

## Come Back, Be Here: An Analysis of Archilochus' Fragment 24 and Sappho's *Brothers Poem*

This paper will offer a shift in focus on the debate about lyric *nostos*, through an examination of how Archilochus' Fragment 24 W already features themes later used by Sappho in the *Brothers Poem*. I will demonstrate how there is a wider background for the tradition of the depiction of homecoming in lyric poetry, since both authors 1) address a person from their community, 2) value the life of the returning one instead of the financial prospects of a sea journey, 3) focus on their own experience on land, 4) but acknowledge the role of the gods in this situation. However, it is evident that each poet has their own innovations to the genre. Though it is a common trend in scholarship to analyze Sappho's poems through their opposition to epic poems (Mueller, 2016) or even to other authors (such as Euripides) who use a similar language in prayers of safe return (Obbink, 2014), it is also important to identify how Sappho is part of a larger tradition of lyric poetry, not necessarily being the only or even first to explore the idea of valuing a *safe* homecoming instead of a profitable one.

On the one hand, Archilochus' Fragment 24 focuses on a private (or even isolating) experience: although the use of masculine participles and pronouns (ll. 11-12, 16) reveals that both the poetic voice and his addressee are men, the description of the poetic voice's own past condition (ll. 16-17) describes how he felt isolated. At the same time, Fragment 24 undermines the role of the individual waiting on land: the last two verbs (κείμενος, "laying down," l. 17; and κατεστάθην, "I am set," l. 18) seem to describe passive actions. Other fragments from the poet might help understand this passivity: for example, Fragment 2 portrays a scene of lying down which has been connected to the setting of the symposium (Brockliss, 2020), possibly suggesting the praise of a passive behavior over a more active and heroic action; but Fragments 130.2 and

24.17 share the use of the same the participle κείμενος, in the case of Fragment 130 describing the oppressing power gods have over human lives, another possible connotation for its use in Fragment 24.

On the other hand, Sappho's *Brothers Poem* continues the lyric tradition of focusing on the *safe* return home (instead of the more traditional epic approach and its focus on returning home with valuable goods, e. g. Odysseus' ship in *Odyssey* 13) and at the same time has an innovative depiction of *nostos*, since it places the first-person at the center of the action through its emphasis on the role prayer has in appeasing the gods. Even though we cannot be sure about the addressee of Sappho's poem (Obbink, 2014), the *Brothers Poem* showcases how the community has been debating the situation of her brother. Regarding the gender of the poetic voice and its role, there is also a surprising development: Sappho's female voice showcases her agency in the religious sphere of her community, while Archilochus' masculine voice stresses his lack of action regarding the homecoming of a dear one. Even if we consider other fragments of Archilochus on homecoming, for example, Fragment 13, we do not see a similar role assigned to women as the one described by Sappho. However, scholars must be careful not to conclude that Sappho innovates simply by her appropriation of a *safe* homecoming into lyric poetry, as her predecessor Archilochus had already explored the theme, but rather on her depiction of the active social role of women in *nostos*' scenes.

## Works Cited

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