

10. Gregory Nagy

Further comments on Sappho's poetics of eschatology for her songs

In recently published work, Giambattista D'Alessio has re-examined the theme of Sappho's leap into the sea at Cape Leukas out of love for Phaon, as prominently mentioned in Fragment 1 of Menander's *Leukadia*. He argues that this theme is an aspect of what can be described here as a poetics of eschatology, where the songs of Sappho are imagined as destined for an afterlife after her death—and where the poet herself is destined for a personal afterlife by way of recovering the love of the love-object that had been fleeing her, namely, her beloved Phaon. In support of such an argument, further comments will be offered on the poetics of Sappho with reference to myths about the love of the goddess Aphrodite herself for Phaon—as also for Adonis, who represents a more generalized version of a figure like Phaon, localized on the island of Lesbos. The comments will focus on relevant details both in the Tithonos Song of Sappho and in Athenian vase-paintings that were inspired, it will be argued, by songs of Sappho as performed in citharodic competitions at the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens.