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Love's Battlefield: Rethinking Sappho Fragment 31

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Love can be likened to an experience of heaven, but it can also feel like the site of bitter suffering and conflict, more akin to the battlefield. Sappho's poems are the first works of ancient literature to gesture towards this notion, one that was in due course to be explicitly adopted and explored as *militia amoris* by Latin elegiac poets of the first century BCE such as Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. In Archaic Greece love and its delights could naturally enough be constructed in opposition to war and its horrors, in the same way that men and women were supposed to perform their proper functions within the domains of warfare (*polemos*) and home life (*oikos*) respectively. 'My child', Zeus reproves Aphrodite in the *Iliad* (5.428–9), when she flees to him for consolation after being humiliated on the battlefield by Diomedes, 'matters of war are not your sphere. Better that you should concern yourself with joyful [*ἡμερόεντα*] matters of marriage.' In the context of the Trojan War, however, the conflict at whose root were the workings of Eros and the machinations of Aphrodite, there might always be a latent irony in the assertion of such an antithesis. Sappho reveals the irony as well as the potential humour of deconstructing the surface opposition, with her implicit recognition that while the operations of love can appear to be women's alternative to those of war, they might equally provide a counterpart to it. If women are excluded from the practical aspects of fighting in war, love for them may be experienced not just as opposed to but as analogous to what takes place on the field of battle.

In this regard it is noteworthy that Sappho expresses the ambivalent feelings aroused by *erôs* in terms largely adopted from Homer. The self-conscious lyric exploitation of elements of the epic tradition for the purpose of thinking and speaking of *erôs* allows the emotional contours of love to be constructed as just as painful, violent, and potentially fatal as any martial engagement. In drawing

heavily on and adapting Homeric words and metaphors to express the intensity of both suffering and pleasure, Sappho can effectively position love as war.¹ In Sappho's fragments the pain of love is a 'dripping wound' (fr. 37: *στάλαχμον*);² desire (fr. 48: *πόθος*) 'burns' the heart; Aphrodite 'overpowers with pain and anguish' (fr. 1.3), while Eros is 'sweet-bitter' (fr. 130.2: *γλυκύπικρον*) and 'inflexible', a 'giver of pain' (fr. 172) who can shake the heart like the wind shakes the trees (fr. 47). Sappho's quandary ('I am in two minds', fr. 51) brings to mind the Homeric warrior's 'divided thoughts';³ and her description of Eros as 'loosener of limbs' (fr. 130.1: *λυσιμέλης*), following the use of the epithet by the more overtly martial Archilochus, recalls Homer's use of 'loosening of limbs' to describe death in combat.⁴ Fearful anxiety and death itself are repeatedly in the frame of her thoughts (e.g. fr. 1.26, 23.9). 'Honestly I wish I were dead' is the heartfelt exclamation that precedes her speaking of the departure of a beloved friend (fr. 94.1). Elsewhere she expresses her desperation by declaring 'a longing to die grips me' (fr. 95.11).

In the only poem by Sappho that is preserved more or less complete (poem 1), when the poet prays for Aphrodite's help to win the goal of her desire, the goddess's response evokes the to and fro of battle with its pattern of alternating flight and pursuit:

*τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
..]σάγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ
Ψάπφ', ἀδίκηει;
καὶ γὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει...⁵*

Who is it this time I must induce
to love you again? Who, Sappho,
is doing you an injustice?
Look, though she flees you, soon she will chase you . . .

The final word of this poem unveils the battle metaphor explicitly, as Sappho beseeches the goddess:

*ὄσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
θῦμος ἰμμέρρει τέλεσον, σὺ δ' αὐτα
σύμμαχος ἔσσο.⁶*

Fulfil all that
my heart longs to accomplish, and you yourself
be my fellow-fighter.

This is not, then, merely a defensive alliance: Sappho asks to be 'totally fulfilled', to achieve complete victory in love. Elsewhere Sappho bids her divine ally to

¹ Rissmann (1983).

² All fragments in this chapter refer to L-P.

³ e.g. those of Achilles in *Il.* 1.189.

⁴ Archil. fr. 196; lines 4.469 etc.

⁵ Fr. 1.18–21.

⁶ Fr. 1.26–8.

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ensure the defeat of a potential rival who would otherwise, like a Homeric warrior, be in a position to vaunt her superiority over a vanquished foe:

*Κύπρι, κα[ί σ]ε πι[κροτάτ]αν ἐπέυ[ροι
μη]δὲ καυχᾶς[α]ίτο τόδ' ἐννέποισα
Δ]ωρίχα, τὸ δεύ[τ]ερον ὡς πόθε[ννον
εἰς] ἔρον ἦλθε.⁷*

[. . .]Cypri, and may (s)he find you harsh(er),
and let Dorikha not boast and tell
how he came a second time to love her
as she desired.

When the connection between war and love is raised in fr. 16, it highlights the contrast between the two spheres. The poem begins with a priamel in which the poet suggests that the delight felt at the sight of the love-object surpasses that afforded by the sight of massed forces of war:

*οἱ μὲν ἱππήων στρότον οἱ δὲ πέσδων,
οἱ δὲ νάων φαῖσ' ἐπὶ γᾶν μέλαιναν
ἔ]μμεναι κάλλιστον, ἔγω δὲ κῆν'
ὄττω τὶς ἔραται.⁸*

Some say that a troop of horses, others of soldiers,
some a fleet of ships, is the finest sight on the
dark earth, but I say whatever it is
that one loves.

Sappho proceeds to instantiate the generalization by referring to the way Helen succumbed to love: Helen abandoned Menelaus 'the best of husbands' (fr. 16.7–8: *ἄνδρα πανάριστον*) and sailed with Paris to Troy, 'and thought not at all of her child and dear parents' (10–11). This brief but vivid allusion to the scenario that triggered the Achaean expedition to Troy leads Sappho to name the woman whom, in sharp contrast to the accoutrements of war, is the thing she herself loves. The fifth stanza evokes a loving image of the absent Anactoria:

*τᾶ]ς κε βολλοίμαν ἔρατόν τε βᾶμα
κ]αμάρυγμα λάμπρον ἴδην προσώπω
ἦ τὰ Λύδων ἄρματα κᾶν ὄπλοισι
πεσδομ]άχεντας.⁹*

I would rather see her lovely walk
and the bright sparkle of her face
than the chariots of the Lydians and
their infantry at arms.

If the feelings roused by love, then, can be represented by Sappho both in parallel and contrast to war and its effects, one might wonder whether

⁷ Fr. 15.9–12.

⁸ Fr. 16. 1–4.

⁹ Fr. 16.16–20.

Sappho's most famous and vexed poem of love, fr. 31, is in some way susceptible to interpretation on either of these lines:

φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν
 ἔμμεν' ὄνηρ, ὅττις ἐναντίος τοι
 ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδου φονεί-
 σας ὑπακούει
 καὶ γελαίσας ἰμέροεν, τό μ' ἦ μὰν
 καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν·
 ὡς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω βρόχε', ὡς με φωνάι-
 σ' οὐδ' ἐν ἔτ' εἴκει,
 ἀλλὰ κάμ μὲν γλώσσα †ἔαγε†, λέπτον
 δ' αὐτίκα χρῶ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,
 ὀππάτεσσι δ' οὐδ' ἐν ὄρημι', ἐπιρρόμ-
 βεισι δ' ἄκουαι,
 καὶ δέ ἰδρως κακχέεται, τρόμος δέ
 παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δέ ποίας
 ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης
 φαίνομ' ἔμ' αὐτα.
 ἀλλὰ πὰν τόλματον, ἐπέι[
]καὶ πένητα

He seems just like the gods in heaven,
 that man who sits across from you
 and cocks his head to listen to
 your lovely voice
 and charming laugh—which sets *my* heart
 aflutter in my breast, for when
 I catch the merest glimpse of you,
 my voice is gone,
 my tongue's congealed, a subtle fire
 runs flickering beneath my frame,
 my eyes see blank, a buzzing noise
 assails my ears,
 my sweat is cold, my body's gripped
 by shivers, my skin's yellower
 than grass, it seems as if I'm just
 an inch from death.
 But all is worth the risk since . . .
 . . . and serf

The first four stanzas of this poem present a more elaborate and extravagant depiction of an anguished response to feelings of love than any in Sappho's surviving oeuvre. Its Homeric resonances have often been remarked on.¹⁰ The

¹⁰ e.g. Page (1979) 29.

poet presents herself as gazing on a man whom she describes in Homeric terms as, literally, 'equal to gods' (1: ἴσος θεοῖσιν). He appears unaffected by the sight of the woman opposite whose voice and laughter make Sappho's heart (6: καρδίαν) literally 'cower in her breast' (6: ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόραιοσιν), but this causes her by contrast to experience physical sensations akin to those caused by terror on the battlefield—loss of voice, cold sweat, trembling, and pallor. This hyperbolic 'list of symptoms' reaches an extreme finale: 'it seems as if I'm just | an inch from death' (15–16: τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω' πιδεύης | φαίνομ' ἔμ' αὔτα).

Despite these unmistakable resonances, the martial and epic overtones of the poem have rarely been considered central to its interpretation or reconstruction. The literary critic Longinus, in whose writings alone the poem is preserved as a quotation, focuses on the way contradictory emotions are expressed and brought together into a harmonious whole: 'she both freezes and burns, is irrational and sane, is fearful and nearly dead, so that we may observe in her not a single emotion but a synthesis of feelings.'¹¹ Interpretation has, moreover, been heavily and misleadingly influenced by Catullus' near-translation of these stanzas in his poem 51, in which he addresses his 'Lesbia'. This raises the spectre of the overwhelming feelings of jealous passion expressed by Catullus for 'Lesbia' in his other poems, feelings which some have sought to attribute to those felt by Sappho for 'that man'. Arguably, however, such feelings have no place in the circumstances surrounding Sappho's poem, for whom 'that man' is an object of admiration rather than envy; some scholars have indeed supposed that this is a 'wedding poem' which begins with a *makarismos* (complimentary praise) of the groom.¹²

Longinus' quotation of the poem breaks off just as it undergoes a marked change of tone and direction with ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον. The fragmentary line with which the section following the last full stanza opens has been imagined to initiate a generalizing consolation or exhortation. Thus West has reconstructed it in Greek, as expressing a generalization on these lines:

ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον, ἐπεὶ [θέος τοι
καὶ πένητα [πλουσίον αἰψ' ἔθηκεν·
καὶ κατήλεν αὐθι τὸν ἐξισώμενον μακάρεσσι.]

But no thing is too hard to bear

¹¹ Longinus *Subl.* 10.3; Page (1979) 27 is unduly unsympathetic to the critic's viewpoint.

¹² This once dominant interpretation, with its rather old-fashioned and unromantic overtones, has now largely fallen from favour (though Wilson (1996) 57 pronounces it a 'not unlikely proposition') partly thanks to Page's scathing dismissal of the arguments of its proponents in (1979) 30–3. However, it is arguable that, given that κῆνος in line 1 can on its own indicate 'another man', the emphatic use of ὄνηρ in line 2 signifies 'husband' (cf. the use of ἄνδρα indicating Helen's legitimate husband in fr. 16.7).

for God can make the poor man rich
and bring to nothing heaven-high fortune.¹³

Despite West's philologically expert reconstruction of the fragmentary evidence, the shift from the extreme concern with love, suffering, and even death in the previous lines to a bland commonplace about rich and poor, resembling most closely a similar expression in Theognis (662–3), seems implausibly unpoetic in this context. I have previously proposed that we should rather attempt to reconstruct a stanza in which Sappho reproaches Cypris with a personal address and seeks consolation by stressing the fact that she is wholesale and impartial in her infliction of destruction, i.e. love afflicts everyone—rich and poor, noble or serf—alike.¹⁴ Supposing that the Latin version of the poem constitutes the only independent evidence for any reconstruction of Sappho's words, I argued that we might read the last 'otium' stanza of Catullus 51 with fresh eyes:

*otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est,
otio exsultas nimiumque gestis;
otium et reges prius et beatas
perdidit urbes.*¹⁵

What irks you, Catullus, is *idleness*,
in *idleness* you become restless and hyperactive;
it is *idleness* that even destroyed in the past kings
and blessed cities.

This stanza is usually supposed to diverge wholesale from the Greek original, but I suggested that Catullus in fact preserves the last two lines of Sappho's lost stanza with some degree of fidelity, and does so particularly closely in the last two lines, [*otium*] *et reges prius et beatas* | *perdidit urbes*, '[idleness] even destroyed in the past kings and blessed cities': only the fact that the admittedly alien-seeming notion of *otium* here is a purely Catullan insertion is signalled by his emphatic repetition of the word.

Where *otium*, therefore, represents how Catullus personally identifies his 'problem' (*molestum*), Sappho is likely to have said that Love (Eros, Aphrodite, Cypris) was what had 'destroyed kings and cities'. Accordingly, I previously proposed a Sapphic continuation on the following lines:

*ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον, ἐπεὶ κεν ἔσλον
Κύπρι, νικάσαις ἴσα καὶ πένητα
καὶ γὰρ ὄλεσάς ποτ' ἀνακτας ὀλβί-
αις τε πόλῃας.*¹⁶

But all is worth the risk since, Love,
you'd ruin lord and serf alike:

¹³ West (1970) 312–13.

¹⁴ D'Angour (2006).

¹⁵ Catull. 51.13–16.

¹⁶ D'Angour (2006) 300.

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you who of old brought down great kings
and cities proud.

However, even if a continuation on these lines might be thought to unite the various strands of literary and circumstantial evidence, this stanza alone (no less than West's proposed reconstruction) makes for an unduly abrupt conclusion to the poet's agonized outpourings of the preceding stanzas. Moreover, while the fact that Love is impartially and universally destructive offers some consolation to the sufferer, it does not explain with sufficient amplitude why, given the extreme afflictions wrought on the lover's mind and body, 'all is worth the risk'.

The assumption that Sappho's poem ended after only five stanzas is open to strong challenge on different fronts. One is purely formal: the fragments of Sappho's other poems in this metre mostly represent part of poems longer than five stanzas: fr. 1 has seven stanzas, fr. 2 and fr. 16 are likely to have had at least six, of fr. 3 five survive but there may have been more. Secondly and more decisively, a single concluding stanza could not do justice to the expectations set up by the scenario relentlessly expounded in the preceding stanzas, which end with the poet's expression of her feeling that she is 'on the brink of death'. However, a wholly new approach to tracing the poem's trajectory may be opened up once we explore the consequences of the correct interpretation of the phrase *ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον*, to which critics and commentators have accorded virtually no attention. Although the phrase is often taken to mean 'but all must be endured', Hermann Fränkel long ago noted that this is a mistranslation: 'must be endured' would be *τολμάτεον*, whereas *τόλματον* means 'can be endured'.¹⁷ I would go further and maintain that *τολμᾶν* is closer to 'dare' than 'endure': so *ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον* properly means something like 'all can be dared' (hence my translation, above, 'all is worth the risk').¹⁸ In other words, 'can' indicates possibility rather than inevitability, and 'dare' indicates an active attitude rather than a passive position.

This reading of *ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον* finds a somewhat surprising source of support in a hitherto neglected piece of evidence, Catullus' only other poem in Sapphics, Catull. 11.¹⁹ It seems reasonable to suppose that Catullus' efforts at adapting Sappho fr. 31 would have had some impact on the composition of his only other known Sapphic verses (or in the event that Catull. 11 were an earlier

¹⁷ Fränkel (1975) 176; despite his insistence, he does not spell out the interpretative consequences of his observation. Hutchinson (2001) 176 downplays its importance, while rightly noting that 'after all that has preceded, the tone of resignation is, within the poem, a striking gesture'.

¹⁸ It is noteworthy that every usage of *τολμᾶν* in the *Iliad* (8.24, 10.205, 10.232, 12.51, etc.) has the active connotation of 'dare' rather than 'endure'. Sappho could readily have used a form of *τλᾶν* to indicate 'must be endured' (cf. fr. 121.3).

¹⁹ I accordingly modify my assertion (D'Angour (2006) 298) that Catull. 51 is 'the only independent evidence for reconstructing the final stanza of Sappho fr. 31'.

attempt at Sapphics, would have been affected by them).²⁰ The Roman poet's rare incursion into Sapphic metre suggests at least that some coincidence of verbal rhythm and expression might be expected.²¹ The expectation of some mutual influence is reinforced by the structural similarity of Catull. 11 and 51: both contain lists spanning two stanzas or more, the former detailing faraway places, the latter bodily afflictions. At the end of these lists, both poems appear to resume the initial direction of the poem, though with a marked change of tone and tempo. Thus in poem 11, following the rhetorically extravagant protasis in which Catullus specifies the ends of the earth to which his friends would go at his behest, we arrive at the words (13–14):

*omnia haec, quaecumque feret voluntas
caelitum, temptare simul parati . . .*

All these, whatever the decision of the gods
will bring, (although) you are prepared to face together . . .

The three underlined words strikingly occupy the same formal juncture of the poem as Sappho's ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον; placed together in sequence they could have been used to render into Latin Sapphics that very phrase.

The possibility thus arises that *omnia haec . . . temptare* in fact represents a residue of Catullus' attempt to translate the last stanza of Sappho fr. 31 into Latin.²² The poet would have opted for *temptare* (rather than *ferre* or *pati*) as a counterpart to *τολμᾶν* in seeking to represent the sense of an active response to adversity ('to venture').²³ Supposing the πᾶν of ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον to refer to the previous list of symptoms—all *this* can be ventured—Catullus might even have toyed with the metrically precise equivalent *omnia haec temptanda*.²⁴ It appears that he altered the thrust of the indictment because he wanted to

²⁰ Wilkinson (1953) 47 proposed the biographical fancy, accepted by other scholars (e.g. Kenneth Quinn, Peter Green), that Catull. 51 and 11 were respectively composed at the beginning and end of the affair with Lesbia. Although Catull. 51 seems likely to have been the earlier poem, in my view they were probably composed close in time to one another in the context of Catullus' experimentation with Sapphic models.

²¹ Commentators have noted the repetition in both poems of the prosaic and intrusive word *identidem* ('time and again'); I suspect that this is a sly and deliberate verbal allusion to Sappho's similar, oft-repeated, 'signature' term δηῖτε ('now again').

²² The salience of the parallel has been partly obscured by the intervening parenthesis, *quaecumque feret voluntas caelitum*. This is reminiscent of the parenthetical second line of Catull. 51 (*ille, si fas est, superare divos*), both in what it means and in the way it constitutes an apparently idiosyncratic departure from the actual or supposed Greek original. In both cases, Catullus seems to have felt the need to interpose a rhetorical appeal to Roman piety into his poem, as if thereby stamping his own personality on the resulting verses.

²³ *Temptare* has strong active connotations: it is also used by Horace in the context of bold venturesomeness, mental and physical (*Odes* 1.28.5, 3.4.31).

²⁴ Other renderings are possible (*omne temptandum tibi, omne sed temptandum, cuncta sed temptanda*, etc.) but the phrase with added *haec* makes for a more elegant resumption. *Haec* points explicitly to the previous list, unlike ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον, but the Catullan phrase suggests that πᾶν would naturally be read as referring to the foregoing symptoms.

emphasize that the source of his own ruin, unlike that designated by Sappho, was *otium*, *otium*, *otium*; but although he then abandoned his original version of the missing stanza, his translation of ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον was available for use in almost identical form and for the same structural purpose in another Sapphic composition.

The fact that Catull. 11 does not end with the stanza beginning *omnia haec* but carries on for a further *two* stanzas gives circumstantial support to the view that a longer coda than just one stanza was to be found in, and is likely to have been required for, the continuation of fr. 31. Catull. 11 is equally tinged with Homeric resonances, which become explicit in the last stanza of the poem where Catullus uses an Iliadic simile (from *Il.* 8.306) to compare his predicament to that of a flower cut down by a passing plough: the poet levels the blame, as does Sappho in fr. 31, on an overwhelming feminine force, but for him that force is Lesbia (*amorem* | *qui illius culpa cecidit*) rather than Cypris. However, the Iliadic resonances and the notion of blame for misdeeds in Catull. 11 recall another Greek poem in Sapphic metre which may also underlie its compositional basis. Alcaeus fr. 42 similarly designates Aphrodite/Helen as the agent of Troy's ruin, and its first lacunose stanza speaks of the 'bitter grief' (πίκρον ἄχος) they inflicted on Troy's kings and their city:

ὡς λόγος, κάκων ἄ[χος ἔννεκ' ἔργων
Περράμῳ καὶ παισ[ί ποτ' ἦλθε, Κύπρι,
ἐκ σέθεν πίκρον, π[ύρι δ' ὤλεσε Ζεὺς
Ἱλιον ἴραν.²⁵

As the story goes, grief on account of their misdeeds
once came to Priam and his sons, Cypris,
bitter (grief) at your hands, and Zeus destroyed with fire
holy Ilium.

The πίκρον ἄχος that Alcaeus identified as an affliction on kings and cities may have triggered Catullus' desire to insist on what, for him, was truly *molestum*; he then fused this notion with his implicit rejection of Sappho's supposition that the problem was Love. That Catullus may have had Alcaeus' poem as well as Sappho's in mind (consciously or otherwise) when composing Catull. 11 is suggested not only by its closely related theme but by a curious verbal resonance: in the context of poetry with Trojan associations, the words that

²⁵ My reconstruction following that of Page (L-P), who provides the first line and proposes subsequent lines as follows (also printed by Campbell): Περράμῳ καὶ παισ[ί ποτ' Ἰλιν, ἦλθεν | ἐκ σέθεν πίκρον, π[ύρι δ' ὤλεσε Ζεὺς | Ἱλιον ἴραν ('bitter grief came once to Priam and his sons from you, Helen, and Zeus destroyed holy Ilium with fire'). The fact that Helen is mentioned in the final couplet in the third person (οἱ δ' ἀπώλοντ' ἀμφ' Ἑλένα, Φρύγες τε | καὶ πόλις αὔτων: 'but they, the Phrygians, and their city perished on account of Helen') may argue for an apostrophe to Cypris in the first stanza such as I reconstruct here, rather than to Helen.

end Catullus' fifth stanza create a bathetic but unmistakable echo—*Ἰλιον ἴραν, ilia rumpens*.²⁶

To return to Sappho. What the translation of ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον as 'all can be dared' means for the resolution of fr. 31 requires careful reconsideration: on our revised understanding of the phrase, 'all' can hardly refer to the symptoms just listed in the foregoing stanzas. Rather, it points to the potential obstacles posed for 'that man' who appears in the first stanza, who 'dares' to gaze at his love-object, the very thing that threatens Sappho's near-annihilation. His actions—gazing at the beloved's potentially lethal beauty, hearing her beguiling laugh, and facing her fatal charms—require daring worthy of a heroic individual who merits the epithet ἴσος θεόισιν, 'equal to gods'. Such an act of daring and its consequences, we are told, *can* be entertained. In short, the change of tone at this point in the poem strikes a note of defiant *resolve*, rather than one of *resignation* in the face of Love's overwhelming power.

If, therefore, we seek to discover how Sappho continued the poem, rather than supposing that the suffering she describes is something that 'must be endured', we need to ask why the *possibility* of such daring behaviour, with its frighteningly hazardous consequences, is envisaged. The generalization about kings and cities is unlikely to have formed an end to Sappho's own thoughts: such general statements are prone to be supported by specific allusions just as they are in Homeric epic (and the epic diction and imagery throughout the poem means that the *Iliad* is never far away). We have seen how in fr. 16 Sappho follows the generalization 'some say X, some say Y' with the exemplum of Helen, and how in fr. 1 the general advice offered by Aphrodite in the penultimate stanza is followed up by a specific prayer for her help. The recently discovered completion of fr. 58 also shows how Sappho might end a poem—in this case lamenting her loss of youth and consoling herself for the consequent loss of love—by illustrating her sentiments with a mythical exemplum:

Ἵμμες πεδὰ Μοῖσαν ἰ]ρκ[ό]λπων κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες,
 σπουδάσδετε καὶ τὰ]ν φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνναν·
 ἔμοι δ' ἄπαλον πρίν] ποτ' [ἔ]οντα χροά γήρας ἦδη
 ἐπέλλαβε, λεύκαι δ' ἐγ]έροντο τρίχες ἐκ μελαίναν·
 βάρυς δέ μ' ὁ [θ]ύμωρς πεπόηται, γόνα δ' [ο]ὐ φέροισι,
 τὰ δὴ ποτα λαΐψηρ' ἔον ὄρησθ' ἴσα νεβρίοισι.
 τὰ <μὲν> στεναχίσδω θαμέως· ἀλλὰ τί κεν ποίειν;
 ἀγήραον ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ' οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι
 καὶ γάρ π[ο]τὰ Τίθωνον ἔφαντο βροδόπαχυν Αὔρων
 ἔρωι φ . . ἀθρῖσαν βάμεν' εἰς ἔσχατα γὰς φέροισα[ν],

²⁶ The *ludus otiosus* of Catull. 50 is after all undertaken *per iocum atque vinum*, and it may have struck Catullus that *ilia rumpens* could suggest a pun on the notion of 'sacking Ilium' (cf. Propertius' similar pun at 2.1.14: *longas condimus Iliadas*).

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ἔοντα [κ]άλλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ὕμῳς ἔμαρψε
 χρόνῳ πύλινον γήρας, ἔχ[ο]ντ' ἀθανάταν ἄκοιτιν.²⁷

[You for] the fragrant-blossomed Muses' lovely gifts
 [be zealous,] girls, [and the] clear melodious lyre:
 [but my once tender] body old age now
 [has seized;] my hair's turned [white] instead of dark;
 my heart's grown heavy, my knees will not support me,
 that once on a time were fleet for the dance as fawns.
 This state I oft bemoan; but what's to do?
 Not to grow old, being human, there's no way.
 Tithonus once, the tale was, rose-armed Dawn,
 love-smitten, carried off to the world's end,
 handsome and young then, yet in time grey age
 o'ertook him, husband of immortal wife.²⁸

Bearing this kind of structure in mind, we can suppose that Sappho's generalization about kings and cities will not have formed an end to Sappho's thoughts in fr. 31, but that she is likely to have specified some of those individuals and locations whose destruction could be laid at Aphrodite's door. 'Cities' here points to Troy *par excellence*, and 'kings' must allude to figures such as Priam, Hector, and Achilles, heroes who suit the associations of the epithet ἴσος θεοῖσιν in the first line. Additionally, the Homeric allusions also bring into sharper focus what is at stake in acknowledging that τόλματον means 'can be ventured' as the use of *temptare* in Catull. 11 now seems to confirm: the suffering described by the catalogue of symptoms is responded to with a call to *action*. The love-smitten onlooker may be only barely alive, but alive she is, to fight and love another day. Sappho is not simply exhorting herself to endure what must be endured, but saying that one can brave all love's afflictions. If her coda demonstrated why all *can* be ventured for love, far from simply offering consolation for inevitable defeat it must have indicated that some measure of success might emerge from the struggle and pain.

When we ask which figure might best provide the exemplar of such success, the compelling answer in relation to the tale of Troy is Menelaus.²⁹ Having sailed to Troy for Helen's sake and braved death in battle, he managed in due course to regain his wife and to contemplate her beauty. As mentioned earlier,

²⁷ Lardinois (2009) and Edmonds (2009) both give arguments for thinking that this poem did not necessarily end with ἄκοιτιν but continued with the two fragmentary couplets in the same metre reflecting on Sappho's personal situation and ending with the couplet stating 'but I love delicacy [. . .] and love has obtained for me the brightness and beauty of the sun'.

²⁸ *P. Köln* 21351 (Gronewald and Daniel (2004)) with West's (2005) reconstruction and translation. If the obscure elements in the third line from the end are correctly represented, an unusual form of φορέω (e.g. φοράθεισαν for φορεθείσαν, 'borne') might fit the traces and the space available.

²⁹ The stolen passion of Paris also comes to mind (cf. Harrison (2001)); but Paris represents a morally dubious character for Sappho, and will have struck a false note as an exemplum of love's daring.

Menelaus is referred to by Sappho as Helen's 'most noble husband' (fr. 16.7–8) and his example could well demonstrate why 'all can be ventured' in love as in war: the war at Troy, instigated at Love's bidding, brought about the widespread destruction of men of all ranks, but in the end Menelaus regained (at Aphrodite's bidding) his rightful spouse. If Sappho's poem concluded, therefore, with at least two stanzas on these lines after the surviving fragment (and I would contend that more than two originally followed), one might now envisage a continuation of the poem on the following lines:

ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον, ἐπεὶ [κατ' ἔσλον,
Κύπρι, δηῦτ' ἄγρησθ' ἄμα] καὶ πένητα·
[καὶ γὰρ ὤλεσάς ποτ' ἀνακτας δλβί-
αις τε πόληας,

Ἵλιόν τ' Ἴραν, Ἑλένας ἔκατι
Πηλεός τ' υἱὸν Δανάων τε λαόν·
ἀλλὰ δηῦτ' αὐτὸς Μενέλαος ἄβραν
εἶδεν ἄκοιτων.

Ἰλίῳ γὰρ εὐρυχόροις ἀγυίαις
καλλίπων ἦχ' ἱμερόεντα νόστον,
καὶ τέλος ξάνθαν κεφάλαν ἔθηκ'
αὐτὰς ἐνὶ κόλπῳ.

ἀλλὰ, Κύπρι, δός μ' ἐπ' ἔρον πελάσθην
καλλίποισ' ἄχος στονόεντά τ' ἄλγεα,
καὶ γὰρ αὐτικ' ὄσσα πέπονθα δεῖξαιμι
οὐδ' ἔν ἔοντα.]

But all is worth the risk since, [Love,
you ruin, now, both lord and] serf:
[you who of old brought down great kings
and cities proud,

yes, holy Troy for Helen's sake,
and Peleus' son, and all the Greeks;
but Menelaus, he once more
gazed on his wife,

when once he'd left the plains of war
and homeward made his sweet return,
and laid his godlike head to rest
on Helen's lap.

Grant, Kupris, that I'll love again,
and leave the pain of loss behind,
and prove that suffering for love
is not in vain.]³⁰

³⁰ The additional lines that may have ended fr. 58 (see n. 27 above) prompt a reconstruction that would allow Sappho here to have similarly ended with a comment reflecting on her own feelings or status as a lover.

Love's Battlefield

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Sappho can, then, be understood in this poem to be expressing the struggle of love and passion in terms of the battlefield. But she may also have been indicating that, in the end, the struggle of love is not always a fight to the death. Both in love and war, victory is possible for those who dare; and a restored union with a beloved is possible for those who survive love's assault. Hers is a message that can be presented both to a husband enjoying the delectable sight of a young wife, and to a bereft or lonely lover gazing on that same scene. *Cras amet qui numquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet.*³¹

³¹ 'He will love tomorrow who has never loved, and who has loved will love again tomorrow': the refrain of the fourth-century CE Latin poem *Pervigilium Veneris*, which incorporates elements found in the poems of both Catullus and Sappho.

