‘Glancing Seductively through Windows’: The Look of Praxilla fr. 8 (*PMG* 754)*

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ὦ διὰ τῶν θυρίδων καλὸν ἐμβλέποισα
παρθένε τὰν κεφαλάν τὰ δ’ ἔνερθε νύμφα

You who glance seductively through windows,
maiden as regards your head, bride below

This tantalising fragment addressed to a woman glancing seductively through a window leaves us wondering who this woman might be and what kind of situation might have prompted the speaker to remark on her gaze. Since this couplet is all we have of the poem, it has been tempting to see a simple ironic contrast between the first line and the second. The opening image is one of irresistible seductiveness, with its appeal to the woman’s gaze which is both beautiful and confronting. The implications of ἐμβλέπω, ‘to look directly, gaze intently’, are clear from other classical instances: Plato’s Socrates claims to be almost overwhelmed by a youth’s gaze (ἐνέβλειψέ τέ μοι τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἀμήχανόν τι οἶον, *Charm.* 155c–d) and Xenophon uses the same verb of a seductive glance which is wielded like a hunting net to snare a suitor (*Mem.* 3.11.10).¹ The seduc-

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1 Page marks a corruption here: ‘etiam ἐχβλέποισα expectasses: nisi huiusmodi erat sententia, “quae more meretricio vagabunda per fenestras intueri soles, scilicet ut virum foras unde unde elicias”’—this latter suggestion betrays an extraordinary strong expectation of the tenor of the poem of our poor Praxilla, on which see below. ἐμβλέπω, however, does not mean ‘to look in’ e.g. through windows but rather to ‘look in the face’ (LSJ s.v. 1a). Cavallini (1992) 37–38

tiveness implied by the initial address is then overturned simply and ironically by the second line—or so goes the usual reading—which is understood as a revelation of the woman's true nature: her face may look innocent, but 'down below' she is well practiced—she is, in other words, a whore or a *hetaira*. But the key to understanding these lines may not be quite so simple; the lost continuation of the poem may have gone on to build a more complicated picture. In the second half of this paper I will argue that this may in fact have been a very different kind of poem from what it is usually understood to be. (To anticipate, I will propose the tentative view that it is a fragment of a wedding song.) But first I discuss some deeper reasons why such a 'racy' interpretation of this fragment has proven quite so attractive. These have to do with assumptions about the performance context for which the poem was originally composed (namely the symposion) as well as about the character of the female poet who composed it (a *hetaira* like the addressee of her poem, it would naturally follow); these assumptions are tied to what is thought to be a depiction on a drinking cup of this poem being sung by a symposiast. The 'look' of the title, then, refers not just to the woman's gaze, or to the deceptiveness of her appearance, but also to (what is usually thought to be) the visual testimony for the poem.

The identification of the fragment of Praxilla preserved by Hephaestion (*Ench.* 7.8, p. 24 Consbruch) with the inscription on a vase in the British Museum (95.10–27.2) (fig. 7.1c) has been adopted by modern editors with remarkable confidence considering that the inscription includes only the first three words of the fragment and that the reading is different, giving the singular ΟΔΙΑΤΗΣΘΥΡΙΑΔΟΣ instead of Hephaestion's ὦ διὰ τῶν θυρίδων.² Indeed the editors go so far as relying on the inscription to emend the text. Page's apparatus reports that he would like to emend the plural τῶν θυρίδων to the singular and that he refrains from doing so because he cannot account for the change from an easier reading to a more difficult one. Campbell, in his Loeb edition, does emend the text, emboldened by Renehan who refers to the vase inscription and outlines a plausible mechanism of corruption: the Doric form διὰ τὰς θυρίδος was misread as διὰ τὰς θυρίδας but the accusative was later recognized to give the wrong sense and corrected to the genitive while main-

defends the manuscript reading, citing Meleag. 24 Gow-Page = *AP* 12.94.3–4 as well as the classical instances cited here in the main text.

2 The identification, first made by Jacobsthal (1912), was taken up by Page and has since been accepted virtually unanimously (a notable exception is Ahl in his Pauly-Wissowa entry 'Praxilla', but his own alternative interpretation proved so unconvincing that his objection to the inscription went unheeded with it—see below).

taining the plural, thus giving us the manuscript reading.³ This despite the fact that Page's perplexity over the use of the plural (on grounds of sense, not dialect) does not seem to have much justification in the first place: windows with their multiple openings can easily be thought of as plural and indeed we find an exact (if somewhat later) parallel for this use in Philodemus.⁴ The need to emend arguably arose from the supposed evidence of the inscription.

This readiness to identify the inscription with the fragment of Praxilla is probably owed to the fact that the vase shows the fragment issuing from a symposiast's mouth, that is to say being sung as a *skolion*, and this chimes with Praxilla's reputation as an author of *skolia* or *paroinia*, as the testimonia tell us; a notion which is, however, problematic, as we shall see presently. This in turn, by a circular argument, gives us the racy interpretation: since the fragment is depicted as belonging to a sympotic context, then it must be a *lascive Anrede*, as Wilamowitz put it, or an 'improper song' about a 'wanton lady' as Fraenkel put it rather more primly.⁵ The recurrence of the locution διὰ τῆς θυρίδος in several other places (already noted by Page in his apparatus) is then taken not as diluting the relevance of the vase inscription to the poem but rather—again with some circularity—as compounding the assumption that the poem, too, must be racy, since in some (though not all) of these other cases the expression occurs in contexts involving women's inappropriate behaviour.⁶ But

3 Renehan (1983) 29.

4 Phld. 14.2 Sider = *GPh* 3213 = *AP* 5.123.2; Asclepiades' Epigram 3 Sens may be indebted to Praxilla (see below), and so cannot be appealed to as a parallel, *pace* Cavallini (1992) 38. For multiple-paned windows on pottery see e.g. Athens 1560 (fifth cent.), Munich 6026 (fourth cent.).

5 Wilamowitz (1900) 9 n. 4; Fraenkel (1936) 263; most subsequent discussions have followed in their tracks. A representative summary of the common view on our distich in Graham (1998) 25–27, who, however, has a definite axe to grind (he is defending a new interpretation of a Thasian stele according to which a prohibition for women to look out of windows is in fact aimed at banning prostitution).

6 *Ar. Thesm.* 797–799: *κἂν ἐκ θυρίδος παρακύπτωμεν, τὸ κακὸν ζητεῖτε θεᾶσθαι / κἂν αἰσχυνθεῖς ἀναχωρήσῃ, πολὺ μᾶλλον πᾶς ἐπιθυμεῖ / αὖθις τὸ κακὸν παρακύψαν ἰδεῖν ...* 'and if we peep out of a window you seek to take a look at us, 'bane' that we are; and if a woman is ashamed and withdraws then everyone is all the more eager to see this 'bane' peep out again ...'; *Carmen popolare* 7 (= *PMG* 853 = *Athen.* 15.697b), where it is cited as one of the 'rude songs' (*καπρωτέραι ᾠδαί*) favoured by Ulpian: αἱ Λοκρικαὶ καλούμεναι, μοιχικαὶ τινες τὴν φύσιν ὑπάρχουσαι, ὥς καὶ ἦδε· ὦ τί πάσχεις; μὴ προδῶις ἄμμ', ἱκετεύω / πρὶν καὶ μολεῖν κείνον, ἀνίστω, / μὴ κακὸν (σε) μέγα ποιήσῃ / κάμῃ τὰν δειλάκραν. / ἁμέρα καὶ ἦδη· τὸ φῶς / διὰ τὰς θυρίδας οὐκ εἰσορῆις; 'The so-called 'Locrian songs', adulterous in character, such as this one: What is the

its frequent recurrence in several texts more plausibly betokens the fact that it was a familiar vernacular phrase. In a recent article, Jasper Gaunt places it in a context of broader literacy evident in metrical inscriptions on a number of other media as well as pottery, and he rightly assimilates it to various other similar sympotic 'buzzwords' known from both vase inscriptions and indirectly preserved poems (e.g. εἵ μοι γένοιτο on Berlin 10984 with Hippon. fr. 119 w.², Archil. fr. 118 w.²). As he demonstrates, artists (just like real-life symposiasts) 'drew on an oral sympotic tradition' rather than particular compositions, and it is to this, and not to specific texts by named authors which happen to have been preserved, that we should more plausibly relate the snatches of poetry we find on vases.⁷

Moreover, a closer look at the cup which is so blithely cited in apparatus enjoins even greater caution. It is in fact an unusually curious and fascinating object and one that demands to be considered on its own terms rather than be adopted unproblematically as a basis for emendation. The cup is a stemless kylix of uncertain provenance and date. It is a crude copy of the style of Douris. The drawing displays a clear attempt to emulate the striking composition of sympotic scenes where two couches are seen in profile and one in rear view which is most closely associated with the Athenian master-painter; indeed one panel is an almost exact copy of a famous vase belonging to his middle period, ca 490–485.⁸ If our British Museum cup is Athenian we might wish to assign it to a date close to this. A marginally later dating might be arguable if the vase is correctly identified as Boeotian, to allow for greater time-lag in copying.⁹ Boeotian red-figure's habit of emulating Athenian trends of particularly good works is a recognized trait, and the angular and awkward drawing would fit this well.¹⁰ In any case, it seems safe to say that the vase was produced in the first half of the fifth century. Our inscription, however, is added after firing and so arguments for its date need to be assessed separately.

Like the composition of the painting, the several inscriptions on our British Museum cup should probably be read as an attempt to emulate the work of Douris. His partiality for inscriptions is well known; in fact their unusually

matter with you? I beg of you don't betray us / get up before he arrives / lest he do great harm to you and to wretched me. / It is day: don't you see the light through the window?' But cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 379, where no such connotations are present.

7 Gaunt (2014).

8 Florence, Museo Archeologico 3922. For this composition with a view from the back of the couch see McNiven (2014), with a list of further instances at 125 and nn. 6 and 7.

9 Boeotian identification already by Lullies (1940) 6.

10 Sabetai (2012a) and Sabetai (2012b).

FIG. 7.1A *Side A of unattributed red-figure kylix*
LONDON, BRITISH MUSEUM 95.10–27.2. © TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH
MUSEUM

high incidence, including snatches of poetry, has led to the suggestion that ‘the inspiration for some of his scenes might be literary.’¹¹ Our cup includes ‘speech-bubble’ inscriptions in the panels on both exterior sides as well as in the tondo, all of which depict sympotic scenes. One side of the exterior portrays a symposion in which two fellow-drinkers seem to be having a conversation: the inscription reads ΦΑΣΙΝ ΤΑΥΤΑ ΑΛΗΘΕ, ‘these things which they say are true ...’ (fig. 7.1a).¹² The other side of the exterior depicts symposiasts engaged in a game of *kottabos* while calling out the name of the love-prize: ΤΟΙ [Λ]ΑΧΕΤΙ, ‘for you, Laches’ (fig. 7.1b).¹³ Finally, in the *tondo* we have the scene which

- 11 Buitron-Oliver (1993) vii. But a krater by Douris serves as warning against using inscriptions as reliable witnesses to poems: Berlin 2285 includes a fragment of poetry, either lyric or epic, which has traditionally been thought to represent the beginning of a specific (possibly Stesichorean) poem but which has been argued to include—deliberately and humourously—mistakes which are to be attributed to the student seen writing it on a book-roll: Sider (2010); cf. Gaunt (2014) 108–109. For a cup by Douris with an inscription similar to indirectly transmitted verse see Munich 2646, οὐ δύναμ’ οὐ with Theogn. 695, Οὐ δύναμαι σοι, θυμέ, παρασχεῖν ἄρμενα πάντα ... or 939, Οὐ δύναμαι φωνῇ λίγ’ ἀειδέμεν ὥσπερ ἀηδών ...
- 12 According to Campbell (1964) their words ‘look like the introduction of a maxim and may well have been in elegiac metre’. Csapo and Miller (1991) 372 interpret this scene as representing conversation.
- 13 Csapo and Miller (1991).

FIG. 7.1B Side B of unattributed red-figure kylix
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includes what has been taken to be the beginning of our Praxilla fragment (fig. 7.1c). It is tempting to imagine that the inscription was copied directly from Douris together with the images—but this is unlikely. As Csapo and Miller have argued, if the inscription were copied the letters would be correctly facing to the left in true retrograde, whereas our inscription is partly in retrograde partly not, suggesting that it was composed by an inexperienced hand.¹⁴ This snatch of song would then have been added by someone (the painter? the buyer? a later user?) wanting to give the impression that they were copying Douris' script—by including for instance, his signature letter-shape, dotted delta—but not quite pulling it off.¹⁵ Csapo and Miller further argue that the fact that the inscription is not copied from Douris is evidence that it is archaic, since the letter-forms are archaic; while the possibility (which they do not mention) that it was copied from a different source cannot be ruled out, the likelihood does seem to be that the line was an improvised addition and that the inscription, like the cup, belongs in the first half of the fifth century.

Given that the conventional chronology for Praxilla places her *floruit* c. 450, the vase's dependence on a poem of hers seems difficult if not impossible—but in this respect, too, it turns out on closer inspection that we are on shaky

14 So Csapo and Miller (1991) 371.

15 On dotted delta as a recognized hallmark of Douris' script among forgers and imitators see Barron (1964) 45 n. 60.

FIG. 7.1C *Tondo of unattributed red-figure kylix*
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ground. Praxilla's date is based solely on Eusebius' notice for the 82nd Olympiad, i.e. 452/1 BC (here quoted according to Jerome's report): *Crates comicus et Telesilla ac Bacchylides lyricus clari habentur. Praxilla quoque et Cleobulina sunt celebres*.¹⁶ The date of Crates must be accurate since we have a report of his victory at the City Dionysia in 450, but Bacchylides was surely earlier and Telesilla was famous in antiquity for her military involvement in Argos' defence against Cleomenes' attack in 494 BC, while Cleobulina's very existence is doubtful.¹⁷ Not much, then, can be made of Eusebius' report, but the hypothesis of the inscription's dependence on the poem remains tenuous indeed.

It seems best to interpret the cup on its own terms as evidence of a lively sympotic culture. Indeed, the cup's decoration conveys the sense that its owner

¹⁶ Euseb. *Chron. Ol.* 82.2 (p. 112 Helm).

¹⁷ Crates' victory: *IG* 11² 2325.52. Telesilla's military prowess: Paus. 20.20.8–10; Plu. *Mor.* 245c–f; some scholars defend the essential veracity of this story (see Pizzocaro [1993]) while others dismiss it as a later invention prompted by the Delphic oracle on the 'defeat at the hands of women' reported by Herodotus 6.76 (who does not mention Telesilla): see Campbell (1992) 3–4.

may have been trying a little too hard to live up to sympotic aspirations, for it exhibits a peculiar combination of pretension and ineptitude: everything about it, from the inscriptions to the comprehensive depiction of all verbal and ludic aspects of the symposion (poetry, gnomic conversation, competitive *kottabos*) to the inclusion of figurative decoration in *mise en abyme* on the amphora and the coverlet of the couch (which depicts cranes and pygmies) points to an attempt to display sophistication and mastery of the artistic and literary activities of the symposion—at the same time as the crudeness of the execution belies the accomplished nature of its context of production and use. We can only guess at the status and ambitions of the maker and the owner of this cup. But whatever its agenda, it does not seem reasonable to use this cup as reliable evidence that would justify emendation.

Impetus for connecting the inscription to the fragment of Praxilla has come, as already noted, from the fact that it is presented as a *skolion* and that we are told by the ancient testimonia that Praxilla was an author of *skolia*. However, the notion of Praxilla as an author of *skolia*, too, is problematic. The dispute surrounding the precise generic nature of the *skolion* is one I wish here to avoid.¹⁸ Instead I take a different tack by speculating on the impression given of Praxilla as a poet by what remains of her corpus (though this is admittedly very little indeed). This suggests that, rather than being an author of racy sympotic songs, Praxilla in the main composed civic ritual songs. The sympotic compositions which go under her name appear to be generic convivial ditties which came to be ascribed to her at some later stage; this in turn may have affected the transmission of her civic poetry through sympotic reperformance.

Only eight fragments survive, including our ambiguous fragment addressed to the gazing woman. Of these, five suggest with various degrees of certainty a ritual context, while only two are preserved as *paroinia* or *paroimiai* and belong clearly to a sympotic context. Let us start by looking at the two fragments which are printed by Page under the heading of Παροίνια. *PMG* 749 is ascribed to this category by the scholiast to *Wasps* (1239 Koster), who also tells us that others ascribe it to Alcaeus or Sappho, in itself a reason to doubt the attribution to Praxilla.¹⁹

18 For this question see the discussion with a full doxography in Jones's chapter in this volume.

19 For the reuse of poems by famous authors as *skolia* and the specific case of Alcaeus see Fabbro (1992).

Ἀδμήτου λόγον ὦ ἑταῖρε μαθὼν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς φίλει,
τῶν δειλῶν δ' ἀπέχου γνούς ὅτι δειλῶν ὀλίγα χάρις.

Learn Admetos' saying, my friend, and stick with the good sort,
keep away from the wrong sort in the knowledge that they don't show
much gratitude.

There are further clues arguing against attribution to Praxilla. The address to a *hetairos* suggests a male persona and sits uncomfortably with authorship by a Praxilla who was also the author of female ritual songs. What is more, the fragment recurs in almost identical form among the *Carmina convivalia* preserved by Athenaeus (15.695c = PMG 897) and, still more tellingly, both the form and the sentiment are closely reminiscent of lines from the Theognidean corpus (753, 37, 31–32 ~ 1165, 854 = 1038b).²⁰

The second *skolion* fragment (PMG 750), is a single line—ὕπὸ παντὶ λίθῳ σκορπίον ὦ ἑταῖρε φυλάσσεο, 'beware a scorpion under every stone'—again preserved in a *scholion* to Aristophanes in explanation of a passage (*Thesm.* 529–530) in which, as he is wont to do, Aristophanes willfully misquotes a *paroimia* substituting *para prosdokian* a rhetor for the scorpion. The scholiast tells us that it is recorded among the verses 'ascribed to Praxilla' (ἐκ τῶν εἰς Πράξιλλαν ἀναφερομένων, 529a Regtuit). The same line but for a small variation recurs as *Carmen convivale* 20 (= PMG 903: ὕπὸ παντὶ λίθῳ σκορπίος, ὦ ἑταῖρ', ὑποδύεται· / φράζου μή σε βάλῃ· τῷ δ' ἀφανεῖ πᾶς ἔπεται δόλος). This *paroimia* clearly expresses a widespread generic sentiment (it occurs frequently among paroemiographers and lexicographers) and was adaptable to innumerable situations both in real life and in mythology (for the latter see its use by Sophocles in fr. 37 Radt, from his *Captives*).²¹ The version attributed to Praxilla would probably not have proceeded, like the *carmen convivale*, with an explication of the symbolic meaning of the scorpion image as applicable to deceit among friends, since it anticipates the warning in the first line. In any case, the ascription seems unconvincing and this seems rather another case of a generic tradition being tied to a named author, perhaps because of the existence of a Sicyonian collection which would naturally have been associated with Sicyon's most famous singer.²² Thus both *skolia* attributed to Praxilla

20 For Theognidean parallels see Fabbro (1995) 35; on these and on the possible meaning of the 'Admetus saying' see Scodel (1979).

21 Fabbro (1995) 175.

22 See already Smyth (1900) 347.

suggest that generic sympotic compositions went under her name which are unlikely to have been composed by her originally.

The remaining fragments are ritual civic songs, several of which hint at the possibility that they were transmitted through sympotic reperformance. *PMG* 748 is a line of a dithyramb entitled *Achilles* preserved once again by Hephaestion (ἐν διθυράμβοις ἐν ᾧδῇ ἐπιγραφομένῃ Ἀχιλλεύς, *Ench.* 2.3 p. 9 Consbruch): ἀλλὰ τεδὸν οὐποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔπειθον, 'but the heart in your breast they (or I) could never persuade'. The longest of Praxilla's fragments consists of three lines of a hymn for Adonis preserved by the second century AD paroemiographer Zenobius in explanation of the proverbial phrase 'sillier than Praxilla's Adonis' (*PMG* 747). When asked what he most missed of the good things he had left behind when coming to the Underworld, Adonis is made to reply with the supposedly incongruous lines

κάλλιστον μὲν ἐγὼ λείπω φάος ἡελίοιο,
δεύτερον ἄστρα φαεινὰ σεληναίης τε πρόσωπον
ἦδὲ καὶ ὠραίους σικύους καὶ μῆλα καὶ ὄγχνας·

the most beautiful thing I leave behind is the light of the sun,
next, the bright stars and the face of the moon,
then, too, ripe cucumbers and apples and pears;

As Zenobius tells us, 'he is a silly man who reckons the sun and moon on a par with such things as cucumbers' (εὐηθὴς γάρ τις ἴσως ὁ τῶι ἡλίῳ καὶ τῇ σελήνῃ τοὺς σικύους καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ συναριθμῶν). It is possible that this fragment too was reperformed at symposia and that such reperformance left its mark on the textual tradition: the subject-matter, with its pithy exemplarity, lends itself well to a sympotic context, and the implicit word-play on cucumbers (σικύοις, 3) and the name of Praxilla's hometown of Sicyon, which is bowdlerized when the cucumbers become figs (or is it perhaps a rude joke of a different gender?) in a version preserved by Diogenianus (5.12, p. 1 251 van Leutsch-Schneidewin), is just the kind of playfulness which we know went down well in the symposion. Three more fragments have subject-matter which might easily belong to hymns but also, in view of their affinity with the erotic and paederastic concerns of the symposion, might just as easily be thought to have been reperformed symposiastically. *PMG* 751 is no more than a brief report by Athenaeus (13.603a), in the context of a discussion on the origins of *to paiderastein*, that Praxilla mentioned the rape of the handsome young Chrysippus at the hands of Zeus. *PMG* 752 (cited by Hesychius β 128 Latte) is a passing citation as evidence for an alternative parentage for Dionysus, in which the pairing of the god with Aphrodite

has obvious resonance with the symposion, the context *par excellence* for the mixing of wine and love. PMG 753 is said by the scholiast to Theocritus (5.83a pp. 170–171 Wendel) to have been composed for the festival of the Carneia; while the scholiast definitely implies that Praxilla referred to the festival, and he mentions Praxilla in the same breath as Alcman, it is notable that here too the subject-matter is paederastic, and so suitable for sympotic reuse.

Despite the fact that Praxilla's corpus consists in the main of hymns and dithyrambs and that the two *skolia* ascribed to her are suspiciously generic, the testimonia's report that she was an author of *skolia* has led some scholars to the conclusion that she must have been a *hetaira*. This embarrassment regarding Praxilla's status has led her to acquire something of a split personality; Martin West has even suggested the possibility that there were two different poets named Praxilla, one a respectable matron and one a *hetaira*,²³ just as in ancient scholarship's treatment of Sappho.²⁴ This is not necessary if we accept that Praxilla's poems could have been detached from their original context and reused in the symposion (as West also suggests). The 'split-personality' problem is particularly in evidence in the case of our fragment addressed to the gazing woman, which, as we will see, some scholars have tried to interpret in reaction to the prevailing reading in ways that would restore reputability to its author. In fact, as it stands the couplet does not lend itself easily to being grouped with either one or the other category, that is to say it resists being clearly identified either as a ritual song or as a *skolion* which was ascribed to her at a later date. However, it is arguable that once we have dissociated Hephaestion's quotation from the vase inscription and are more willing to preserve the plural τῶν θυρίδων (which does not have the vernacular ring of the singular) the latter possibility seems to lose force. It is time to return the woman's gaze and give the fragment a closer look.

We might start by noting that the attribution to Praxilla rests entirely on the context of quotation in Hephaestion's *Handbook on Metres* (7.8), where the fragment is cited as being an example of the verse called 'Praxilleion'. Elsewhere (11.3) two lines of Sappho (fr. 154 v., explicitly ascribed to her) are cited as an example of a different kind of Praxilleion; conversely, the Byzantine

23 West (1993) xix: 'She was credited on the one hand with songs suitable for the symposion—which might suggest a courtesan—and on the other hand with choral poetry and hymns, which would point rather to a respectable, matronly, chorus-leader. It is possible that two different women of the same name have been confused, or else that Praxilla's authorship of the sympotic songs, about which the ancients seem to have entertained doubts, was a fiction.'

24 Nymphodorus *FGrH* 572 F 6 = Ath. 13.596e, *Suda* σ 108 Adler; Most (1996) 15–16.

scholar Trichas (presumably basing himself on Hephaestion or perhaps Choroeboscus) gives as an example of a Praxilleion ('so called because she used it often', as he says) a line which is (to my knowledge) otherwise unknown, remains unasccribed, and may very well have been invented.²⁵ Still, such low-level uncertainty can hardly be avoided and it is reasonable to assume that the fragment was thought in antiquity to be by Praxilla.

We have seen that the prevailing interpretation of the fragment, based on the assumption that Praxilla composed *skolia* and was therefore in all likelihood a *hetaira*, an assumption seemingly reinforced by the occurrence of the first few words of our fragment on a wine cup, is that the song is a bawdy drinking song, an address to a loose woman.²⁶ I have begun to argue that, once freed of the close connection with *skolia* and the vase, this interpretation loses its appeal. I will now investigate the possibility that the fragment comes from a ritual song (though this does not, of course, preclude the possibility of reperformance at the symposion—indeed the irony of sympotic appropriation would be well placed).

Some attempts have in fact already been made to interpret the fragment in ways other than as a *lascive Anrede*. Aly's elaborate suggestion that the female addressee is the Moon, who shines chastely through our windows at night but when she dips beyond the horizon becomes Endymion's lover, is frequently cited in the literature for being farfetched and unpersuasive.²⁷ Halporn's interpretation has τῶν θυρίδων as referring to the windows of the soul, that is to say the eyes, but there are not any convincing parallels for that peculiar use of θυρίς.²⁸ A different attempt is made by Eleonora Cavallini, who aligns this fragment with the others attributed to Praxilla by interpreting it as a ritual song, and specifically a hymn to Aphrodite Parakuptousa,²⁹ but there is no evidence for this cult outside of Cyprus. A simpler explanation will have to be sought.

25 Trichas 3.273 (p. 380 Consbruch): καὶ προσέτι τὰ τετράμετρα ἀκατάλεκτα, τὰ πρὸς τρισὶ δακτυλικοῖς ποσὶ μίαν ἔχοντα τροχαικὴν διποδιαν, ἃ καὶ Πραξιλλεῖα λέγεται, ἅτε τῆς ποιητρίας Πραξιλλῆς ἐν πολλῶι χρησαμένης τῷ τοιούτῳ μέτρῳ, οἷόν ἐστι τὸ ἀνίδεον θεότητα λόγῳ σιν ἄμμιν.

26 In fact, a similar interpretation is found already in the scholia A to Hephaestion: πρὸς φιλουμένην, παρθένον μὲν φαινομένην, μὴ οὔσαν δέ (p. 130 Consbruch, reported by Page in apparatus).

27 RE XXII 1764–1765 s.v. 'Praxilla'.

28 Halporn (1983); arguments against in Renehan (1987).

29 Cavallini (1992) 37–41. For this Cypriot ritual see Plu. *Mor.* 766d–e (*Amatorius*) and cf. Ov. *Met.* 14.751–761; Borghini (1979).

Among scholars who have voiced their doubts about the prevailing 'lascivious' interpretation is Alan Cameron, who has additional reason to want to reject such a reading of our fragment, since he thinks that a poem of Asclepiades' has been erroneously interpreted as representing the girl behaving inappropriately partly on the basis of its allusion to Praxilla (with the plural θυρίδων).³⁰ I quote Cameron's misgivings on our Praxilla fragment (his emphases):

Most commentators have inferred from line 2 [of the Praxilla fragment] that the girl is a whore with the face of a virgin. [...] yet the traditional explanation is ... [not] satisfactory. While one can say in most languages that a girl has the face of a virgin but the heart or body of a whore, it is surely very odd to say that she has the head of a virgin but is a *bride* (or married woman) *beneath*. Marriage marks the end of virginity, to be sure, but most people consider it respectable enough. If we had the rest of Praxilla's poem these two lines might take on a meaning we could never have guessed.³¹

But a guess might be ventured yet. The fragment may be a snatch of a wedding song, and specifically a wedding song which was sung at the groom's house after the wedding night. We know that songs were performed outside the marriage chamber on the evening before the consummation and then again on the following morning, when a group of well-wishers would return for a second day of festivities. These were known as τὰ ἐπαύλια and they celebrated the bride's taking up residence in the groom's house (ἐπαυλίσθαι) and the consummation of the union.³² The festivities involved a procession to bring gifts to the bride,

30 Asclepiades, Epigram 3 (text and translation from Sens [2011]):

Νικαρέτης τὸ πόθοισι βεβαμμένον ἦδ' ὑπὸ πρόσωπον,
 πυκνὰ δι' ὑψηλῶν φαινόμενον θυρίδων,
 αἰ χαροπαὶ Κλεοφώντος ἐπὶ προθύροισι ἐμάραναν,
 Κύπρι φιλή, γλυκεροῦ βλέμματος ἀστεροπαί.
 Nicarete's sweet face, imbued with desirability,
 often visible through the lofty windows—
 the bright lightning-bolts from the sweet gaze of
 Cleophon at the front door, dear Cypris, dimmed it.

31 Cameron (1995) 499; cf. Kirkwood (1974): 'this intriguing start could lead almost anywhere. Is it praise? Invective? A riddle poem? We know no more.'

32 Eusth. *Comm. ad Il.* 24.29 (pp. 864–865 van der Valk), referencing the second century AD lexicographer Pausanias (ε 49 Erbse); *Suda* ε 1990 Adler; *Etym. Magnum* s.v. ἐπαύλια (p. 354 Gaisford).

a scene which is frequently depicted on pottery. In paintings, this scene often involves ladders; this detail is interpreted both as a piece of realism (ladders had a utilitarian function in reaching the bridal chamber on the upper floor) and as having a symbolic function, signifying the transition from a virginal maiden, a *parthenos*, into a bride, a *nymphē*.³³ Our fragment, with its address to the woman at the window and its arresting gesture to her changed status, seems to fit this template nicely.

But we do not have to rely on vase paintings alone: some textual evidence allows us a glimpse of the kinds of songs that might have been addressed to the bride on these occasions. Ancient scholarship attests to the existence of a subspecies of wedding song, ‘reveille songs’ which were sung at daybreak to awaken the bride and groom.³⁴ They are labelled ὄρθρια or διεγερτικά in the scholia to Theocritus’ *Idyll* 18 (‘Helen’s epithalamion’): τῶν ἐπιθαλαμίων δὲ τινὰ μὲν αἰδεται ἐσπέρας ἃ λέγεται κατακοιμητικά, ἅτινα ἕως μέσης νυκτὸς αἰδουσι· τινὰ ὄρθρια, ἃ καὶ προσαγορεύεται διεγερτικά, ‘of the songs sung at the wedding chamber some are sung in the evening—these are called “going-to-bed songs”, the ones which they sing until midnight; then there are those sung in the mornings—these are called the “waking-up songs”’.³⁵ The *Idyll* itself, which purports to be a song sung outside the bridal chamber of Menelaus and Helen just before the consummation of the marriage, is, like our fragment, addressed to the bride, and it clearly anticipates a reveille song the following morning; in so doing it, too, draws attention to the woman’s changed status—the young girl is now an *oikétis* (38–41).

ὦ καλὰ, ὦ χάριεσσα κόρα, τὸ μὲν οἰκέτις ἤδη.
ἄμμες δ’ ἐς Δρόμον ἦρι καὶ ἐς λειμώνια φύλλα
ἐρψεύμεσ στεφάνως δρεψεύμεναι ἀδὺ πνέοντας,
πολλὰ τεοῦς, Ἑλένα, μεμναμέναι ...

O beautiful, charming maiden, you are now a housewife. But we, early tomorrow, will to go the Course and to the flowery meadows to gather sweet-smelling garlands, much mindful of you, Helen ...

33 Oakley and Sinos (1993) 38–42 with a systematic account of visual evidence for this stage in the festivities; Rosenzweig (2004) 67–68.

34 A review in Mangelsdorff (1913), esp. 10, who adds that such songs were still known to be sung in Greece in modern times, and Lyghounis (1991), esp. 174–180.

35 *Inscr.* Theoc. 18 (p. 331 Wendel). It is worth mentioning—though it has not won favour—Alan Griffiths’ interpretation of Alcman’s Louvre Partheneion (*PMGF* 1) according to which it is instead an epithalamion sung as a reveille song: see Griffiths (1972).

and a little later on, at the closing of the song (54–58):

εὐδετ' ἐς ἀλλήλων στέρνον φιλότατα πνέοντες
καὶ πόθον· ἐγρέσθαι δὲ πρὸς ἅμ' ἢ πιλᾶθησθε. (55)
νεύμεθα ἅμμες ἐς ὄρθρον, ἐπεὶ καὶ πρῶτος αἰοιδὸς
ἐξ εὐνᾶς κελαδήσῃ ἀνασχὼν εὐτριχὰ δειράν.
Ὑμῆν ὦ Ὑμέναιε, γάμῳ ἐπὶ τῷδε χαρεῖης.

Sleep, breathing love and desire into each other's breasts, and do not forget to wake at dawn. We will return at daybreak, when the first songster raises his well-plumed neck from its bed to cry out. Hymen o Hymenaeus, rejoice in this marriage.

Earlier in the *epithalamion* the girls had drawn attention to Helen's preeminence by praising the beauty of her face as the dawning sun shines its light on it (25–27).

τὰν οὐδ' ἄτις ἄμωμος ἐπεὶ χ' Ἑλέναι παρισωθῇ.
Ἀὼς ἀντέλλοισα καλὸν διέφανε πρόσωπον,
πότνια Νύξ, τό τε λευκὸν ἔαρ χειμῶνος ἀνέντος·

... of whom not one is without blemish when compared with Helen. The dawn rising shows her beautiful face, Lady Night, like the bright spring when winter retreats.

This rhetorical gesture, which here introduces an elaborate series of similes for the bride's beauty, is a convention of songs sung by *parthenoi*,³⁶ but it may also be viewed as anticipating the coming of dawn when they will return to sing for the bride. The same kind of reveille song seems to be implied in a fragment from Aeschylus' *Danaids* (fr. 43 Radt):³⁷

καῖπειτα δ' εἴσι λαμπρὸν ἡλίου φάος
ἐγὼ δ' ἐγείρω πρευμενῆς τοὺς νυμφίους
νόμοισι θέλγων σὺν κόροις τε καὶ κόραις

36 See Swift's chapter in this volume.

37 The text is especially problematic. I use Sommerstein's (Loeb) text and apparatus. See Garvie (1969) 228–230.

- 1–2 εἶσι Kalliergis, ἐγὼ δ' ἐγείρω Bothe: εἶσι ... ἕως ἐγείρω codd.: εὖτε ... ἕως
 ["dawn"] ἐγείρηι, Wilamowitz
 2 πρευμαμένης Heath: προυμέν . . B: προυμ(μ)ενεῖς cett.
 3 θέλων Bothe: θέντων codd.

And then will come the brilliant light of the sun, and I will graciously awake the bridal couples, enchanting them with song with a choir of youths and maidens.

A further and more intriguing parallel, not least on account of its dialogic form and for the emphasis on the transition from being a *parthenos* to being a *numphe*, can be found in a fragment of a marriage song by Sappho preserved by Demetrius (*Peri hermeneias* 140 = fr. 114 v.). This sees alternate lines sung in response by a bride on the one hand and maidenhood or *parthenia* on the other:

(νύμφη). παρθενία, παρθενία, ποῖ με λίποις' ἄ(π)οῖχῃ;
 (παρθενία). † οὐκέτι ἤξω πρὸς σέ, οὐκέτι ἤξω †

Bride: Virginity, virginity, where have you gone deserting me?
 Virginity: Never again shall I be with you, never again.

In our Praxilla fragment, the slightly risqué tone (as it has been perceived by most commentators) is in fact not at odds with a marriage song. The fragment may conceivably imply a contrast between what is visible of the woman through the window and what is not, between her face and her sexual parts; the praise would then be combined with the kind of mock abuse and sexual innuendo which seems to have been a generic trait of marriage songs.³⁸ We see it for instance in Sappho fr. 111 v. (suggesting that the bridegroom is so large—or has such a fantastically large erection—that he will not fit under the roof of the bridal chamber) or fr. 110 v. (about the doorkeeper with the huge feet).³⁹ We also see it in Theocritus' *epithalamion* to Helen cited above, where the chorus suggest that Menelaus might be so drunk he will fall asleep before consummating his marriage. On the other hand, it is perhaps more likely that the reference to what is 'below' the virginal face of the bride is not a reference to her sex but rather to her bosom. A woman's breasts seem to have had special signif-

38 See especially Hague (1983) and Swift (2010) 247–248.

39 For these bawdy fragments and others see Dale (2011) 51–55.

icance in a marriage context. A number of *lebetes gamikoi* portray the bride accepting her *epaulia* gifts while naked from the waist up; as Oakley and Sinos argue, this is a way to indicate conspicuously her transition from *parthenos* to *nymphe*.⁴⁰ In Theocritus' *epithalamion*, when the *parthenoi* draw attention to the separation of the bride that comes after the wedding, they employ an arresting simile which draws attention to the woman's breasts: they will remember her 'as the milk-fed lambs who yearn for the breast of the sheep who bore them' (41–42).⁴¹ Perhaps more tenuously but still suggestively, among the fragments of Sappho we find a marriage song within a marriage song which refers to love-making with a violet-bosomed bride (fr. 30.4–5 v. ἀείδοι.ν φ[ιλότατα καὶ νύμ]/φας ἰοκόλπω).⁴²

So looks, it seems, can deceive in more ways than one. The song by Praxilla of which the first two lines are preserved by Hephaestion may not be a *skolion* as commonly thought. Rather than being an address to a prostitute, it may be an address to a bride made by a chorus notionally positioned outside the bridal chamber. The suggestion that the fragment is from a marriage song seems a natural one for a poem by a female poet, and it is surprising that despite the fancifulness of some of the previous interpretations this more straightforward one has never been defended.⁴³ More generally, it is intriguing to note that, while scholarship on Sappho tends to privilege the feminine ritual character of her poetry and make light of her association with the symposium, in the case of Praxilla the opposite has been true.⁴⁴ The recent discovery of a poem by Sappho in which the speaker discusses the circumstances of her family (the now notorious 'Brothers Poem', *P.Sapph. Obbink* 21 ff.) has prompted a resurgence in the debate on the social context of her poetry. Praxilla may not have left as deep a mark in Greek literary history as Sappho, but it may be timely to revisit our ideas about her too.

40 Oakley and Sinos (1993) 42; see e.g. Athens National Museum 1371.

41 Dover (1971) 236 condemns this as 'a very odd simile indeed'.

42 See Contiades-Tsitsoni (1990) 79–80, with argument to the effect that the 'violet' colour refers to the hue of the bride's skin rather than her garment.

43 It has barely (to my knowledge) been mentioned: Chris Carey remarks in passing, in his 'Praxilla' entry for the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, that the fragment is 'probably' a wedding song. Cf. McIntosh Snyder (1991) 56: 'Presumably the person addressed is a young woman of innocent demeanor who is in fact not so innocent as she looks, but whether she is supposed to be a bride-to-be or a *hetaira* cannot be determined.'

44 Though this status quo is now being challenged in relation to Sappho, and the view is resurfacing that she was a courtesan of sorts and her poetry essentially sympotic: see especially Schlesier (2013).

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