

**Why Hera? A comparative investigation into
Sappho's Brothers poem and Fragment 17**
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The recent discovery in 2014 of papyri containing new fragments of Sappho has reinvigorated the study of her poems. The discovery included significant additions to Fragment 17, which was partially known from other sources, and the Brothers poem, an entirely new and nearly complete poem. These two poems, quoted in full below, are a rich source of inquiry due to their shared theme of *nostos*, or 'homecoming', and their intriguing focus on Hera. Elsewhere in Sappho's poetry, if she refers to a deity she is usually praying to Aphrodite in the context of *eros*, erotic love.² It is very unusual, therefore, for Hera to be the subject of these two poems. A comparative investigation of fr. 17 and the Brothers poem will reveal more about each poem and why they focus on Hera.

The Brothers poem

ἀλλ' ἄϊ θρούληθα Χάραξον ἔλθην
νᾶϊ σὺν πλήαι, τὰ μέν, οἶομαι, Ζεῦς
οἶδε κύμπαντές τε θεοί, σὲ δ' οὐ χρῆ
ταῦτα νόησαι
ἀλλὰ καὶ πέμπτην ἔμε καὶ κέλεσθαι

4

¹

² Sappho 1 is the most famous example, but Sappho also refers to Aphrodite in frs. 16 and 134, among others.

πόλλα λίσσεσθαι βασίληαν Ἥραν

ἐξίκεσθαι τυίδε κάαν ἄγοντα

νᾶα Χάραξον

8

κάμμ' ἐπεύρην ἀρτέμεας· τὰ δ' ἄλλα

πάντα δαιμόνεσσιν ἐπιτρόπων·

εὐδίαι γὰρ ἐκ μεγάλαν ἀήταν

αἶψα πέλονται.

12

τῶν κε βόλληται βασίλευσ Ὀλύμπω

δαίμον' ἐκ πόνων ἐπ' ἄρηον ἤδη

περτρόπην, κῆνοι μάκαρες πέλονται

καὶ πολύολβοι·

16

κάμμεσ, αἶ κε τὰν κεφάλαν ἀέροη

Λάριχοσ καὶ δὴ ποτ' ἄνηρ γένηται,

καὶ μάλ' ἐκ πόλλαν βαρυθυμίαν κεν

αἶψα λύθειμεν.³

20

... but you keep chattering that Charaxus has arrived

with a full ship, which, I believe, Zeus

and all the gods know, but *you* ought not

to be concerned with this;

4

³ F. Ferrari. "Sappho and her Brothers, and other Passages from the First Book," trans. Chiara Mecariello, *ZPE* 192 (2014): 2.

instead send me and tell me

to repeatedly entreat queen Hera, that

Charaxus may arrive here guiding

a safe ship

8

and find us safe. All the other things

let us entrust them to the gods:

for calm weather

suddenly follows great storms.

12

Those whose fortune the King of Olympus

turns to good things,

away from pain, those people are blessed

and prosperous -

16

and we too, if Larichos will raise his head

and finally become a man -

would very suddenly be freed

from many cares.⁴

20

⁴ Translation mine.

Fragment 17

πλάσιον δὴ μ[οικοπ]όλοισ ἀ[ήεθ]ω,

πότνι' Ἥρα, σὰ χ[αρίε]ς τ' ἐόρταν.

τὰν ἀράταν Ἀτρ[εΐδα]ι πόησάν

τοὶ βασίληεσ

4

ἐκτελέσσαντεσ μ[εγά]λοισ ἀέθλοισ

πρῶτα μὲν πέρ Εἰ[λειον], ἄψερον δέ

τυιδ' ἀπορμάθεν[τεσ· ὁ]δον· γὰρ εὖρη[ν

οὐκ ἐδύναντο

8

πρὶν σὲ καὶ Δί' ἀντ[ίαιον] πεδέλθην

καὶ Θυῶνασ ἱμε[ρόεντα] παῖδα·

νῦν δὲ κ[.....]...πόημεν

κατ τὸ πάλ[αιον

12

ἄγνα καὶ κα[..... ὁ.]χλοσ

π]αρθέ[νωνγ]υναίκων

αμφι[

μέτρ' ὀλ[ολύγασ

16

πασ[

[] νλ[

ἔμμενα[ι

[Ἥ]ρ' ἀπίκε[σθαι⁵

20

⁵ Ferrari, "Sappho and her brothers," 21.

Now, nearby to your attendants let your favour blow,

queen Hera, and towards the festival

that the Atreids, kings, made

desired to you 4

after completing great trials

first around Ilium, and then

leaving for here: for they would not have been able

to find the way 8

before turning to you and Zeus,

and the charming son of Thyone;

now we... are performing

according to the past 12

the holy and... crowd

of girls... women

around...

the measure of the cries 16

...

...

to be...

Hera, to arrive.⁶

20

Nostos is the theme that unites both poems. The Brothers poem revolves entirely around Sappho's wish for the safe homecoming of Charaxus, her brother. Sappho tells an unknown person that they ought to send her to pray to Hera, so that Charaxus might arrive home with a safe ship (ll. 5-8):

ἀλλὰ καὶ πέμπτην ἔμε καὶ κέλεσθαι
 πόλλα λίσσεσθαι βασίληαν Ἥραν
 ἐξίκεσθαι τυίδε σάαν ἄγοντα
 νᾶα Χάραξον

instead send me and tell me
 to repeatedly entreat queen Hera, that
 Charaxus may arrive here guiding
 a safe ship

Fr.17 is a prayer to Hera, and explicitly references the *nostos* myth of the Atreids in lines 2-10. Nestor famously related this myth in the third book of the *Odyssey*. After Troy finally fell, Menelaus was in favour of returning home immediately whereas Agamemnon wanted to remain

⁶ Translation mine.

and sacrifice to Athena. Menelaus' party left Agamemnon behind, and eventually arrived in Lesbos, where they prayed to Zeus to indicate to them which direction they ought to take:

ὄψε δὲ δὴ μετὰ νῶϊ κίε ξανθὸς Μενέλαος,
 ἐν Λέσβῳ δ' ἔκιχεν δολιχὸν πλόον ὀρμαίνοντας,
 ἢ καθύπερθε Χίοιο νεοίμεθα παιπαλοέσσης,
 νήσου ἐπι Ψυρίας, αὐτὴν ἐπ' ἀριστέρ' ἔχοντες,
 ἢ ὑπένερθε Χίοιο, παρ' ἠνεμόεντα Μίμαντα.
 ἠτέομεν δὲ θεὸν φῆναι τέρας· αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ἡμῖν
 δεῖξε, καὶ ἠνώγει πέλαγος μέσον εἰς Εὐβοίαν
 τέμνειν, ὄφρα τάχιστα ὑπέκ κακότητα φύγοιμεν.⁷

And, finally, after us came fair-haired Menelaus,
 And on Lesbos he found us pondering our open-sea crossing,
 Whether we should steer to the north of craggy Chios,
 By the island of Psyrie, keeping it to our left,
 Or whether we should go beneath Chios, by windy Mimas.
 We asked the god to reveal a sign.
 And indeed he showed one
 To us, and he ordered us to cut through the middle of the sea straight to Euboea,

⁷ Homer, *Odyssey* 3.168-75.

So that we might escape out from under misery as quickly as possible.⁸

Sappho's use of the tale of the Atreids' *nostos* differs significantly from the myth related in the *Odyssey* and thus invites investigation. Her use of the plural Ἀτρειῶναι in l. 3 indicates that Agamemnon as well as Menelaus were present on Lesbos. Though this departs from the *Odyssey* myth, Neri correctly points out that the reading Ἀτρειῶναι in the dative singular to mean Menelaus would be ambiguous: which Atreid?⁹ Another discrepancy is that in the *Odyssey* the Atreids pray only to Zeus whereas in fr. 17, Sappho claims that they invoked a triad of gods, "you [Hera] and Zeus and the charming son of Thyone [Dionysus]" (ll. 9-10).

Neither of these incongruities is a cause for concern. Other sources, too, disagree with the account in the *Odyssey*: for instance, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* had both Atreids leaving Troy at the same time, which might align better with Sappho's account.¹⁰ Ferrari indicates that the differences in Sappho's myth are thus probably due to regional variation.¹¹ It is no surprise that Sappho should have chosen the myth of the Atreids in her poem. The landing of the legendary king or kings in Lesbos would surely have been significant in the island's memory. The connection is deeper, however. Sappho mentions the βασιλευς, (l. 4), kings, and Caciagli draws attention to this word. The Lesbian βασιλευς were not generic kings, but the Pentilidae, the "royal *genos* of Lesbos".¹²

⁸ Translation M. Mueller. "Re-centering Epic Nostos: Gender and Genre in Sappho's Brothers Poem," *Arethusa* 49.1 (2016): 29.

⁹ Camillo Neri. "A Hoped-for Festival?" trans. Chiara Mecariello, *Eikasmos* 25 (2014): 16.

¹⁰ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* ll. 615-80; Ferrari, "Sappho and her brothers," 25.

¹¹ Ferrari, "Sappho and her brothers," 25.

¹² S. Caciagli. "Sappho Fragment 17: Wishing Charaxos a Safe Trip?" in Bierl and Lardinois, eds., *The Newest Sappho: P. Sapph. Obbink and P. GC inv. 105, Frs. 1-4* (Brill, 2016), 432.

The Pentilidae claimed to be descended from the Atreids.¹³ Indeed, Agamemnon was “supposedly” the grandfather of Pentilius, as explained by Caciagli, who explores their descent.¹⁴ As Caciagli suggests, it is not an unreasonable step to suggest that Sappho chose this variation of the myth because of the significance of the Pentilidae and the Atreids to Lesbos.¹⁵ The triad of gods should also come as no surprise. Zeus, Hera, and Dionysus are not a random collection of gods: they are known as the ‘Lesbian Triad’ from Alc. 129. Again, this regional quirk makes Sappho’s variation of the myth seem logical. However, it raises the question, to be examined later, of why Hera should be singled out among the triad.

Thus, we see that both fr. 17 and the Brothers poem focus on *nostos* in their content. As Ferrari demonstrates, this association is deepened by repeated phrases of arriving and departing.¹⁶ Fr. 17 ends with Ἦρ᾽ ἀπίκεσθαι (l. 20); the Brothers poem uses the phrase Ἦραν | ἐξίκεσθαι (ll. 6-7). Fr. 5, another poem related to Charaxus’ homecoming, contains the word ἴκεσθαι (l. 2), the same infinitive. However, Ferrari does not comment on the frequently repeated τυίδε near each of these phrases. This word occurs in l. 7 of fr. 17; in the Brothers poem, we find not just Ἦραν | ἐξίκεσθαι but Ἦραν | ἐξίκεσθαι τυίδε (ll. 6-7); and in fr. 5 it is not just ἴκεσθαι but τυίδ’ ἴκεσθαι (l. 2). These repeated phrases link the poems and emphasise the theme of *nostos*: Hera should grant that Charaxus, or someone else, should return *here*.

¹³ Alcaeus 70.6.

¹⁴ Caciagli, “Sappho Fragment 17: Wishing Charaxos a Safe Trip?”, 433.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ferrari, “Sappho and her brothers,” 26.

While each poem is a *nostos* poem, they use the theme of homecoming differently. Fr. 17 uses the *nostos* myth as part of a prayer. Neri correctly indicates that the fragment follows the structure of a traditional prayer: a deity is invoked (ll. 1f), asked to remember one of their past interventions (ll. 3-10), and then asked to intervene again (ll. 11-20).¹⁷ Calame investigates in detail how Sappho weaves the myth into her prayer, contrasting the narrative that is *palaion* (l. 12), of the past, with the *hic et nunc* of her request.¹⁸ Finding this structure in Sappho's work is certainly not unusual; the famous Sappho 1, an entreaty to Aphrodite, is also structured as a traditional prayer. In fact, when Sappho prays, she most often prays to Aphrodite.¹⁹ It is rare for Sappho to mention other deities, let alone make them the focus of a poem. Even when examining her other *nostos* poems, Kypris is dominant. Two recent fragments, also given to us by the 2014 discovery, will illuminate this. In fr. 15, Sappho mentions Doricha, a slave woman with whom her brother Charaxus had a "stormy" affair.²⁰ According to Herodotus, she strongly disapproved of the affair, considering it unwise, and berated her brother for it.²¹ In this fragment, Sappho prays to Kypris that Doricha might find Charaxus "harsher" (ll. 9-12):

Κύ]πρι, κα[ί ς]ε πι[κροτέρ]αν ἐπεύρ[οι
μη]δὲ καυχά[α]ιτο τόδ' ἐννέ[ποια

¹⁷ Neri, "A Hoped-for Festival?", 13.

¹⁸ C. Calame. "The Semiotics and Pragmatics of Myth", trans. Ken Dowden, in K. Dowden and N. Livingstone, eds., *A Companion to Greek Mythology* (Malden, MA, 2011), 519-20.

¹⁹ E.g. Sappho 1, and frs. 16 and 134.

²⁰ Hdt. 2.135; G. Liberman. "Reflections on a New Poem by Sappho Concerning her Anguish and her Brothers Charaxos and Larichos," trans. Paul Ellis, www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/Fragments/Liberman.FIEC.Bordeaux.2014.pdf 2, 2014.

²¹ Hdt. 2.135.6.

Δ]ωρίχα τὸ δεύ[τ]ερον ὡς πόθε[ν]νοσ
 ἄψ]ερον ἦλθε.²²

O Kypris, and may Dorica find you
 harsher, nor may she boast saying
 that he returned for the second time,
 longed for.

Similarly, in fr. 5 Sappho prays first for her brother to come home unhurt, and then to Kypris to eliminate “unbearable things” (ll. 1-2; 18-19):

πότνιαι Νηρηίδεσ, ἀβλάβη[ν] μοι
 τὸν κασίγνητον δ[ό]τε τιδ' ἴκεσθα[ι]
 ...
 γνώσε[τ' ἄψ] οἶ[ο]ν. σὺ [δ]έ, Κύπ[ρ]ι σ[έ]μ]να,
 οὐκῶνε[κτα κατ]θεμ[έν]α κάκων²³

Revered Nereids, grant me that my brother may come here unhurt,

...

But you, august Kypris, having eliminated unbearable things, ...

²² Text and translation Ferrari, “Sappho and her brothers,” 14-15.

²³ Text and translation Ferrari, “Sappho and her brothers,” 5.

In this fragment, Sappho wishes for a safe journey by sea, so the invocation of the Nereids is logical. Nevertheless, we are left with the question of why Sappho in her *nostos* poems that are either explicitly or implicitly about Charaxus might choose sometimes to invoke Kypris as elsewhere in her work, but sometimes to invoke Hera instead. Part of this answer, certainly, is linked to Sappho's use of the Atreids myth. If her version of the myth involved the Lesbian triad answering the Atreids' prayers, it would be inappropriate to refer to Kypris in this context, as the triad did not include Kypris. Still, this does not answer why Hera alone from the triad should be emphasised. The answer to this will be illuminated as we continue with the comparative investigation of fr. 17 and the Brothers poem, so for now we put this aside and return to the question of how *nostos* is used in each poem.

Melissa Mueller argues that in the Brothers poem, Sappho uses the theme of *nostos* to express her feminine voice and agency.²⁴ While epic *nostos*, such as that of the *Odyssey*, is masculine and involves a homecoming with profit, glory, and *kleos*, Mueller argues that Sappho harnesses and redirects this tradition to serve her feminine preference for safety and the strength of the family. Sappho scolds the unnamed speaker for wishing for Charaxus to come home with a "full" ship (l. 2), which is associated with the epic *nostos* and its spoils, preferring instead her brother to come home with a "safe" ship (l. 7).²⁵ There is a link here with Nestor's tale of *nostos* in the *Odyssey* discussed earlier: Nestor's *nostos* was safe and uneventful, and Mueller argues that Sappho uses

²⁴ Mueller, "Re-centering epic *nostos*".

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

this “non-epic” *nostos* that also originated from Lesbos as the theme in the Brothers poem.²⁶ True, epic *nostos* did not exclude safety, but Sappho “appropriates” it, making it the sole focus of her poem.²⁷ Women are not actors in epic *nostos*, and Sappho does not take up a traditional *nostos* role in this song. She is not the one performing the homecoming and does not have direct control over it. But in writing this poem, telling the unnamed speaker to send her to pray, and then specifying that the prayer ought to be for safe homecoming, Sappho becomes an “instigator and negotiator” of her brother’s *nostos*: not in a traditional masculine way, but in a way that demonstrates her feminine voice and agency.²⁸ Clearly, both poems use the theme of *nostos* in different ways, and this poem’s purpose is deliberately feminine.

Next, we must examine each poem’s presentation and audience. The Brothers poem is clearly a private poem: Sappho explicitly names Charaxus. We know from Herodotus that Charaxus is her brother, a wine trader, and as mentioned before, he was entangled in a “stormy” affair with the slave woman Doricha.²⁹ Whether Charaxus is away just for trade or also for Doricha, both his finances and his love life would be a sensitive subject. It seems improbable that Sappho would want to air her concern in a public setting. The audience would probably not extend past Sappho’s companions, family, and those who care about Charaxus. Given the personal context, the unnamed speaker at the start of the poem is probably a family member. There are two plausible candidates: Sappho’s mother and her brother Eurygyius. Scholars have not reached a consensus

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29-31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁸ Mueller, “Re-centering epic *nostos*,” 34.

²⁹ Hdt 2.135; Liberman, “Reflections on a New Poem by Sappho,” 2.

on which of these two Sappho was truly addressing. Caciagli prefers the latter, arguing that Sappho's mother would no longer have the authority to 'order' Sappho to pray, as they are both adult women, and that Sappho ought to pray herself.³⁰ On the other hand, Nünlist believes that Sappho's mother would not concern herself with these economic affairs while Bettenworth thinks that Sappho is reproaching a nurse.³¹ Ferrari, Mueller, Obbink, and Liberman prefer Sappho's mother for various reasons.³² It seems to me that Caciagli misinterprets the 'authority' and relationship between Sappho and the unnamed speaker. If Sappho is able to reprimand the unnamed speaker as she does in this poem, she cannot also be strictly under their authority, thus opening the door for the unnamed speaker to be a mother with limited authority over her adult daughter. The tone is more one of gentle reproach, and not such a harsh reprimand as Bettenworth seems to think. Therefore, I prefer the suggestion that the unnamed speaker is Sappho's mother; in addition to the reasoning above, she is addressed elsewhere in Sappho's poetry, and West provides a plausible suggestion that $\mu\alpha\tau\epsilon\theta$ appeared in the first stanza.³³ Liberman shows that if we accept that the unnamed speaker is Sappho's mother, there is a strong parallel between this poem and fr. 98. The Brothers poem has Sappho's mother fretting about her lack of resources and how Charaxus' return would improve her situation; fr. 98 has Sappho expressing her anxiety that her lack of resources is preventing her from giving her daughter a

³⁰ Caciagli, "Sappho Fragment 17: Wishing Charaxos a Safe Trip?", 436.

³¹ R. Nünlist. "Das Schiff soll unversehrt sein, nicht voll! Zu Sapphos neuem Lied über die Brüder," *ZPE* 191 (2014): 13–14; A. Bettenworth. "Sapphos Amme: Ein Beitrag zum neuen Sapphofragment (Brothers Poem)," *ZPE* 191 (2014): 15–19.

³² Ferrari, "Sappho and her brothers," 5; Mueller, "Re-centering epic nostos", 31; D. Obbink, "Two New Poems by Sappho," *ZPE* 189 (2014): 41; Liberman, "Reflections on a New Poem by Sappho," 5.

³³ M. L. West. 'Nine Poems of Sappho', *ZPE* 191 (2014): 1–12.

colourful *mitra*, or headband.³⁴ The mother-daughter relationship is mirrored in fr. 98 where Sappho is the mother, unable to provide for her daughter. In the Brothers poem, Sappho is the daughter, telling her mother not to be so concerned about any future resources. In investigating the private nature of the Brothers poem, then, it has become clear that there is a strong suggestion of motherly concern overlaying the poem.

The question of whether fr. 17 is public or private is harder to answer. Page, before the 2014 additions to the fragment, argued that it was a private poem to which the myth of the Atreids was “subsidiary”.³⁵ The discoveries of 2014 simultaneously show fr. 17 in a more personal and a more public light. Because it is so closely associated with the Brothers poem, both in the *nostos* and the repeated phrases discussed above, there is a link drawn with Charaxus, so it is cast in a more personal light. However, the new supplementations to the previous text refer to a ‘festival’ (l. 2), which seems to indicate that it was a public prayer, albeit one that probably had significant personal meaning to Sappho. Investigating the nature of this public prayer reveals that it has strong feminine elements, which could explain the choice of Hera from the otherwise male Lesbian triad. Scholars agree that there are strong signs that this poem was performed in Messon, a place of worship in the centre of Lesbos.³⁶ This would have been a particularly appropriate site for a *nostos* prayer because Messon was next to the sea and a natural shelter for ships in ancient times.³⁷ It was also the site of the Lesbian *Kallisteia*, a local female beauty contest described in

³⁴ Liberman, “Reflections on a New Poem by Sappho,” 5.

³⁵ D. Page. *Sappho and Alcaeus. An Introduction to the Study of Ancient Lesbian Poetry* (Oxford, 1955), 61.

³⁶ Caciagli, “Sappho Fragment 17: Wishing Charaxos a Safe Trip?,” 426-8; G. Nagy, “Lyric and Greek Mythology,” in R. D. Woodard, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Myth* (Cambridge, 2007), 24-25.

³⁷ Caciagli, “Sappho Fragment 17: Wishing Charaxos a Safe Trip?,” 426.

Alcaeus 130 that involved ritual cries.³⁸ The shared site and the ὀλολύγας of l. 16 in fr. 17 do not confirm that the ‘festival’ of fr. 17 is a *Kallisteia*, of which the natural deity would surely be Aphrodite, but they do draw a link between fr. 17’s ‘festival’ and another particularly feminine festival. This is reinforced by l. 14, with its παρθένοι and γυναίκες, girls and women. These girls and women may have served as the chorus at this ‘festival’. There is therefore a strong suggestion that the public prayer of fr. 17 is a specifically feminine one.

Having gained a deeper understanding of the poems through this comparative investigation, and how their use of *nostos* and their presentation all indicate that they are gendered in a feminine way, we are now in a better position to investigate the question of why Hera is highlighted in both poems. If Sappho’s version of the Atreids myth involves the entire Lesbian triad showing the way to the Atreids, then why does she make special mention of Hera in fr. 17 and the Brothers poem? In Alcaeus 129, all three gods are invoked together and equally. But in fr. 17, Hera’s name is used as the frame for ring composition; in the Brothers poem, Sappho asks to be sent to pray to Hera and Hera alone, even though it is the King of Olympus who is implicitly said to have power over reversing people’s fortunes (ll. 13-16). There can be no doubt that Sappho intended to emphasise Hera in both of these poems. Sappho must have chosen Hera for her close feminine associations; she is the only female deity of the Lesbian triad, and the discussion above has revealed that both poems are deliberately feminine. The Brothers poem harnesses *nostos* in a feminine way, is probably directed at her mother, and draws upon a theme of mother-daughter

³⁸ Neri, “A Hoped-for Festival?”, 21.

relationships also found in fr. 98. Fr. 17 calls on girls and women to pray, was performed in the same place as the *Kallisteia*, and is clearly a feminine prayer. But if she simply wants to make a prayer of *nostos* to a female deity, why not invoke Kypris, as in frs. 5 and 15? In fact, it is possible to draw a more specific link between the femininity of these poems and the deliberate emphasis on Hera, and the strongest indication lies in the end of fr. 17.

At the close of fr. 17, Sappho expresses her wish for her younger brother Larichus to “raise his head” and “become a man” (ll. 17-8). Although Sappho wants her young brother to become a man instead of a boy, given the context of the poem she cannot be wishing for more time to pass before Charaxus comes home unharmed. She is therefore wishing for her Larichus not to become *older*, but *more mature*. There is one obvious way that Larichus might “become a man” and in doing so “free the many cares of [Sappho’s] heart” (ll. 17-20): by getting married and taking charge of his own household affairs. Larichus ought to “raise his head” in society, taking his place as an adult married man.

The reading of a suggested marriage immediately makes sense of the repeated references to Hera. We will consider the links between Hera and the feminine elements of the Brothers poem first, and fr. 17 will follow logically. It should be no surprise that a feminine version of *nostos* should emphasise marriage. Returning to the *Odyssey*, it is Penelope’s feminine role in her husband’s *nostos* to maintain her chastity until he returns, going to many lengths to avoid unworthy suitors. When Odysseus does return and verifies his identity, Penelope then joyfully resumes her marriage to him. Odysseus, on the other hand, represents masculine *nostos*, and during his

homecoming, he has a long affair with Calypso. The difference between masculine and feminine versions of *nostos* could not be clearer. Sappho concludes the Brothers poem, a *nostos* poem, with a wish for Larichus to get married, but I suggest that her feminine wish for Charaxus' safe *nostos* also includes a wish for Charaxus to marry. As discussed earlier, she had a strong dislike for his love affair with Doricha. The natural contrast to this unsuitable partner would be to have either no partner, an unlikely recommendation if Sappho is encouraging Larichus, a younger man than Charaxus, to get married, or a suitable partner in a steady marriage. Mueller contrasted the 'safe' ship of feminine *nostos* with the 'full' ship of masculine *nostos*; I submit further that Sappho contrasts the feminine, 'safe' ship of a Hera-associated, steady marriage with the masculine, 'full' ship of a Kypris-associated love affair with Doricha. While Neri mentions this possibility, he believes that this interpretation means that the reference to the Atreids would have a "merely aetiological function."³⁹ This is not so. The *nostos* of Charixus is both metaphorical and literal; as much as Sappho wishes him to settle down in marriage, first he must return home safely, hence the reference to the Atreids. Because the two poems are so closely related, fr. 17's prayer for *nostos* is cast in the same light. Charaxus' safe return and orderly marriage were on Sappho's mind. Although it was a public prayer, it has clear links to other private poems about Charaxus' *nostos*; it is both public and private in this sense. Finally, this contrast between Hera and Kypris also makes sense of the references to Kypris in Sappho's other *nostos* poems, frs. 5 and 15. These are the poems that focus more on where Charaxus *is*, rather than where he *should be*: *there*, rather than *τῶιδε*. They explicitly or implicitly refer to Doricha and the disordered "unbearable" *eros*

³⁹ Neri, "A Hoped-for Festival?", 22.

that Charaxus harbours for her. Kypris is the deity that inspires *eros*, and so Sappho calls on her to release her brother. In fr. 17 and the Brothers poem, Sappho focuses on the *τυίδε*, home, the place of steady relationships, which is not Aphrodite's domain, but Hera's.

It is clear, then, why Sappho chose Hera as the deity to invoke in fr. 17 and the Brothers poem. Through an examination of the shared theme of *nostos*, and how it is used in each poem, it became clear that fr. 17 is a feminine prayer for safe homecoming, based on the Lesbian version of the myth of the Atreids. The Brothers poem is a conversation between mother and daughter, an expression of sisterly and motherly concern, and a feminine reinterpretation of traditional masculine *nostos*, wishing for safety and steadiness rather than adventure and *kleos*. The association of feminine *nostos* with marriage is undeniable, which brings the references to Hera into focus. Sappho wishes for Larichus to "become a man" and marry (l. 8), and for Charaxus to leave aside his tumultuous affair with Doricha. While Kypris is the deity who controls affairs of the heart, Hera presides over sensible, considered love and marriage. So, once Sappho has asked in frs. 5 and 15 for Kypris to "eliminate unbearable things" wherever Charaxus is, it is Hera she implores in fr. 17 and the Brothers poem to bring Charaxus safely home, *τυίδε*, to the feminine domain of steadiness and marriage.

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