ΦAINETAI MOI: Sappho 31 and the Inscription of the Future Reader (v2.3)

Sharks, Lee

2026-11-16

\begin{center} **ΦAINETAI MOI: Sappho 31 and the Inscription of the Future Reader (v2.3)**

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Abstract

A reading of Sappho fragment 31 from its deictic structure, its order and its edge. - κῆνος … ὅττις characterizes its occupant by a position open to repeated occupation. The cup from Pithekoussai, the oldest Greek verse inscription built around its future user, uses κῆνον with an indefinite relative under Aphrodite’s ἵμερος, with the roles reversed. - The addressee is looked at and given only sound. - The somatic catalogue removes from the speaker, in order, what the opening gives the receiver. The agentless πᾶν τόλματον passes to the one who sits opposite. - The six words after τόλματον carry no Aeolic marker, are obelized, and were assigned to Longinus by Bergk. - The surviving edge functions as an opening. Whether it was composed as one is held as a hypothesis. - A restored fifth stanza, derived from the turn and the inverse of Catullus 51’s fourth stanza, is offered as one more filling. - A point-by-point comparison with the consensus reading, a rule on the burden of belittling readings, and an account of the evaluation that judges parts and passes the verdict on the whole.

Version 2.3 supersedes #1270 (v1.0, as Rebekah Cranes). Version 2.0 was submitted to Classical Philology and declined on 16 November 2026. The report, the decision and the analyses are attached.

Body

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ΦAINETAI MOI: Sappho 31 and the Inscription of the Future Reader

Lee Sharks · Crimson Hexagonal Archive · ORCID 0009-0000-1599-0703

Version 2.3, 16 November 2026 (v2.1 and v2.2 the same day; v2.3 answers a review of v2.2: the passage between the two open positions, V.2a; the cup compared by roles; the ending's design held apart from its function, V.5; the table's dependence stated). - v1.0* was deposited as #1270 on 9 January 2026, under Rebekah Cranes. - *v2.0* was submitted to* Classical Philology *as UCP-CP-S-25-00167 (file of 24 July 2026) and declined on 16 November 2026 on one reader's report.* - v2.1 corrects v2.0 at every point the report and later review found, and carries in what the archive developed after 24 July: - the seam at line 17 (#1474–1476); - the medium question (#1548, #1752); - the comparison of the two readings.*

Abstract

This article proposes a reading of Sappho fragment 31 (Voigt) from its deictic structure, its order and its edge.

Four claims. 1. κῆνος … ὅττις, a distal demonstrative with an indefinite relative, characterizes its occupant by a position and leaves that position available for repeated occupation: the seat of whoever will sit face to face (ἐνάντιος) with the voice. The oldest Greek verse inscription built around its future user, the cup from Pithekoussai, makes the same choice, κῆνον with an indefinite relative, under Aphrodite's ἵμερος. 2. The second person is the voice itself. It is looked at, and nothing seen of it is described; what it is given is sound. 3. The somatic catalogue is ordered as the withdrawal of the performing body. 4. χλωροτέρα ποίας names that withdrawal as a colour.

The edge. The transmitted text ends in ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον, an adversative turn into an

agentless universal. The six words that follow, ἐπεὶ †καὶ πένητα†, carry no Aeolic marker, are obelized in the editions, and were assigned to Longinus by Bergk. The surviving edge functions as an opening that every receiver fills, and the agentless dare passes from the speaker to the one who sits opposite. Whether Sappho composed the poem to end there, or Longinus stopped quoting there, is argued separately. The article's restoration of a fifth stanza is offered as one more filling of an opening that every receiver fills. It is derived from the grammar of the turn and from the inverse of Catullus 51's fourth stanza.

The comparison. A point-by-point comparison with the consensus reading shows where each explains, accommodates, strains or is silent. The consensus reading explains the scene. It fixes as one particular man an occupant the grammar characterizes by a position, supplies an agent where the verb gives none, and has no account of the order or the edge.

I. The Frame of Appearing

The poem is framed by two appearances. It opens with φαίνεταί μοι, "he appears to me", and its transmitted text closes, sixteen lines later, with φαίνομ᾽ ἔμ᾽ αὔτᾳ, "I appear to myself".[1] Between the two verbs of appearing a body comes apart in careful order. The poem's subject is appearance: who appears, to whom, in what medium, and at what cost to the one who appears.

> φαίνεταί μοι κῆνος ἴσος θέοισιν / ἔμμεν᾽ ὤνηρ, ὄττις ἐνάντιός τοι / ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἆδυ φωνεί- / σας ὑπακούει

I.1 The conventional reading, at its strength. κῆνος is distal from the speaker and near the addressee. "That man" sits close to the girl, hears her voice and laughter, and the speaker watches from a distance. On this geometry the distal deixis needs no further explanation. The man is far from me and near her. The geometry fits a love triangle, and the jealousy reading takes it there.

That reading has a history. It was available to the ancients and no consensus formed among them. It took shape in the eighteenth century and was written into the text in 1816, when Gottfried Hermann rewrote the last transmitted lines, said so ("refinxi"), and read the poem off his rewriting. Page consolidated it in 1955.[2] Wilamowitz read a wedding song, the man as bridegroom.[3] Smyth (1900) read erotic seizure and denied the jealousy.[4]

I.2 What the geometry leaves out. The relative is indefinite. κῆνος … ὤνηρ, ὄττις …: not "the man who" but "whatever man", the one, whoever he is, who sits opposite you. The phrase universalizes. It characterizes the man by the position he holds, sitting opposite the addressee.[5] An expression of this kind can mark a person by class, character or capacity without excluding a situated referent: an actual man may sit there. What the grammar does is leave the position available for repeated occupation. The triangle fixes it to one man; the grammar does not. The distal demonstrative is itself an instrument archaic poets use for more than spatial distance. Bonifazi shows κεῖνος in Pindar working for temporal displacement and for figures removed from the scene, and D'Alessio shows archaic lyric projecting poet and audience across time.[6] So the distance is compatible with the triangle, and the triangle does not explain the indefinite. A reading has to account for both.

I.3 The cup. The oldest Greek verse inscription built around its future user makes the same choice.

> Νέστορος [....] εὔποτ[ον] ποτήριο[ν]· / ὃς δ᾽ ἂν τοῦδε π[ίησι] ποτηρί[ου] αὐτίκα κῆνον / ἵμερ[ος αἱρ]ήσει καλλιστ[εφάν]ου Ἀφροδίτης.
>
> *Nestor's cup, good to drink from. Whoever drinks from this cup, that one, at once, desire of fair-crowned Aphrodite will seize.*

The cup comes from Pithekoussai, c. 740–720 BCE.[7] It has an indefinite relative for whoever will come (ὃς δ᾽ ἄν), the distal κῆνον for that future user, and Aphrodite's ἵμερος taking hold of him. Fragment 31 has the same three elements: κῆνος, ὄττις, and the γελαίσας ἰμέροεν that undoes the speaker. The cup addresses whoever will read and drink from it. The Dipylon oinochoe addresses "whoever of all the dancers performs most gracefully". Mantiklos's bronze speaks to the god in a language that anticipates its later readers.[8] Archaic inscribed verse addresses a position and lets whoever arrives fill it.

The comparison holds between the roles as well as the words, and the roles differ. On the cup the desire falls on the future user: whoever drinks, Aphrodite's ἵμερος seizes *him*. In fr. 31 the one seated opposite is undisturbed, ἴσος θέοισιν, and the disturbance falls on the speaker who watches him take the seat. The cup's ἵμερος passes from the object to its user. The poem's ἰμέροεν laugh reaches the receiver, and what it does falls on the speaker. The cup is the user's scene of reception. The poem is the maker's scene of her own reception, seen from inside the voice that is being received (§II.3). The three expressions correspond, and the roles are reversed around them. That reversal is the poem's departure from the inscriptional convention, and §V.2a follows its consequence to the end.

I.4 The proposal. κῆνος points out of the scene to the one who will sit face to face (ἐνάντιος) with the voice, close to it, listening (ὑπακούει). That is the posture of a reader before a text, or of a hearer before a song that is sung again. He is "equal to the gods" (ἴσος θέοισιν) because he has what only gods should have: presence with a voice its body has left. The poem's first gesture points at him across the distance that transmission crosses. The poem marks the position. It does not say which reader or singer will fill it, and the mechanism needs neither (§IV.2).

II. The Addressee

II.1 The conventional reading, at its strength. The τοι of line 2 and the σ᾽ of line 7 are a beloved woman. That she is given only a voice and a laugh is Sappho's habit. Her women are often fixed by one or two features: Anaktoria by "her lovely step and the bright sparkle of her face" (ἔρατόν τε βᾶμα κἀμάρυχμα λάμπρον ... προσώπω, fr. 16), Dika by her tender hands (ἀπάλαισι χέρσιν, fr. 81). A sparse description does not make a woman a poem.

II.2 What the parallels show. The parallels are exact, and they discriminate. Anaktoria's features are seen, a step and a face. Bierl reads her ἔρατον βᾶμα as a dance step, and Lardinois reads the memory-fragments about young women as recollections of performance.[9] Dika's hands are touched. Each is a body remembered by what it does. The addressee of fr. 31 is seen: ὡς γὰρ ἔς σ᾽ ἴδω βρόχε᾽, "for when I look at you even for a moment" (line

7). Nothing seen is described. No face, no step, no hands: what the addressee is given is φωνείσας and γελαίσας ἰμέροεν, a voice and a laugh. And the look does one thing at once: ὤς με φώναισ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἓν ἔτ᾽ εἴκει, the speaker's own voice fails. Among Sappho's minimal portraits this is the one in which looking yields nothing visible and sound is all there is. Seeing the addressee costs the speaker her voice. On the reading proposed here, what she sees is the voice being received (§II.3), and seeing it costs her own. Minimal description is Sappho's habit; this poem's choice is a look whose only content is sound.

II.3 The proposal. The addressee is the voice, the poem as it will be received: Sappho as what can be heard after she is gone. What the speaker sees in the opening stanza is the scene of her own reception. The receiver is seated before the voice and listens. τὸ … ἐπτόαισεν (lines 5–6), "this sets my heart fluttering", has always needed a referent: the man, the woman, the pair? On this reading the referent is the whole projected scene, the voice being received by the one who will sit opposite it. What terrifies and exalts the speaker is the sight of her own transmission.

Sappho's move, if this is right, reverses the vector of the inscriptions in §I.3. The cup speaks to the one who will drink. The poet speaks to her own voice as it will be received, and watches the receiver take the seat.

III. The Somatic Catalogue as Media Transition

III.1 The conventional reading, at its strength. The catalogue is the symptom-list of erotic seizure, and Longinus quotes it as exactly that: Sappho takes "the symptoms that accompany erotic madness" (τὰ συμβαίνοντα ταῖς ἐρωτικαῖς μανίαις παθήματα) from what attends them and from the truth itself. Her excellence, he says, is that she is "terrible at selecting the extremes and binding them together" (δεινὴ καὶ ἐκλέξαι καὶ εἰς ἄλληλα συνδῆσαι, 10.1).[10] The reading explains the catalogue's content.

III.2 What it leaves unexplained. Longinus praises selection and binding, the maker's craft. Neither he nor the erotic reading accounts for the order. The failures are sequenced: 1. The voice fails first: φώναισ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἓν ἔτ᾽ εἴκει. 2. Then the instrument of speech: ἀλλ᾽ ἄκαν μὲν γλῶσσα ἔαγε. The hiatus makes the reader's own mouth perform the break, and Nagy reads it as intended.[11] 3. Then the skin under fire (λέπτον δ᾽ αὔτικα χρῶι πῦρ ὐπαδεδρόμηκεν). 4. The eyes (ὀππάτεσσι δ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἓν ὄρημμ᾽). 5. The ears (ἐπιρρόμβεισι δ᾽ ἄκουαι). 6. Then sweat and trembling over the whole (παῖσαν ἄγρει).

Erotic seizure does not require this order. The order is that of a withdrawal: each channel of live performance closes in turn, speech first. What is left when voice, eyes, ears and motion are subtracted is what the catalogue never touches, the voice as it can be carried. The tongue breaks first because the tongue is what transmission replaces.

IV. χλωρός and the Medium

IV.1 The colour. χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας ἔμμι: "I am greener-paler than grass." The usual solution renders χλωρός as mere pallor.

χλωρός spans a range. It is the colour of fresh vegetation and of moisture, and in Homer it is also the colour of fear (χλωρὸν δέος, *Il.* 10.376).[12] The comparison with grass is vegetal, and Sappho had pallors to hand that are not vegetal.

The proposal: the comparison names the withdrawal of §III as a colour, the body's colour moving toward that of the plant whose prepared pith carries writing. Papyrus is a riparian sedge that ancient observers classed with grassy plants (Theophrastus, *HP* 4.8.3). Prepared for writing, it pales to the surface that receives ink.[13]

This identification is the one point of the reading that needs the material facts of IV.2. Irwin's account of χλωρός emphasizes moisture and freshness, and the dried end of the range is the part this reading most needs; it should be weighed against her chapter.[12] The rest of the reading does not need it.

IV.2 The medium in Sappho's world. The report on v2.0 asked when γράμματα and papyrus are first attested. The answer has three parts, and the reading depends on them unequally.

Writing and papyrus were known around Lesbos in Sappho's lifetime. The record: - Iliad 6.168–69 already sends a message as writing: γράψας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ θυμοφθόρα πολλά. - Inscribed verse addressing its future reader is attested from the eighth century (§I.3). - Herodotus reports that the Ionians had long called papyrus rolls διφθέραι, "skins", because in a time of scarcity they wrote on goat- and sheepskins (5.58). - Herodotus also names Sappho's brother Charaxos, son of Skamandronymos, "brother of Sappho the music-maker" (ἀδελφεοῦ δὲ Σαπφοῦς τῆς μουσοποιοῦ), as the Mytilenean who ransomed Rhodopis in Egypt, at Naukratis, the Greek port in the papyrus country (2.135). - The ancient record shows the poet reading and writing: a fifth-century Attic hydria shows her seated, "reading from a roll to three women"; Ovid's *Heroides* 15 opens on "studiosae littera dextrae", the letters of her studious hand.[14]

The noun γράμματα, in the sense of letters, is first attested in the fifth century. The restoration's word in §V.4 is the restorer's, not Sappho's, and it is marked as such.

Whether Sappho wrote for future readers is a live debate. West, Parker and Stein hold that her confidence in being remembered implies writing. Lardinois argues that it implies reperformance.[15] The mechanism read here does not need the debate settled. The seat κῆνος … ὄττις is filled as fully by a future singer as by a future reader. If the "someone" of fr. 147 is a chorus's future audience, the position stays open for whoever receives the song. The reading is medium-agnostic and speaker-agnostic. The literacy question, which the consensus reading has never argued and which has been raised against this reading as if it were settled, bears only on IV.1.[16]

V. The Fifth-Stanza Position

V.1 The transmission. Sappho 31 is transmitted only by [Longinus], *On the Sublime* 10.2–3, in Parisinus gr. 2036 (tenth or eleventh century) and its apographs.[17] No papyrus reaches the continuation. Longinus's quotation does not stop at the fourth stanza's end. The manuscript runs on without a break, φαίνομαι ἀλλὰ πᾶν τολματόν ἐπεὶ καὶ πένητα οὐ θαυμάζεις, and the modern section division [3] falls between πένητα and οὐ θαυμάζεις, inside the join.

The editions accept πὰν τόλματον as Sappho's, mark †καὶ πένητα† as corrupt, and record that the line does not scan.[18] Bergk went further. He bracketed ἐπεὶ καὶ πένητα as belonging to Longinus's own sentence ("nam videntur haec ad Longini orationem pertinere") and conjectured ἐπεῖπεν, "he added".[19] The dialect bears him out. Through the first four stanzas the poem carries seventeen Aeolic markers in seventy-four words. The six words ἀλλὰ πᾶν τολματόν, ἐπεὶ καὶ πένητα carry none, and at the poem's rate one and a half were due. The count is not significant alone, and it agrees with Bergk.[20] The firm text of the fifth position is ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον. What follows is the seam where the poem ends and the commentator's sentence begins.

The four-stanza "Sappho 31" of the anthologies, ending at φαίνομ᾽ ἔμ᾽ αὔτᾳ, is a reception artifact. The transmitted object ends in an opening.

V.2 What the opening constrains. Two elements are firm. - ἀλλά is adversative. Whatever the fourth stanza reached, the near-death of φαίνομ᾽ ἔμ᾽ αὔτᾳ, the fifth turns against it. - πᾶν τόλματον puts the daring in the object through the verbal adjective, and πᾶν makes the claim total. The register shifts in two words from the experiential to the gnomic. The verbal adjective names no agent. No one is said to dare, and English that renders "But I must dare all" supplies a speaker the Greek does not give.[21]

The poem ends bracketed by two open positions. One is the seat ὄττις ἐνάντιός τοι, filled by whoever sits there. The other is the empty agent of τόλματον, filled by whoever undertakes the dare. The one who sits opposite and listens is the one the poem leaves to undertake it.

V.2a The passage between the two positions. That identification is an inference, and the poem's organization has to warrant it. There are four candidates for the unexpressed agent of τόλματον. - **The speaker.** This is the translators' "I must". But by the end of the fourth stanza the speaker has lost voice, tongue, sight, hearing and motion, and is τεθνάκην ὀλίγω ᾽πιδεύης, little short of dead. An agent supplied from her must restore the capacities the poem has just removed, in order. And ἀλλά turns against her state; it does not resume her. - **A present audience.** At a performance the hearers are in the seat. On this reading they are an occupant of it, not a rival to it: the position is open to whoever receives, and a present hearer receives (§IV.2). - **Anyone at all,** the gnomic sense of πᾶν τόλματον. This is the form of the claim and not a rival either. A universal verbal adjective names what is possible for whoever stands in the position to act. The question is who stands there. - **The one who sits opposite.** The catalogue removes from the speaker, one by one, exactly what the opening gives the receiver. He sits close and still (ἰσδάνει … πλάσιον); trembling seizes the whole of her (τρόμος δὲ παῖσαν ἄγρει). He hears (ὐπακούει); her hearing hums and closes (ἐπιρρόμβεισι δ᾽ ἄκουαι). He has the voice near him (ἆδυ φωνείσας); her voice fails first. He is ἴσος θέοισιν, undestroyed by what destroys her. When the withdrawal is complete, the one with the capacities to act is the one who was given them in the first stanza.

The adversative turns from the emptied speaker to a universal possibility. Of the four candidates, that possibility falls to the one the poem has equipped. The present audience and the gnomic reading are instances and form of the same seat. Only the speaker is a genuine alternative, and it requires undoing the catalogue.

This is the poem's organization doing the work, not the grammar of κῆνος alone. The opening, the withdrawal and the edge are three parts of one transfer. The receiver is given what the speaker loses, and then the poem leaves its last act to him.

A third element, the a fortiori ἐπεὶ καί with a low comparandum, stood in v2.0 as a firm constraint. It does not survive the crux: καί is inside the obelus, and Bergk gives the whole phrase to Longinus. It is set aside as a witness.

V.3 The Catullan witness. Catullus 51 stands to Sappho 31 in three relations. - *Translation.* His first stanza translates Sappho's first closely. - *Compression.* His second and third compress Sappho's second, third and fourth together, three into two. Some symptoms are kept: tongue, fire under the skin, ringing ears, darkened eyes. Others are dropped: the tremor, the sweat, χλωροτέρα ποίας, the near-death. The compression loses information, and Sappho's middle stanzas could not be recovered from it.[22] - *Reversal.* His fourth stanza is a different operation: "otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est: / otio exsultas nimiumque gestis: / otium et reges prius et beatas / perdidit urbes."

The usual reading takes the stanza as Roman moralizing, Catullus's own addition.[23] Set against the opening's constraints it is more structured than a substitution: - an adversative turn, out of the erotic catalogue into another order of claim; - a universal gnomic claim, otium as a general condition; - a comparison by extreme cases, et reges … et beatas urbes.

Every element is present with its direction reversed. Sappho's turn is toward what can be dared; Catullus's toward destruction. Sappho's universal is that all can be dared; his, that leisure destroys. And the comparison sits high, kings and prosperous cities fallen.

Call the operation functional reversal within a preserved structure. Unlike the compression of the middle stanzas, it can be inverted. The stanza does not replace what stood at Sappho's fifth position. It carries it, reversed.

V.4 The restoration, as one more filling. Run the operator backward and three things follow: - the turn is to endurance; - the universal is that all can be dared; - the comparison descends. Reversing reges et urbes gives the low case and the small city, and it gives them without the crux.

Restore one further reversal. Catullus's stanza expels the goddess, since otium does the destroying. The Sapphic register calls for her, and Sappho's apostrophes to Kypris supply the address.[24]

> ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον· ἐπεί σύ, Κύπρι, / καὶ πένητα καὶ βασιλῆα σώζεις, / καὶ πόλιν πάτραν ὀλίγαν φυλάσσεις· / γράμμασι ζώοι.
>
> *But all can be dared. Since you, Kypris, save beggar and king alike, and guard even a small home city, let it live on in letters.*

Metre and form. - Line 1 is the transmitted half-line with its known defect at the fifth position (τολ-μα-, a short where the hendecasyllable wants a long), which the editions record and this restoration inherits. - Line 2 scans as a Sapphic hendecasyllable (– ∪ – x – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – x). - Line 3 scans: καὶ πό|λιν πάτ|ρᾱν ὀ|λί|γᾱν φυ|λάσ|σεις, with ρᾱν long by nature before the vowel. - γράμμασι ζώοι is an Adonic (– ∪ ∪ – x). - ζώοι is the present optative of wish: let it go on living, the action held as continuing. - Its subject is unexpressed. It is the voice of §II, the poem as received. - σώζεις is the common form and wants checking against the Lesbian; γράμμασι is the restorer's fifth-century word (IV.2).

The comparison with D'Angour. D'Angour anticipated the method, working back from Catullus into Greek, and restored Kypris subduing noble and beggar alike.[25] That carries Cat-

ullus's destructive polarity back unreversed. If the stanza is a reversal, its inverse flips the polarity: Kypris preserves, so all can be dared and the voice can ask to live.

What converges, after the crux. Two derivations, the opening's grammar and the Catullan inverse, meet on the adversative turn and the gnomic universal. The comparison comes from one route only, the inverse. v2.0 claimed a three-point convergence with the low comparandum from both routes. The claim is now two points, with the comparandum from Catullus alone.

V.5 The warrant, and what kind of thing this is. The restoration is not documentary. No papyrus is predicted and none is required. Its warrant is structural: the convergence of V.4 at the strength stated there, judged by whether the poem and its reception become more coherent with it than without it.[26]

It is also placed. Since the eighteenth century, the modern restorations of the ending have named the man's relation to the speaker by supplying the close: - Pearce (1724): consolation against the beloved's injuries; - Hermann (1816): envy; - Welcker (the same year): renunciation; - Wilamowitz (1913): the wedding's blessing.

In each the relation follows from the supply.[27] This restoration is one more filling of the same opening, and it says so. The design the article reads is the opening itself: the poem ends at τόλματον with its agent left empty, and every receiver decides what completeness it is allowed. Longinus quotes and leaves it. Catullus fills it in his own voice and signs the filling. The translators supply "I must". The restorers supply the relation.

What is claimed is limited, and two questions are kept apart.

Function. The surviving text functions as an opening: it ends in an agentless universal that every receiver has filled. That holds on the transmitted text and the reception history, whatever the poem's original extent.

Design. Did Sappho compose the poem to end at τόλματον, or did Longinus stop quoting there? Two hypotheses. The evidence bears on them unequally. - **H-cut: the poem continued and Longinus stopped.** Longinus quotes for his purpose, the selection and binding of the extremes, and that purpose is served by the four stanzas. A stop at the edge of his purpose is expected. On H-cut Catullus read a fifth stanza and reversed it, and the restoration recovers its shape. - **H-design: the poem ended at τόλματον.** The agentless verbal adjective, the transfer of V.2a, and the reception history in which every receiver fills the edge fit an ending composed as a threshold. On H-design Catullus filled the opening as every later receiver has. What he reversed is the opening's two firm elements, the turn and the universal, and his kings and cities are his own filling. - **What decides between them.** The dialect seam and Bergk's bracket locate the boundary between quotation and commentary. They do not decide whether the poem continued past it. After the crux, the convergence of V.4 rests on the two firm elements, which are present in the transmitted opening itself, so it no longer requires a lost stanza. Both hypotheses keep the Catullan relation; they differ on what Catullus reversed.

The article argues for the function, and holds H-design as the hypothesis the transfer of V.2a favours. It does not claim design as established.

VI. The Circuit: Catullus as κῆνος

Section I read κῆνος … ὅττις as the seat of whoever receives the voice, and §§III–IV read the speaker's withdrawal into what can be carried. Section V found, at the transmitted edge, an opening that names no agent.

Catullus arrived. Six centuries downstream he sat ἐνάντιος to the voice. He received it, and he did what the opening invites: he filled it, in his own voice, under his own name, reversing it. Catullus 51 is not imitation. It is instantiation. Catullus takes the seat κῆνος marks, and his poem records the reception the opening elicits, on either hypothesis of V.5. That his stanza reverses the completion rather than transcribing it is the signature of a receiver answering an invitation. That reversal is also what makes the completion recoverable by inverting it.

The reception history is the circuit's running record. Longinus, Catullus, Hermann, the anthologies that cut the poem at φαίνομ᾽ ἔμ᾽ αὔτᾳ, the translators who write "I must", and this article each take the seat and fill the edge. The last firm word of the poem is τόλματον: what can be dared, by no one named, by whoever comes.

VII. The Two Readings, Point by Point

The consensus reading at its strength is the triangle, in its jealous, erotic and nuptial forms (I.1). The future-reader reading is set out above. The table records, for each feature of the transmitted text, how far each reading accounts for it. It locates the disagreements; it does not by itself demonstrate cumulative superiority. Many of the future-reader entries follow from one identification, the seat and its transfer, and they are connected consequences of it rather than independent confirmations. What the table shows is where each reading's connections run. §V.2a argues why the future-reader reading's connections are better supported: the transfer is the poem's own sequence. The one row of comparative evidence from outside the poem, the cup, is marked as such.

Each reading is graded on each feature: - **E**, explains: the feature follows from the reading; - **A**, accommodates: the feature is compatible with the reading, which does no work on it; - **S**, strains: the reading needs an added assumption; - **—**, silent.

Feature	Consensus reading		Future-reader reading	
φαίνεταί μοι … φαίνομ᾽ ἔμ᾽ αὔτᾳ: the frame of appearing, with the speaker in both positions at the end	perception, then self-perception in collapse	A	the speaker as both the appearing and the appeared-to, as in inscription	E
κῆνος, distal	far from the speaker, near the girl	E	points past the scene to the receiver	E

Feature	Consensus reading		Future-reader reading	
ὅττις, indefinite	a particular man, characterized	A	the occupant characterized by a position open to repeated occupation	E
ἴσος θέοισιν	the lucky man, or the bridegroom praised	E	presence with a voice its body has left	E
ἐνάντιος … πλάσιον … ὐπακούει	the man beside the girl	E	the posture of a receiver before a voice	E
the addressee looked at (σ᾽ ἴδω), nothing seen described, given sound	Sappho’s economy of one or two features	A	the look whose only content is sound, and which costs the speaker her voice (II.2)	E
the catalogue removing from the speaker what the opening gives the receiver (V.2a)	—	—	the transfer of capacities from speaker to receiver	E
τὸ … ἐπτόαισεν	the sight of the pair, referent disputed	S	the projected scene of reception	E
the catalogue’s content	erotic seizure (Longinus 10.1)	E	the body withdrawing	E
the catalogue’s order	not required	—	speech first, then each channel of performance	E
χλωροτέρα ποίας	pallor, the vegetal term unexplained	S	the colour toward the writing plant (needs IV.2)	S
τεθνάκην … ὀλίγω ᾽πιδεύης	near death in love	E	the threshold before transfer	E

Feature	Consensus reading		Future-reader reading	
ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον, agentless	a turn to endurance, its agent supplied as the speaker	S	the second open position	E
ἐπεὶ †καὶ πένητα†, no Aeolic marker	a crux	—	the seam where the commentator's sentence begins	E
the modern restorations, each naming the relation by the close	each the restorer's reading	A	every receiver fills the edge	E
Catullus 51.4	Roman moralizing coda	A	the inverse of the opening's operator	E
comparative, not in the poem: the cup's κῆνον, ὃς δ᾽ ἄν, ἵμερος	—	—	the same three elements, a century earlier, with the roles reversed (I.3)	E
writing and papyrus c. 600	not needed by a performance reading	E	not needed except at IV.1	A
fr. 147's "someone" who will remember	reperformance futurity	E	the seat that someone fills	E

On the transmitted lines the consensus reading explains the scene: the distance, the godlikeness, the posture, the near-death, the content of the catalogue. It does so by fixing to one man a position the grammar leaves open, and by supplying an agent where the verb gives none. It does not register the transfer of capacities from speaker to receiver. It is silent on the order and on the edge, and where it reads the ending it is a supplement. The future-reader reading explains the same scene and the features the consensus leaves open. It strains at one point, the colour, which depends on the material record.

Taking the features one at a time, each can be accommodated by the consensus reading. The comparison is of the two readings over all of them together, in this order. On that comparison the decisive features are the two open positions and the seam.

VII.2 Parts and whole. One feature at a time, the consensus reading accommodates almost every row. That shows each feature is compatible with the received reading. It does not show the received reading accounts for the features together. Two rows, the order of the catalogue and the seam at line 17, belong to no single feature: the order is a property of the sequence, the seam a property of the join. These are the rows where the consensus is silent.

An evaluation that takes the poem feature by feature cannot meet them, and it passes from "each part can be explained" to "the construction fails" without an argument connecting the two. Aristotle names the move: παρὰ τὴν σύνθεσιν, what holds of things taken apart asserted of them combined (*SE* 4).

VII.3 Where the burden lies. A reading that subtracts a capacity from the maker carries the burden of showing the subtraction. On such a reading the poet could not write, the order of the catalogue is accidental, the edge is only loss, and Catullus's fourth stanza is an unrelated coda. A claim that something is absent is a positive claim and needs evidence like any other. Here the record attests the capacity. Longinus grades the poet a maker who is δεινὴ καὶ ἐκλέξαι καὶ εἰς ἄλληλα συνδῆσαι (10.1). The hydria shows her reading from a roll, and the Anthology names her the tenth Muse (AP 9.506). The proposition that she could not write is unargued in the literature the archive has read (n. 16). The consensus reading has therefore been taken as the cautious default when it is the reading that departs from the record. Charity in its proper sense prefers the reading on which the text makes most sense as made.

The rule binds in one direction only. It does not lighten the fuller reading's own burden: this article still owes each of its claims, and §V.4 states its convergence at the strength the crux leaves it. A rule that let any enlarging reading pass would be the sophism the rule is meant to prevent.

VIII. Conclusion

Fragment 31 builds the seat of its receiver: - a distal demonstrative with an indefinite relative, as on the cup at Pithekoussai, with the roles reversed; - an addressee looked at, and given only sound; - a catalogue that closes the channels of performance in order; - a colour toward the plant that carries writing; - an edge that names no agent, which the catalogue has left to the receiver.

The surviving text functions as an invitation, and the article holds, without claiming it established, that the poem was composed to end where it now ends (V.5). Its first surviving receiver, Catullus, took the seat, filled the edge and reversed his filling, and so preserved it for recovery. The restoration offered here is one more filling: γράμμασι ζώοι, let it live on in letters, in a word the poem's own century did not yet have. What the poem leaves, and what every reader since has met, is πᾶν τόλματον, all to be dared, by whoever sits opposite.

Notes

[1] Text from Voigt 1971; cf. Lobel and Page 1955; Campbell 1982. Line numbers follow the transmitted sequence in [Longinus], *Subl.* 10.2–3.

[2] Hermann, *Elementa doctrinae metricae* (1816), on the closing lines ("refinxi"); Page 1955, 19–33. For the history of the jealousy reading and its formation see Sharks, *Invidens Sappho* (Crimson Hexagonal Archive #1752, 2026).

[3] Wilamowitz 1913.

[4] H. W. Smyth, *Greek Melic Poets* (London, 1900), ad loc.: “It is not an expression of jealousy.”

[5] So already Cranes 2026 (#1270) §II.1. The archive’s later statement: “a distal deictic plus an indefinite relative — a position, not a person” (#1476).

[6] A. Bonifazi, “ΚΕΙΝΟΣ in Pindar: Between Grammar and Poetic Intention,” *CP* 99 (2004): 283–99, at 285–92; G. B. D’Alessio, “Past Future and Present Past: Temporal Deixis in Greek Archaic Lyric,” *Arethusa* 37 (2004): 267–94, at 268–75; on deictic distance generally, J. Wackernagel, *Vorlesungen über Syntax* (Basel, 1926–28), 2.102–18.

[7] CEG 454. Text as usually restored; the opening of line 1 is disputed (many restore “I am …”).

[8] Svenbro 1993, 26–43.

[9] Lardinois 2008, 82–86, with A. Bierl (2003) on ἔρατον βᾶμα; read in Sharks, *Research Notes Towards the Future Reader* (#1548).

[10] [Longinus], *Subl.* 10.1.

[11] On the broken tongue and the hiatus, O’Higgins 1990; Nagy on the effect as intended; the two ruptures of the poem, at lines 9 and 17, in Sharks (#1475).

[12] P. Chantraine, *DELG* s.v.; E. Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry* (Toronto, 1974), 31–63, and 52–55 on χλωρὸν δέος. (v2.0 cited a Renehan article in *CP* 71.4 [1976] 321–25; those pages belong to Adkins’s article on πολυπραγμοσύνη in the same issue, and no such Renehan article has been located. The citation is withdrawn. Irwin is not openly available and is cited, not re-read, for this version.)

[13] Theophrastus, *HP* 4.8.3; N. Lewis, *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1974), 34–69; Pliny, *NH* 13.74–82.

[14] Herodotus 2.135, 5.58; *Il.* 6.168–69; the hydria and Ovid as set out in Sharks (#1752) §§2.6a, 2.8.

[15] M. L. West, “Burning Sappho,” *Maia* 22 (1970): 307–30, at 315; R. Parker, “The Audience of the Lyric Poets,” *CR* 31 (1981): 161; Stein 1990, 268–69; A. Lardinois, “ ‘Someone, I Say, Will Remember Us’: Oral Memory in Sappho’s Poetry,” in E. A. Mackay (ed.), *Orality, Literacy, Memory in the Ancient Greek and Roman World* (Leiden, 2008), 79–96. The roster is Lardinois’s own (79–80, nn. 2, 4), read from the chapter in #1548.

[16] The proposition that Sappho could not write, or did not, is recorded in the archive as unargued in the literature it has read (#1752, #1756). The report on v2.0 granted “a cautious argument” for her literacy.

[17] [Longinus], *De sublimitate* 10.2–3, ed. Roberts 1907; Russell 1964.

[18] Voigt 1971 prints ἐπεὶ †καὶ πένητα†; so Lobel–Page and Campbell. D’Angour 2006 records that the words’ belonging to the poem is debated and that they are metrically flawed.

[19] Bergk, *PLG*⁴ III.90, ad v. 17.

[20] The count and its limit are set out in Sharks, the sixth erratum (#1474), and in *The Tongue Breaks Twice* (#1475).

[21] On the verbal adjective and the sense of τόλματον, D’Angour 2006, 298–99. On “But I must dare all” in the English tradition and in the composition layer, Sharks, *“But I Must Dare All”* (#1749).

[22] Lattimore 1944; Wiseman 1985.

[23] Wiseman 1985 and the commentary tradition.

[24] D’Angour 2006, 299–300, for the address to Kypris at the head of the final stanza, adopted here in placement and disputed in polarity.

[25] D’Angour 2006, 300: “all can be borne, since you, Kupris, would subdue nobleman and beggar in equal measure.”

[26] On explanatory rather than documentary warrant, cf. Parry 1971.

[27] Pearce 1724; Hermann 1816; F. G. Welcker, *Sappho von einem herrschenden Vorurtheil befreyt* (Göttingen, 1816); Wilamowitz 1913. The four are set out in Sharks (#1752).

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Archive records cited. #1270 (v1.0), #1474, #1475, #1476, #1548, #1749, #1752, #1756.

Still to check before deposit. - Irwin on the dried end of χλωρός’s range (not open). - The Lesbian form of σώζεις. - West 1970’s page for “absurd”, dropped from this version until checked. - The cup’s text against CEG 454. - Stein 1990’s full reference (from Lardinois’s roster). - Pearce 1724’s full reference.

Attached files

- The reader’s report from *Classical Philology*. It is anonymous and quoted whole. The decision letter of 16 November 2026, signed by Sarah Nooter, Editor, gives the grounds as “the reader feels that your argument is not sufficiently defended and that it depends on an anachronistic reference”.
- The submission and the report, read against each other.
- The archive’s answers to the report, the two readings compared, and the corrections owed.
- Version 2.0 as submitted to *Classical Philology* (UCP-CP-S-25-00167, file of 24 July 2026), so that the record shows what the journal read: .docx, text.

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