

Sappho, Iambist: Abusing the Brother

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At this remove, it strikes us as implausible that the author of *Principia Mathematica* also penned *Notes on Early Church History and the Moral Superiority of the 'Barbarians' to the Romans*. And how likely is it, we think, that the poet of the *Iliad* would in addition compose the coarsely comic *Margites*? We like our authors classifiable, even monotonic. So it seems surprising, if not disturbing, that the Sappho of poems 1, 2, 16, 31, 94 and other expressions of exquisite longing and imagination might also have composed verses of forthright criticism in the style of *iambos*, the genre associated with mockery and abuse.¹

Yet several testimonia and at least a few poetic fragments afford a glimpse of this other side of Sappho. I shall argue here that the newest Sappho poem, on “the brothers,” draws from, and may even in antiquity have been considered a specimen of, iambic poetics. For the suggestion, I shall rely on its structure and rhetorical strategy while adducing comparative evidence from a more readily recognizable Greek iambist. Finally, I shall propose that poems like our newly found composition—maybe even this very poem—affected the Roman reception of Sappho through hints that she could be, when she wished, an artist of verbal abuse.

Sappho and *iambos*

The testimonia regarding her iambic compositions were examined nine years ago by Patricia Rosenmeyer in the comprehensive article ‘Sappho’s Iambics’,

1 A somewhat shorter version of this paper was read to a colloquium at Berkeley in May 2014. For helpful comments, I wish to thank the audience at that occasion, and especially the organizers (Mark Griffith, Leslie Kurke, Donald Mastronarde). A few questions from the audience for the longer version at the Basel conference prompted further thinking on my part. I have benefitted from numerous discussions with Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi about this poem and Sapphic poetics in general. Finally, I thank the editors of this volume for helpful suggestions.

which builds on suggestions by Dolores O'Higgins and Antonio Aloni.² In the light of that evidence, it is hardly necessary to argue for the existence of an ancient tradition about Sappho engaging in *iambos* in the larger sense of mocking verbal attacks. What will be important for my case are the specific ways we find Sappho proceeding in this vein. Before that, however, it will be worth re-visiting the most immediately relevant testimonia, to tease out some more detail.

First in importance come the three passages that use the genre term *iambos* or derivatives in connection with Sappho's work. A biographical notice from the *Suda* reports that Sappho, in addition to lyric poems, wrote epigrams, elegies, *iamboi*, and monodic songs (*Suda* Σ 107= iv 322s. Adler = Voigt test. 253: ἔγραψε δὲ καὶ ἐπιγράμματα καὶ ἐλεγεία καὶ ἰάμβους καὶ μονωδίας.) The same Byzantine source twice mentions *iamboi* by Anacreon the lyric poet, juxtaposing them first with elegies (A 1916.3 = i.171s. Adler), then later in the same entry with sympotic songs (*paroinia* ... *melê*) and 'Anacreontea' (A 1916.7–8). While there is evidence (fr. 425) that poems in iambic trimeters or tetrameters were circulating as Anacreon's (and, of course, the iambic dimeter catalectic later bore his name) it is just as probable that compositions by him, in whatever metrical form, could give the overall impression of the mood of *iambos*, interpreted more generally as poetry of invective (which was, after all, the older sense of the genre term).³ The significantly abusive side of Anacreon has been obscured in literary reception by the dominant persona of the boozy symposiast, as Christopher Brown has pointed out.⁴ Apart from the well-known fragments (372, 388) satirizing the effeminate Artemon, Anacreon's invective has not gotten much attention.

In relation to our question regarding Sappho's iambs, one fragment of Anacreon is particularly relevant. The *Etymologicum Genuinum*, citing the adjective *κνυζή* from an "iambos" by the poet (fr. 432) most likely uses the literary term in its generic, rather than strictly metrical, meaning:

2 Rosenmeyer (2006). Dale (2011) examines the same testimonia but cites neither Rosenmeyer nor O'Higgins.

3 On the evolution of the concept, see Rotstein (2009). While it is possible that the author of the *Suda* notice has been misled by poems falsely attributed to Sappho (as the editors of this volume pointed out to me), it seems more plausible, following Rotstein (2009) 35–36, that perceived "iambic" features had led him and predecessors in antiquity to speak of some Sapphic verse in this way, while not positively asserting that there were poems by her strictly in the genre of *iambos* narrowly defined.

4 Brown (1983) and (1984).

κνυζή τις ἤδη καὶ πέπειρα γίνομαι
σὴν διὰ μαργοσύνην.

Already I am becoming a wrinkled old thing, over-ripe fruit,
thanks to your lust.

This line shares diction and theme with the Cologne Epode of Archilochus (cf. Archilochus fr. 196a.24–26: ‘As for Neoboule, let (some?) other man have her. Ugh, she’s overripe (*pepeira*), twice your age ...’).⁵ The two poems also, it seems, used the same metrical scheme: instead of stichic iambs, an iambic trimeter followed by a dactylic hemiepes. The aggressive invective tone of the Archilochean verses has been widely acknowledged and we shall come to discuss it further below.⁶

Equivocal in a different way is the allusion found in a letter by the Emperor Julian to Alypius (*Ep.*10, 403d Bidez, dated 361AD):

It happened that when you sent me your map I had just recovered from my illness, but I was none the less glad on that account to receive the chart that you sent. For not only does it contain diagrams better than any hitherto made; but you have embellished it by adding those iambic verses (κατεμούσωσας αὐτὸ προσθεὶς τοὺς ἰάμβους) not such as ‘Sing the War of Bupalus’, as the poet of Cyrene expresses it, but such as beautiful Sappho is wont to fashion for her songs (οἶους ἢ καλῆ Σαπφῶ βούλεται τοῖς ὕμνοις ἀρμόττειν).⁷

Gianfranco Agosti remarks on the opposition articulated here between aggressive and “serious” or moralizing iambic modes, a recurrent theme in the Christian reception of the archaic form.⁸ In this case, we should not doubt that the prefatory poem was, in formal metrical terms, composed in iambs, but (at least to Julian) sounded milder than the archaic poetry of Hipponax (the attacker of Bupalus, notably alluded to by the ‘poet of Cyrene’ Callimachus). Whether he understood Sappho herself to have composed in iambic *meters*, rather than in the *spirit* of the genre *iambos*, is not clear.

5 Trans. Gerber (1999b) 213.

6 Note also that the speaker of fr. 432 is a woman. On the affiliations of Anacreon with Archilochus, see Brown (1984).

7 Trans. Wright.

8 Agosti (2001) 229–230. On Julian’s views concerning iambic poetics, see now Hawkins (2014) 271–273.

Such passages are admittedly later than one might desire. Somewhat earlier is an interesting excerpt in which the critic and poet Philodemus makes mention of a generic contrast that may well have become canonical by the 1st century BC (fr. 117 *de Poem.* Janko):

οἱ γ[ὰρ ἰ]αμβοποιοὶ τραγικὰ ποιοῦσιν, καὶ οἱ τραγωδοποιοὶ πάλιν ἰαμβικά, καὶ Σαπφὸς τινὰ ἰαμβικῶς ποιεῖ, καὶ Ἀρχίλοχος οὐκ ἰαμβικῶς. ὥστε φύσει μὲν [οὐ ῥ]ητέον ἰαμβοποιὸν [ἢ ἄλλ]ο τι ποιοῦντα γένος, ἀλλὰ νόμωι...

For poets of iambs compose tragic verses, and conversely tragic poets compose iambs. Sappho composes some verses in the manner of iambs, while Archilochus composes some not in the manner of iambs. Therefore one must say that a composer of iambs or some other genre exists not because of his nature, but by convention.⁹

The alternative explanation for why particular poets are affiliated with certain genres—that it is a matter of “convention”—directly counters the assumptions behind Aristotle’s treatment of the issue. For the author of the *Poetics*, *physis* is destiny, as those with a more vulgar nature gravitate toward the less serious or more abusive genre of *iambos* (1448b20–34). The source being quoted or paraphrased here by Philodemus adduces the polythetic poetics of two leading lyric exponents to prove that the individual composer is *not* locked into his or her dominant generic practice. We can observe that the exact nature of the usual poetry composed by each one is not specified; what counts is that either can choose whether or not to compose in the manner of *iambos*, no matter what his or her own main styles might be. (It is also apparent that Archilochus is thought of mostly as an iambist). To what extent the pairing of Sappho opposite Archilochus further coincides with the ability of either to compose ‘tragic’ verses is not clear from this passage, and it is difficult to imagine which poets Philodemus or the source to which he responds has in mind: Ion of Chios, so celebrated in Hellenistic times for his *polyeidea*? Or the tragedians who also regularly produced satyr plays as part of their Dionysiac tetralogies?¹⁰

A fourth passage uses language typical of descriptions of *iambos* while not actually employing the term. The Second Sophistic rhetorician Maximus of

9 On the Philodemus passage, see Janko (2000) 330–332.

10 On genre-mixing as built into the archaic iambic tradition and later revived by Callimachus, see Acosta-Hughes (2002).

Tyre compares Socrates' relations with his interlocutors to Sappho's interactions with her female friends, whom she censures and cross-examines (Max. Tyr. 18. 9 = test. 219)

What else could one call the love of the Lesbian woman than the Socratic art of love? For they seem to me to have practised love after their own fashion, she the love of women, he of men. For they said they loved many, and were captivated by all things beautiful. What Alcibiades and Charmides and Phaedrus were to him, Gyrinna and Atthis and Anactoria were to her; what the rival craftsmen Prodicus and Gorgias and Thrasymachus and Protagoras were to Socrates, Gorgo and Andromeda were to Sappho. Sometimes she censures them, at other times she cross-examines them, and she uses irony just like Socrates (νῦν μὲν ἐπιτιμᾷ ταύταις, νῦν δὲ ἐλέγχει καὶ εἰρωνεύεται αὐτὰ ἐκεῖνα τὰ Σωκράτους).

From these passages, we can glimpse an ancient tradition that read the content and style of some Sapphic poetry in terms of its apparently corrective or even aggressive tone. A second category of testimonia, further propounding this view, can be found wrapped up with the representation of Sappho in Athenian comedy. At least six comedies were named for the poetess, and a few others probably staged her adventures—Plato's *Phaon* and the *Leucadian* by Menander for example.¹¹ Athenaeus mentions that Diphilus, the poet of New Comedy, in his play *Sappho* represented Archilochus and Hipponax as her lovers (13.598bc-d).¹² Significantly, this remark on comedy is prefaced by a citation from Anacreon (whose iambic behavior we have mentioned above), lines supposedly arising from his erotic rejection by Sappho.

Chamaeleon had asserted that Anacreon's poem (fr. 358) was addressed to Sappho, after she *mocked* him for his white hair: (lines 5–7: ἡ δ', ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ' εὐκτίτου/Λέσβου, τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην,/λευκὴ γάρ, καταμέμφεται). In the broader context, the sympotic speaker at this point in Athenaeus has been at pains to critique the relative chronologies in a poem by Hermesianax, the Hellenistic elegist, that had alluded to a rivalry for Sappho's favor between Alcaeus and Anacreon (Hermesianax 3.47–56 *Coll. Alex.* Powell). That two of the would-be lovers of Sappho in these inter-related traditions were iambic poets *par excellence*, and the third (Anacreon) can now be seen to have exercised his own

11 On Sappho in comedy, see Lefkowitz (2012) 43–44; also Yatromanolakis (2007) 293–312.

12 On the play, see Rotstein (2009) 292–293.

brand of *iambos*, makes one think that Sappho in the Diphilus play might have played a feisty interlocutor, a Kathryn Hepburn to Archilochus' Spencer Tracy. Both the comedy and the traditions known to Chamaeleon concerning the mocking exchanges between Sappho and Anacreon could also have resembled poetic duelling, like the exchange of competing *skolia* in the symposium.¹³ Significantly, the one scrap we have elsewhere in Athenaeus coming from the Diphilus comedy features someone—perhaps Sappho—toasting Archilochus at what must be a drinking party (11.487a):

Ἀρχίλοχε, δέξαι τήνδε τὴν μετανιπτρίδα
 μεστὴν Διὸς σωτήρος, Ἀγαθοῦ Δαίμονος.

Archilochus, accept this brimming after-dinner cup in honour of Zeus Saviour and of the Spirit of Good Luck ...

Rosenmeyer compares with this image of Sappho as sympotic performer a passage from the play of Antiphanes, in which Sappho poses riddles to the guests (Ath. 10.450e).

What we do not know, as Rosenmeyer points out, is whether this Sappho is a complete invention of the comedians or whether the playwrights were simply working within an interpretive frame already established in Athens, by which audiences and critics could detect “iambic” overtones in the verses attributed to her.¹⁴ Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi, meanwhile, has taken this Athenian comedic evidence in a different direction, to examine in detail the ways in which Horace conceptualized lyric performance within the symposium. Her article concentrates on Horace's difficult *Epistle* 1.19, to which I shall return at the end of this paper.¹⁵

Iambic Moods and Modes

So much, then, for the testimonia to Sappho's composition or performance of poetry evoking the genre of *iambos* in contents, style, or occasions. As for the possible surviving Sapphic poems that employ the mode of *iambos*, let us consider five passages in particular. Most prominent is fr. 55, the poem

13 On the practice, see Collins (2004) and Martin (2015).

14 Rosenmeyer (2006) 8–9.

15 Peponi (2002).

‘to an uneducated woman’ (πρὸς ἀπαίδευτον γυναῖκα) preserved in Stobaeus (3.4.12):

κατθάνοισα δὲ κείσῃ οὐδὲ ποτα μναμοσύνα σέθεν
 ἔσσειτ' οὐδὲ πόθα εἰς ὕστερον· οὐ γὰρ πεδέχῃς βρόδων
 τῶν ἐκ Πιερίας, ἀλλ' ἀφάνης κὰν Ἄϊδα δόμῳ
 φοιτάσῃς πεδ' ἀμαύρων νεκύων ἐκπεποταμένα.

But when you die you will lie there (κατθάνοισα δὲ κείσῃ), and afterwards there will never be any recollection of you or any longing for you since you have no share in the roses of Pieria; unseen in the house of Hades also, flown from our midst, you will go to and fro among the shadowy corpses.

trans. CAMPBELL 1982a

It is difficult to read this fragment without recalling Homeric speeches that verbally abuse enemies recently killed. Compare for instance Achilles' address to Lykaon (*Il.*21.122–125):

ἐνταυθοῖ νῦν κείσο μετ' ἰχθύσιν, οἳ σ' ὠτειλήν
 αἶμ' ἀπολιχμήσονται ἀκηδέες· οὐδὲ σε μήτηρ
 ἐνθεμένη λεχέεσσι γοήσεται, ἀλλὰ Σκάμανδρος
 οἴσει δινήεις εἴσω ἄλός εὐρέα κόλπον·

Lie there now among the fish, who will lick the blood away from your wound, and care nothing for you, nor will your mother lay you on the death-bed and mourn over you, but Skamandros will carry you spinning down to the wide bend of the salt water.

trans. LATTIMORE 2011

This is the safest sort of *iambos*, being an aggressive speech-act to which the hearer cannot respond. We do not know whether Sappho's addressee (a rival poetess?) was dead or alive: the former scenario would turn the lines into an effectively vivid perversion of a song of mourning, a *thrênos*, more akin to Achilles' post-mortem abuse of his dead enemy. Her syntax admits of either interpretation.¹⁶

16 Lardinois (2008) 86–87 has argued that the addressee is a young woman who left the choral group prematurely and against Sappho's wishes.

From Athenaeus (supplemented from Maximus of Tyre) we have verses that refer cattily to Andromeda's unfortunate style blunders. He frames the citation with the word *skôptei*, the regular word for iambic mockery (Ath. 21bc = Sappho fr. 57):¹⁷

Σαπφῶ περι Ἀνδρομέδας σκώπτει:
 τίς δ' ἀγροῖωτις θέλγει νόον ...
 ἀγροῖωτιν ἐπεμμένα στόλαν ...
 οὐκ ἐπισταμένα τὰ βράχε' ἔλαχην ἐπὶ τῶν σφύρων;

Sappho derides Andromeda thus:
 And what country girl beguiles your mind ...
 dressed in country garb ...
 not knowing how to pull her rags over her ankles?

trans. CAMPBELL 1982a

We can notice in this brief fragment that the mockery of Andromeda—one of the women whom, as we saw above, Maximus of Tyre claimed had been 'censured and cross-examined' by Sappho—is indirect, inasmuch as the immediate addressee, whether man or woman, is also subjected to mockery, simply for being infatuated with such an uncouth (but absent) bumpkin. As we shall see, this technique fits a sophisticated rhetorical strategy within *iambos*.

It is a commonplace, of course, that scoptic language was ritualized at marriage ceremonies, as it also was in Demeter cult.¹⁸ The famous fr. 110 (= Hephæstion, *Ench.* 7.6, p. 23 Consbruch), about the door-keeper at a wedding whose feet are seven fathoms long, and so forth, is characterized as scoptic mockery (*skôptei*) by Demetrius (fr. 110b = Demetr. *Eloc.* 167, p. 37 Radermacher). Significantly, the ancient literary critic also notices that Sappho in this poem employs 'prosaic rather than poetic language' (ἐν πεζοῖς ὀνόμασι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν ποιητικοῖς), so that such verses are better spoken than sung. Clearly, Demetrius associated the genre of this poem with the 'lower' modes of *iambos* or satire, the 'walking Muse' that had such prominence in the later theorizing and practice of Horace (cf. *Sat.* 2.6.17).¹⁹

The final two passages offering some possible hints of invective theme and diction are fragments 71 (= P.Oxy. 1787 fr. 6) and 37 (= *Etym.Gen.* p. 25 Calame

17 cf. Philem. 162 (p. 107s. Osann) = Eust. 1916. 49 (om. v. 2), Max. Tyr. 18. 9s. (p. 231 Hob.) (= v. 2).

18 See O'Higgins (2003).

19 On this *Musa pedestris*, see the masterful work of Freudenburg (1993).

= *Et. Mag.* 335. 37ss). The former offers just a single relevant word (which is partially restored, at that), the vocative in line 4, ‘villain’ (*ka[ko]trop’*). It may have been part of a poem regarding the defection of Sappho’s friends to her political enemies, as other lines apparently referred to someone having chosen the friendship of the house of Penthilus (the family of Pittacus, by marriage). The latter reads:

τὸν δ’ ἐπιπλάζοντ’ ἄνεμοι φέροιεν
καὶ μελέδωναι

May winds and sorrows carry off the one who rebukes me.

The line has affinities with the style of the so-called Strasbourg Epode attributed to Hipponax (*P.Argent.* 3 fr. 1 = fr. 115 West), although that poem, with its vision of the friend-turned-enemy naked and freezing on a Thracian beach, admittedly expresses a rather nastier wish.

Iambos in the Brothers Poem

After this brief overview of the several more or less explicit poetic moments in Sappho that might be colored “iambic,” we turn to a key passage that relates Sappho to invective as specifically directed toward her brother Charaxos—one of the cast of characters in the new Brothers Poem. Herodotus, telling the story of the courtesan Rhodopis (Hdt. 2.135), names the man who freed her, at great cost, from servitude in Egypt as the brother of Sappho ‘the *mousike*-maker’ (τῆς μουσικοιοῦ). When this man, Charaxos, brought Rhodopis back to his home city Mytilene, his sister roundly abused him in a song (ἐν μέλει Σαπφῶ πολλὰ κατεκερτόμησέ μιν). The word *katekertomêse* aligns the sisterly speech-act with biting pointed addresses of the type seen, once more, in Homeric exchanges (cf. *Il.* 1.539, 5.419, 16.744, 20.202, etc.). Whether we take the information as purely biographical, or see it as an instance of a brother-correcting trope found in didactic verse (as when Hesiod rebukes Perses in the *Works and Days*), it seems certain that the tone of Sappho’s poem concerning Charaxos was far from mild; it must have sounded like verbal abuse.²⁰ That

20 Dale (2011) 67–71 sets the Herodotean anecdote within the generic framework of Hesiodic advice-poetry. On the nuances of Perses and other “brother” figures in such poetry, see Martin (2004).

this occurred *after* Charaxos returned to Mytilene means we have to imagine the newest Brothers Poem as pre-dating in fictional time the missing *iambos*-like poem where Sappho rebuked him. In our newest Sappho poem, Charaxos is apparently still at sea or even still in Egypt, yet to set sail. In effect, his return home with or without his newly-freed girlfriend would provide a nicely ironic companion piece for Sappho fr. 44, depicting the ecstatic welcome given Hector when he arrived at Troy with his new bride Andromache.

A passage from Strabo further shades in the picture. Speaking of the tomb of the courtesan built by her lovers he states that Sappho calls this woman who was her brother's mistress 'Doricha', while other writers call her 'Rhodopis' (Strab. 17.1.33). We should pay a bit more attention to this onomastic divide: other writers call the prostitute by a perfectly apt *hetaira* name ('Rosey'). But Sappho—and apparently no one else—calls her Doricha. Is it too much to see in the latter name an iambist's instinct for degrading her target? While it might be simply an extended form of *Doris* 'the Dorian woman' (though she in fact was known as a Thracian) 'Doricha' might also pun on *dôron* and related forms to imply 'she who gives herself freely' or even something like *dôrodektês* 'she who freely takes gifts'.²¹

The motive given in Athenaeus (Ath. 13.596bc) for Sappho's outraged poetic attack (διὰ τῆς ποιήσεως διαβάλλει)—namely that Rhodopis/Doricha came between the brother and his money—is a commonplace in later comic representations regarding voracious courtesans.²² A more intriguing tradition might underlie the later information contained in Photius and the *Suda* (Phot. s.vv. Ῥοδώπιδος ἀνάθημα, p. 490 Reitzenstein = *Suda*, ρ211, iv 297 Adler). If Rhodopis had been a fellow slave of Aesop might she, as he did, have represented an entire speech-genre on her own? Leslie Kurke in her suggestive work on the ideology contained in the Herodotean account draws attention to the contrast between Aesop the *logopoios* and Sappho *mousopoios*—that is, between low prose and high poetic genres.²³ Might Rhodopis be something in-between these poles, a "low" voice but one still speaking within the conventions of poetic discourse, whose existence (or even actual verses) drags Sappho down to the level of fighting dirty, using the resources of *kertomia*?

One might object that this misunderstands the real target of Sappho's alleged attack. We are told she derided Charaxos, or at least it appears so from the

21 For later comic punning on "Dorian" and *dôra* (bribes), see e.g. Ar. *Knights* 989–995. On the appropriate meanings of both names, see Yatromanolakis (2007) 334.

22 See Davidson (1997).

23 Kurke (2010) 371.

account in Herodotus.²⁴ In the passage cited above from Athenaeus, however, it is quite clear that Sappho attacked *Rhodopis*. And yet the language of Herodotus (along with a late testimonium in Tzetzes) implies that this all took place in the space of *one* poetic composition.²⁵ Instead of trying to reconcile these divergent accounts, I would like to use the apparent ambiguity of the attack to approach our newest Sappho poem, the Brothers Song. In brief, I should like to propose that a specific *iambos* technique could well have led readers of the lost poetic “attack” on Rhodopis to perceive it as *also* an attack on Charaxos. The same technique, in my view, means that in our newest Sappho fragment the mention of Charaxos can lead to *iambos*-like mocking of Sappho’s *other* brother, Larichos. He was the usually “good brother” whom Sappho is said to praise in yet another poem (test. 203a= Ath. 10.425a):

The lovely Sappho often praises (ἐπαινεῖ) her brother Larichos because he poured the wine for the Mytilenaeans in the town-hall.

Larichos, I suggest, in the newest poem becomes collateral damage, even as a direct strike on Charaxos is *not*—at least in what survives of the poem—being carried out.²⁶

To envision this possibility, we must first return to the new poem’s rhetorical structure. The speaker (let’s call her person A) addresses person B, who seems to be present in the immediate vicinity, using an impatient tone: you are always *going on* about Charaxos (let’s call him absent subject #1) saying that he has started on his journey (so I construe the aorist *elthein* with the verb of speaking).²⁷ The next sentence, a command ‘leave that to the gods’, morphs into another more practical imperative: ‘send me to pray’.

24 Unless the unmarked *min* in the Herodotean passage refers to *Rhodopin*.

25 Tzetzes in *Prolegomena de comoedia* (Koster 1.1A): Χάραξος δὲ ἦν αὐτῆς ἀδελφός, ὃς τὴν Ῥοδώπιν τὴν ἑταιρίδα ἐκ Ξάνθου ὠνήσατο, Ἰάδμονος δούλην ὑπάρχουσαν, σύνδουλον δὲ τοῦ λογοποιοῦ καὶ μυθογράφου Αἰσώπου, καὶ ταύτῃ συνῆν καὶ τούτου ἔνεκεν ἢ ἀδελφῆ τούτου Σαπφῶ μέλει ἐνὶ τῶν αὐτῆς καθάπτεται οὐ μετρίως.

26 Fr. 15, which appears to mention Doricha at line 11 (as restored by Campbell), might have been a poem in which Sappho criticized Charaxos for his relationship: see Lardinois in this volume.

27 For a parallel to this use of the verb *erkhomai* to mean ‘set out’ with specific reference to a ship, see *Od.*14.334–335: ‘But me he sent forth first, for a ship of the Thesprotians chanced to be **setting out** (*erkhomenê*) for Dulichium, rich in wheat’ (trans. Murray 1919). The addressee whose frequent remarks are referred to by the narrator in the Sappho poem can be imagined as constantly saying “*erkhetai*” which can mean either ‘he is coming’ (with deictic focus on the *speaker’s* place) or ‘he is setting out’ (with imaginative focus

While the first complete two stanzas have staged at least a difference of attitude between speaker and addressee, the third stanza brings them *together*: may he (the absent Charaxos) find *us* (*amme*) safe and sound. Let *us* entrust the rest to the divine (*epitropômen*); the fourth stanza picks up the same verbal root in order to make a different point: Zeus can turn things around (*pertrôpên*). Then the fifth stanza neatly returns to *us* again (compare *kamme* in line 13 [9] with *kammes* in line 21 [17]). This time, however, person A introduces a second brother (absent subject #2)—namely Larichos, asserting that ‘if he lifts his head and indeed ever becomes a man we might quickly be released from many heavy-hearted cares’.

In my reading, the initial segment (although it is probably not the beginning of the poem) is lightly colored with the tones of *iambos*. ‘You are always chattering’ (*thrulêstha*) does not employ a poetic word.²⁸ The register goes along with a certain abruptness: ‘Instead of talking, do something: tell me to supplicate Hera’. The mention of Larichos, at the end of our readable portion of the poem, has the same sort of tone. Instead of taking it to mean that Larichos is just too young to do anything in a crisis situation, I interpret the line ‘If he lifts his head and indeed ever becomes a man’ to be an insulting swipe. He *is* of age, but he will not take the responsibility to rescue Sappho and her interlocutor from whatever *baruthumiai* are oppressing them. Transpose the situation to epic terms, and we can imagine Eurykleia in the *Odyssey* privately telling Penelope what she thinks of the latter’s laggard twenty-something slacker son. Larichos, like Telemachos, has got to man-up.²⁹

on the distant *subject’s* action). The aorist infinitive *elthein* generated within the indirect discourse is therefore ambiguous, capturing the sense of either of the two possible original utterances. But in context only the second (‘he has set out’) makes sense: the addressee can hardly have been asserting, many times over, ‘he has come’ when clearly Charaxos is still at sea. Obbink’s translation (this volume) ‘But you are always chattering *for Charaxos to come* with a full ship’ (emphasis mine) does not fit easily with the next sentence, ‘Zeus and all the other gods know these things, I think’. It is more plausible that the narrator refers to the gods’ knowledge of *facts* (the setting out of a ship, e.g.) about which the addressee allegedly chatters, rather than about the addressee’s *desire for* Charaxos to come (as Obbink’s version would seem to suggest).

- 28 Bettenworth (2014) notes the word’s *despektierliche Färbung*, and further cites Obbink’s observation (p. 41: ‘θρῦλλησθα: Derogatory, implying either a confused babbling or unharmonious chattering’). See also Lidov, ch. 3, this volume.
- 29 Bettenworth (2014) 16 has independently adduced the figure of a servant such as Eurykleia, but more literally takes this figure as a parallel for the *addressee* in the poem, not (as I would) as providing a more general analogy for the attitude and tone of the *speaker*. West (2014) 9 independently observes the parallel with Telemachos.

We are familiar with this tone in the realm of martial elegy: one thinks of Callinus fr. 1 (from Stobaeus 4.10.12):

μέχρις τέο κατάκεισθε; κότ' ἄλκιμον ἔξετε θυμόν,
 ὦ νέοι; οὐδ' αἰδέισθ' ἀμφιπερικτίονας
 ὦδε λίην μεθιέντες; ἐν εἰρήνῃ δὲ δοκεῖτε
 ἦσθαι, ἀτὰρ πόλεμος γαῖαν ἄπασαν ἔχει

How long are you going to lie idle? Young men, when will you have a courageous spirit? Don't those who live round about make you feel ashamed of being so utterly passive? You think that you are sitting in a state of peace, but all the land is in the grip of war.

trans. GERBER 1999a

The only two collocations of 'raising' and 'head' in Homer are oddly enough in one book of the *Iliad* (the already odd Book 10), but it is suggestive that these phrases (metrically identical, and line-final, like the phrase in the Sappho poem), although they do not precisely capture the same denotation as the Sapphic phrase, nevertheless describe two heroes who are roused and ready to find solutions to the troubles that beset the Achaeans:

*Il.*10.29–31 (of Menelaus):

First of all he mantled his broad back in a leopard's spotted hide, then lifting the circle of a brazen helmet placed it upon his head, (αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ στεφάνῃν κεφαλῆφιν αἰείρας/ θήκατο χαλκείην) and took up a spear in his big hand ...

*Il.*10.77–85 (of Nestor): ... and by him

lay in all its shining the war belt, in which the old man girt himself, when he armed for the fighting where men die, leading his own people, since he gave no ground to sorrowful old age. He straightened up and raised his head, leaning on one elbow, (ὀρθωθείς δ' ἄρ' ἐπ' ἀγκῶνος κεφαλῆν ἐπαείρας) and spoke to the son of Atreus, and asked him a question ...

As for the derogatory wish that Larichos 'be a man', we might compare the frequent injunction in the *Iliad* to 'be men'—as when Agamemnon roams about urging on his troops (*Il.*5.528; cf. 6.112, 8.174, 11.287, 15.487, 561):

And Atreus' son ranged through the masses with his many orders:
 'Be men now, dear friends, and take up the heart of courage,
 (ὦ φίλοι ἀνέρες ἔστε καὶ ἄλκιμον ἦτορ ἔλεσθε)
 and have consideration for each other in the strong encounters,
 since more come through alive when men consider each other,
 and there is no glory when they give way, nor warcraft either.'

Nestor uses the same formula in *Il.*15.661, with a notable emphasis on how being a man means remembering one's kin—children, wives, parents—the people who are not there:

and beyond others Gerenian Nestor, the Achaians' watcher,
 supplicated each man by the knees for the sake of his parents.
 'Dear friends, be men; let shame be in your hearts and discipline
 (ὦ φίλοι ἀνέρες ἔστε καὶ αἰδῶ θέσθ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ)
 in the sight of other men, and each one of you remember
 his children and his wife, his property and his parents,
 whether a man's father and mother live or have died. Here now
 I supplicate your knees for the sake of those who are absent
 to stand strongly and not be turned to the terror of panic.'

Sappho or the speaker of our poem works a variation on this speech-act, giving it a guilt-inducing spin with an iambic-style swipe at Larichos, who is (so the strong implication goes) not yet man enough to do the right thing and keep his kin (such as the speaker) foremost in mind.³⁰ The strategy thus fulfills what Antonio Aloni identified as one role for Sapphic iambic: 'iambic aggression helps to strengthen the identity and the solidarity of the audience, which in many cases was not restricted to the female group, but extended at least to the males in the family group'.³¹

Most important, however, in establishing the iambic quality of the new poem is the way in which it deploys a structuring technique associated with a known piece of *iambos*, the Cologne Epode attributed to Archilochus (fr. 196a).

30 Leslie Kurke points out to me a close parallel for the use of *anêr* within such speech-acts, at *Hdt.* 3.120: Oroites and Mitrobates, sitting at the doors of the Great King, argue about their respective "manly excellence" (*peri aretês*). The latter asks contemptuously 'Do you even count as a man (*en andrôn logôî*), who has not even been able to capture Samos for the king ...?'

31 Aloni (2001) 29.

Gregory Nagy explained in the *Arethusa* volume that heralded the poem's debut how an 'enclosed invective' within this poem functions rhetorically as a foil device, at the same time as it embodies the single most important principle for the structuring of discourse and society in archaic Greece: praise vs. blame.³² The relevant lines are 16–37:

As for Neoboule, let (some?)
 other man have her. Ugh, she's overripe, twice your age,
 and her girlhood's flower has lost its bloom as has the charm
 which formerly was on it. For (her desire is?) insatiable,
 and the sex-mad woman has revealed the full measure of her
 (infatuation?). To hell with her! (Let) no (one bid?) this,
 that I have such a wife and become a laughingstock to my
 neighbours. I much prefer (to have?) you,
 since you are neither untrustworthy nor twofaced, whereas
 she is quite precipitous and makes many (her lovers).

Trans. GERBER 1999b

To put it schematically for purposes of comparison with the newest Sappho poem, Archilochus (person A) addresses an unnamed girl (person B) and in the course of his seductive persuasion mentions absent person #1. The absent person is the sister of his addressee, the woman named Neoboule, another daughter of Lykambes. By maligning in no uncertain terms her shriveled-up older sibling, the Archilochean speaker highlights by contrast the charms of the younger and apparently available girl. Nancy Felson argued that the function of the Cologne Epode is not primarily invective; she would instead fit the poem into the genre of love poetry.³³ Whether or not we should make a hierarchy in this way is not the point, however. What we need to notice is the technique of embedded invective in a poem ostensibly directed to *another* addressee. This technique, I propose, is what we see in the Sapphic poem's mention of Larichos. While ostensibly talking about far-off Charaxos, and possibly berating him (in an earlier segment) the poem embeds a message, none too subtly coded, for another 'absent' (not to say out-of-it) brother, but one who is presumably near by, living on Lesbos. It is all done in a flash but it stings. Given the corpus of Archilochean poetry as a whole, it is easy to slot him into the position of iambist vs. Sappho, whose corpus gets pigeon-

32 Nagy (1976).

33 Felson (1978–1979).

holed, somewhat too easily, as love poetry. More interesting are the possibilities that their juxtaposed corpora pose for a more rhetorically grounded analysis of what we might call gendered slander.

Iambic Sappho and Two Roman Poets

By way of coda, let me suggest how these thoughts on Sappho the iambist might clarify some lines in two Roman poets. Ovid in the fictional letter from Sappho to Phaon (*Heroides* 15) seems to be alluding to the lost attack on Charaxos when he presents Sappho saying (at lines 67–68):

*me quoque quod monui bene multa fideliter odit
hoc mihi libertas hoc pia lingua dedit.*

Moreover, because I faithfully warned him, much and well, he hates me this is what free-speech, this a loyal tongue, has brought me.

What may be from the speaker's point of view "advice" is from the recipient's a cause for hatred. Ovidian Sappho's *libertas* is of course the Latin translation of *parrhêsia*, the term widely associated with the comic license of Aristophanes and the tradition from which he drew. If we think of a Sappho who is deeply engaged in using the strategies and attitudes of the iambic tradition, we might imagine that there could even have once existed a sort of amoebic counter-poetry with verses written in the *persona* of her brother.³⁴ This would give more meaning to the allusion to a Charaxos who rejoices and exults at her grief (line 117: *gaudet et e nostro crescit maerore Charaxus*). Think of the alleged 'conversation' between Alcaeus and Sappho.³⁵ If Sappho and Archilochus were conceived of as yoke-mates and poetic (long-distance) collaborators, it is interesting that the figure of this *Charaxus inops frater* whose poverty has reduced him to piracy (lines 63–66) shares several key traits with that of Archilochus himself in the ancient biographical tradition.³⁶

34 A close structural parallel is provided by the poetic debates (often between a man and woman) called *tensos*, found in medieval Provençal poetry, on which see Akehurst & Davis (1995) 204–207. Compare the traditions about Sappho trading barbed verses with Anacreon (above).

35 On the tradition and its wide-ranging implications, see Nagy (2007b).

36 See, on the metapoetic qualities of the Archilochus biography, Lavigne (2005).

As for Horace, the other Latin poet of relevance here, I would connect my suggestion to the conclusions of two scholars who have offered similar striking formulations. The line in question comes at Horace *Epistles* 1.19.

*Parios ego primus iambos
ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus
Archilochi, non res et agentia verba Lycamben.
ac ne me foliis ideo brevioribus ornes,
quod timui mutare modos et carminis artem,
temperat Archilochi Musam pede mascula Sappho,
temperat Alcaeus, sed rebus et ordine dispar.*

I first showed Latium Parian invective
Following the meter and moods of Archilochus
but not the material and words that impelled Lycambes.
And lest you for that reason, crown me with fewer leaves
because I feared changing modes and song-craft:
Sappho, the manly, mixes temperately with her verse the Muse of
Archilochus,
Alcaeus, too, tempers it—but is unlike in content and arrangement.

Dolores O'Higgins thinks of the reputation of the poetess as practicing *iambos* when she explains the epithet *mascula* applied here: 'Sappho is *mascula* in Horace's eye possibly because she participated in what had developed as an assertively "male" genre'.³⁷ Patricia Rosenmeyer writes along similar lines in referring specifically to the imitation and 'tempering' of Archilochus by *mascula* Sappho: 'She is labeled masculine because she could compose invective with the best of them, but she chose not to follow his (Archilochus) metrical lead.'³⁸ Neither of these scholars had known of the newest Sappho composition now revealed to the world. In light of its embedded wish, with iambic inflections, that Larichos *grow up already*, Sappho may be called *mascula* (in Horace's vision) because it is she who forcefully challenges her indirect addressee to hold up his head, to become a man.³⁹

37 Cited by Rosenmeyer (2006) 21 n. 36; see O'Higgins (2003) 88. Both sharpen the point made by Porphyrius in *Hor. Epist.* 1. 19. 28 (p. 362 Holder): 'mascula' autem 'Saffo', vel quia in poetico studio est (incluta), in quo saepius viri, vel quia tribas diffamatur fuisse.

38 Rosenmeyer (2006) 22.

39 For further discussion of *mascula* and the passage as a whole, see Johnson (2011) 58–60.