

## MISZELLEN

### SAPPHO'S DAUGHTER/CLITORIS/LOVER

ἔστι μοι κάλα πάϊς χρυσοίοισιν ἀνθέμοισιν  
ἐμφέρην ἔχοισα μόρφαν Κλείς ἀγαπάτα,  
ἀντί τᾶς ἔγωϋδὲ Λυδίαν παῖσαν οὐδ' ἐράνναν  
Sappho 132 (Voigt)

(I have a beautiful child, who has a form like golden flowers, beloved Kleis, for whom I [would not take] all Lydia nor lovely ...)

A great scholar not so long ago wrote:

I would not reject the suggestion that Sappho's feelings for Kleis, as imagined in fragment 132, were given a consciously lesbian coloring ... Indeed, taking it a step further, this "child" (pais) may be simply another metaphor for clitoris (Kleis/kleitōris).<sup>1</sup>

This suggestion has recently met with approval.<sup>2</sup> That is, the claim is made that Sappho expected her readers on encountering the Lesbian proper name Κλείς to think of the Attic word κλείς, which in turn was to suggest the word κλειτορίς. One can already see the problems in this concatenation. The accidental resemblance of Κλείς to κλειτορίς is a good example of where a little learning is a dangerous thing. Four brief points.

1) To take the last link first, κλείς (and its forms in other dialects) is never used to mean 'clitoris,' or indeed any part of the body other than the collarbone (Hom. Il. 8.325, etc., whence English 'clavicle'). None of the other derivatives of κλείς, nor any other word built to the same root, means 'clitoris.' The word κλειτορίς itself, a feminine agent noun with the rare compound suffix -τορίς,<sup>3</sup> is clearly a part of the late technical medical vocabulary, attested only once (apart from the lexicographers), and at least six centuries after Sappho (Ruf. Onom. 111).<sup>4</sup>

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1) J. Winkler, *Constraints of Desire* (London 1990) 182 n. An earlier version appeared as: *Gardens of Nymphs: Public and Private in Sappho's Lyrics*, in: *Women's Studies* 8 (1981); repr. in: *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, ed. H. Foley (London 1981) 89 n.38. Sappho is cited from the text of E. M. Voigt, *Sappho et Alcaeus* (Amsterdam 1971).

2) S. Instone, *CR* 49 (1999) 344–5.

3) I. e., a feminine by-form of an unattested \*κλεί-τορ 'closer, door-keeper,' (attested only as a proper name), cf. ἄκεσ-τορ-ίς, ἄλεκτορ-ίς. See P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris 1968–1980), s. v.; E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik* (Berlin 1953) I 531 n. 2.

4) See this chapter for the words normally used for clitoris; also Hsch. κ 2917, Pollux *Onom.* 2.174, Phot. *Lex.* μ 281, Suda μ 1462. Cf. also the verb

2) Attic κλείς ‘key, bar’ and its cognates have nothing to do with Κλέϊς, the name of Sappho’s daughter. Attic κλείς, κλειδός comes from the root \*klāw (cf. Latin *clavis*, *claudio*) and the nominal suffix -id-, with the meaning ‘closer, key, bar,’ etc.<sup>5</sup> This \*κλᾶρις (cf. Doric κλαῖς, acc. pl. κλαῖδας) developed to \*κληρίς and with loss of digamma to κληρίς (Ionic κληρίς, κληρίδος).<sup>6</sup> In a later (fourth century) Attic development this new ηι monophthongized to a long high ē, spelled -ει- (the famous “spurious diphthong”).<sup>7</sup> The predicted Aeolic reflex κλάϊς (two syllables, long ā retained, long ī, with Aeolic recessive accent) is attested by Hesychius in the form κλάϊς.<sup>8</sup>

3) The proper name Κλέϊς, on the other hand, is equally transparent.<sup>9</sup> Κλέϊς (Sappho 132; dat. Κλέϊ, 98b.1; always scanning as a pyrrhic)<sup>10</sup> is from \*klew-is, with the root \*klew- ‘glory,’ seen in κλέ(φ)ος, etc., and the formant -ις (short ι) which creates feminine patronymics.<sup>11</sup> The name Κλέϊς (loss of intervocalic digamma and Aeolic recessive accent) then means ‘Daughter of Glory,’ or the like. It is attested on Lesbos (IG XII Suppl., Nr. 78, p. 25: iii cent.), and is simply one of the vast series of names built to this root (Κλεο-πάτρα, Περι-κλής, etc.).

4) I am also uncertain precisely what Sappho imagined the reader would make of 98b.1–3:

σοὶ δ' ἔγω Κλέϊ ποικίλαν  
οὐκ ἔχω πόθεν ἔσσειται  
μιτράν

(I do not have a way for you to have an embroidered headband,  
O Kleis),

if Κλέϊς is meant to bring to the reader’s mind κλειτορίς.

If not her clitoris, then, can we at least avoid the plain sense of the text and claim that Kleis is not her daughter, but her lover? However, as Judith Hallett point-

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κλειτοριάζω, attested only in the lexicographers (sometimes amusingly): Diogenianus 5.77 (ἐπὶ τῶν παιδεραστῶν τινές φασιν· ἢ ἐπὶ τῶν γυναιξίν ἀκολάστων), Pseudo-Plut. Paroem. 1.6, Phot. Lex. κ 168.15, Suda κ 1767, Macarius 5.16. There is a stone called κλειτορίς according to Pseudo-Plut. De fluviis 25. 5.

5) Chantraine (above, n. 3) s. v. The -id- formant is infrequent, cf. κνημ-ίς ‘greave’ built to κνήμη ‘shin,’ χειρ-ίς to χεῖρ. See Schwyzler (above, n. 3) I 465; E. Risch, Wortbildung der homerischen Sprache (Berlin 1974) 144–5 (§ 51.f).

6) Doric poetry twice attests a gen. with short -ι- on the pattern of the more common ἔπ-ις, -ιδ-ος: Pind. P. 9.39; Ad. 1005.3 (PGM).

7) Michel Lejeune, Phonétique historique de mycénien et du grec ancien (Paris 1972) 226–7, 249 (§§ 235–7, 270); A. Sihler, New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin (Oxford 1995) 59 (§ 64). Note the new monosyllabic accentuation.

8) κ 2856: κλάϊς· μοχλός, the accent may reflect a new analogical short ι, or more likely is merely an error.

9) I do not believe its etymology has been pointed out. However, E.-M. Hamm, Grammatik zu Sappho und Alkaios (Berlin 1957) 29 (§ 58 a.1), lists κλέος, Κλέϊ, etc. as examples of the intervocalic loss of digamma, and points to the correct root.

10) D. Page, Sappho and Alcaeus (Oxford 1955) 131 n. 4, for the meter.

11) Hamm (above n. 9) 29 (§ 58 a1), 52–53 (§ 111, 111e).

ed out some time ago, in early Greek the adjective ἀγαπητός is used exclusively of beloved only children.<sup>12</sup> Despite Hallett's irrefutable data, some ideas just will not go away.<sup>13</sup> One might with equal cogency argue that Ben Jonson was referring to his lover (or his penis or his slave) when he wrote, "Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy; / My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy."

To this I would add just one well-known point of Greek syntax, and that is the use of the possessive dative. As Cooper points out: "The idiomatic range is not wide ... Homer uses the possessive dative with εἰμί especially in expressions of family relations."<sup>14</sup> Although I do not know that it would be completely impossible for Sappho to have expressed the idea "I have a beautiful girlfriend" by ἔστι μοι κάλα πάϊς, it is not the first thing that would have occurred to her audience.<sup>15</sup>

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12) Beloved Cleis, QUCC 10 (1982) 22–31, citing Il. 6.401, Od. 2.365, 4.727, 817, 5.18. So too, J. Hallett, Sappho and her Social Context, *Signs* 4 (1979) 453 n.24; reprinted in: Reading Sappho, ed. E. Greene (Berkeley 1996) 131; A. Broger, *Das Epitheton bei Sappho und Alkaios* (Innsbruck 1996) 123.

13) Recent supporters include A. P. Burnett, *Three Archaic Poets. Archilochus, Alcaeus, Sappho* (Cambridge, Mass. 1983) 279 n.2: "the possibility remains that πάϊς here means what it would in masculine society." However, πάϊς does not mean 'sexual object' in masculine society on all occasions. There are no examples in archaic lyric or elegy of πάϊς as an unqualified technical term for 'boy sexual partner'; instead in all cases where we have the context πάϊς simply means 'child/offspring.' In later poetry, one can always address a beloved as 'boy' because he is a boy, but that does not mean that the word 'boy' means 'beloved' (so in the additions to Theognis 994, 1235, etc.; cf. Theog. 261: πάϊς of a desirable girl, under the watch of her parents). Burnett continues: "Elsewhere in the Sapphic corpus it means 'girl' ten times, 'child of x' five times." That is, there is no example of the meaning 'lover' in the surviving corpus, not even 102 (Page [above n.10] 128, "a young person"). My own count is rather different. Apart from 132, I find 'daughter' 4 times (1.2, 16.10 [this is Hermione; cf. Hom. Od. 4.14], 103.6, 155.1), 'boy' or 'son' 1 time (164), 'girl' (marked feminine) 3 times (49b, 113, 122), and gender unspecified or uncertain 4 times (27.4, 58.11 [not known to be the opening line], 102, 104a.2). The new fragment, PKöln 21351, ZPE 147 (2004) 1–8, has placed 58 in context, but there is no justification for translating "girls." Also, M. Williamson, *Sappho's Immortal Daughters* (Cambridge, Mass. 1995) 2: "used of a young girl by her older lover," but no evidence is given. There is an important methodological consideration here: one cannot simply map male terminology onto female relations. Nor can one simply assume that Athenian social vocabulary meant the same thing in differing areas and ages. No one yet, I believe, has tried to make Kleis into Sappho's slave (an Athenian use of πάϊς) and yet why not?

14) Guy L. Cooper, *Greek Syntax: Early Greek Poetic and Herodotean Syntax* (Ann Arbor 2002) III: 2119–20 (§2.48.3.0–2), citing Il. 5.10, 248, 6.142, 20.183, 209, Od. 4.94, 6.277, 24.270; cf. Hdt. 6.69.4; to which add Il. 9.144. The dat. can also be used of simple possession of material objects, e.g. Hom. Il. 23.173 (dogs) and Sappho 98b (above); or abstractions, e.g. Il. 10.453 (woe); see P. Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique* (Paris 1953) 71 (§91).

15) One might point to Alc. 1.74: Ἄσταφίς [τέ μοι γένοιτο and Hipponax 119: εἴ μοι γένοιτο παρθένος καλή τε καὶ τέπεινα as counter-examples in an erotic context; however, note the optatives and the use of γίνομαι; Cooper (above, n. 14)

The Attic word κλείς ‘key’ did not suggest clitoris. Attic κλείς and Aeolic κλάϊς do not resemble each other. Attic κλείς ‘key’ and Aeolic Κλείς ‘Daughter of a Glorious Parent’ have nothing to do with each other. The syntax argues strongly against taking πάϊς as ‘lover.’ Sappho’s daughter was her daughter, not her clitoris, not her girlfriend.

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III 2119–20 (§ 2.48.3.1): “When γίγνομαι is used instead of εἰμί the range of translation is wide and includes get, suffer, come over, pine (for), etc.”