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'Whom Should I Persuade …?'
Another Look at an Old Problem in Sappho fr. 1 (P.Oxy. XXI 2288)

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Sappho fr. 1 is the only poem of hers transmitted complete in the manuscript tradition (Dionysius of Hali-carnassus, *de Compositione*).[1] It is a hymn-prayer to Aphrodite in which Sappho[2] prays to the goddess to come and help her with her 'relationship problem'. A girl she loves is not reciprocating her love and the speaker is desperate that the goddess should intervene on her behalf. The poem consists mainly of an imagined speech by the slightly world-weary goddess sighing: 'Who do you want me to influence for you *now*?' She gives the impression that the speaker is constantly making such demands on her services. Dionysius praises the refined language of the poem and the polish of its harmonies[3] and I think the general modern reception is in agreement. A thorn in the side of the appreciation of the poem, however, comes in line nineteen, at a critical juncture of Aphrodite's speech, where the text of Dionysius appears to be corrupt, defying emendation. When a sliver of papyrus from Oxyrhynchus turned up with portions of lines 1–28 of the poem, hopes were high that this might settle some of the doubts surrounding the poem's transmission. Not so. At the critical points the papyrus when edited by E. Lobel as P.Oxy. XXI 2288 (2nd c.) proved to be less than helpful. And, for the purposes of this investigation, line 19 appeared indeed in a different form to that of the mss. of Dionysius, but unfortunately also not intact.[4]

The mss. of Dionysius give various different versions of the beginning of line 19, none of them yield-ing sense. P reads βαι caγήνεccαν (βαι corrected from μαι)[5] and F has καὶ caγήνεccαν. So we seem to have a line beginning βαι/μαι or καὶ followed by an unintelligible word caγην, then letters which can be articulated ἐc càν (φιλότατα), 'to (or 'into') your love'. Blass thought -μαι might connect with πειθω- at previous line end, giving πείθωμαι: '(whom) am I to be persuaded?' Aphrodite would be quoted as asking Sappho: 'whom am I to be persuaded to lead to you (caγην = c(οι) ἄγειν) into your love?' Turner comment-ed that although the sense was good, there was no precedent for a word broken over lines two and three in a Sapphic strophe.[6] Maryline Parca has a different suggestion on how the initial letters evidenced by the mss. of Dionysius might be accommodated, to which I will return later. As already noted by Turner, the line beginning βαι-/μαι-/και- in the manuscripts of Dionysius may have been the result of the copyist's eye slipping to the beginning of the *previous* line (μαι-voλαι), i.e. a form of dittography. In which case one could reject the evidence of these three initial letters (with variants) as simply anomalous. That did not help in understanding the remaining letters cάγην etc.

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[1] Full edition in E.-M. Voigt, *Sappho et Alcaeus. Fragmenta*, Amsterdam 1971, Sappho fr. 1.

[2] Normally it is safer to say 'the speaker' when referring to the first-person speaker of a poem, but here Sappho names herself in line 20.

[3] τῆc λέξεωc ἡ εὐέπεια καὶ ἡ χάριc ἐν τῆι cυνεχείαι καὶ λειότητι … τῶν ἁρμονιῶν.

[4] E. G. Turner in *The Papyrologist at Work*, Greek, Roman and Byzantine Monographs, no. 6 (J. H. Gray Lectures, Cam-bridge 1971), p. 24, introduces the problem as follows: 'At the heart of Sappho 1.1 (= 1 L–P) there is a notorious linguistic and textual difficulty. Sappho imagines Aphrodite responding to her summons, and recollects what she said last time: "You asked what once again is the matter with me, why I am calling once again, and what in my heart's madness I most desire to have." From the three verbs in the first person present indicative (still inside the quotation) to a third person verb, of which Sappho is the object, "Who, Sappho, wrongs you?" How is this transition managed? It used to be thought that a second person verb μαῖc stood as the first word in verse 19, "Whom once again do you wish Persuasion (…) to bring you for you to love?" The form implied in the verb μαῖc is rightly stigmatized as a monster by Sir Denys Page.'

[5] K. Tsantsanoglou, Sappho 1.18–19 V., *ZPE* 201, 2017, 15–16, points out, following Lobel, that Voigt is not correct in saying that μαι in P has been corrected from βαι; the reverse, rather, is true.

[6] And the elision of cοι is questionable, as Turner points out. I would add that πείθωμαι would naturally be taken to mean 'should I agree?' rather than 'should I be persuaded', particularly when followed by an infinitive ἄγην.

So hopes were high when P.Oxy. 2288 was discovered. Now, the transcription given by Lobel here was .]..αγη.[(with an accent[7] over the alpha). After eta, nu looks likely and Lobel suggested the traces before alpha were probably sigma (followed by a strange dot looking like a low stop); and before *that* the high dot of ink might be the tip of the long downstroke of either psi or phi (picture below). He suggested as the only solution which seemed justifiable to him, ἄψ ϲ᾽ ἄγην, 'to lead you back' (sc. 'to her love', but this necessitates changing the mss. reading ἐϲ ϲὰν φιλότατα ('to *your* love') to ἐϲ ϝὰν φιλότατα), 'to *their/her* love'.[8] Lobel also considered the possibility that αγην might = ἀγῆναι, aor. pass. infin. of ἄγνυμι, 'be broken in love', as one might break in a horse. Similarly, Page suggested τάγην as infinitive of τάττεσθαι, to be ordered: 'who should I persuade to be ordered …?' or 'to subject themselves'. Voigt comments on Lobel's original suggestion: *possis*. On one point she agrees with Lobel: that there seems to be only room for one letter missing at the torn left edge of the fragment.

In his discussion of the problem, Turner concurs with Lobel that the traces before alpha in the papyrus most likely represent sigma with an inexplicable dot after it, but doubts the value of the apparent punctuation. However, he expresses scepticism about the psi or phi which Lobel argued for. What Lobel had taken to be the upper tip of the descender of phi or psi might, so Turner, be the tip of another high letter such as alpha. Turner compares the alphas of this scribe as they are evidenced by this papyrus, another fragment of Sappho (P.Oxy. XVII 2076) and a fragment of Plato, *Phaid*. (P.Oxy. XV 1809), all apparently written by the same hand.

Turner also introduces a further consideration into the discussion, namely the fact that there are two *layers* of papyrus constituting the fragment and some minimal traces of writing can be discerned on the lower layer. Turner supposed that a lower layer of the papyrus roll had become stuck to the upper one accidentally. If the ink traces on both layers were by the same hand, as Turner supposed, that would indicate that more of Sappho's text might adhere to the rear of P.Oxy. 2288. D. Obbink developed this idea to argue that the Aphrodite poem might not be the first poem in the Alexandrian collection, as this second, covered text would have been placed further to the *left* of fr. 1 L–P.[9] However, that would only certainly be the case if the writing on both layers was definitely by the same hand and if the roll was rolled up in the normal fashion, from last to first column of writing.[10]

The physical constitution of the fragment is a topic which has been examined in detail recently by de Kreij/Colomo/Lui.[11] Suffice it here to state the authors' main conclusion, that the lower layer (B, they call it) has been deliberately stuck under the upper layer to repair wear and tear of the papyrus. They do not believe that the writing traces on both layers necessarily stem from the same hand.[12] Layer B is probably quite extraneous to the text of the first book of Sappho's poetry. They title their paper 'Shoring up Sappho', indicating that the papyrus text has been mended or reinforced here, as it had become worn or damaged. So the dual layers of the fragment are not strictly relevant to the discussion of Sappho's text, as all the readings and traces of her poem are on layer A. However, the examination does go to show that the papyrus roll here must have suffered considerable wear and tear, which of course does not improve legibility. In particular, as we will see, some letters have become truncated by the damage to layer A. The conclusion of their examination would tend to strengthen rather than weaken the view that the prayer to Aphrodite is poem one in the collection.

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[7] This looks most like a *brevis* to me. Quantitively that would be correct.

[8] That is, unless one is prepared to take ϲ᾽ in ϲαγην as equivalent to ϲοι by – doubtful – elision.

[9] D. Obbink, Vanishing Conjecture. The Recovery of Lost Books from Aristotle to Eco, in: *Culture in Pieces. Essays on Ancient Texts in Honour of Peter Parsons*, Oxford 2011, 20–49.

[10] A forthcoming contribution by G. B. D'Alessio, referred to by DeKreij/Colomo/Lui (next note), considers the possibility that the roll was rolled up from first to last column, meaning that fr. 1 would have been at the innermost point. The pressure at that point might have been greater, leading to layers become 'glued' to each other. That would mean that writing on layer B would have stood to the *right* of the text of layer A; i.e. Obbink's theory would not hold.

[11] M. de Kreij, D. Colomo, A. Lui, Shoring up Sappho. P.Oxy. 2288 and Ancient Reinforcements of Bookrolls, *Mnemosyne* 73, 2020, 915–948.

[12] For detailed discussion see pp. 920–924 of their paper.

I, too, had for long thought that after the introductory τίνα δηὖτε πείθω in line 18, an intransitive strong aorist infinitive ending -αγην (i.e. a guttural stem) might be the most likely solution, assuming that the amount of space available for text here must be taken from P.Oxy. 2288 rather than the manuscripts of Dionysius, a point corroborated by Voigt's text and *apparatus*.[13] As we have seen, Lobel had toyed with ἄγην (= ἀγῆναι), Page with τάγην (ταγῆναι). Lobel tried to retain sigma before ἄγην, Page was obviously less convinced by that. In fact I think the trace can be seen to be compatible with lamda, and it occurred to me (after a number of years thinking about this, off and on) that ἀλλάγην might be a good candidate, intransitive aorist infinitive of ἀλλάττομαι, 'change one's position', or 'be reconciled with' (as is common with compounds of the verb such as διαλλάττομαι, συναλλάττομαι). This would suit the context well. Aphrodite is imagined to ask: 'And who should I persuade now to change their position to (one of) love of you (ἐc cὰν φιλότατα)', or, perhaps, 'be reconciled to your love?' The meaning of ἀλλάττομαι is precisely *'change* one's mind (or position) from one state to another' as is required by the sequence of remarks of Aphrodite which follows this question: 'If she runs from you (sc. now) <soon> she will chase you. If she does not accept your gifts, soon she will be the one giving. If she does not love you, soon she will love you even against her better judgement.' In other words, it is a case of the loved girl *changing* her mind from one of rejection of Sappho to one of acceptance. Moreover, we arrive at unobjectionable syntax in Aphrodite's question: πείθω (deliberative subj.) followed by accusative-and-infinitive construction, with cὰν becoming logical and unproblematic (no need to postulate ϝὰν). This meaning 'change position' of ἀλλάττομαι is covered in LSJ s.v. III. The specific sense 'be reconciled with' appears to have stood in a fragment of Sophocles, fr. 997 Radt, cf. Photius ⟨ἀλλάχθητε⟩ ἀντὶ τοῦ διαλλάχθητε (and in Suda and *Lexica Segueriana*). The compounds διαλλάττομαι or συναλλάττεσθαι are of course more common with this meaning.

Clearly the crux palaeographically is what I read as lamda now, which had been seen as sigma. Let us have a look at the picture.[14]

What one can see before the αγην[(in the penultimate line) is, in my opinion, the right diagonal of lamda. There is ink missing in the downstroke, dividing it into two halves, where the surface of the papyrus is rubbed or perhaps broken off, as can be seen to the right of the stroke and affecting the loop of the alpha as well. The top of the line is also broken off at the edge of layer A of the papyrus. Now, moving one's eye to the left of this, one can see the dot of ink which Lobel had extrapolated into a psi. This, too, in my opinion, might be the top of a lamda (α]λλαγην). Turner had already suggested that the trace might be the top of an alpha, as this scribe sometimes formed a high alpha or delta, as evidenced in this papyrus in line 13 and in

the other two fragments attributed to this hand. I believe we can see the same phenomenon regarding lamda in P.Oxy. 2076 (see above n. 9) line 3 (ταλ- where lamda is even taller than alpha), line 4 (μελος), line 7 (φιαλ-, where the alpha and the lamda are exactly the same height as phi).

Forms of ἀλλάττομαι are found quite often with the preposition εἰς (or ἐς) meaning 'change into'. The sisters of Phaethon are 'changed into trees' ἀλλαγῆναι ἐς τὰ δένδρα (Lucian *On Amber* 1.6). Pausanias records a myth of Zeus 'turning into a cuckoo' (λέγοντες) ἐς τοῦτον τὸν ὄρνιθα ἀλλαγῆναι (2.17.4), or Teiresias changing from woman into man ἐκ γυναικὸς ἐς ἄνδρα ἠλλάγη (9.33.2), Tereus into a hoopoe ὁ δὲ ἔποψ ἐς ὃν ἔχει λόγος τὸν Τηρέα ἀλλαγῆναι (10.4.8). A scholion cites Hesiod (fr. 188a Merkelbach–West) to the effect that Arethousa was changed into a fountain [εἰς κρήνην] ἠλλάγη ἐν Χ[αλκίδι] ὑπὸ [τῆς] Ἥρας, ὡς Ἡσίοδος ἱστορε̣[ῖ]. So perhaps we should take the combination ἀλλάγην ἐς in Sappho's poem similarly. Aphrodite is asking whom she should persuade to 'convert to' love. The possessive pronoun cάν is equivalent to a genitive object σοῦ, so: 'love of you', or 'for you'. English makes a slight distinction between 'change to' and 'change into', the latter being used for metamorphosis, the former less so.[15] Greek only has εἰς/ἐς + acc. The girl envisaged by Sappho does not turn *into* love for 'you', but rather changes from a *state of* rejection to one of love. Nevertheless, this is a kind of metamorphosis. However, I would still not wish to rule out the possibility that the verb ἀλλάττεσθαι here is meant in the sense 'be reconciled to'.

Where might the present suggestion be considered weak? Clearly the conjecture stands or falls on the proposition that the ink traces in P.Oxy. 2288 before the alpha are compatible with lamda. I do not wish to claim that it can *only* be lamda; merely that the extant traces are compatible with lamda. Daniela Colomo kindly re-examined this place in the papyrus for me, as I was prevented from autopsy by the pandemic, and gave me her opinion. She, too, expresses scepticism about the sigma read originally by Lobel. She herself suggests delta, which is clearly analogous to lamda in the shape and position of its right diagonal. The break in the line is to be explained by abrasion.[16]

If the high trace before putative lamda is on layer A (see previous note) I suggest that the two lamdas in my reconstruction (ἀλλ-) were written very close together, as is common in literary papyri. In P.Oxy. 1809 (= Plato *Phaedo* 103a1), written by the same scribe,[17] the two lamdas in ἀλλά are close, and ibid. 102e6 delta-alpha are written nearly on top of each other. In other hands, too, double lamda is written tightly. Just two examples: P.Oxy. XXXIII 2656 (Menander *Mis.*), and the Bodmer papyrus of Menander's *Samia*.

Next, the reading entails rejecting the evidence of the manuscripts of Dionysius for the beginning of the line. However, I do not seem to be alone in this position, which was shared by Voigt and Lobel. If we go by the papyrus, there is simply no room for more than three letters before the alpha.

Finally, is the strong aorist ἀλλάγην (Att. ἀλλαγῆναι) a likely form in Sappho? (a) Lexically. ἀλλάσσω and compounds does not occur in epic. It is well represented in lyric, however, and cases are recorded for Pindar, Simonides, Bacchylides as well as for the Attic tragedians. There are a couple of occurrences in lyric *adespota*: *PMG* 43.1, *Coll. Alex.* 2.91 Powell. The earliest recorded instance is somewhat later than Sappho, in Theognis 21: οὐδέ τις ἀλλάξει κάκιον τοὐσθλοῦ παρεόντος, 'nor will a person exchange the worse for the better when it is available'. Euripides *Hel.* 836 has an interesting instance where the active, ἀλλάττω, has the sense 'swap lovers' (lit. 'swap beds' κοὔποτ' ἀλλάξεις λέχη;), a semantic field close to Sappho's here. This distribution, in my opinion, makes it quite possible that the word was used by Sappho.

(b) Morphologically. Hamm, *Grammatik zu Sappho und Alkaios* §203 collects equivalent forms (ἀλλάττω itself is not among them), which are numerous (from πλήττω, μίγνυμι, τήκω, δάμνημι, μαίνομαι,

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[15] Likewise German uses 'verwandeln *in*', but 'ändern/sich ändern *zu*'.

[16] Email of 28.05.2021: "The sigma in [.]ϛαγην is not convincing at all: it would have a prolonged lower part of the arc. In this script sigmas appear rather regular. In my view a delta is more likely: in this script the diagonal descending from left to right is not very straight, but somehow curving: we have to assume mechanical loss of ink." Interestingly she goes on to say that the trace *before* the putative lamda/delta "lies on the lower layer and is rather blurred: I would not consider it part of the sequence. So I would go for:]δαγην (with elision after delta?)". If that were true, we would not need to accommodate the high trace before lamda/delta which Lobel had identified hypothetically as a psi.

[17] Cf. Turner *Papyrologist at Work* p. 22.

ῥέω, φαίνομαι).[18] She comments that all extant forms are intransitive with the possible exception of τάκην. LSJ s.v. comment that aorist in ἠλλάγην (as opposed to ἠλλάχθην) is 'more common in prose'. An instance occurs however in the *monostichi* of Menander (line 79 Jaekel). Compounds of ἀλλάττω such as ἀπαλλάττομαι, διαλλάττομαι, συναλλάττομαι, regularly have strong aorist infinitive in -αλλαγῆναι. So I see no reason to rule out ἀλλάγην in Sappho morphologically.

Turning briefly to previous suggestions,[19] the most determined attempt to retain the manuscript letters ?αις was made by Maryline G. Parca as the fruit of work in L. Koenen's seminar on Sappho.[20] She advocates retaining βαις (corrected to μαι- in ms. P of Dionysius) in combination with ἄγην, infinitive of ἄγω. τίνα πείθω / βαῖς' ἄγην, she says, means 'whom should I persuade this time, setting out to bring her to your love?'[21] There are various objections to this, in my opinion. First, with West (*Maia* 22, 1970, 309 n. 5), this is 'forced' in sense: 'whom should I persuade, setting off to bring?' Logically, it is a *hysteron proteron*. First one decides who to 'go to', then begins persuading, not the other way round. And, in question form, one would have to ask: 'to whom should I go to persuade?' There is a syntactical awkwardness in combining (τίνα) πείθω βᾶσ' ἄγειν; (in Attic) where the infinitive follows naturally after πείθω ('…whom should I persuade *to* lead/bring'), not βᾶσα. Normally the modal (or temporal) participle βᾶσα would qualify πείθω, not introduce a new construction with the infinitive. Parca cites the Homeric combination of βαίνω with an infinitive (usually ἰέναι) but there is a gulf between βῆ δ' ἰέναι, 'off he went', and βᾶς' ἄγειν, as in the latter the infinitive gives the *intention*, not the mode, of going.[22] Finally palaeographically: Turner rejected the possibility that an iota could have stood between α-ς.

Another inventive treatment of the problem has come from Pär Ola Sandin (Bergen).[23] It, too, however, runs into difficulties, in my opinion. Wilfully emending πείθω in line 18 to 'oblique' infinitive πείθην (with assumed subject Aphrodite), said to be still dependent on θέλω in line 17, and assuming krasis at the beginning of line 19, he arrives at τίνα δηῦτε πείθην / κἀσάγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα: 'who, again, (sc. do you want me) to persuade / and bring home to your love?' But Aphrodite is *already* expressing herself indirectly (with ὅττι thrice) by asking '*what* I have suffered', and '*why* I am calling her', and '*what* I want to happen'. This makes it highly unlikely, in my opinion, that Aphrodite should continue with a second level of oblique expression. And if this *is* indirect speech with a change of subject from that in θέλω, we need an accusative subject of πείθην: 'her' (sc. Aphrodite): ἑ (ἐ ?), I suppose it would have to be. Finally, stylistically: without τίνα πείθω in question form, the direct question at the end of this rhetorical sequence 'who is offending you?' becomes very abrupt.

Kyriakos Tsantsanoglou also published in 2017 (above n. 5) an attempt to preserve one of the ms. readings of Dion. Hal. *De Comp.*, και, in this case. His paper is stronger palaeographically than grammatically. He suggests that before .].ςαγην[in the papyrus, one might postulate that the reading was κἀσάγην = καὶ ἐσάγην by synaloiphē.[24] So far so good. But the reconstructed text: τίνα δηῦτε πείθω / καἰσάγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα, 'Whom am I to convince again so as even to lead that one into your love?' is impossible syntax. There is no such thing as a 'consecutive infinitive' after πείθω. An infinitive construction after this verb (AcI or simple infinitive) represents syntactically the *object* of the verb. His 'parallel' from Euripides

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[19] The following section on the history of scholarship on this question has been radically shortened on the request of the journal editors. Apologies to the authors concerned for not treating their suggestions more fully.

[20] Sappho 1.18–19, *ZPE* 46, 1982, 47–50. Gregory Nagy, https://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/once-again-this-time-in-song-1-of-sappho/, says he 'agrees' with her reading.

[21] The high trace of ink which Lobel had taken as the uppermost tip of psi or phi she takes as 'most probably the top of a circumflex accent written between the two vowels of a diphthong αι'.

[22] Similarly in Attic one can say ᾤχετο φεύγων but not, indicating purpose, ᾤχετο ἄγων. I suppose one might conceivably defend a combination such as βᾶς' ἄξουσα, 'having gone with the intention of bringing'.

[23] P. O. Sandin, On Sappho 1: vv. 7–15 and *Rigveda* 1.118; an Emendation of v. 18, *Symbolae Osloenses* 86, 2002, 3–20.

[24] He points out that, actually, it should be εἰσάγην (not ἐσ-) and that the Oxyrhynchus copyist has noticed this and corrected the reading by inserting an iota above the alpha; it is the tip of this which one sees in the papyrus.

Or. 946–947 is inapplicable: μόλις δ' ἔπεισε μὴ πετρούμενος θανεῖν τλήμων Ὀρέστης, 'with difficulty the brave Orestes persuaded (them) that he should not die by stoning', where θανεῖν stands in, in a familiar way, for the defective passive of κτείνω: the underlying construction is an AcI as object of ἔπεισε: 'he persuaded them not to kill him by stoning'.[25]

So, to recapitulate my proposal (lines 15–20):

> …
>
> ἤρε' ὄττι δηὖτε πέπονθα κὤττι
> δηὖτε κάλημμι
>
> κὤττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεςθαι
> μαινόλαι θύμωι· "τίνα δηὖτε πείθω
> ἀ]λλάγην ἐς ϲὰν φιλότατα; τίς ϲ', ὦ
> Σάπθ', ἀδίκηϲι;"

You asked what had upset me this time, why I was calling you again, what I most wanted to happen in my fervent heart: "Who should I persuade this time to have a change of heart (or 'be reconciled')[26] toward your love? Who, Sappho, is offending you?"

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[25] This is not even to mention other oddities of the paper. He wrongly accuses Page of suggesting τάγην where the form would have to be τάγηναι (a *vox nihili*). Without explanation he says that the copyist of P.Oxy. 2288 may have taken ϲαγηνεϲϲαν as an adjective meaning 'seductive' with φιλότατα (and hence inserted the apparent stop ('hypostolē') after sigma).

[26] Or even 'reciprocate' as ἀλλάττω/ἀλλάττομαι was also used for the exchange of goods, sometimes with the coin of money: LSJ s.v. III and also IV ('have dealings, as buyer or seller').