

Sappho's private world

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OF ALL THE LYRIC POETS writing love poetry in Greek between about 700 and 500 BC, Sappho is the most intense, the most immediate. "The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece! Where burning Sappho loved and sung," wrote Byron.¹ Other readers, less passionate themselves perhaps, have emphasized rather the atmosphere of magic and incantation in her poems, or the exotic settings, the Lydian head-dress and slippers, soft robes, flowers, everything rich, delicate, and lovely.² All these elements flow together to form the unique quality of Sappho's poetry, which I shall call her romanticism.³ To suggest the source and nature of that romanticism is the purpose of this paper.

Sappho wrote within a tradition of love poetry in archaic Greece. Her poetry had roots; it was surely in its craft and themes a familiar form of expression. Hymns, poems of praise and blame, re-tellings of myth with culturally normative motives, and love poems are all traditional types found in Sappho's work. Yet the theme of love itself forced on Sappho a different structure of narrative from that of any other extant lyric poetry. The difference might be defined in two stages. The formal problem facing Sappho was to find a way of presenting the female persona as an erotic subject. Culturally acceptable models presumably did not include woman's pursuing man. Sappho's solution, to direct the erotic impulse toward other women, was perhaps a traditional one. On the social plane quite possibly girls before marriage were encouraged to cultivate female poetry, friendships, liaisons, and among them Sappho may have found her audience.⁴

But Sappho's confining of her poetic love-objects to other women did not in itself determine that she would write love poetry different from that of the male lyric poets. Sappho is fundamentally different because she explores what a woman might desire and might offer erotically and how these interact. Her romanticization of erotic life is based on woman's understanding of experience in a totally feminine context.⁵ This paper, then, must first distinguish the patterns of erotic relations used by the male poets and by Sappho before describing how Sappho exploited the romantic possibilities of the lesbian patterns. Sappho's actual, personal experience in sexual relationships is not in question here; I am interested in Sappho's imaginative projection of emotional life into aesthetically pleasing, abstract shapes.

Fragments of love poems from the male lyric poets are scrappy, but a pattern of expression can be observed. The man is helpless, prostrate, stricken by the power of Eros or Aphrodite, but toward the particular boy or girl who attracts him the man is confident and prepared to seduce. For Eros or Aphrodite is the universal, eternal sexual longing which can never be mastered, while the individual provoking it is only a temporary focus of the longing, the prey or prize which loses its allure once the man has captured it. A short poem of Ibycus, a poet writing about sixty years later than Sappho, expresses the pattern very neatly (6 P):⁶

Ἔρος αὐτέ με κυανέοισιν ὑπὸ
 βλεφάροις τακέρ' ὄμμασι δερκόμενος
 κηλήμασι παντοδαποῖς ἐς ἄπει-
 ρα δίκτυα Κύπριδος ἐσβάλλει·
 ἧ μὰν τρομέω νῦν ἐπερχόμενον,
 ὥστε φερέζυγος ἵππος ἀεθλοφόρος ποτὶ γήραι
 ἀέκων σὺν ὄχεσφι θοοῖς ἐς ἄμιλλαν ἔβα.

Eros, again looking at me meltingly with his
 eyes under dark eyelids, flips me with manifold
 charms into the inescapable nets of Aphrodite.
 In truth I tremble at his coming as a yoke-
 bearing, prize-winning horse, nearing old age,
 unwillingly goes with his quick chariot into
 the fray.

The two rather disparate images reflect the poet's two responses,

the one toward sexual longing in the abstract, the other toward the object. Eros has driven the narrator into the nets of Aphrodite; he is like a trapped and helpless wild animal.⁷ But toward the object of his love the narrator is like an old prize-winning horse who returns again to the contest. Now he is active, competitive, and the boy will be his prize (if he wins).⁸ There is a boast implicit in the epithet "prize-winning" for the horse: the narrator hints that he has won the individual boy before — but previous victories have secured him no respite from the power of Aphrodite. The reason is implied in the poem. Eros is said to look at him bewitchingly, to use charms as his snare. Surely it is the boy's eyes and charms that have captivated the narrator, but they are treated as the momentary location of Eros. When the narrator has won this boy for himself, Eros will laughingly skip off elsewhere. Anacreon too thought that the contest was with Eros (53 P):

ἀστραγάλοι δ' Ἐρωτός εἰσω
μανίαι τε καὶ κυδομοί

The dice of Eros are madnesses and uproars.

Other poets express the same dichotomy, though not so succinctly. Several fragments of Archilochus proclaim that the narrator is being overwhelmed by desire, for instance:⁹

δύστηνος ἔγκειμαι πόθῳ
ἄψυχος, χαλεπήσι θεῶν ὀδύνῃσιw ἔκητι
πεπαρμένος δι' ὀστέων

Miserable I lie wrapped in longing, soulless,
pierced through the bones by harsh griefs
from the gods.

But in a long fragment, the Cologne Epode, Archilochus describes the seduction of a virgin girl. As the fragment takes up the girl is trying to dissuade the narrator from action, suggesting that he pay court to another girl, Neoboule, instead. The narrator, promising to go along with the girl's wish, promising to decide something with her (marriage?) later on, expends most of his eloquence in

abuse of Neoboule. Then, putting an end to the dialogue, the narrator lays the girl among the flowers, gently caresses her, and "lets go his force," probably without deflowering her.¹⁰ The narrator acts, despite his admitted haste, with a graceful, gentle masterfulness that bespeaks control, experience, self-assurance. The implied impotence of the first fragment is not imagined as impeding action where opportunity presents itself.

The same pattern can be demonstrated from Anacreon. In a fragment (68 P) the narrator complains that Eros like a bronze-smith again hit him with a hammer and dipped him in a wintry river. But elsewhere he has the speaker boast to a skittish girl (72 P):¹¹

πῶλε Θρηκίη, τί δὴ με
 λοξὸν ὄμμασι βλέπουσα
 νηλέως φεύγεις, δοκεῖς δέ
 μ' οὐδὲν εἶδέναι σοφόν;
 ἴσθι τοι, καλῶς μὲν ἂν τοι
 τὸν χαλινὸν ἐμβάλομι,
 ἡνίας δ' ἔχων στρέφομι
 σ' ἀμφὶ τέρματα δρόμου
 νῦν δέ λειμῶνάς τε βόσκειαι
 κοῦφά τε σκιρτώσα παίζεις,
 δεξιὸν γάρ ἵπποπείρην
 οὐκ ἔχεις ἐπεμβάτην.

Thracian filly, why do you glance at me askance
 and flee pitilessly? Do you think I have no art?
 Know, then, neatly could I throw on the bridle and
 holding the reins steer you around the course.
 At the moment you pasture in meadows and play,
 lightly prancing, for you do not have an adroit
 experienced rider.

The girl is pitiless as the incarnation of the pitiless pressure of Eros; as a particular girl she is tameable. The narrator's assurance of dominating the girl if he chooses is as complete as his helpless observation of her suspicious rejection of him.¹²

It is essential to the male lyric poet that the object of his passion be vulnerable to seduction, but unsexed. So the seducer in Archilochus's Cologne Epode, mentioned above, rejects the girl

named Neoboule because she is too lusty. Neoboule is no longer virgin, innocent, sexually unaware, so she does not attract the erotic impulse. It is significant that Archilochus does not consider Neoboule, unlike himself, to be justified in her eagerness through her subjection to Aphrodite's power. Her drives are simply not brought into relationship with Aphrodite at all. Neoboule is in the poem to point up by contrast the pattern of ever-pursuing male lover and innocent beloved, whose innocence makes his or her allure almost abstract, suprapersonal.

Anacreon gives lovely expression to the allure of innocence in a brief poem (15 P):¹³

ὦ παῖ παρθένιον βλέπων
 δίζημαί σε, σὺ δ' οὐ κλύεις,
 οὐκ εἰδὼς ὅτι τῆς ἐμῆς
 ψυχῆς ἡνιοχέυεις.

Oh child, virgin-glancing, I seek you, but you
 do not hear, not knowing that you are the
 charioteer of my soul.

The child as a figure of Eros is charioteer, but the child in himself is passive, unaware, while Anacreon actively pursues him and must ultimately, in terms of the poetic pattern, seduce him.¹⁴

This pattern of longing for the ever uncapturable essence of Eros and excitement at discovering its momentary embodiment in a vulnerable, innocent figure, is the poetic rhythm of the male lyric poets. It allows the male to exalt passionate anguish and justify his loss of autonomy while maintaining a claim of potency. Both desire and the sweetness of potential triumph are raised to the highest pitch without the complexities and inhibitions of more prolonged interaction between two people. And the pattern remains the same whether girl or boy is the object of desire.

This pattern Sappho could not use. Had Sappho portrayed herself as an active seeker after the virginity of a succession of girls, even, she might have presented a figure too close to Neoboule for cultural acceptance or aesthetic appreciation among her contemporaries. But the poetic reason for the inappropriateness of the male pattern to Sappho is that the implicit metaphors of recurrent

prostration, domination, and release are based on male sexual psychology, the man's sense of his action in sexual encounter. In order to make aesthetically integrated, convincing love poetry Sappho had to find (or make use of) patterns based on metaphors of female biology and psychology. The patterns had to allow her to express romantic longing, fulfillment, and struggle with the mystery of sexuality, with truth to her emotional and bodily sense of them.

Sappho's poetry is also in frustrating tatters. But the pattern that Sappho did use is revealed by two of her poems. The first, LP 1, the only definitely complete poem we have, goes in translation thus:¹⁵

Richly-throned immortal Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus,
weaver of wiles, I pray to you: break not my
spirit, Lady, with heartache or anguish;

But hither come, if ever in the past you heard my cry
from afar, and marked it, and came, leaving your
father's house,

Your golden chariot yoked: sparrows beautiful and
swift conveyed you, with rapid wings a-flutter, above
the dark earth from heaven through the mid-air;

And soon they were come, and you, Fortunate, with a
smile on your immortal face, asked what ails me now,
and why I am calling now,

And what in my heart's madness I most desire to have:
Whom now must I persuade to join your friendship's
ranks? Who wrongs you, Sappho?

For if she flees, she shall soon pursue; and if she
receives not gifts, yet shall she give; and if she
loves not, she shall soon love even against her will.

Come to me now also, and deliver me from cruel anxieties;
fulfil all that my heart desires to fulfil, and be
yourself my comrade-in-arms.

This is the only poem of Sappho's in which the narrator expresses an adversary relationship with the love-object.¹⁶ The attitude is the same as that of the male poets quoted, but the components are related in a different fashion. Sappho's narrator (identified with

Sappho by Aphrodite's use of her name) is on good terms with Aphrodite but helpless in the face of the love-object, the opposite of the male pattern. Comparison with the Ibycus poem quoted above (p. 48) makes the contrast clear. Sappho does not portray herself as a woman skilled in seduction, nor does she claim the potential to master the other or to "win." On the other hand, Aphrodite is not the capricious, impersonal force that she and Eros are for the male poets. She does not play games of challenge with Sappho. Far from trembling at her approach, Sappho calls her for help.¹⁷ Aphrodite here is a cosmic affirmation of Sappho's own eroticism, the source of terrible pain but also of loveliness and joy, of contact with the divine, of heightened self-awareness, as the vivid sensuousness of the poem bears witness.¹⁸ Sappho's address, consequently, is not to the girl she loves but to Aphrodite: her orientation in her helpless state is different from that of the male poets.¹⁹

But though Aphrodite may be her ally Sappho does not ask her to make the other girl submit, and Aphrodite offers only to have the other girl suffer too. Connection with Aphrodite does not lend Sappho any new power to impose herself on the other girl. It grants her rather a way of making manifest her own eroticism, which will perhaps, via the epiphany itself, draw the other girl closer to her. Aphrodite's spectacular arrival, in other words, will not only comfort Sappho with evidence of the goddess's affection but also give the other girl a potent new sense of Sappho's attractiveness.

Only in this fashion can the other girl be won. The other girl's response to Sappho must be spontaneous, for Sappho can find consummation of love only if it is offered; she cannot achieve her desire by "taking" the other girl. Thus unlike the innocent beloved of the male poets, the other girl's envisioned role here is to turn to Sappho out of her own longing. She must come independently to want Sappho before either woman can find intimacy satisfying.²⁰ But, again in contrast with the male poets, Sappho imagines that either woman might initiate the relationship, for the two women must be equals, each understanding the other from insight into herself.²¹

In a fragment (LP 49) Sappho says:²²

*ἡράμαν μὲν ἔγωγ τέθεν, Ἀτθι, πάλαι ποτά....
τμήκρα μοι πάς ἔμμεν' ἐφαίνεο κᾶχαρις.*

I loved you, Atthis, long ago. . . . You seemed to me to be a small and graceless child.

The name Atthis recurs in other of Sappho's poems (e.g. LP 96, 131) as a companion, so one can imagine the narrator telling Atthis about her previous attraction only after the two have become intimate, when Atthis is in a position to appreciate it. The second line also implies that Atthis's potential attractiveness was intuited by the narrator's insight before it became visible. The tone is very different from that of Anacreon's little poem about the boy who rules his soul (above, p. 51).

Sappho's poem LP 94 confirms the pattern I have been extrapolating from LP 1 and 49. The poem is damaged and incomplete, but the first twenty-six lines can be made out. The legible portion goes, in translation:²³

Honestly I wish I were dead. Weeping she left me
With many tears, and said 'Oh what unhappiness is ours;
Sappho, I vow, against my will I leave you.'
And this answer I made to her: 'Go, and fare well, and
remember me; you know how we cared for you.
If not, yet I would remind you . . . of our past happiness.
Many wreaths of violets and roses and . . . you put
around you at my side,
And many woven garlands, fashioned of flowers, . . .
round your soft neck,
And . . . with perfume of flowers, fit for a queen, you
anointed . . .
And on soft beds . . . you would satisfy your longing . . .
And no . . . holy, no . . . was there, from which we were
away

In this poem are found the mutual understanding and mutual desire that were absent from LP 1. The narrator (again named Sappho) recalls a whole range of shared experience, including but not limited to the erotic. The intimacy, she suggests, engages two

complete personalities.²⁴

The poem makes an interesting contrast with the Cologne Epode of Archilochus (described above, p. 49), for both poems involve conversations meant to define the erotic relationship between two people. In Archilochus's poem the girl presses for a verbal statement, perhaps an offer of marriage, rather than sexual contact, and the seducer must cut off the conversation in order to further the seduction. Sexual intimacy and verbal understanding here inhibit one another. In Sappho's poem the conversation is a continuation and confirmation of erotic intimacy, an attempt to perpetuate it. In Archilochus the conversation is manipulative, she negotiating, he trying to disarm her. The tension, directly reflected in dialogue, is between man and girl over who will get his or her way. As the narrator usurps control of the dialogue to bring it to a halt, so he gains ascendancy over the girl. In LP 94 Sappho, the persona, also takes over the dialogue, but uses it to banish impending separation between herself and the other woman. Sappho's method of recreating the intimacy verbally to the girl whom she comforts is to reflect the girl's past happiness back to her: the verbs of the description are all second person (so far as can be told, given the broken text), and Sappho's only mention of herself is the "at my side." Thus Sappho dramatizes her absorption with the other woman, the lapse of her separate self-consciousness as she is caught up in the other's sensuousness. The other woman's happiness is in turn a reflection of her closeness to Sappho, since memory of it serves as the token of warmth that Sappho would have the girl carry away with her. The tension in Sappho's poem, then, is between the friends and the outside forces that are requiring them to separate. The aim of the dialogue is to obliterate the tension; it becomes monologue in order to insist on the unity of the two participants.

As a result of these differences the sense of space in the two poems is very different. Although the beginning of the Cologne Epode is lost, the extant portion implies that the narrator and the girl are alone somewhere in an open, undefined space, a flowery meadow, with nothing interposed between them and the cosmos. The girl herself is assimilated to this uncivilized world by the use

of metaphors to describe her anatomy – “under beetling crags” and “grassy gardens.”²⁵ She is trembling like a fawn with fear. In this natural world, where sex is a cosmic, inhuman force, conversation and plans have no place.

Sappho’s poem presupposes a protected place containing the two women in perfect understanding. No problems of jealousy, no social pressures penetrate, yet it is not the natural world either, for art and luxury enclose it. I will return to this dimension of the poem later.

Sappho’s poetic problem was to find a pattern consistent with female experience of love within which to express her romantic sensibility. The pattern of love I have been tracing in her poetry, of mutuality rather than domination and subjection, of intimacy based on comprehending the other out of the self, is the ideal characteristic of lesbian love, as Simone de Beauvoir asserts in *The Second Sex*:

Between women love is contemplative; caresses are intended less to gain possession of the other than gradually to re-create the self through her; separateness is abolished, there is no struggle, no victory, no defeat; in exact reciprocity each is at once subject and object, sovereign and slave; duality becomes mutuality.²⁶

De Beauvoir also speaks of seeing the self in the other, which she calls mirroring.²⁷ As de Beauvoir confirms, Sappho’s sense of eroticism is based on feminine biology, on the fact that sexual response is felt within as an urge to receive and that a woman cannot aggressively “take” another in the absence of reciprocal interest. She confirms, too, a felt identity of two lovers which erases the distinction between “self” and “other,” at least ideally, so that Sappho’s concentration on the other woman in LP 94 can be seen as a poetic equivalent of erotic fulfillment.

So far, I have concentrated on the differences between Sappho’s patterns of erotic imagination and those of the male lyric poets. But if Sappho was to create a romantic posture, she had to intensify and idealize the patterns of love and pain as a woman experiences them. Her method was to pick three aspects, or moments, of love to dramatize. The first I have already discussed:

it is the appeal to Aphrodite, who displaces the desired girl in Sappho's attention in LP 1 (quoted above, p. 52). In that poem Aphrodite becomes an affirmation of Sappho's own eroticism as a value in itself. Sappho is implicitly claiming that erotic desire, if cherished above release or calm, opens a path to divinity and absolute beauty, that through intensity of longing comes transcendence.²⁸

So, too, in LP 2 Aphrodite is called to come to a lovely, protected sanctuary and pour out nectar. Ritual, celebratory terms are used this time to describe the same wish for the goddess's acknowledgement, the same claim on it, as in LP 1. In this poem apparently no second woman is present.²⁹ The one who prays here wishes for contact with sensuousness not as a directed feeling but as an embracing atmosphere.

But Aphrodite's coming is not pictured as bringing rest or resolution with it. As Sappho calls Aphrodite in LP 1 she recalls previous occasions when Aphrodite has responded. Those moments of glory occurred, but left in time a woman as limited and vulnerable and thwarted as before (so the poem implies). For the erotic impulse as Sappho projected it is less a matter of loving another individual than of finding in love a form of intensification and grandeur which must be ever renewed. As the male lyric poet stands in the throes of desire, contemplating the possibility of possessing the desired object, but knowing that no permanent peace will result, so Sappho in the grip of love calls on Aphrodite but knows she will find in Aphrodite's coming no enduring solution to her griefs. Whichever way it is envisioned, the rhythm is romantic, for it leads the individual on in a never-ending quest to escape the confines of the self.

The second aspect of love which Sappho romanticizes is the loss of the beloved by parting. Like the summons to Aphrodite, the poems of longing for one absent imply that bliss would come with the numinous presence of that individual. But the happiness theoretically attainable depends always on an impossible rearrangement of reality, so one must forever mourn its elusiveness. In LP 94 (quoted above, p. 54), Sappho uses the moment of parting as the frame for the picture of intimacy, for intimacy seems most

precious, union most complete in the face of imminent loneliness. By viewing the relationship through the lens of idealization provided by the moment of parting, Sappho exacerbates present pain, while the earlier time together seems blissful and perfect, without complexity. Consequently, previous closeness and present desire can both be viewed as absolutes.³⁰

In LP 96 Sappho recalls a beautiful woman now in Lydia with the certainty that she is longing for Atthis. The emotional dynamic of the poem is impossible to recover in full, though longing for a lost intimacy is at the heart of it. The poem is addressed to someone, perhaps Atthis. And in the broken section beyond line twenty-four someone, probably Aphrodite, is said to have poured nectar once. The poem must have juxtaposed the transcendence of a time in Aphrodite's presence with the subsequent absence of a lovely woman. Fragmentary LP 95, addressed to Gongyla, has verbs in the past tense narrating some event, followed by the wish to die. The two themes, Aphrodite and the pain of loss, are again connected, now in ritualized form, in LP 140. The two-line fragment comes from a lament for Adonis addressed to Aphrodite. The lamenters participate in Aphrodite's grief, and perhaps the instructions, "beat your breasts, maidens, and tear your clothes," were actually carried out in ceremony. In these poems the extremes of emotional life, presence of Aphrodite and mortal pain of loss, come together. Sappho here romanticizes what is in fact the dominant experience of women in love-making and in child-birth — intimacy followed by withdrawal.

The final way in which Sappho shapes her pattern to romanticism is in the creation of a private world. In this she depends specifically on the homosexual relationship, that is, on the fact that two women can mirror one another. For to come together each woman must spontaneously wish to be close to the other; the act of love requires communication between the two, since it has no other outward manifestation. Then each woman can imagine the other by reference to herself. The dynamic of mutual erotic attraction, the interplay between two women, becomes an invisible bond, or in Sappho's formulation a single enclosure, impenetrable by others, in which the two are so open to one

another that they feel united. It is the poetic equivalent of Simone de Beauvoir's phrase, "duality becomes mutuality."

The private space is a metaphor for emotional openness in a psychological setting apart from the normal, separate from marriage, home, social life, from everything experienced by a woman in the ordinary course of life.³¹ In LP 2 this private space is given form as a shrine to which Aphrodite is to come. The sacred spot, set apart from the rest of the world, is not accessible to non-worshippers, that is, those who do not participate in this intimacy with Aphrodite.

In LP 94, Sappho creates the private world in subtler fashion. This is the poem whose use of space was contrasted with the Cologne Epode. Sappho implies that the two women have been alone together in soft and sensuous surroundings, somehow cut off from the rest of the world. But once they have parted their private intimacy can be found only in memory. The poem preserves the moment when Sappho transmutes the old physical closeness into a new purely emotional connection. So the poem becomes the container of the shared memories, hence itself the private space, the common world into which either can enter and find the other imaginatively.

In LP 96, the poem recalling a woman in Lydia, the private space is created by evoking the moon. The woman in Lydia is lovelier than those about her as the moon outshines the stars when the sun has set, the moon which shines on fields and sea, while dew falls and flowers bloom. The moon's light forms an analogy for the girl's beauty, defines a non-daylight world in which it is to be found, and unites the speaker with the girl, since the speaker is a privileged observer of the radiance spreading over an otherwise empty world. Having entered the world of moonlight the speaker can "see" the woman in Lydia and know that she in turn is longing for someone. A kind of communication defies the separation even while it sharpens it. And as with LP 94, the poem itself is the entry into this world by revealing the analogy between moon and girl. Thus the auditor of the poem has the key to entry into a special state of mind in which she can feel connected with an absent or fictional lover while intensifying the clarity of her

longing and loneliness.

The beautiful robes and ornaments and flowers with which Sappho decorates her poems are the furnishings of this poetically-created private space. And the charm and enchantment of her poetry in themselves recreate the experience of being rapt out of ordinary preoccupations into a special, lovely, divinely-inspired world. For the private space exists, in fact, only in the poem.

The existence of a private space, created by the poem, counterbalances the focus on loss in Sappho's poetry. Indeed, the continuation of the private space is asserted in the face of the loss of the loved woman. Thus the private space is the most important metaphor for love in the poetry of Sappho. Itself based on a contradiction, that the inward can become outward, that solitude can be replaced by perfect intimacy, the claim of a private world can mediate the contradictions of Sappho's romanticism. Powerful erotic drive can coexist with a biological role as non-aggressor, Sappho's self-involvement can coexist with intimacy with another, and lament for the loss of another can coexist with the certainty that the unity of the two still exists. So Sappho's romanticism devolves on the creation of a poetic metaphor that both affirms and transcends the inward, self-contained nature of woman's love.

Even within Sappho's poetry the private world has only fictional existence. That is, she never presents herself or her speakers as being within it, but only as looking forward or back to it. But for Sappho's audience the poetry itself was a private imaginative world within whose bounds they might open themselves to rich and sensuous self-expression.

Notes

An earlier version of this paper was given at the Fourth Berkshire Conference on Women's History, Mount Holyoke College, August, 1978.

1. *Don Juan*, Canto III, stanza 86.
2. E.g. D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford 1955) 141, quoting J.A. Symonds; C. Segal, "Eros and Incantation: Sappho and Oral Poetry," *Arethusa* 7 (1974) 139-60; G. Lanata, "Sul linguaggio amoroso di

- Sappho," *QUCC* 2 (1966) 63-79.
3. Romanticism is a tricky term to use since it is so ill-defined. I mean to evoke literary, not popular associations, essentially yearning for escape from the isolation of the self and affirmation of the yearning in the face of knowledge that escape is impossible. It is a self-conscious, aesthetic attitude that paradoxically distances the individual from that into which he would lose himself. For nineteenth-century romanticism see R. Wellek, "Romanticism Re-examined," in N. Frye, ed., *Romanticism Reconsidered* (New York 1963), 107-33, who characterizes it as "the implication of imagination, symbol, myth, and organic nature . . . as part of the great endeavor to overcome the split between subject and object, the self and the world, the conscious and the unconscious," (132). If for "world," one substitutes "other," the definition fits Sappho. On the other hand the nineteenth-century view of the lyric poet as communing with himself (for which see M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* [New York 1958] 21-26 and *passim*) does not apply to Sappho.
 4. G. Nagy, *Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meter* (Cambridge, Mass. 1974) 118-39, concludes that Sappho's meters are more archaic than the hexameter of epic. He suggests that Sappho, like epic, had inherited a traditional language and traditional subject matter adapted to the meters she uses. C. Calame, *Les choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque* I (Rome 1977) collects extensive evidence for an established practice of grouping young girls under the leadership of one who is both choral leader and educator. Sappho may have fulfilled some such function. On the question of Sappho's audience see J. Russo, "Reading the Greek Lyric Poets," *Arion* n.s. 1 (1973-74) 707-30; also J. Hallett, "Sappho and Her Social Context: Sense and Sensuality," *Signs* 4 (1979) 447-64, and my response, 465-71.
 5. The psychological reality and romantic treatment of it may also have been an inherited part of women's poetry. But at the very least Sappho exploited the possibilities of such poetry with great personal sensitivity. Calame (above) 430-31, sees Sappho's poetry as escaping from its institutional context into accents of compelling individual emotion. P. Friedrich, *The Meaning of Aphrodite* (Chicago 1978) 112-23, is emphatic about Sappho's distinctiveness, both from male poets and, implicitly, from all earlier poets.
 6. The texts of the poems by Ibycus and Anacreon are taken from the edition of D. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford 1962). The translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.
 7. By use of the term "narrator" I mean to distinguish the first-person of the poem from the poet.
 8. The figure implied by the poem is presumably a boy if the poem was written for the court of Polycrates on Samos. See D. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry: A Selection* (Glasgow 1967) 305-307 (notes on Ibycus).
 9. Archilochus 104, E. Diehl, ed., *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca* (rev. R. Beutler, Leipzig 1952). Cf. Archilochus 112 and 118. Archilochus is not strictly speaking a lyric poet but for my purposes can be included

under that rubric.

10. For text, translation, and discussions see J. Van Sickle, ed., *The New Archilochus, Arethusa* 9 (1976). On the lyric voice of Archilochus see K.J. Dover, "The Poetry of Archilochus," *Archiloque, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* X (Geneva 1964), 181-222.
11. According to Heracleitus, who quotes the poem, it was addressed as a reproach to a woman of meretricious mind and haughty disposition. See Campbell (*op. cit.*, note 7) 328.
12. On the playful and ironic tone of Anacreon's poetry see G.M. Kirkwood, *Early Greek Monody* (Ithaca 1974) 161-63.
13. See Kirkwood (above) 164, for a slightly different text and for the bibliography cited there.
14. Anacreon's poetry does not always portray suffering over an innocent figure. In 13 P the narrator says that Eros invited him to play with a girl, but she is from Lesbos, disdains his grey hair, and gapes at another (girl or set of hair). In 1 P, fr. 4, Anacreon's narrator claims to have fought Eros and won.
15. The translation is that of D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 4. The text is given in Page and in E. Lobel and D. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* (Oxford 1955), hereafter LP.
16. On the recast epic tone of this poem see J. Marry, "Sappho and the Heroic Ideal: ἔρωτος ἀπερὴ," *Arethusa* 12 (1979) 71-92. He does not consider the difference in tone between this poem and Sappho's other extant poetry.
17. See H. Saake, *Zur Kunst Sapphos* (Paderborn 1971) 41f., for the surprise of Sappho's asking Aphrodite to come (rather than simply release her from pain).
18. The question of the tone of this poem has occasioned much controversy. For an interesting analysis see K. Stanley, "The Role of Aphrodite in Sappho Fr. 1," *GRBS* 17 (1976) 305-21. For the controversy cf. his bibliography.
19. Sappho treats Eros somewhat differently. Cf. LP 47 and 130.
20. Page's contention (*Sappho and Alcaeus* 14-15) that Sappho implies that the other girl's suit will not be met with favor because Sappho will have lost interest in her is disputed by others (bibliography in Kirkwood [*op. cit.*, note 12] 249, note 23). But certainly some effort on the girl's part is indicated. She will behave like an active suitor for favor, giving gifts, rather than simply fall into waiting arms.
21. See W. Schadewaldt, *Sappho: Welt und Dichtung: Dasein in der Liebe* (Potsdam 1950) 138-45, for emphasis on Aphrodite as the one who calms and joins together.
22. The lines are paraphrased by Terentius Maurus, implying that they were consecutive originally. Modern editors place dots between them because the train of thought appears very abrupt. Campbell (*op. cit.*, note 7) 276, in his notes to the poem remarks that ἀχαρίς probably has the additional sense of "immature" attributed to it by Plutarch, *Amat.* 5.
23. The translation is by Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* 76. The first line of the poem is missing. In the stanza following the last one I quoted the word

"grove" is preserved.

24. For an analysis of this poem along similar lines see T. McEvilley, "Sappho, Fragment Ninety-Four," *Phoenix* 25 (1971) 1-11.
25. Lines 14-16 of the text given in *Arethusa* (*op. cit.*, note 10).
26. *The Second Sex* (tr. H.M. Parshley, New York 1974) 465.
27. *The Second Sex* 465.
28. See B. Gentili, "La Veneranda Saffo," *QUCC* 2 (1966) 37-40, for discussion of Alcaeus's phrase, "awesome Sappho."
29. For an analysis of the formal aspects of the poem see T. McEvilley, "Sappho, fragment 2," *Phoenix* 26 (1972) 323-33.
30. On the "love and death" motif in Sappho's poetry, including this poem, see Lanata (*op. cit.*, note 2) 72-73. For the recalled happiness as imaginary see McEvilley (*op. cit.*, note 25) 8ff.
31. On the psychology of a private erotic world see my article, "Retreat from the Male: Catullus 62 and Sappho's Erotic Flowers," *Ramus* 6 (1977) 92-93.