

THE UNFAITHFUL'S «FLIGHT» TO ANOTHER LOVE
(ARISTOPH. *ECCL.* 895-899)

The author traces echoes from Sappho —fragments 121 and 130 V.— in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* 895-899.

According to the law that has just been issued by the Parliament of women, the first γραῦς defends —in contrast with the νεᾶνις— her right to lie with some young man:

οὐ γὰρ ἐν νέαις τὸ σοφὸν ἔν-
εστιν ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς πεπεῖραις·
οὐδέ τις στέργειν ἄν ἐθέλοι μᾶλλον ἢ ἴγῳ
τὸν φίλον ᾧπερ ξυνεῖην,
ἀλλ' ἐφ' ἕτερον ἄν πέτοιτο.

The whole context (lines 877-913) has already been compared with Sapph. fr. 168 B V., because of the strictly analogous situation (a woman anxiously waiting, in the night time, for a love-meeting)¹. But, on the other hand, nobody seems to have noticed the peculiar allusion to two other fragments by Sappho, which can be identified in our lines 895-899.

To support her own cause, the γραῦς declares that only old women's love can be trusted, as young ones are unfaithful. This singular warning must be regarded as a complete upsetting of traditional love-rules, which required either links between two δμήλικες², or marriages between a very young girl and an older man³. The opposite situation (a

¹ See B. Marzullo, *Studi di poesia eolica*, Firenze 1958, p. 53 ss.

² See especially Theogn. 1063 s. ἐν δ' ἤβη πάρα μὲν ξὺν δμήλικι πάννουχον εὔδειν, / ἱμερτῶν ἔργων ἐξ ἔρον ἰέμενον, Plat. *Phaedr.* 240 c παιδικοῖς δὲ ἐραστῆς (sc. πρεσβύτερος)... πάντων ἀηδέστατον. ἤλικα γὰρ καὶ ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος τέρπειν τὸν ἤλικα (both referring to homosexual situations).

³ See Hes. *Op.* 695 ss. ὦραϊος δὲ γυναῖκα τεδὸν ποτὶ οἶκον ἄγεσθαι, / μήτε

young man seeking after an older woman) is blamed by Sapph. fr. 121 V.:

ἀλλ' ἔων φίλος ἄμμι λέχος ἄρνυσο νεώτερον·
οὐ γὰρ τλάσομ' ἔγω σὺν <τ'> οἴκην ἔσσα γεραιτέρα⁴.

Some features in Aristophanes' passage doubtless show that he remembered this fragment of Sappho's: see especially νέαις (~ νεώτερον), ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς κτλ. (~ ἀλλ' ἔων κτλ.), the emphasis on the pronoun ἐγώ (μᾶλλον ἢ 'γώ ~ τλάσομ' ἔγω); finally, the phrase τὸν φίλον ᾧπερ ξυνεῖην (~ ἔων φίλος ἄμμι... σὺν τ' οἴκην). While Sappho, as γεραιτέρα, refused to marry her younger lover, Aristophanes' πέπειρα, on the contrary, advises any young man to choose her instead of the light-minded νεᾶνις: with a comical, parodistic upsetting of rôles⁵.

To conclude her peroration, the γραῦς advises men to beware of young girls' unfaithfulness: a νέα —she says— ἐφ' ἕτερον ἂν πέτοιτο. It looks strange that nobody has remarked the close reference of this verse to Sapph. fr. 130, 3 s. V.:

Ἄτθι, σοὶ δ' ἔμεθεν μὲν ἀπήχθετο
φροντίσθην, ἐπὶ δ' Ἀνδρομέδαν πότη(ι),

where πότη(ι) (πότη, πότε codd.) has been restored by Voigt⁶ by comparison with Alc. fr. 322 ποτέονται (see also Hamm § 250 a)⁷. It seems evident —on the ground of Aristophanes' close imitation— that the verb πότημαι⁸ fits well Sappho's passage. Therefore, Lobel's conjecture πότη(ι)⁹ —which in any case appears to be unnecessary— is absolutely to be excluded.

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τριηκόντων ἐτέων μάλα πόλλ' ἀπολείπων / μήτ' ἐπιθείς μάλα πολλά· γάμος δέ τοι ὄριος οὗτος· / ἢ δὲ γυνὴ τέτορ' ἠβώοι, πέμπτω δὲ γαμοῖτο, Plat. *Leg.* 785 b γάμου δὲ ὄρον εἶναι κόρη μὲν ἀπὸ ἑκκαίδεκα ἐτῶν εἰς εἴκοσι... κόρη δὲ ἀπὸ τριάκοντα μέχρι τῶν πέντε καὶ τριάκοντα, Aristot. *Pol.* 1335 a τὰς μὲν ἀρμόττει περὶ τὴν τῶν ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἐτῶν ἡλικίαν συζευγνύσαι, τοὺς δ' ἑπτὰ καὶ τριάκοντα.

⁴ This fragment has been recently analysed by A. Andrisano, «Sapph. fr. 121 V.», *MCr* 13-14, 1978-1979, p. 81 ss.

⁵ See, as latest, X. Απ. Μιχαήλ, «Ἄτθι κομικὸς λόγος τοῦ Ἀριστοφάνους», Athens 1981, p. 190 ss.

⁶ *Sappho et Alcaeus. Fragmenta*, ed. E. M. Voigt, Amsterdam 1971, p. 131.

⁷ As πότημαι is the usual form in Sappho (fr. 22, 12 ἀμφιπόταται, 55, 4 ἐκπεποταμένα) some authors prefer to read πότη(ι) (see E. Lobel, *Σαπφούς μέλη*, Oxford 1925, p. 53; E. Lobel-D. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, Oxford 1955, p. 93; G. Perrotta-B. Gentili, *Polinnia*, Messina-Firenze 1965₂, pp. 183 and 369).

⁸ Or πότημαι: see n. 7.

⁹ Σ. μ. 54 (in alternative to πότη(ι)). This suggestion is offered again by both Lobel and Page in their edition (*PLF*, p. 93).