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# Sappho Fragment 2 L.-P.: Some Homeric Readings\*

Kai Heikkilä

## Introduction

The relationship of Sappho's poems to Homer has been studied several times.<sup>1</sup> Fairly recently four fragments of Sappho, namely frs. 1, 16, 31, and 44 L.-P. have been studied by Leah Rissman as to their Homeric allusions.<sup>2</sup> Rissman's methodological approach to Homeric allusions in Sappho deserves attention as a model with which to highlight the purposes and method of this study. Rissman assigns the types of Homeric allusions in three general categories: repetition of a word or expression, adaptation thereof and similarity of situation. The effect of the allusions is produced if the audience thinks of Homer in the first place.<sup>3</sup> She rightly notes that this approach involves several difficulties: epicisms in archaic poetry can be coincidental, lyric formulae may arise from an independent tradition, and what seem to be allusions to epic poetry may in fact be allusions to other poems.<sup>4</sup>

The present study sets out to compare certain key themes of Sappho's fragment 2 L.-P. to similar themes in Homer. Although certain lexical and thematic parallels will suggest that Sappho has constructed her poem with similar Homeric themes in mind, certainty is often impossible, and the corrupt state of parts of fr. 2 further complicates establishing

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\* Drafts of this paper have been read by Professor Jane Snyder at the Ohio State University and by Professor Maarit Kaimio at the University of Helsinki. I am grateful for their valuable comments and suggestions. All errors remain mine.

<sup>1</sup> Generally, M. Treu, *Von Homer zur Lyrik* (Zetemata 12), 1955, 136ff. passim. On the use of formulae E. Risch, *MH* 3, 1946 and more recently, F. Ferrari, "Formule saffiche e formule omeriche", *Ann. Scu. Norm. Sup. di Pisa XVI*, 1986, 441-447. For an excellent study on a Homeric expression in Sappho fr. 2, see P. Wiesman, "Was heisst koma?", in *MH* 29, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> L. Rissman, *Love as War: Homeric Allusion in the Poetry of Sappho* (Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 157), 1983.

<sup>3</sup> Rissman 1983, 15

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 14

exact Homeric borrowings. Yet even if direct Homeric influence could not be demonstrated, it can be safely assumed that Sappho and Homer work in the same tradition and make use of it for their own purposes. It should also be noted that most of Greek lyric poetry has a close relationship to Homer and the dominance of Homer in Greek culture and literature will have made it the most suggestive field of reference for the poets and their audience. Furthermore, the only surviving literary context, apart from some other lyric poetry, that is contemporaneous with Sappho or precedes her literary output is the epic tradition of Homer and Hesiod. Thus a comparison of Sappho to Homer is a matter of necessity dictated by the chance of survival. The purpose of this study is also to show that contrasting Sappho with the Homeric tradition will make the unique character of her work appear more clearly. Moreover, the Homeric parallels or allusions that can be plausibly identified often create a system of reference that Sappho uses to introduce different shades of meaning for a word, expression or image. How this system of reference emerges in fragment 2 and how it enhances the understanding of the meaning and artistry of the poem will be the main concern of this study.

#### Fragment 2 L.-P: The First Stanza

The basic structure of fr. 2 has been indicated in several studies.<sup>5</sup> The first stanza contains the address to a deity that is not mentioned, a plea that the deity come to a temple with a grove and an altar. The two following stanzas describe the grove in detail, and the fourth names the goddess Aphrodite and by asking her to perform a libation returns to the cletic and cultic setting of the first stanza. This establishes a tripartite structure for the poem (or the part of it that has been preserved) as well as the principle

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<sup>5</sup> I have followed the text established by D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus. An Introduction to the Study of Ancient Lesbian Poetry*, 1955, 34. For older literature (mostly dealing with textual problems), see his notes at 35, for structural analysis, 39ff. Page's text is followed closely by D. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry*, 1982, repr. 1990, 41-42. For further textual problems reference has also been made to the detailed study of the poem by G. Lanata in *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 1960, 64-90, to the edition by Eva-Maria Voigt (*Sappho et Alcaeus*, 1971, 33-35) and to the article by C. Gallavotti (*L'ode saffica dell'ostrakon*, *Bolletino dei Classici* ser. 3, fasc. 1, 1980, 3ff.). On questions of completeness and the identification of the genre, T. McEvelley, *Sappho Fragment Two*, *Phoenix* 26, 1972, 323ff. Further H. Saake, *Sappho Studien*, 1972, 62ff. The poem has been studied relatively little recently. The latest major account by A. P. Burnett, *Three Archaic Poets: Archilochus, Alcaeus, Sappho*, 1983, 259ff. is indispensable for textual problems, interpretation and bibliography.

of ring-composition without lexical pointers which are often used to announce the ring.<sup>6</sup>

The wish that the deity would appear is expressed by δεῦρον without the verb, if the word is not missing in the fragmentary first line.<sup>7</sup> The call upon the deity is followed by a short description of the locality: it is a holy temple (ναῦον ἄγνον)<sup>8</sup> where Aphrodite (as identified later in the fourth stanza) would find a pleasant grove (χάριεν ἄλσος) of apples with altars which have been perfumed with incense (βῶμοι τεθυμιάμενοι [λι]βανώτῳ). The key words temple, altar and grove have all been defined with adjectives and the grove with an additional μαλί[αν]. These words not only describe the place but also indicate by the addition of perfumed altars that a cult is being practised. These notions of locality and activity anticipate the following stanzas so that an introduction is created which already indicates the structure and the basic ideas of the poem. A thorough analysis of the first stanza is therefore essential for a proper understanding of the poem as a whole.

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<sup>6</sup> Whether the fragmentary line (numbered 1a by Voigt 1971, 33) that begins the text of the ostrakon actually belongs to the poem is a vexed question. Page 1955, 35 points out that the text as it stands cannot belong to the ending of a Sapphic stanza, although the copyist is careless to the extent that it is difficult to assume anything on the basis of the metrical distortion. Burnett 1983, 261, note 86 evaluates earlier solutions rightly emphasizing the inconclusive nature of the evidence. The solutions to the problem ranging from the rather ambitious attempt to reconstruct a complete first stanza by Theiler and von der Mühl (Das Sapphagedicht auf der Scherbe, MH 3, 1946, 22ff.) to the complete rejection of line 1a Voigt (e.g. McEvelley 1972) have to remain tentative. At any rate the problems of metre and dialect that line 1a presents make it likely that it does not belong to the poem and that line 1 indeed represents the beginning. See further M. West, *Maia* 22, 1970, 315ff. and A. Rivier MH 5, 1948, 227ff.

<sup>7</sup> Apart from δεῦρον the interpretation of the first line is extremely uncertain. Most scholars have contended that the line contains a mention of Crete or Cretans (e.g. Page 1955, 36), but this has been contested. See Burnett 1983, 262, note 87 and Gallavotti 1980, p. 5f. for different theories. Gallavotti proposes a solution that would turn the word +κρητεσι+ (this reading by Lanata 1960) into a third person of the verb κρητημι = κρατέω and consequently would do away with the clitic element of the first line. This solution seems hardly tenable, however, in view of the fact that it presupposes the existence of an atematic κρητημι, not conclusively proven by the existence of the aorist infinitive κρητησαι in Sappho fr. 20, and for the extremely corrupt state of the text here that makes emendations more or less conjectural. Moreover, if we indeed assume that this line begins the poem, we would expect a call of some sort upon Aphrodite, whose identity is subsequently revealed in the fourth stanza.

<sup>8</sup> Here the form ναῦον adopted by Page 1955, 34 and Voigt 1971, 33 seems to be preferable to the word ἐναῦλον proposed by Gallavotti 1980, 5, note 4, since the latter needs a heavier and more controversial emendation, especially the addition of the beginning epsilon of which there is hardly any trace on the ostrakon.

The aspect of cult of the first stanza of fr. 2 finds its Homeric parallel in the formulaic expression ἔνθα τέ οἱ τέμενος βωμός τε θυήεις, found several times in different contexts.<sup>9</sup> In Od. 8. 362f. Aphrodite moves from Olympus to her shrine (τέμενος) in Paphos where a fragrant altar (βῶμος θυήεις) awaits her and where the Charites will wash and anoint her body. The movement of the goddess from one place to another, the fact that she comes to her shrine and the fragrant altars there suggest strong similarity in theme and organization, the lexical connection being provided in the image of the fragrant altars. Both accounts move gradually deeper into the shrine to suggest the movement of the goddess, and the movement takes the same course in both: 1. Paphos - δεῦρυ, 2. τέμενος - ναῦος, 3. βῶμος - βῶμοι. Sappho gives a further lexical connection by describing the grove of the precinct as χάριεν (l. 2). In the Homeric passages describing Aphrodite's arrival at her temple she is assisted by Charites, who as personifications of erotic attraction are associated only with her.<sup>10</sup> Here Sappho seems to invite comparison between her poem and Aphrodite's advent scenes in Homer, although the goddess is not named by her until in the fourth stanza.

Despite the evident similarities, Sappho's first stanza is substantially different from its Homeric parallels. Already the function of Sappho's poem as a cletic hymn demands a different and more personal approach which is reflected in the cletic δεῦρυ and the use of the second person (τοῖ) when the goddess is addressed instead of the Homeric third person in οἱ.<sup>11</sup> The narrative purpose of Homer emphasizes the action and contains little of the descriptive and picturesque detail that decorate Sappho's account. Sappho's poem emerges as a curious mixture of personal address

<sup>9</sup> Aphrodite's arrival at her precinct in Paphos in Od. 8. 362-6 and H. Ven. 59-63, the advent of Zeus at his shrine in Ida in Il. 8. 47-48 and the description of the shrine of the river god Spercheus in Il. 23. 148 (with ὄθι τοῖ).

<sup>10</sup> The association of Charites and sexual love is more clearly developed in Hesiod than in Homer, and is likely to have sprung from their intimate association with Aphrodite. See Hes. Theog. 907ff., with comments in M. West's commentary (Hesiod, Theogony, 1966). For the coupling of Aphrodite and Charis, Hes Op. 65f: καὶ χάριν ἀμφιχέαι κεφαλῇ χρυσῆν Ἀφροδίτην / καὶ πόθον ἀργαλέον καὶ γυιοβόρους μελεδῶνας.

<sup>11</sup> Second person address appears in Homer with the formula in Il. 23. 148 when Achilles addresses the river god. As for Sappho it should be noted that τοῖ is added in the lacuna by Page 1955, followed by Campbell 1982, 41, omitted by Voigt 1971 and Lanata 1960. Perhaps the existence of τοῖ in the Homeric formula gives some authority to Page's emendation, although it is unlikely that Sappho makes reference to Achilles' address to the river god.

and generalizing omissions: although the locality is elaborately described by Sappho the place of the shrine is not mentioned and the name of the deity addressed remains unknown for the time being. This creates two important effects that separate Sappho's poem from the Homeric account and the conventional form of a cletic hymn. The omission of the name of the deity creates suspense that is not released until in the last stanza, which gives Sappho's poem a forward impetus quite different from the Homeric linear narrative.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the mention of the godhead's name is essential for a cletic hymn or invocation. The connection between the mortal and the god can be fully established through identification, as Sappho duly does in fr. 1 L.-P., which mentions Aphrodite in the first line with a characteristic epithet.<sup>13</sup> Thus the omissions of proper names for the locality and the godhead summoned can be regarded as a programmatic statement to indicate that Sappho's intentions are different than those of Homer and the hymnic genre.

The basic elements of Aphrodite's advent that appear in Sappho's poem were already present in the Homeric account: the holy precinct (τέμενος) and the fragrant altars. Sappho, however, develops the notion of holiness by adding the temple (ναῦον), describing it holy (ἄγνον) and giving the whole scene the dimension of nature with the addition of the pleasant grove of apples (χάριεν ἄλσος μαλί[αν]).

Ναός or ναῦος is usually a temple with the cult image, whereas τέμενος suggests the holy precinct in general.<sup>14</sup> By ναῦος Sappho brings us to the center of the cult where the existence of the temple suggests a permanent establishment for cult rather than just a holy precinct. The word ναῦος also indicates the connection between the goddess and mortals who have built the temple and perform the sacrifices. Whereas in Homer Aphrodite was attended by the Charites, in Sappho humans await her arrival. The adjective ἄγνον is an interesting choice to describe the temple. In Homer ἄγνός is used of places and things dedicated to gods and the word even otherwise always refers to what is particular to the

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<sup>12</sup> Probably the educated reader will have been able to supply Aphrodite's name by reference to the Homeric parallel, but Sappho still leaves room for ambiguity, which is not dissolved until in the last stanza. The reasons for this will be discussed below.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Alc. 34a L.-P., where Castor and Polydeuces are invoked with a mention of their name, common haunt and genealogy.

<sup>14</sup> On ναός see W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 1985, 88f.

sacred.<sup>15</sup> But it is also the special epithet of virgin goddesses, especially of Artemis. Homer never uses the adjective of Aphrodite.<sup>16</sup> Burkert in fact thinks that the word means sacred and pure as opposed to things defiled (μιαρά), although this is a matter of some controversy.<sup>17</sup> Parker regards the term ἄγνός as too vague to mean pure or chaste without qualification from its context.<sup>18</sup> According to Williger the term when applied to gods conveys rather a notion of respect than purity.<sup>19</sup> Doubtlessly the term ἄγνον when it in Sappho's poem describes the temple conveys a sense of separation, holiness and awe, but the possibility of associating the adjective with Artemis and therefore the connotation of sexual purity and virginity cannot be ruled out since Artemis is the ἄγνή goddess *par excellence*, and she and her cult are especially connected with groves and meadows.<sup>20</sup>

In the first stanza the eroticism is represented by the presence of χάρις in the landscape, and those associated with the grove become part of

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<sup>15</sup> Od. 21. 258-9 (ἑορτὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄγνή); H. Merc. 187 (ἄλσος). Cf. Pindar Pyth. 4. 204 (τέμενος), Aisch. Suppl. 223 (ἐν ἄγνῳ) "on holy ground".

<sup>16</sup> Artemis is often styled ἄγνή, e.g. Od. 5. 123; 18. 202; 20. 71, Persephone and Demeter less frequently: Od. 11. 386, H. Cer. 337 (Persephone), H. Cer. 203; 439 (Demeter). What Demeter's virginity consisted of is harder to assess. Perhaps she could be seen as a defender of Persephone's virginity, as she in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter tries to save her from Hades, who by abducting her when she is still a maiden threatens (and finally conquers) her virginity.

<sup>17</sup> Burkert 1985, 270f. with bibliography.

<sup>18</sup> R. Parker, *Miasma, Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, 1983, 147.

<sup>19</sup> E. Williger, *Hagios, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 19.1, 1922, 37ff. This is also the opinion of B. Gentili, *Poesia e Pubblico nella Grecia antica da Omero al V secolo*, 1984, 287f. He argues that the sense "ritually pure" develops for ἄγνός only after the archaic period, but his evidence is inconclusive. For instance it is very hard to assess whether in the passage of Simonides (fr. 577a P) that he cites the prevalent notion of lustral water is that of reverence or purity. In fact both aspects seem to be equally present.

<sup>20</sup> Burkert 1985, 150, with bibliography. On Artemis' special relation with nature and growth see e.g. the ample evidence collected by K. Wernicke in RE 2, 1342f. (Artemis). In Homer ἄλσος is favored especially by the nymphs, so that the notion is already attached to the expression (e.g. Il. 20.8) Compare Athena's ἄλσος in Od. 6. 291, which in its structure is close enough to have served as a possible model for Sappho's description of the grove. Athena's ἄλσος contains a spring (κρήνη, cf. the second stanza in Sappho fr. 2), a meadow, a holy precinct (τέμενος) and lush vegetation, i.e. the elements of a hallowed *locus amoenus* that make up Sappho's garden. Athena's grove suggest virginity and Treu 1955, 213 in fact thinks that the inclusion of sexuality by the description of a holy grove as χάριεν seems to be a Sapphic innovation. See the chapter below on this question.

that χάρις.<sup>21</sup> Yet the erotic potentiality inherent in the Sapphic grove (χάριεν ἄλλος) first becomes real and tangible through the Homeric reference to Aphrodite (later confirmed in the fourth stanza) assisted by her Charites. Aphrodite brings in the notion of sensual love and by their association with Aphrodite the Charites suggest erotic attraction and sexual maturity.<sup>22</sup> The participants of the cultic celebration of Aphrodite who have perfumed Aphrodite's altar and in the fourth stanza invite her to pour the libation take in Sappho's poem the place of the Homeric Charites as the attendants of Aphrodite. Thus the Homeric reference not only activates the landscape, it also places those present there in their function and status.

Aphrodite's role as the goddess of physical sexuality and her suggested presence in the first stanza seem quite incompatible with the idea of purity and virginity also prominent in the stanza. It is also important to note that sexuality in general was banned from places of cult, which makes the Sappho's combination of eroticism and worship original and striking.<sup>23</sup> So even if the interpretation of ἄγνον as implying sexual purity here could not be regarded as conclusive, the contrast between sexuality and the sacred still persists. Such flowery meadows as the one in Sappho fr. 2. could of course include sexuality, even invite its violation, but what has usually escaped the scholars' attention is that in Sappho fr. 2 the meadow is a hallowed temple with all the trappings of cult and sacrifice and not merely described as "inviolable" (ἀκήρατος).<sup>24</sup> This Sapphic innovation to

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<sup>21</sup> Saake 1972, 63: "Diese Erweiterung gipfelt einerseits in der Wahrnehmung der Charis des ganzen Menschen, andererseits in dem Wiederfinden eben dieser Eigenschaft in den natural objects in der Landschaft und Pflanzenwelt".

<sup>22</sup> Ibycus 7 calls the beloved Eurualos Χαρίτων θάλλος. Furthermore χάρις is according to Page 1955, 36 used by the Lesbian poets only of personal charm. If this indeed was so, Sappho's use of the word to describe nature must have sounded striking and given the grove an immediate ambivalence between nature and man. The grove could indeed be understood to refer not in the first place to nature but symbolically to human physis and emotion. Burnett 1982, 263-4, note 90, in fact emphasizes that the natural scene in fr. 2 is not natural at all with roses blooming and apples maturing at the same time. This can be seen as a confirmation of the symbolic character of the landscape and as a way to show that this is no ordinary garden but rather divine place where the rotation of seasons is no object.

<sup>23</sup> Evidence on the exclusion of sexuality from cult is collected and interpreted by Parker 1983, 74ff.

<sup>24</sup> Evidence on meadows and love has been gathered in the monumental work by A. Motte, *Prairies et Jardins de la Grèce antique* (Académie Royale de Belgique, Mém. Classe des Lettres, 61.5, 1973), see especially 147ff. For a more succinct treatment and evidence on the theme meadows and sexuality, see now J. M. Bremer, *The Meadow of Love and Two Passages in Euripides' Hippolytus*, *Mnemosyne* 28, 1975, 268ff, especially 271 that compares Sappho 2, Ibycus 5 and Eur. Hipp. 73ff. without noticing, however, how

combine purity, sexuality and the sacred points out her original genius, but creates problems for the interpretation of the passage. Therefore the following similarity that reconciles the concept of ἄγνος with both Homeric passages describing Aphrodite's advent and the aspect of sexuality in Sappho's poem should be considered.

Aphrodite's arrival at Paphos in Cyprus in the *Odyssey* is part of one of the most famous and original stories in the poem, the song of Demodocus.<sup>25</sup> The story is a parody of passion, adultery and punishment, where the adulterous couple Aphrodite, the wife of Hephaestus, and Ares are trapped *in flagranti* by the suspecting husband. Without further going into the details of the story, it suffices here to note that the main point of the story is sexuality, namely illicit sexuality, and the shame and ridicule that follows it.<sup>26</sup> What is important here is the fact that she leaves Olympus and Ares (who heads to Thrace), the scene and partner of her adulterous affair, to bathe in her shrine. Her departure from Olympus can be understood not only spatially but also as a symbolic separation from the sexual status of an adulteress she had put herself in during the affair.

Since Aphrodite's bathing happens in a holy precinct a comparison with ritual baths suggests itself. Ritual baths were a regulated ceremony before entering holy places and precede sacrifice and mysteries. In them a symbolic separation from the world outside and a transformation into different status or capacity took place.<sup>27</sup> Even here it could be suggested that Aphrodite's bath purifies her from the stain of her adultery and marks her transition to a new status, which also is sexual as can be seen from the rest of the Homeric passage: at 366 her clothes are described as

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different the Sapphic ναῦον ἄγνον is from what Ibycus and Euripides describe only with the adjective ἀκήρατος.

<sup>25</sup> The bibliography to the song of Demodocus (*Od.* 8. 266-369) is very large. For older literature see W. Burkert, *Das Lied von Ares und Aphrodite*, RM 103, 130ff. and for a recent commentary and additional literature, see now J.B. Hainsworth's commentary (*Omero, Odissea*, vol. II, 1987, 269ff.).

<sup>26</sup> Hephaestus calls the adulterous affair at 307 ἔργα γελατὰ καὶ οὐκ ἐπεικτὰ, ridiculous and intolerable deeds, which neatly summarizes the tenor of Demodocus' song.

<sup>27</sup> Parker 1983, 19 aptly states that "Without purification there is no access to the sacred". His account following this statement (in fact all of the first chapter [Purification: a Science of Division] of his book) well demonstrates the centrality of lustrations before dealing with the sacred and how purification was a liminal marker between the sacred and the profane. Older evidence is presented by M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion I*, 1951, 102, with more detail in L. Moulinier, *Le pur et l'impur dans la pensée des Grecs d'Homère à Aristote*, 1952, 71ff. For an expert study on bathing, see now R. Ginouvès, *Balaneutiké, recherches sur le bain dans l'antiquité grecque*, 1968.

captivatingly beautiful (ἐπήρατα) and a wonder to behold (θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι). What makes Aphrodite acquiring this status similar to a worshipper approaching ἄγνόν, is that in both cases purity and separation are the key elements. The bath itself shows that purity is not a concept incompatible with Aphrodite, yet Aphrodite's bath does not purify her absolutely, but marks her new sexual status. Similarly in the Homeric hymn to Aphrodite 61 the goddess is bathed by the Charites when she wants to seduce Anchises.<sup>28</sup> Here again the bath marks the preparation and the beginning of her new sexual mood and purpose. Of course Aphrodite's purity is by no means virgin purity, but for the interpretation of the Sappho 2 it is essential to note that the allusion to these Homeric passages brings in the idea of purity as a marker of an active sexual status and a limiting factor as regards other sexual statuses. The allusion colors the place of cult and the term ἄγνον by showing that the sexual purity they both imply here can be understood not as a sort of anti-sexuality but as an erotic mood.<sup>29</sup> Therefore the purity in this context need not be inconsistent with the sexuality that Aphrodite and χάρις imply, but rather a reflection of the Sapphic idea of the type of love connected with the grove. The virginity and purity suggest that the maiden, like the unmarried priestesses of Artemis,<sup>30</sup> was supposed to have no sexual contact with men. If we assume that the love celebrated in Sappho's temple of Aphrodite was strictly between women, the ἄγνον quality of the temple would not have been compromised.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Note also that Aphrodite at 82 approaches Anchises in the guise of a virgin maiden. Thus the idea of purification and virginity is already suggested in the hymn.

<sup>29</sup> This is a striking modification by Sappho of the usual purpose of purification before cult and sacrifice. Normally the celebrant would exclude sexuality altogether while practising the cult and symbolize the exclusion by ritual washing, but in Sappho sexuality in a form defined by purity is an integral element of the cult.

<sup>30</sup> A comparison between the celebrants of Aphrodite and priestesses seems justified since Sappho's grove is clearly a place for cult. Virgin priestesses are best attested for Artemis, see E. Fehrle, *Die kultische Keuschheit im Altertum* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 6), 98ff. More in Burkert 1985, 150 and Parker 1983, 90f. who finds the evidence on virgin priests and priestesses (especially for those of Demeter) difficult to interpret and stresses the idea that the abstinence from sex in cult was more often occasional than absolute.

<sup>31</sup> This mood is again contrasted to other forms of erotic self-expression, as the idea of separation inherent in the term ἄγνον and expressed in the Homeric passages describing Aphrodite's bath shows. Therefore it does not seem plausible to see Sappho allowing any broad spectrum of eroticism in her poem, but instead a restricted form of sexuality. Compare Sappho fr. 94 L.-P. where the locality of the past (homosexual) love seems to

The idea of purity and sexuality combined can be further strengthened by considering the apple-grove which is the center of activity. The symbolism and function of the apple-grove become fully clear only in the second and third stanzas, but the image has here suggestive power by itself. Apple-trees in the *Odyssey* in a garden setting with other trees represent abundance, wealth and the high position of their owners. This is clear in the way Alcinous' orchards in *Od.* 7.114f. stand for his wealth and the splendour of his court. Apples also figure among the gifts of nature Tantalus is denied as punishment (*Od.* 11.588ff.). The presence of apples in a holy grove of Aphrodite with its erotic implications and suggestions of purity obviously connects the apple to a different symbolic structure than was the case in Homer. Burnett has noted that the ambiguity of the grove is paralleled by apples which represent both virginity and its loss.<sup>32</sup> The connection of apples and ἔρωϝ is made clear by Ibycus in fr. 6d where the sensually beautiful garden setting bears a striking resemblance to Sappho's fr. 2.

The problem that the apple presents is again the same as with the advent of Aphrodite to a setting that suggests virginity and sexual purity, a landscape that would be more suitable for Artemis, the pure (ἀγνή) goddess who loves to haunt meadows and groves.<sup>33</sup> Burnett notes that Aphrodite was associated with groves as well, but this might represent later tradition. Also her idea that virginity existed only to be lost seems forced in this context.<sup>34</sup> Rather if we assume, as suggested above, that the advent of Aphrodite and the eroticism of the landscape do not pose a threat to virginity, the goddess of love can enter with impunity a precinct that also exhibits attributes of Artemis. The fact that the name of the goddess is

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have included something holy (25: ἵρον) and a grove (27: ἄλσοϝ), that is, the basic setting of eroticism present in fr. 2 as well.

<sup>32</sup> Burnett 1982, 266ff. By not considering the Homeric parallels she nevertheless misses the subtle way Sappho already in the first stanza creates and dissolves the ambiguity by a masterly play with the Homeric passages.

<sup>33</sup> Burkert 1985, 150f. He notes that Artemis' virginity is not asexuality, but the evidence he has gathered pertains more to her following than to the goddess herself. At any rate even her followers always fall victim to rape rather than have erotic adventures out of their own will. No such sexual intrusions can be found in Sappho 2. Nevertheless Burkert's idea of Artemis and sexuality is interesting in this context, as Sappho could be seen in her way to make good of such potential when she combines purity and sexuality. But the fact that the ἀγνον quality of the temple is respected excludes sexual excesses such as rape and abduction.

<sup>34</sup> Burnett 1982, 269.

not mentioned leaves the reader/listener free to associate the scene with both Artemis and Aphrodite and to accommodate the oblique Homeric reference to Athena (Od. 6. 291, see above note 20). The virgin Artemis who only associates herself with women and Aphrodite the goddess of sexual love thus enter the scene to create a setting with a decidedly homoerotic flavor. The ambiguity of the apple is transformed in this grove to a coherence of sexuality and virginity, an ἔρωϝ of distinctly Sapphic character, with suggestions of purity, holiness and Artemis controlling the loss of virginity associated with the apple.

### Stanzas 2-4 of Fr. 2: Expansion and Conclusion

The image of the apple-grove of the first stanza is elaborated and expanded in the second and third stanzas. The flow of the cool water through apple branches, the shadows of roses, rustling leaves that create deep slumber and a flowery meadow with gentle breezes create a paradise-like atmosphere. This idea of a paradise is indebted or related to some Homeric passages, most notably the amorous encounter between Zeus and Hera in Il. 14.347-51, the description of the scenery around Calypso's cave in Od. 5.63ff. and the grove where Odysseus waits before he follows Nausicaa to the city (Od. 6.291ff.). In Calypso's abode trees, flowers, meadows and water are all present and an image of this kind is echoed in Sappho. Sappho's grove in fr. 2, however, has important additions and implications that form what Burnett has called a landscape of female sexuality.<sup>35</sup> Burnett further notes that Aphrodite's "best known attributes and parts are rendered by bits of landscape... to specify and reinforce the aspect of the divinity that the worshipper would meet."<sup>36</sup> It was suggested above that the Aphrodite worshipped in this garden represented the union of sexuality and purity. How do the details of the landscape agree with this?

The first feature of the grove that Sappho gives is the purling of cold water through the apple-branches. In Homer the only instance when water is called ψυχρὸν is when it comes from a spring in a garden of

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<sup>35</sup>Burnett, 1982, 266.

<sup>36</sup> Burnett 1982, 263. Saake 1972, 62ff. thinks that the topographical Ekphrasis replaces the Aretalogie that would have been at place in a cletic hymn. For more on this type of Αφροδίτη ἐν κήποις in art, see E. Langlotz, Aphrodite in den Gärten, 1954.

Nymphs (Od. 17. 205f.). Also the verb *κελάδειν* that in Sappho's poem describes the purling of the water is used in Homer of rivers (Il. 18.576). It is therefore plausible to assume that Sappho is describing a spring or a creek. Some of the apple-branches could have fallen into the water or could be long enough to reach it. As the above examples show, water in Homer is an integral part of a pleasant natural setting. But in fact the word *ὔδωρ* in Homer is most often associated with purification, especially the washing of hands (*χέρνιψ*). In the Iliad purification with water takes place in connection with oaths (3. 270), prayers (9. 171f.) and reception of guests.<sup>37</sup> Water thus purifies to prepare men for a contact with gods and marks the transition of the stranger into the status of guest. Nilsson notes that water was the most usual means of purification in several Greek cults.<sup>38</sup> The implications of purity, purification and virginity were already suggested for the first stanza. The sounding water in the second stanza can consequently be seen both as the limit between the holy and the profane and as a means of the purification that gives entry to the area marked pure and holy (*ἄγρον*) in the first stanza. On the whole the connection of the word *ὔδωρ* here to Homer shows how Sappho uses the epic parallel to create awareness of the expression she uses, but it also indicates the skill of Sappho to unite the most important aspects of the image in the parallels to a personal and effective synthesis.

In Sappho's poem the flow of water is intimately connected with apple-branches. Whereas water here can be seen to represent the purity and holiness of the grove, apples stand for virginity and sexuality. In the first stanza Sappho had tried to dissolve the inherent contradiction in the symbolism of the apple. In the second stanza Sappho emphatically returns to her interpretation of apple as an erotic symbol. The water that flows among the apple branches cleanses them of the residues of their ambiguous message (especially the loss of virginity) and brings them in line with the definition of their sexual symbolism already formulated in the first stanza.<sup>39</sup> This is in keeping with the Homeric qualities of water as a

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<sup>37</sup> For more, see Nilsson 1951, 90.

<sup>38</sup> Nilsson 1951, 102. Nilsson emphasizes that only water in motion is suitable. This makes one think of the verb *κελάδει* in Sappho's poem.

<sup>39</sup> Sappho fr. 105a provides an interesting parallel. The apple on the bough-top is not accessible to pickers and can be only seen. In fr.2 the apple is not only accessible but also defined by its association with the image of purity. The contrast between the actively pursuing apple-pickers in 105a and the passive reception of love in fr. 2 is also notable: love, the gift of Aphrodite, comes when it is mature and the setting is suitable for its

purifier but also as a means and marker of transformation. Moreover, the verb κελάδει can be seen as an oblique reference to Artemis, whose special epithet in Homer is κελαδεινή (sounding).<sup>40</sup> This lexical connection to Artemis again points out the particular virgin quality of the purity inherent in the landscape and in the image of flowing water (as well as expected of those entering the holy precinct), which was more vaguely expressed in the first stanza.<sup>41</sup>

The roses that cast their shadow on earth recall with their erotic implication<sup>42</sup> - which also other flowers can have - the scene in Il. 14. 347f. where lotus, crocus and hyacinth spring up under Zeus and Hera as they make love. The floral imagery reappears coupled with sweet breezes in the third stanza, but because of textual corruption the exact nature of these flowers remains unknown.<sup>43</sup> As it is the horse-rearing meadow expands on the rosy earth of the previous stanza. Even if it cannot be attested whether Sappho modelled her account on the famous Homeric passage, the fact that this passage is the only epic occurrence of extensive floral imagery in an erotic setting suggests the parallel.<sup>44</sup> The Homeric parallel makes it evident where Sappho's originality lies: roses do not occur in Homer except in the adjective ῥοδοδάκτυλον,<sup>45</sup> and the idea of the shadow is also alien to Homer apart from the formulaic description of how the dusk falls.<sup>46</sup> Sappho's garden of love preserves the already

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enjoyment. J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, 1990, 183f. thinks the apple in fr. 105a is an image of the secure and unattainable nature of female sexuality which men cannot fully know or understand. Winkler's notion of the exclusivity and special nature of female sexuality in fr. 105a goes well with the general tone of fr. 2, although in fr. 105a the image of the apple ripening represents existing but not fully ready sexuality, whereas in fr. 2 sexuality is an active presence in an erotic landscape.

<sup>40</sup> Artemis is styled κελαδεινή in Il. 16, 183; 20, 70; 21, 510; H. Ven. 16; 118; H. Diana 27. The scholiasts suggested that the name suggested the barking of his dogs, but neglected the connection of the term to images of nature and landscape.

<sup>41</sup> The virgin quality of the landscape need again not be understood to exclude all but virgins, but should rather be seen to point out the female exclusivity of the sexual landscape. The water that flows through the apple-branches is not only a boundary between the pure and the stained, but also an active purifier that can create a sexual status suitable for the Sapphic temple and garden of Aphrodite.

<sup>42</sup> Burnett 1982, 263, n. 89.

<sup>43</sup> See further Page 1955, 38.

<sup>44</sup> See E. S. Forster, 'Trees and Plants in Homer', CR 50, 1936, 100. Cf. D. A. Campbell, *The Golden Lyre*, 1983, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Forster 1936, 100.

<sup>46</sup> Treu 1955, 213ff.

Homeric idea of the flowery meadow of love but gives it a distinctly new colouring to mark the difference between her concept of pure and virgin love and the Homeric sexual union of the two gods.

The κῶμα, i. e. the state of total relaxation comes in Sappho's poem from the quivering leaves. Because of its association with the paradise-like garden of love, the Sapphic κῶμα is easily identified with the pleasant state of slumber (Il. 14.359) that covers Zeus after he has made love to Hera. The passage in the Odyssey where Athena covers Penelope with κῶμα (18. 201) also has erotic implications: Penelope is made more appealing to the suitors in her slumber. The positive connotation of the word seems to be retained in Sappho's poem: indeed Burnett has suggested that κῶμα suggests the consummation of love in Sappho's garden.<sup>47</sup> Since κῶμα in the Iliad follows Zeus' lovemaking and can be ultimately traced back to Aphrodite, it seems plausible to suggest that the κῶμα in Sappho's poem has an erotic flavor and is connected to Aphrodite. But κῶμα can be a negative occurrence as well. Wiesmann has suggested that the threatening side of κῶμα is already present in the verb καλύπτω which in Homer describes the onset of κῶμα but also the coming of death.<sup>48</sup> Hesiod (Theog. 798) speaks about a bad κῶμα that seizes the god who breaks his or her oath on Styx. The god can be revived from this state of paralysis only by nectar.

The link between κῶμα and nectar brings us to the last stanza of Sappho's fr. 2. Aphrodite is finally addressed, named, and asked to gently pour nectar with her golden cups among the festivities. Just as the gods in Hesiod could be awakened from coma and Hector's corpse in the Iliad 19.379 saved from putrefaction with nectar, it could be suggested that Aphrodite in Sappho's poem pours out nectar to ward off the possible bad effects of κῶμα. We need not take the nectar as an antidote against κῶμα itself,<sup>49</sup> whose pleasant nature is suggested by the setting and the parallel in the Iliad and from which no rescue is needed. Rather we can see Aphrodite using the nectar against the wrong kind of κῶμα, which might

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<sup>47</sup> Burnett 1982, 272f.

<sup>48</sup> Wiesmann 1972, 3ff.

<sup>49</sup> Burnett 1982, 274 thinks that nectar revives the participants of the ritual from their coma.

even result from a flawed sexual union,<sup>50</sup> but also to bring the notion of the divine, immortal and eternally young among the festivities. Nectar belongs to the gods, and this notion of divine is further confirmed by the presence of the golden cups with which Aphrodite pours the nectar. The golden quality which is associated with Aphrodite's dwellings in Olympus in Sappho fr. 1.8 is in Homer often connected to other gods as well, as Page's note on the passage shows.<sup>51</sup> Thus Sappho makes it explicit that the participants of the ritual in the holy grove would by association acquire godlike qualities. These qualities were already suggested in the first stanza and elaborated in the second and third by paralleling the landscape of love to which initiated mortals can gain entry with that of Zeus and Hera in the Iliad. Here the theme grows into a vivid image of the consummation of the ritual which culminates in the realization of the godlike qualities in the beneficiaries of the Sapphic garden of love.

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<sup>50</sup> In Il. 14.216f. Hera prepares to trick Zeus into bed with her so she can work freely while Zeus slumbers. It should be noted that most of Sappho's Homeric parallels serve to define the concept of love and sexuality peculiar to fragment 2.

<sup>51</sup> Page 1955 7 n. 8. Rissman 1983, 2 notes that the adjective χρυσήν is applied to Aphrodite ten times in Homer.