ ὁ Χῖός φησιν (fr. 27 W.² = fr. 2 Valerio).

χαιρέτω ἡμέτερος βασιλεύς, σωτήρ τε πατήρ τε·
ἡμῖν δὲ κρητῆρ' **οἰνοχόοι** θέραπες
κιρνάντων προχύταισιν ἐν ἀργυρέοις· ὁ δὲ **χρυσὸς**
οἶνον ἔχων χειρῶν νιζέτω εἰς ἔδαφος.
σπένδοντες δ' ἀγνώως Ἡρακλεί τ' Ἀλκμήνη τε,
Προκλεί Περσεΐδαις τ', ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχόμενοι,
πίνωμεν ...

ἐποιοῦντο δὲ καὶ οἱ ἑπτὰ καλούμενοι σοφοὶ συμποτικὰς ὁμιλίας ... συνιοῦσι καὶ ἡμῖν ἐπὶ τὰς
Διονυσιακὰς ταύτας λαλιὰς οὐδεὶς ἂν εὐλόγως φθονήσαι νοῦν ἔχων, κατὰ τοὺς Ἀλέξιδος
Ταραντίνους (fr. 222 K.-A.),

οἱ τῶν πέλας

οὐδέν' ἀδικοῦμεν οὐδέν ...
ἔγνωκα γοῦν οὕτως ἐπισκοπούμενος
εἶναι μανιώδη πάντα τὰνθρώπων ὅλως,
ἀποδημίας δὲ τυγχάνειν ἡμᾶς αἰεὶ
τοὺς ζῶντας, ὥσπερ εἰς **πανήγυριν** τινα
ἀφειμένους ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ σκότους
εἰς τὴν διατριβὴν εἰς τὸ φῶς τε τοῦθ', ὃ δὴ
ὀρῶμεν. ὅς δ' ἂν πλεῖστα γελάσῃ καὶ πῆ
καὶ τῆς **Ἀφροδίτης** ἀντιλάβηται τὸν χρόνον
τοῦτον ὃν ἀφεῖται, κἂν τύχη γ', ἐράνου τινός,

πανηγυρίσας ἥδιστ' ἀπῆλθεν οἴκαδε.

καὶ κατὰ τὴν καλὴν οὖν Σαπφώ (fr. 2.13-6 V.).

ἐλθέ, Κύπρι,

χρυσίαισιν ἐν κυλίκεσσιν ἀβρῶς

συμμεμιγμένον θαλίαισι νέκταρ

οἰνοχοῦσα

τούτοις τοῖς ἐταίροις ἐμοῖς τε καὶ σοῖς (σοι **A**³²).

(Ath. 11.462c-3e)³³

³² Cf. Bergk (1853) 669, Brunet (2003) 67.

³³ Ath. 11.462c-3e: ‘Since I can see for myself, then, that your party is full of happiness of every sort, as in the description offered by Xenophanes of Colophon (fr. 1 G.-P.); ‘For now the floor is clean, as are everyone's hands / and the cups. (One slave) places woven garlands around (our heads), / while another offers us fragrant perfume in a bowl; / and a mixing-bowl full of good cheer stands in the middle. / Another type of wine, sweet as honey and smelling of flowers, / is ready in the jars, and promises that we will never run out of it. / In our midst is frankincense that produces a sacred scent; / and the water is cold, delicious, and pure. / Golden-brown loaves of bread have been set beside us, along with a table full of honor / and heavy with cheese and dense honey. / In the middle is an altar covered on all sides with flowers; / song and dance and celebration fill the house. / ... / But they ought not to spend their time describing battles fought by Titans, or Giants, / or centaurs, stories our ancestors made up, / or their violent quarrels; topics of this sort are worthless. / Instead, they should always have good forethought for the gods.’ So too the witty Anacreon says (eleg. fr. 2 W.²): ‘I dislike the man who talks of quarrels and war, which is full of tears, / as he drinks wine beside a full mixing-bowl; / better someone who combines the Muses glorious gifts with those of / Aphrodite, and fixes his mind on the cheer we desire.’ Ion of Chios (fr. 27 W.²) as well says: ‘Hail to our king, savior and father! / Let the servants who pour the wine mix up a / bowl for us using silver pitchers (*prochutai*); † and the gold / having wine of hands let it wash onto the floor! † / Let us pour holy libations to Heracles and Alcmene, / and to Procles and the descendants of Perseus, although we begin with Zeus; / and let us drink ...’ The so-called Seven Wise Men

After a digression on the population of Kylikranes, Plutarchus assimilates the rejoicing of his companions with the banquet represented by Xenophanes in fr. 1 G.-P. The end of this poem, with a refusal to talk about wars, allows Plutarchus to quote Anacreon (fr. eleg. 2 W.²), where the poet rejects war and invites the audience to enjoy the banquet: these quotations permit to a connection to be made between the *deipnosophistai* and the Seven Sages. Plutarchus says that there is no blame for the learned banqueters, if they enjoy the sympotic chat, because, according to Alexis, life is a sort of short journey far from the darkness of death: so, we have to seize the moment. Alexis' invitation to enjoy Aphrodite is the reason to quote a section of Sappho's fr. 2 V., where the poet requests the goddess to come and pour nectar in gold cups. This summary makes clear how greatly this example differs from previous ones: the link that connects the quotations here is not linguistic, but thematic. In a sense, we are at the beginning of a sort of sympotic chain³⁴ that is based on picking up the words of previous poetical excerpts. In fact, all the passages revolve not only around the joy of the banquet, but also around some words and their synonyms: κύλιξ, οἶνος, θαλία, σπένδειν, συμμίγνυμι, χεῖν, χρυσός and Ἀφροδίτη. These words represent the best way to have εὐφροσύνη, an element suitable

also held drinking parties... when we gather for these Dionysiac conversations, “no one with any sense would have / reasonable grounds for resenting our behavior,” to quote Alexis' Men of Tarentum (fr. 222 K.-A., including what follows), “since we're not hurting / the people around us... / ... / But I've thought about it, and I've come to the following conclusion: / human existence is entirely, completely insane, / and as long as we're alive, we're enjoying / a reprieve, like going to a festival; / we've been released from death and darkness / and allowed to have a party in this light / we see. And whoever laughs the most, and drinks the most, / and grabs Aphrodite during the time / he's released, or a dinner party if he gets the chance – / he's the happiest when he goes home after the festival.” So to quote the lovely Sappho (fr. 2.13-16 V.): “Come, Cypris, / and daintily pour nectar mixed / with celebrations into gold cups” for these friends of yours and mine.’ (transl. Olson).

³⁴ Cf. Vetta (1980), Colesanti (2011) 8 ff.

for the symposia of the wise. In this context, Sapphic quotation is a fitting conclusion to Plutarchus' opening remarks, in that it picks up all the topics of his speech. Plutarchus directly connects Sapphic quotation with Alexis, who offers the exhortation to grab Aphrodite. In any case, the Sapphic quotation also picks up all the previous passages: for Κύπρι, one may compare Anacreon; for χρυσίασιν, Ion of Chios; for κυλίκεσσιν, Xenophanes; for συμμεμιγμένον, Anacreon; for θαλία, Xenophanes and Alexis; for the act of pouring wine, Xenophanes and Ion. In this context, Sappho's verses are suitable for a hymn, which is characteristic of the beginning of a symposium.

If we have a glance at the other *testimonium* of Sappho's fr. 2 V.,³⁵ the Florentine *ostrakon* (PSI 1300), we notice how Athenaeus – or his source – has possibly reworked Sappho's verses.

1a 

2a 

3a 

4a 

δεῦρό μ' ἐκ <Κ>ρήτας πρ[οσίοισ'] ἔναυκλον

ἄγνον, ὄππ[αι δῆ] χάριεν μὲν ἄλσος

μαλί[αν], βῶμοι δὲ <τε>θυμιάμε-

4 νοι [λι]βανώτω<ι>

ἐν δ' ὕδωρ ψῦχρον κελάδει δι' ὕσδων

μαλίαν, βρό<δ>οισι <δ>ὲ παῖς ὁ χῶρος

<ἐ>σκίαστ', αἰθυσσομένων δὲ φύλλων

8 κῶμα κατέρρει

³⁵ The text of Sappho fr. 2 V. that I print is the result of my [reading](#) of PSI 1300 [in 2009](#): I discuss it in Caciagli (2015).

ἐν δὲ λείμων ἱππόβοτος τέθαλε
 ἠρίνοις <ιν> ἄνθεσιν, αἰ <δ' > ἄηται
 μέλλιχα πνέροις < υ - υ - υ - x >
 12 < υ - υ - υ - υ >·
 ἔνθα δὴ cὺ †(.)υ .τ.[]† ἔλοισα, Κύπρι,
 χρυσ(ύ)αισις ἐν κυλίκεσσιν ἄβρωσ
 <ὀμμε>μείχμενον θαλίασι νέκταρ
 16 <οἰ>νοχόαισα[ι].³⁶

In Plutarchus' speech, the reference to the natural landscape of fr. 2 V. has completely disappeared: it is in this "garden" that the poetess invites Aphrodite to come and to pour nectar. The most important difference between the text of the *ostrakon* and Athenaeus' quotation is perhaps syntactical. With Sappho's words, Plutarchus summons Aphrodite through an imperative, ἐλθέ, on which οἰνοχοῦσα depends. In the case of the *ostrakon*, on the other hand, we do not find ἐλθέ, but ἔλοισα: with this participle we lose the main verb in Athenaeus. What about οἰνοχοῦσα? In l. 16, the *ostrakon* presents the reading οἰνοχοαισα[, with the potsherd breaking just after *alpha*. The imperative οἰνοχόαισον that Lobel and Page have proposed is based on a mistaken reading;³⁷ but while the reading does not commend itself, these editors – in my opinion – have stumbled on the correct sense of the sentence,

³⁶ 'Hither come to me from Crete, going to this holy haunt, / in which is your delightful grove / of apple-trees, and altars smoking / with incense; / therein cold water babbles through apple-branches, / and the whole place / is shadowed by roses, and from the shimmering leaves / the sleep of enchantment comes down; / therein too a meadow, where horses graze, blossoms / with spring flowers, and the winds / blow gently . . . ; / ... / here, Cypris, taking . . . / pour gracefully into golden cups / nectar that is mingled with / our festivities.'

³⁷ The signs on *PSI* 1300 l. 17 seem to require the reading -αισα[: cf. Lanata (1960) 75, Ferrari (2000) 42 f., and Caciagli (2011) 138-141.

i.e. with an imperative at the end of the poem that is the main verb of ll. 13-16 in the original version of Sappho's poem. Of course we also look for a main verb in the lacuna of l. 13, but I think that the simplest solution is to interpret the *ostrakon* reading as οἶνοχόαισα[ι: this form could be an imperative middle or, perhaps better, an active infinitive of the aorist used imperatively.

If this reconstruction is correct, Athenaeus – or his source – will have completely reworked the syntactical construction of Sappho's sentence. Why? Plutarchus' aim is probably to invoke Aphrodite in order to perform a sympotic libation, as usual at the beginning of a symposium. The need to invoke Aphrodite probably entails Plutarchus quoting Sappho, given the strong relationship between this poetess and the goddess, but the invocation in fr. 2 V. does not fit with his speech: in fact, it does not imply a sympotic environment, because ll. 2-12 seem to represent a τέμενος, an ἔναυλος or, more generally, a shrine in which it is possible to imagine a sort of sacrifice and to which the poetess summons the goddess.³⁸ Of course, a sanctuary does not rule out a symposium, which could be performed after a sacrifice in a ἐστιατόριον:³⁹ however, I suggest that this latter location is inconsistent with the natural landscape described by Sappho. As to the syntax, the entire relative clause, which begins in l. 2, necessarily depends on a verb in l. 1 (or in a previous line), where an imperative is probably required: it is very likely that this verb was one of movement, because δεῦρο, ἐκ and ὄπρ[α in l. 1 seem to imply a movement from somewhere to the place where the *persona loquens* invokes the goddess; from l. 13 a new sentence begins, possibly with another imperative

³⁸ In my view, the reading ναῦ{γ}ον proposed by Lobel is not suitable for description that follows it: the poetess describes a natural landscape that is not fenced (*i.e.* it seems not a τέμενος), but that simply has altars. In any rate, it is really unconceivable a temple where there is a grove, a meadow and – probably – a river: an ἔναυλος ('a dwelling in the open air') seems to me the best correction of ENAYTONAIGNON in *PSI* 1300, but it is also possible that the right reading is ENAYΛONAIIGNON (the letter between *ypsilon* and *omikron* has the left stroke slightly curved).

³⁹ Cf. Caciagli (2014) 75-80.

(οἰνοχόαισα[ι?]), linked to the previous sentence by ἔνθα, which, in a sense, resumes the description of the natural landscape in ll. 1-12.

So then, in order to produce a sort of sympotic invocatory hymn, Athenaeus (or his source) eliminated all reference to the original context, which was not suitable for a banquet, and quoted only the end of the poem, where there is a libation that also suits a symposium. However, after the elimination of the beginning of Sappho's poem, the quotation has lost its invocatory verb. It is therefore tempting to imagine that Athenaeus (or his source) finds ἐλθέ in l. 1 or in a previous line, so that we should maybe fill it somewhere in the *incipit* of fr. 2 V.: he picks up it from here and puts it in l. 13, where on the *ostrakon* there is a word with a similar sound to ἐλθέ, that is ἔλοισα. Because of the room in the lacuna of l. 1 of the Florentine *ostrakon* and because of the metrical structure of this line, the verb cannot be ἔλθε if we would like to insert an invocatory verb in the lacuna of this line, but it could have been a compound of ἔρχομαι. Athenaeus (or his source) would thus also have simplified the compound, possibly playing with the poetical memory of his "audience", which knows that ἔλοισα has no preverb in the original context. Otherwise, we could also fill ἔλθε in the stanza that – according to me – has to be before l. 1.⁴⁰ If this reconstruction finds its mark, it is possible to postulate that the need to pick up the imperative from the beginning of Sappho's poem implies the change of οἰνοχόαισαι into a participle for syntactical reasons.

In short, I suggest that we may be confronting an oral technique of composition that was characteristic of the symposium from the archaic age onwards.⁴¹ A banqueter was able, by this

⁴⁰ In my view, it is difficult that l. 1 is the *incipit* of the poem: in fact, a prayer without an invocation at the beginning is very strange; further, the *Anrede* in l. 13 seems to require an invocation in *incipit*, if we consider the *Ringkomposition* that characterizes texts similar to fr. 2 V.: cf. e.g. Sappho fr. 1 and 5 V.

⁴¹ Pelling (2000) analyses the way used by Athenaeus to introduce and rework the quotations of the historians, adapting them to the context of learned symposia, in which the oral character of the communication was important.

technique, to rework “famous” poems in order to adapt them to new contexts. A good example of this phenomenon is the *Theognidea*, in which some elegies are connected to those that preceded them through a thematic or linguistic link, and some metrical or linguistically reworking to fit a famous poem to a new context is evident.⁴² If this reconstruction is plausible, it is interesting that the learned banqueter’s store of memorized poetry, which naturally includes Sappho’s poems, can have played a role. In fact, several elements of Sappho’s garden that have been eliminated by Athenaeus in order to fit his quotation to a sympotic context appear in Xenophanes’ poem, i.e. the first of Plutarchus’ quotations: ἄνθος, ἀγνός, λιβανωτός, ψυχρός, ὕδωρ, βωμός. So, when a learned reader arrives at Sappho’s quotation, which ends the introduction to the 11th book, it is possible that he retrospectively reinterprets these elements as an allusion to the section of fr. 2 V. that Plutarchus-Athenaeus has had to eliminate for contextual reasons. Faced with this situation, it is impossible to say whether the reworking is by Athenaeus or by a source that he has used, but the significant point is that the final result is a speech that is suitable for a sympotic context.

To sketch a conclusion, Sappho’s ἐταρεία is a problematic concept, when Athenaeus is the main witness for the fragments that could support this idea. Of course, the presence of the word ἐταίρα in these lines is relevant, but Athenaeus could hint at a pre-existing sympotic tradition in which they were included (and dating from 6th century B.C. onwards) or he could be reworking the texts of Alexandrian edition in order to emphasize sympotic themes. In a word, not only the *testimonia*, but also the *ipsissima verba* may be unreliable since they can be reworked in contexts that are very different from the original one. In this regard, the words used by Athenaeus to conclude the quotation of Sappho fr. 2.13-6 V. are quite interesting. Scholars have discussed whether the sentence that ends this quotation – τούτοις τοῖς ἐταίροις ἐμοῖς τε καὶ σοῖς – stems from Sappho or Plutarchus, the

⁴² Cf. Colesanti (2011) 16 ff. and 35 ff.

character in the *Deipnosophistai*: in any case, it is possible to postulate that, in Athenaeus' representation, Sappho's group is obviously conceived – by analogy with the Learned Banqueters – as a sympotic community. Could this verse or *testimonium* point to a sort of Sapphic *ἐταιρεία* for which the gathering of female companions was assimilated to male institution of the symposium? Is Parker's idea of a sympotic context for fr. 2 V. appealing? The juxtaposition – at least in the last example analysed – between Sappho's and Athenaeus' groups, which Athenaeus' readers could have made, is not really unprecedented: in fact, ll. 13-16 of fr. 2 V., which are suitable for a hymn at the beginning of a symposium, become sympotic in Plutarchus' speech.

I therefore conclude that a full appreciation of female *ἐταιρεία* cannot rest solely on Sappho's *ipsissima verba*, which can be as misleading as the *testimonia* are purported to be. When the aim is to reconstruct the social and performative context of Sappho's audience, caution in the use not only of *testimonia*, but also of fragments does not necessitate rejection of the idea of a female *ἐταιρεία*. This hypothesis still seems to me the best one, because it is based not only on *testimonia* and fragments, but also on the comparison between Sappho and other poets, especially Alcaeus, who – despite the difference of gender and, consequently, of social role – happens to be her contemporary and from the same society. On the other hand, the concept of *φιλότης* expressed in fr. 1 V. is consistent with that of *φιλότης* and *ἐταιρεία* in Alcaeus (cf. e.g. fr. 129.14-20 and 70.2-5V.), i.e. the reciprocal relationship between the members of a specific social group⁴³. Moreover, fr. 22 or 160 V. represent a musical performance not so different from those one could have found at a symposium. Thus we find in fr. 71 V., about the women of the Penthilidae, a society in which relationships of *φιλότης* were linked to familial relations in context of conflicts among different aristocratic factions, while in fr. 94 V. some activities of Sappho's group resemble those of Alcaeus or Anacreon.⁴⁴ All these poems,

⁴³ Cf. Caciagli (2011) 49-52 (for Alcaeus) and 52-88 (for Sappho).

⁴⁴ Cf. Caciagli (2011) 175-85.

which probably come from the Alexandrian editions, offer an idea of Sappho's community that is not so different from that of Alcaeus, one based on familial links and relationships of φιλότης. But then, whether we should trust the text of the Alexandrian edition without understanding the ways in which it was reworked is another intriguing question.

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