

Greek Lyric Fragments in Margaret Goldsmith's *Sappho of Lesbos*

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Abstract *Sappho of Lesbos. A Psychological Reconstruction of Her Life* (1938) by Margaret Leland Goldsmith (1894-1971) receives little attention in accounts of Sappho's modern reception. This is despite the novel's close engagement with Sappho's corpus at a pivotal moment in the transmission of her text, when for the first time a substantial number of papyri containing her poetry had been published, edited, and translated. After contextualising and summarising the novel, this article examines Goldsmith's relationship with the chief source of the many fragments of Greek lyric poetry which she cites (chiefly, but not exclusively, by Sappho): J.M. Edmonds's Loeb edition. Goldsmith's divergences from this source are analysed; so too is the impact on her novel of Edmonds's liberal approach to the supplementation of fragmentary papyri. A codicil considers Goldsmith's depiction of the lyric poet Stesichorus, a rare instance of the reception of that poet, which is compared to the use of his works, decades later, by Anne Carson; again, the publication and supplementation of papyri plays a crucial role.

Keywords Sappho. Margaret Goldsmith. Anne Carson. Stesichorus. Translation. Greek literature. Papyri. Loeb Classical Library.

Summary 1 Context. – 2 Plot. – 3 Sources. – 4 Supplements. – 5 Stesichorus.



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1 Context

For centuries the life of the archaic Greek poet Sappho has been the subject of novels.¹ Many focus on Sappho's relationship with the ferryman Phaon, an exceptionally beautiful youth with whom she is said to fall in love.² Failing to fulfil her desire, she throws herself off the promontory of the island of Leucas, bringing an end to her passion: in some accounts, by her death, in others, through the act of leaping, which gives relief to those incurably ill with desire. Novels brought this story, which is first attested in ancient accounts of Sappho's life,³ to an audience far beyond the world of classical scholars; for an eighteenth-century reader, it was the narrative that Sappho's name would most of all evoke.

In the nineteenth century, awareness grew that Sappho's romantic interest may not have been directed towards men exclusively – or at all.⁴ An editor of her fragments pointed this out, on the basis of a weakly-attested ancient tradition, as well as the evidence of such fragments of her poetry had survived.⁵ This provoked a fierce riposte from the philologist Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, defending what he regarded as Sappho's purity.⁶ That response proved influential for decades, culminating in the early-twentieth-century monograph by the leading Sappho scholar Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, which

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1 Examples which feature Sappho as a character (many more reference her poetry): Madeleine de Scudéry, *Artamène ou Le Grand Cyrus* (1653) (on which see Gillespie 2021, 335); Anonymous, *L'Histoire et les amours de Sapho de Mytilène* (1724) (Johnson 2021, 365); Claude-Louis-Michel de Sacy, *Les Amours de Sapho et de Phaon* (1769) (Piantanida 2021b, 347); Alessandro Verri, *Le avventure di Saffo poetessa di Mitilene* (1780) (Piantanida 2021b, 346-8); Margot Klausner, *Saffo mi-Lesbos* ('Sappho from Lesbos', 1946) (Jacobs 2021); Peter Green, *The Laughter of Aphrodite* (1965) (Goff, Harloe 2021, 392); Grytzko Mascioni, *Saffo* (1981) (Piantanida 2021b, 359); Jeannette Winterson, *Art and Lies. A Piece for Three Voices and a Bawd* (1994) (Goff, Harloe 2021, 399); Erica Jong, *Sappho's Leap* (2004) (Ball 2005; Hauser 2020; Goff, Harloe 2021, 393); Franco Montanari, *Saffo. Autobiografia segreta. Confessioni di una poetessa* (2020); Silvia Romani, *Saffo, la ragazza di Lesbo* (2022); Selby Wynn Schwartz, *After Sappho* (2022); Franco Montanari, *La luna di Saffo* (2023).

2 Most 1995 ≈ Greene 1996, 11-35; Kivilo 2021, 15-16; Finglass, Kelly 2021b, 1-3; Finglass 2023.

3 Many of these sources are conveniently collected as fr. 211 in Neri 2021, where the *Letter to Phaon*, transmitted with Ovid's *Heroides* though perhaps not by that poet but by a slightly later imitator, appears in its entirety as fr. 263.

4 This was a part, but only a part, of her biographical tradition in antiquity: Kivilo 2021.

5 Volger 1810.

6 Welcker 1816 = 1845, 80-129; Piantanida 2021b, 351-2.

supported the prevailing view.⁷ But it was weakened through the establishment by nineteenth-century philology that Sappho's beloved in her famous 'Ode to Aphrodite' was not a man but a woman;⁸ and ultimately dislodged by the publication of substantial papyrus fragments of her works, in particular by the Berlin parchment (1902), which revealed that extremely close emotional bonds between Sappho and her female companions were very much a feature of her poetry.⁹

This is the context, at least as far as the transmission and interpretation of Sappho goes, when the American/British writer Margaret Leland Goldsmith (1874-1971) published her novel *Sappho of Lesbos. A Psychological Reconstruction of her Life* (1938). This was one of several biographies of historically important women written by Goldsmith; another, with a similar title, and a similar focus on a prominent woman of history who broke through the boundaries of conventional sexual customs, was *Christina of Sweden. A Psychological Biography* (1933).¹⁰ The overall character of *Sappho of Lesbos* is described by Goff and Harloe, according to whom its author

explicitly rejects the Phaon story, pointing out that it contradicts Sappho's other predilections and suggesting that it arose in connection with a different Sappho - the name being common on Lesbos, and the historians all being men. Goldsmith is candid about her invention of Sappho's life - "as I myself am convinced that she must have lived it" (p. v) - and frequently terms the poems 'letters' in order to use them as sources for the 'facts' of Sappho's existence. She is clear that Sappho's society had no prejudice against erotic encounters among women (called here "charming experiences", p. 121) and presents them without judgement; the greater freedom of Lesbos spared her Sappho the need to rebel against women's restricted lives, and positioned her instead to foster the talents of other young women poets.¹¹

Goldsmith's frank acknowledgment of Sappho's lesbianism formed part of the larger literary movement of 'Lesbian modernism', which arose out of changing attitudes to both the role of women in society

⁷ Wilamowitz 1913.

⁸ For details see Finglass 2021b, 247-55.

⁹ For the publication of the papyri see Finglass 2021a.

¹⁰ For Goldsmith's biographies see English 2015, 92-3. For Goldsmith's *Christina of Sweden* see Waters 1994 ≈ 1997, English 2015, 94-9. An interest in both Sappho and Queen Christina is also found in the Viennese poet Marie von Najmájer: Woodford 2008.

¹¹ Goff, Harloe 2021, 391. The hypothesis of two Sapphos - a means of reconciling what appear to be inconsistencies in her biographical tradition - goes back to antiquity: Kivilo 2021, 17.

and to traditional sexual morality in the early twentieth century.¹² During the same period, as we have just seen, the corpus of the woman poet who gave lesbianism its name was significantly expanding, and in a manner that challenged established scholarly views about the nature of her sexuality. Engagement with these new fragments by Modernist poets, for whom their very fragmentariness was part of the attraction, began in the 1910s.¹³ The first novel to include one of the new fragments seems to have been published in 1909;¹⁴ but in-depth engagement with a range of these fragments is first attested, so it appears, in Goldsmith's *Sappho of Lesbos*. The present article examines the nature of that engagement by focusing on Goldsmith's sources, and the consequences for the novel of their presentation of Sappho's text. A codicil looks at a different lyric poet who features in the novel, one who would later have a significant reception history thanks to a different female author. First, though, I summarise the plot of this little-known novel, to give an idea of its focus and range.

2 Plot

Chapter 1 (pp. 11-26): Sappho's genius. Historical background. Sappho as an Aeolian. Her mother Cleïs and father Scamandronymus. A happy childhood in Eresos. Three younger brothers: Charaxus, Eurygyus, Larichos. When Sappho is six, war breaks out between Athens and Lesbos over Sigeum. Scamandronymus goes confidently to war, but dies. The widowed Cleïs takes her children to Mytilene to live with Scamandronymus' uncle Eurygyus.

Chapter 2 (pp. 27-37): life in Eurygyus' home. The war drags on. Eurygyus is pompous and conservative; Sappho has contempt for him. Cleïs inflicts "psychic harm" (31) on her sons through her favouritism of her daughter. Sappho studies feminine arts as well as education in myth, literature, and other topics; Cleïs warns her not to neglect dancing through her fascination with Homer. Sappho's musical performances. She is conscious of her lack of beauty; Cleïs points to her charm and talent.

Chapter 3 (pp. 38-73): Cleïs dies when Sappho is in early teens. Of her brothers, Charaxus and Eurygyus are old-fashioned, Larichos weak. She does not get on with her guardian Eurygyus; she throws a

¹² For this movement see English 2015; English et al. 2023; for the movement in relation to Sappho see Collecott 1999; English 2023.

¹³ Williamson 2009, 366-8; Piantanida 2021a, 53-83; Goff, Harloe 2021, 393-57; Neri 2021, 87-8; Goldschmidt 2023; Finglass forthcoming 2.

¹⁴ In *Σπασμένεες Ψυχές* (*Broken Souls*, 1909) by Petros Pseloreitis (pseudonym for Nikos Kazantzakis), one character consoles another by reading to her a prose translation of Sappho fr. 94 V.: Kargiotis 2021, 386.

pebble at him to prevent his molesting Chloe (a dancing-girl whom he had met at one of his symposia), and later enjoys a “charming experience” (42) with her, which prompts her to write verses. Melanchrus, who became tyrant in 612 (the year of Sappho’s birth), is displaced by Pittacus and Alcaeus’ brothers; a minority of the nobles are hostile to Pittacus. In 596 the Athenians capture Sigeum; Periander of Corinth comes to Lesbos to arbitrate, to Sappho’s interest, especially since the poet Arion comes with him. Sappho wants to meet Alcaeus, poet and reluctant soldier; she finds him at first sight “heavy and rather crude” (50), as he attacks Pittacus in the market-place. Alcaeus notices her and gets invited to a symposium at her house; eventually he reads her poetry, and falls in love with her. She resents the change that this produces. He sends verse to her, and receives a cutting reply, also in verse; she explains her lack of interest in men. Eurygyus confronts the pair and forbids Sappho from seeing Alcaeus. Now sixteen, Sappho feels stifled at Eurygyus’ house, and decides to get married; she selects Cercolas, a merchant. He agrees, but asks her for a child; Sappho becomes pregnant soon after her wedding, and gives birth to a daughter whom she names Cleis.

Chapter 4 (pp. 74-90): Sappho is happy in motherhood; Charaxus’ mistress falls in love with her. Cercolas points out that her association with Alcaeus’ politics may cause her harm, but she remained fascinated by politics. After the war, Megelagryos has become tyrant, before Myrsilos overthrew him, whom Pittacus was rumoured to support. Alcaeus’ party plots against Pittacus when he becomes leader; Pittacus reluctantly has him and his friends arrested, Sappho among them. They are exiled to Pyrrha. Cercolas and Cleis join Sappho; Alcaeus’ brothers escape, with Antimenidas joining Nebuchadnezzar’s army. When elected Dictator, Pittacus calls the exiles home. To Sappho’s distress, Alcaeus continues to plot against Pittacus. He is exiled again, but first flees to Lydia. Cercolas dies of an illness; no professional mourning-women are called to his funeral. Alcaeus launches an expedition against Mytilene, which is easily defeated; Charaxus leads Pittacus’ soldiers to Sappho’s house to find him. Both Sappho and Alcaeus are banished; Sappho with Cleis is to go to Sicily.

Chapter 5 (pp. 91-125): now aged 21, Sappho breaks her journey in Corinth. The treatment of women in the great Greek cities, such as Corinth and Syracuse, was less enlightened than in Lesbos. Sappho reads on the way; Alcman, some twenty years her senior, is her favourite, because of his subjective description of the emotions, and because he had liberated himself from slavery through his ability. She writes herself, with the sapphic metre becoming fixed in her mind. A beautiful woman from Chios shows interest in her, but Sappho wants not to be pursued but to pursue. She is not impressed by Corinth and the Aphrodisia festival, which lacked glamour; the city is not interested in women and the arts. Periander takes no interest in

her. She climbs the Acrocorinth and looks towards Athens and Sparta. Periander's rebuff leads her to doubt her poetic talents. The Parian Marble now records her travel to Sicily. She arrives at the bustling Syracuse and gets to work, writing poetry for musical accompaniment; later she incorporates dancing. She was keen to discuss her poetry with Stesichorus, then living in Catana, who was about twenty years older than her; he was famous for his new triadic metre. His verse was not subjective but objective and stiff; revering tradition and suspicious of literary novelty, he was nevertheless timid and kind. She finds out about Stesichorus' political speech to the Himereans. He would always bring gifts for Cleïs, but was a stern teacher. The *Marriage of Andromache*, which is not like her other work, was written under his tutelage; he though was shocked to see her describing the gods as laughing. She avoids parties, not (as Stesichorus thinks) from moral scruples, but on aesthetic grounds. One fragment may record a passing fancy for a woman. She makes a living by writing wedding poetry; these are contrasted with the severe poetry of Ezekiel. After five years, aged twenty-six, she was allowed to return to Mytilene, now a great writer.

Chapter 6 (pp. 126-48): Sappho is apprehensive about her return. Larichus is made cup-bearer by Pittacus. Sappho intends to establish a 'House of the Muses'. She breaks her journey at Corinth, where her public acclaims her. Refusing an invitation to Athens, she presses on; her ship is diverted by storms (which she later recalls in poetry) to Rhodes, where she meets the fifteen-year-old Erinna, whose poetry, like Sappho's, would later be destroyed by the Church. Erinna wants to be free to write poetry, but is constrained by her parents. Sappho has an emotional experience during their encounter. While walking on the beach she asks Erinna to come with her to Lesbos; Erinna refuses, not wanting to be under her control. They do not meet again but exchange written messages. Sappho asks the progressive Cleobulos of Lindos, who ensures that Erinna can go to Lesbos a year or two later, by which time Sappho's passion for her had cooled. Erinna dies aged nineteen. But on leaving Rhodes, Sappho was still emotionally devastated and desolate; this leads her to turn to work, and to ensure that her poetry was based on her personal experiences. Her last messages to Erinna was the 'Ode to Aphrodite'.

Chapter 7 (pp. 149-78): Pittacus comes to Mytilene's harbour to welcome Sappho. She sees Larichus, who is still indecisive; Charaxus does not come. She settles in a new house on the shore. Now twenty-seven, she is unhappy, but feels responsibility for her child and for her talent. Charaxus is jealous and spreads gossip about her. Sappho is enraged by his treachery and galvanised into activity. She acquires a building for her 'Academy of the Muses' and furnishes it luxuriously. Her poetry becomes more real and more vital now that she has pupils who can sing it and dance to it. The regular routine

of the Academy restores her own mental balance. She discovers the dawn, and often visits the countryside. Thanks to her encounter with Erinna, she does not fall in love with any of her pupils. The reputation of the school leads to pupils arriving from the other islands and from Asia Minor. Sappho becomes interested in one, Gongyla of Colophon. Trauma results from the sudden death of one of her pupils, Timas, which leads Sappho to fall out of love. She longs for the intellectual stimulation that comes from conversations with adults. She tells her pupils that she is closing the Academy for a year to stay with Iadmon of Samos.

Chapter 8 (pp. 179-210): Sappho arrives on Samos in about 580. The island is famous for its navy; Iadmon's house is too luxurious for her, and she needs her solitude. Iadmon was a dilettante and presided over a *salon*. The architect and sculptor Rhoecus takes her to see the Temple of Hera, which he had built; she is struck by his faith in the gods. She was not an atheist, but was not frightened of the gods either. Iadmon's grandson falls in love with Cleïs; Sappho approves, though she does not partake in the promiscuity which characterises Iadmon's house. She admires the flowers of Samos. Iadmon has two favourite slaves (it is naturally illogical to condemn Sappho for not condemning slavery) - one Aesop, the other Doricha, known as Rhodopis. The latter, a brazen woman, held no appeal for Sappho, but she likes Aesop. They trade ideas about the culpability of the rich. Aesop tells fables to Iadmon's guests. Later he tells Sappho that Rhodopis has been paying attention to Cleïs; Sappho feels an urge to strike Rhodopis, but decides instead that they should return to Mytilene. Sappho writes a paean to Hera before she leaves.

Chapter 9 (pp. 211-32): back in Mytilene, Sappho finds that Pittacus has retired. She reopens the Academy, but finds her fame irksome. Young men and women ask for her advice in love-affairs, but Sappho regarded herself as a failure in that area. Cleïs is growing up to be a beautiful but unexceptional woman. Sappho sends notes to her to try to break through her reserve. Cleïs is getting over her infatuation with Rhodopis, but her intimacy with Sappho is gone. Sappho discusses this with a student, Anactoria of Miletus. At first Sappho waits, but then decides to send Cleïs abroad, to her aunt on Chios. Now thirty-three, Sappho feels old, but is stimulated by several love-affairs. She despises the snobbish dilettante Andromeda. Charaxus has settled in Naucratis, a town discovered in 1884 by W.M. Flinders Petrie; Sappho is not surprised to hear that Rhodopis has gone there too, since it was a favourite place for many courtesans. Charaxus buys her freedom, but she soon leaves him, and wounded vanity brings him home to Lesbos. Sappho calls her a 'bitch', translated by Edmonds as a 'she-dog'. She criticises Charaxus, as Herodotus says, but also defends him, and makes clear in her poetry that she has forgiven him.

Chapter 10 (pp. 233-54): Sappho sees her sentimentality towards Charaxus as evidence of her old age. She goes down to the harbour to meet him. She is struck by the daughter of Charaxus' friend Drakes, and convinces herself that she had long been in love with her. She goes with Charaxus to a party at Drakes' house, and on returning home writes a poem describing her passion. Catullus translates it in about AD 250 (*sic*); Longinus' praise, and English translations are cited. Sappho persuades Drakes to send his daughter to the Academy. She may not have understood the verses Sappho wrote for her. They were together for years, though the Atthis loved by Sappho "was really a creation of her own fantasy" (245). Cleïs returns home and needs attention, and Atthis becomes jealous. Sappho's poems to Atthis were probably the main reason for the Church's destruction of her poetry. Anactoria feels Atthis' charm. Atthis thought herself a great artist and became jealous of Sappho; she listens to Andromeda when she visits Mytilene, and soon leaves the Academy. Sappho does not relinquish her self-control. Cleïs clings to Atthis as she leaves; Sappho realises she too was attracted to her. Sappho writes letters to Atthis, though never sends them.

Chapter 11 (pp. 255-70): Sappho never recovers from the loss of Atthis. Cleïs is eager to leave home, and marries; Anactoria sails for home; but Sappho "had grown spiritually numb" (256) and is fearful of old age. She cares even less than before about her fame. She does now send Atthis letters, including one in which she tells her of Anactoria's departure. She writes to Anactoria, and includes one of her greatest poems. Time seems meaningless to her because of her loneliness, though she remains fastidious about her duties and appearance. She contemplates but rejects the prospect of a second marriage and a further child. She rails at old age. She tells the story of Selene and Endymion. No longer so interested in mentally immature students, she permanently closes her Academy. The approval of the people of Mytilene for her graceful way of growing old means something to her; she is pleased not to be pitied. She decides to take her own life, not out of hopelessness, but to "preserve herself by dying now" (268). She goes out to the sea to die, and is buried in Mytilene; for generations her grave is well-cared for.

Chapter 12 (pp. 271-6): Sappho becomes a legendary figure in Greece long before she dies. A legend spreads of her love for Phaon and consequent suicide; male historians wanted her to need a man at the end of her life, but they did not take her point of view into account. This could have been another Sappho, since the name was common. The story is first found in Menander; Ovid ensures that it becomes accepted as fact.

3 Sources

Goldsmith states the origin of her lyric citations in the prefatory matter:

The quotations from the works of Sappho and her contemporaries included in this book have been taken from the *Lyra Graeca*, compiled by Professor J.M. Edmonds, in the Loeb Classical Library, first published by William Heinemann in 1922. Where other sources have been quoted, this is expressly stated.¹⁵

Let us examine this claim. Below is a table giving the source for each of the novel's lyric citations. I include only actual poetic quotations; passages that may reflect, at whatever remove, a poetic fragment are not found here. Nor are citations of testimonia: that is, ancient passages about the lives and works of the lyric poets. Occasionally, in addition to a citation, Goldsmith gives further versions of a translation, typically earlier renderings of a particularly famous poem, which she explicitly attributes to some earlier poet-translator; these further versions, too, are excluded. In the table, 'adapted' means that at least one word has been altered; changes in punctuation are not signalled.¹⁶

Page number	Translation used by Goldsmith	Poet	Fragment number in modern editions	New papyrus fragment?
20	Cox 1924, 91	Sappho	fr. 52 V.	No
35	Easby-Smith 1901, 61	Alcaeus	Free invention on basis of two tiny quotations	No
38	Cox 1924, 91	Sappho	Inc. auct. fr. 25 V.	No
38	Cox 1924, 84 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 42.1 V.	No
49	Weigall 1932, 28 (adapted)	Alcaeus	fr. 38a.1-4 V.	Yes

¹⁵ Goldsmith 1938, vii. In addition to actual quotations, as the anonymous referee points out, Goldsmith draws on other sources such as the Ovidian *Letter to Phaon*, as well as perhaps on the ancient iconographical tradition which presented Sappho and Alcaeus meeting each other (as on a red-figure vase found in Agrigento from c. 470, Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, inv. 2416), and on the modern iconographical tradition which showed an encounter between Sappho and Erinna (as in Simeon Solomon's 1864 watercolour painting *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene*, now in Tate Britain; for Erinna and her biographical tradition see Neri 2003). These are not the focus of the present study, though a comparison of the novel with the *Letter* in particular might be a worthwhile endeavour.

¹⁶ For a comparable list of the fragments cited in Erica Jong's *Sappho's Leap* (2004) see Ball 2005, 599-601; it will be clear that Goldsmith has included far more fragments in the course of her novel.

Page number	Translation used by Goldsmith	Poet	Fragment number in modern editions	New papyrus fragment?
50	Weigall 1932, 23; partly merged with Easby-Smith 1901, 71	Alcaeus	fr. 401Ba V.	No
55	Easby-Smith 1901, 61 (adapted)	Alcaeus	fr. 348.1-2 V.	No
56	Edmonds 1922, 371	Alcaeus	fr. 74 V.	Yes
60	Cox 1924, 88 (adapted)	Alcaeus	Alcaeus fr. 384 V. + Sappho fr. 137.1-2 V.	No
60	Cox 1924, 88	Sappho	fr. 137.3-6 V.	No
67	Cox 1924, 91	Sappho	fr. 51 V.	No
73	Cox 1924, 109	Sappho	fr. 132 V.	No
83	Weigall 1932, 71	Alcaeus	fr. 117.20-5 V. with scholia	Yes
97	Cox 1924, 84	Sappho	fr. 37.2-3 V.	No
99	Edmonds 1922, 119 (adapted)	Alcman	<i>PMGF</i> 58	No
99	Edmonds 1922, 77 (adapted)	Alcman	<i>PMGF</i> 89	No
99	Edmonds 1922, 83	Alcman	<i>PMGF</i> 17	No
100	Edmonds 1922, 83	Alcman	<i>PMGF</i> 56	No
101	Cox 1924, 113	Sappho	fr. 105b V.	No
101	Cox 1924, 79	Sappho	fr. 2.5-8 V.	No
112	Cox 1924, 87	Sappho	fr. 36 V.	No
118	Edmonds 1922, 239	Sappho	fr. 118 V.	No
119	Edmonds 1928, 229, 231	Sappho	fr. 44.5-8, 24-34 V.	Yes
120	Cox 1924, 107 (but 'delicacy' taken from Edmonds 1922, 267)	Sappho	fr. 58.25-6 V.	No
121	Edmonds 1928, 217	Sappho	fr. 27.4-13 V.	Yes
122	Edmonds 1922, 203	Sappho	Free invention on basis of a paraphrase	No
123	Edmonds 1922, 291	Sappho	fr. 112.1-2, 4 V.	No
123	Edmonds 1922, 293	Sappho	fr. 112.3, 5 V.	No
124	Combines Edmonds 1922, 237 and Cox 1924, 90	Sappho	fr. 147 V.	No
130	Edmonds 1928, 213	Sappho	fr. 20.8-18 V.	Yes
132	<i>locum non inveni</i> ; it is not in Paton 1917, 379	Erinna	<i>A.P.</i> 7.710.7-8	No
133	Cox 1924, 110	Sappho	fr. 102 V.	No
134	Mure 1850, 331	Erinna	fr. 402 <i>SH</i>	No
137	Cox 1924, 110	Sappho	fr. 100 V.	No
138	Cox 1924, 85	Sappho	fr. 39 V.	No
138	Cox 1924, 103	Sappho	fr. 56 V.	No
140	Edmonds 1922, 237 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 47 V.	No

Page number	Translation used by Goldsmith	Poet	Fragment number in modern editions	New papyrus fragment?
142	Cox 1924, 106	Sappho	fr. 91 V.	No
143	Edmonds 1922, 243	Sappho	fr. 93 V.	Yes
147	Edmonds 1922, 183, 185	Sappho	fr. 1 V.	No
157-8	Edmonds 1922, 205 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 3 V.	Yes
159	Edmonds 1922, 257	Sappho	fr. 148 V.	No
159	Edmonds 1922, 260	Sappho	mistaken attribution to Sappho of a passage of Pindar, fr. 222 S.-M.	No
160	Edmonds 1922, 225	Sappho	fr. 46 V.	No
160	Weigall 1932, 186	Xenophanes (not named)	fr. 3.6 <i>IEG</i>	No
162	Edmonds 1922, 199	Sappho	Inc. auct. fr. 23 V.	Yes
162	Cox 1924, 97 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 154 V.	No
162	Edmonds 1922, 189	Sappho	fr. 34 V.	No
163	Edmonds 1922, 219	Sappho	fr. 30 V.	Yes
163	Edmonds 1922, 265	Sappho	fr. 91 V.	No
164	Edmonds 1922, 289	Sappho	fr. 110 V.	No
164	Edmonds 1922, 284	Sappho	fr. 111 + 106 V.	No
165	Edmonds 1922, 227 or Cox 1924, 11 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 167 V.	No
165	Edmonds 1922, 253 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 166 V.	No
165	Edmonds 1922, 225	Sappho	fr. 156 V.	No
165	Cox 1924, 86	Sappho	fr. 152 V.	No
165	Cox 1924, 85 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 123 V.	No
165	Edmonds 1922, 197 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 123 V.	No
165	Weigall 1932, 173	Sappho	fr. 157 V.	No
165-6	Edmonds 1922, 275 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 168C V.	No
166	Edmonds 1922, 277	Sappho	fr. 136 V.	No
166	Edmonds 1922, 253	Sappho	fr. 101A V.	No
166	Edmonds 1922, 221	Sappho	Line invented by E. and inserted between the two lines of fr. 49 V.	No
166-7	Edmonds 1922, 239, 241	Sappho	fr. 92 V.	Yes
167	Edmonds 1922, 195	Sappho	fr. 41 V.	No
167	Edmonds 1922, 251	Sappho	Inc. auct. fr. 5b V.	No
168	Edmonds 1922, 193	Sappho	Lines invented by E. on the basis of a testimonium to fr. 55 V.	No
170-1	Weigall 1932, 215	Sappho	fr. 63 V.	Yes

Page number	Translation used by Goldsmith	Poet	Fragment number in modern editions	New papyrus fragment?
171	Weigall 1932, 216 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 22.9-16 V.	Yes
171	Edmonds 1922, 249 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 48 V.	No
171	Edmonds 1922, 245	Sappho	Lines invented by E. on the basis of the paraphrase in fr. 197 V.	No
172-3	Edmonds 1922, 249 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 101 V.	No
173	Edmonds 1922, 281	Sappho	A.P. 7.489 = FGE 678-81	No
174	Edmonds 1928, 245	Sappho	fr. 95.4-13 V.	Yes
192	Coppola 1937 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 2.2-16 V.	Yes (see below)
210	Edmonds 1922, 211 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 17 V.	Yes
212-13	Edmonds 1922, 201	Sappho	frr. 130.2, 172 V.	No
216	Edmonds 1922, 259	Sappho	fr. 150 V.	No
216	Edmonds 1922, 277	Sappho	fr. 158 V.	No
220	Edmonds 1922, 257	Sappho	fr. 153 V.	No
220	Cox 1924, 122	Sappho	fr. 122 V.	No
220	Cox 1924, 112 (adapted)	Sappho	fr. 105a V.	No
221	Edmonds 1922, 265	Sappho	fr. 82a V.	No
222	Edmonds 1922, 265, 267	Sappho	fr. 81.4-7 V.	No
223	Edmonds 1922, 215	Sappho	fr. 24a V.	Yes
225	Edmonds 1922, 233	Sappho	fr. 55 V.	No
230	Edmonds 1922, 207	Sappho	fr. 5.18 V. (a supplement by E., subsequently disproven)	Yes
231	Edmonds 1928, 207	Sappho	fr. 15.9-12 V.	Yes
232	Edmonds 1922, 205, 207	Sappho	fr. 5 V.	Yes
239	Edmonds 1922, 221	Sappho	fr. 49 V.	No
240	Edmonds 1928, 187	Sappho	fr. 31 V.	No
244	Edmonds 1928, 215	Sappho	fr. 23.3-10 V.	Yes
245	Edmonds 1922, 201	Sappho	fr. 163 V.	No
246	Edmonds 1922, 203, 205	Sappho	fr. 4 V.	No
247	Edmonds 1922, 220	Sappho	Hom. // 1.335 + Sa. fr. 45 V.	No
247	Cox 1924, 89	Sappho	fr. 143 V.	No
247	Cox 1924, 94	Sappho	fr. 118 V.	No
247	Edmonds 1922, 221	Sappho	Inc. auct. fr. 5a V.	No
250	Edmonds 1922, 239	Sappho	fr. 130 V.	No
251	Edmonds 1922, 251 (adapted)	Sappho	Lines invented by E. on the basis of the paraphrase in fr. 209 V.	No

Page number	Translation used by Goldsmith	Poet	Fragment number in modern editions	New papyrus fragment?
251	Edmonds 1922, 255	Sappho	fr. 57 V.	No
251	Edmonds 1922, 271	Sappho	fr. 133.1 V.	No
254	Edmonds 1928, 241, 243	Sappho	fr. 94 V.	Yes
257	Edmonds 1922, 193	Sappho	fr. 26.2-4 V.	Yes
258	Edmonds 1922, 194	Sappho	fr. 37.1 V.	No
258	Edmonds 1922, 201	Sappho	fr. 172 V.	No
258	Edmonds 1928, 433	Sappho	fr. 139.1 V.	Yes
258	Edmonds 1922, 263	Sappho	fr. 168BV.	No
258-9	Edmonds 1928, 247	Sappho	fr. 196.1-20 V.	No
259-60	Edmonds 1922, 209	Sappho	fr. 16.1-24 V.	Yes
262	Edmonds 1922, 255	Sappho	fr. 121 V.	No
263	Edmonds 1922, 213	Sappho	fr. 21.2-13 V.	Yes
264	Edmonds 1928, 435, 437	Sappho	fr. 58.11-59.3 V.	Yes
264-5	Edmonds 1928, 437, 439	Sappho	fr. 62 V.	Yes

The main source of Goldsmith's poetic citations is indeed Edmonds's Loeb. The date that she gives, 1922, refers to the publication of the first edition of the first volume of this work, which contains (among other authors) the poetry of Sappho, Alcaeus, and Alcman, the three authors which Goldsmith cites from the Loeb. It is, however, clear that the edition used by Goldsmith was the revised, 1928 edition of that first volume. This revised edition differs from its predecessor in two main ways. First, it includes papyri published between 1922 and 1928; second, it incorporates Edmonds's own revisions of his translations, sometimes reflecting changes of mind as to the Greek text of individual fragments. In the table above I cite those translations which appear only in the 1928 edition as coming from that edition, and the ones which were already available in 1922 as coming from that edition; though in general Goldsmith can be presumed to have used a single copy, that of the 1928 edition.¹⁷

It is not surprising to find Goldsmith employing a Loeb. The Loeb Classical Library, whose first volumes appeared in 1912, was designed for popular use: with a facing translation, its volumes made classical texts accessible to those with little or no Greek, as well as assisting those of us who often find it easier to tackle the original with a translation at hand. In the words of Virginia Woolf:

To those who count themselves lovers of Greek in the sense that some ragged beggar might count himself the lover of an Empress in her robes, the Loeb Library, with its Greek or Latin on one side

¹⁷ For evidence of her use specifically of the 1922 edition see fn. 46 below.

of the page and its English on the other, came as a gift of freedom... The existence of the amateur was recognized by the publication of this Library, and to a great extent made respectable... To our thinking the difficulty of Greek is not sufficiently dwelt upon... for the ordinary amateur they are very real and very great; and we shall do well to recognize the fact and to make up our minds that we shall never be independent of our Loeb.¹⁸

For someone undertaking the kind of task which Goldsmith set herself, the Loeb edition constituted the obvious source. There is no indication that she knew Greek, hence that part of the book was of little practical use; but although other translations of Sappho were available at this time, only the Loeb included English versions of all the papyrus fragments (apart from the tiniest) published over the past six decades.

Nevertheless, Goldsmith's statement with which we began is not quite accurate. As the table makes clear, although Edmonds's Loeb was her main source, she did not hesitate to cast her net more widely, and over a quarter of her total citations come from elsewhere. Translations from five works other than Edmonds's are used, all of which, except the last, are mentioned in Goldsmith's bibliography (pp. 277-8):

- W. Mure, *A Critical History of the Language and Literature of Antient Greece*, vol. 3 (London, 1850).
- J.S. Easby-Smith, *The Songs of Alcaeus. Memoir and Text with Literal and Verse Translations and Notes* (Washington, D.C. 1901).
- E.M. Cox, *The Poems of Sappho* (London; New York, 1924).
- A. Weigall, *Sappho of Lesbos. Her Life and Times* (London, 1932).
- G. Coppola, translation of Sappho *ap.* "A new fragment of Sappho". *The Times*, 16 July 1937, 16.

The most frequently employed of these sources is Cox, from whom more than two dozen citations are taken. His Greek text is based on Edmonds, but his translation usually differs from his. Then about half a dozen are taken from Weigall, and three Alcaeus citations are taken from Easby-Smith. A single citation, of Erinna, is taken from Mure; Erinna's lyric poetry is not included in the Loeb so Goldsmith had to look elsewhere. The sole Coppola citation is of a poem written on an ostrakon (fragment of pottery) published only the year before

¹⁸ Woolf 1917 = 1987, 114, 115; for her reflections on Greek see further Woolf 1925 = 1986, 38-51, Nagel 2002. For the reputation of the Loeb Classical Library over time see Most 2020.

Goldsmith's novel.¹⁹ Its exclusion from the bibliography is presumably because it was printed in 'only' a newspaper.

Varying the source of these translations, and then further adapting them when required, allowed Goldsmith to achieve an overall coherence of citations and narrative. Take the novel's first Sappho citation:

When she was five, Phoebe, the slave-girl of twelve or thirteen, whose duty it was to look after Sappho, came excitedly to Cleïs one night, to say that the child was not in her bed. Cleïs found her, out in the courtyard, reaching her arms up to the sky, and straining her small body to its full height.

"What on earth are you doing, Sappho?" Cleïs asked in surprise.

"I am trying to make myself grow faster", Sappho answered seriously. "I want to be taller than Charaxus, and besides, I want to be so tall that I can pick a star from the sky".

Many years later, with a different implication, and after she had been disillusioned about the stars, Sappho wrote:

"With my two arms I do not aspire to touch the sky".

The concluding citation, taken from Cox, applies to the situation described in this narrative, whereas Edmonds's version, "A little thing of two cubits' stature like me could not expect to touch the sky", is not.²⁰ Nevertheless, the Loeb translation too seems to have influenced the scenario, which is portrayed as taking place during Sappho's early years. Consultation of both books thus precedes and underlies the novelist's creative process.

The process of selection consistently involves small but subtle choices. So Sappho's longing for her mother, who died when she was in her early teens, is denoted by the poetic citation "So, like a child after its mother, I flutter" (p. 38), which comes from Cox.²¹ The Loeb, by contrast, has "and I have flown [to you] like a child to its mother",²² in which the telic aspect of 'I have flown' would be inappropriate: the whole point is that Sappho has lost her parent. In that same context, a citation "the spirit within her turned chill" adapts Cox's "the spirit within them turned chill", the change of pronoun allowing the citation to apply to Sappho.²³ Edmonds, by contrast, translates "as for them their heart grows light", where the adjective is obviously less

19 Norsa 1937. For another early translation see Speyer 1938; it was not included in the Loeb Classical Library until Page 1942, 375-8.

20 Cox 1924, 91; Edmonds 1922, 223.

21 Cox 1924, 91.

22 Edmonds 1922, 279.

23 Cox 1924, 84 (adapted).

appropriate for the fragment's new home.²⁴ Elsewhere "A most tender maiden gathering flowers" (220)²⁵ is preferred over the quaintly archaic "I saw one day a-gathering flowers | The daintiest little maid".²⁶

Goldsmith clearly thought it was important to vary her source for literary effect. Why then does she explicitly tell her readers that she relies on only one, except when the contrary is specifically indicated? Perhaps an answer lies in the authority which the Loeb Classical Library was beginning to acquire. Rather than risk portraying herself as a literary magpie, taking whatever text suited her purpose with no regard for the accuracy of the translation, Goldsmith claims to base her novel on one particular book, one supposedly written by a Professor.²⁷ That this particular volume had come in for considerable criticism among scholars, as we will see below, was irrelevant; her audience would have neither known nor cared. Many would, however, have heard of what was now a well-established literary series; and Goldsmith's supposedly unique reliance on it may have strengthened their belief that, while her narrative was obviously her own creation, the fragments on which it was founded were genuinely ancient artefacts.

4 Supplements

Of 114 citations, 28 (25%) are from papyri, 86 (75%) from quotations in other ancient authors. Fully a quarter, then, come from ancient manuscripts published in the preceding six decades. Such a reckoning understates their importance, since the citations from papyri are typically much longer than the others, which frequently last only one or two lines.

Such fragments present problems to the editor. They usually contain gaps, and it is not always clear how much can safely be filled. Edmonds's approach was liberal, often supplementing entire poems on the basis of little surviving text. He called his supplements "restorations which, though they are far from being mere guesses, are only approximations to the truth";²⁸ an optimistic characterisation. A review of his edition from the papyrologist Edgar Lobel describes Edmonds as "the fortunate possessor of a pair of eyes which enable him to discern, sometimes from a mere photograph, what has often

24 Edmonds 1922, 195.

25 Cox 1924, 122.

26 Edmonds 1922, 259.

27 Edmonds was University Lecturer at Cambridge, but never Professor; see "Mr J.M. Edmonds" 1958.

28 Edmonds 1922, viii.

deceived or totally escaped the vision of the most expert decipherers working on the manuscript itself”, and as “endowed with powers of divination not ordinarily vouchsafed to humanity”.²⁹ Lobel’s different approach to supplementation is summed up by a programmatic statement in the Preface to his edition of Sappho, published three years after Edmonds’s:

But for the caution which I have laid upon myself in handling a text usually either fragmentary or corrupt, though it will appear pusillanimous to the more swashing spirits among those who may be at the pains of criticizing me, I am not at all disposed to apologize, remembering the word of a wise king, with which I have steeled myself against the seductive apparition of Conjecture, that a fool can throw a stone into the Sea of Spain and all the wise men in the world not manage to get it out.³⁰

Lobel’s edition, not Edmonds’s, became the standard scholarly text. But for Goldsmith’s purposes, Lobel’s edition was not really an option, since no translation of this book was ever made. It was intended for the use of scholars, not writers seeking to imagine Sappho’s life; and as a result his austere text had little supplementation of any kind, which in the absence of a commentary made it hard even for scholars to tell what some of the fragments might be about. It is no surprise, then, that it is not even cited in Goldsmith’s bibliography.

So Edmonds it was. Extensive supplementation accompanied by English translation made his volume far easier to deal with; but the former quality meant that the text being translated was often not ancient, but modern. A novel inspired by a poetic oeuvre consisting of fragments was always going to need expansion and imagination; but readers of the novel might have expected that the imaginative work belonged not to Edmonds but to Goldsmith. As it is, Goldsmith claims an authority for reconstructions which had the same evidential basis as the products of her own creative processes.

For example, the passage which prompted Lobel’s comment on Edmonds’s miraculous vision appears as following in Goldsmith’s novel, where it is taken to be a letter addressed by Sappho to Erinna.³¹

... and I answered you: “I swear to you by the Goddess that although I, like you, had of Zeus but one virginity, nevertheless I feared not the threshold beyond which Hera had bidden me cast

29 Lobel 1922, 120.

30 Lobel 1925, v.

31 Goldsmith 1938, 143 = Edmonds 1922, 243. Despite Lobel’s criticism, Edmonds 1928, 243 maintains the same text.

it away". – Aye, thus I heartened you, and cried aloud: "That night was sweet enough for me, neither have you, dear maid, anything to fear..."

A translation of the text that can actually be discerned on the parchment in question would run as follows:³²

... I have... of maidens...

Since nothing can be made of the fragment as it actually survives, perhaps Goldsmith was better off having to rely on Edmonds. Still, it is curious that she explicitly calls his text a genuine preservation, asserting how "it seems strange that when, in the puritanical ardour of the Church, so much of Sappho's work was ruthlessly destroyed, this very frank document should have escaped destruction" (p. 143). Moreover, she removes the brackets which Edmonds uses to indicate those parts of the translation which are merely supplements. The overall effect is to lend the translation more authority than it deserves; readers will believe that they are seeing Goldsmith's imaginative encounter with Sappho, when in fact figments of Edmonds's imagination are getting in the way. On the other hand, as noted above, Goldsmith really had only one choice for a translation of the papyrus fragments; and a book which plastered its citations with brackets would look more like a scholarly monograph than a novel.

Edmonds himself did not always put brackets around supplements in his translations. Such is the case in the following passage which Goldsmith took from him, remarking that it was recorded on "a second-century papyrus":³³

And then I answered: "Gentle dames, how you will evermore remember till you be old, our life together in the heyday of youth. For many things did we then together both pure and beautiful. And now that you depart hence, love wrings my heart with very anguish.

That papyrus actually has the following:

... (you will/to) remember... For we also did these things in our... youth. For many lovely things... we... city... us...

Enough survives to clarify that the speaker is talking about what she and at least one addressee did when they were young. Beyond that is

³² Finglass forthcoming 1.

³³ Goldsmith 1938, 223 = Edmonds 1922, 215 (though G. writes 'then' where E. has 'them').

mere guesswork; yet Goldsmith's readers can have no idea that the text before them comes not from an ancient papyrus but from modern editorial supplements.

A third example is the following ending to a poem addressed by Sappho to her brother, specified as a "literal translation" of Sappho's original:

as for thee, thou black and baleful she-dog, thou mayst set that evil snout to the ground and go a-hunting other prey.³⁴

The striking image has already been highlighted in the novel, with the narrator declaring: "In one letter she called Rhodopis a 'bitch', and this word has been politely and euphemistically translated by Professor Edmonds as a 'she-dog'" (230). Unfortunately, the word in question is again not Sappho's. It is again a supplement by Edmonds – one whose impossible formulation led to Lobel's mockery in his review,³⁵ and one which the later publication of another papyrus would absolutely disprove. The translation of the passage in question should read:

But you, hallowed Kypris, adopting a... spirit,... evil...

This is the text as supplemented by two papyri published after Edmonds's edition. With three papyri to go on, we still can restore less of the text than Edmonds boldly did with one. Moreover, the word supplemented by Edmonds to give "she-dog", *kyinna* (not actually a true formulation, as Lobel notes), turns out to be *Kypri*, vocative of Kypris, a title of the goddess Aphrodite. Rarely can the problems of over-adventurous supplementation be so neatly summed up in a single word.

As we have seen, Goldsmith's narrator sometimes pays attention to the nature of the translation offered in her text,³⁶ as well as pointing to the supposed deliberate destruction by the Church of Sappho's poetry.³⁷ While the latter story is a myth, Edmonds's own treatment of the text unfortunately effected a kind of destruction that was all too real, by enveloping Sappho's poems in a supplemental carapace which only obscured what was truly hers. We may regret that no

³⁴ Goldsmith 1938, 232 = Edmonds 1922, 207.

³⁵ Lobel 1922, 120.

³⁶ "Several of these exhortations have been preserved" (56); "the literal translation" (259); "Unfortunately, only disconnected sentences of the second half of this verse have been preserved" (263). A rare exception refers to the presence of scholarly restoration: "The greater part of two of these poems [...] have been restored by Professor Edmonds" (263).

³⁷ See pp. v (from the Author's Preface), 131, 143, 156, 187, 246.

better resource was available for Goldsmith to rely on, and that Edmonds's imagination so interfered with her own.

5 Stesichorus

The lyric poet Stesichorus makes a cameo appearance in Goldsmith's novel, taking a protective interest in Sappho and tutoring her in poetry when she visits Syracuse.³⁸ Edmonds's *Lyra Graeca*, this time the second volume, will again be the source.³⁹ An entry in the Byzantine encyclopedia the *Suda's* entry quoted by Edmonds told Goldsmith that Sappho "flourished in the 42nd Olympiad (612-609 B.C.) along with Alcaeus, Stesichorus, Pittacus", so there was no chronological problem in making them contemporaries.⁴⁰ Yet Goldsmith makes him "about twenty years older" than Sappho (115), thereby allowing him to mentor her protagonist. He is described as "old-fashioned, conventional and a little pompous" (115), with "a tremendous respect for traditions, [and] slightly suspicious of new departures in literature" (116), and who "consistently pretended to be unmoved by the miseries of the world" (116). The ancient description of Stesichorus as "most Homeric" enabled this kind of assessment:⁴¹ that he was a largely unoriginal poet who transferred to lyric verse the poetic characteristics of his epic forebear. Such a description was nevertheless not completely fair even in the 1930s, when the Stesichorean corpus was extremely limited. The one thing that was generally known about him, and which received an extensive reception history in ancient and modern times thanks to its preservation by Plato, was the story surrounding Stesichorus' *Helen* and *Palinode*. In that account, the poet was struck blind because of his slander of Helen as the cause of the Trojan War in the first poem before regaining his sight by means of the second, which denied that Helen ever went to Troy.⁴² The story is cited by Goldsmith, but not as a mark of striking originality; rather, it merely signals how Stesichorus "revered the gods and the ancient heroes" (116).

Goldsmith's portrayal is driven, as just noted, by the needs of her narrative; it could also be described as a possible, even if somewhat tendentious, reading of his corpus at that time. When Stesichorean

³⁸ For introductions to this poet see Finglass 2014a; 2022; the standard modern edition is Finglass 2014b, with commentary in Davies, Finglass 2014, and the testimonia in Ercoles 2013.

³⁹ Edmonds 1924.

⁴⁰ Edmonds 1922, 145 = 1924, 15.

⁴¹ Edmonds 1924, 27.

⁴² Schade 2015, 164-79; for the *Helen* see Finglass 2015.

papyri began to be published from the 1950s onwards, however, the idea that he was a traditionalist became impossible to sustain, as the extent of his transformation of inherited myths became clear.⁴³ This would lead to a new development in his reception history, when Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red. A Novel in Verse* (1998) and *Red Doc* (2013) took inspiration from Stesichorus' *Geryoneis*, extensive papyrus fragments of which, depicting the monster Geryon in surprisingly sympathetic terms during his clash with Heracles, were published in 1967.⁴⁴ All that for now lay in the future.

Goldsmith's portrayal of Stesichorus as a traditionalist also allows her to place a fragment of Sappho whose inclusion might otherwise have proven difficult.⁴⁵ This is her narrative of the wedding of Hector, prince of Troy, and his bride Andromache; the surviving text is over thirty lines long, and its main sources are two papyri published in 1914 and 1927. A mythological narrative of this kind, lacking any personal element, is unique within Sappho's corpus; its language, too, is unusual, being more deeply coloured by epic than her other works. As a result its authenticity was doubted, with Edmonds referring to it as "perh(aps)... only doubtfully S(appho)'s".⁴⁶ Even after the debate about the poem's authorship had been conclusively resolved in Sappho's favour, a scholar could point to its distinct and apparently unSapphic ethos:

It is no accident [...] that one of Sappho's least successful surviving poems is a routine exercise on the wedding of Hector and Andromache – because Sappho, almost uniquely, really had escaped, in her main artistic interest, into a new genre of personal poetry for which the emotional and intellectual resources of the epic and mythic tradition provided no adequate expression.⁴⁷

More recently, an analysis of the two papyri has suggested, on the basis of script and layout, that the poem was regarded in antiquity as somehow not integral to the book of Sappho's poetry which it concludes.⁴⁸

So when Goldsmith says that the poem "does not sound in the least like Sappho's other work" (19), she is making a literary judgment

⁴³ Finglass, Kelly 2015b, 1-13.

⁴⁴ Schade 2015, 179-85; Finglass 2021c.

⁴⁵ It is absent from Erica Jong's *Sappho's Leap* (2004): Ball 2005, 599-601.

⁴⁶ Edmonds 1922, 226 fn. 3; cf. Lobel 1927, xvii: 'almost certainly supposititious'. Edmonds 1928 expresses no judgment on the authenticity of the work, which had been buttressed after the publication of his first edition by the appearance of a second papyrus; it seems likely, then, that Goldsmith derives her assessment from Edmonds 1922.

⁴⁷ Kirk 1974, 249.

⁴⁸ De Kreij 2022.

which reflects how the poem sounded (and still sounds) to the attentive reader, as well as echoing a scholarly debate taking place at that time. Making it an early work within Sappho's career, when she was still under the influence of her teacher and had not altogether found her own voice, deals creatively with the problem of the content while simultaneously permitting character development and a narrative arc. Yet Goldsmith concedes that in its final section, a description of the celebration in the city, "Sappho seemed to forget that she was writing under Stesichorus', her instructor's, supervision, and her own individual style, her spontaneity, asserts itself when she goes on" (19, followed by a lengthy quotation).⁴⁹ In particular, her phrase "the Gods in heaven laughed" makes Stesichorus "a little shocked"; he found the expression "disrespectful" (119). She begins to break free from her teacher, it is clear, even at this early stage.

How ironic, then, that this evidence of originality should turn out to belong, like the expressions analysed in section § 4 above, not to Sappho, but to Edmonds. All that is found in the papyrus is a reference to laughter followed by a lacuna, and the idea that this laughter was originally predicated of the gods is improbable: first, it occurs amid a sequence of statements describing earthly celebrations, where a sudden reference to the gods would be out of place; and second, it makes no sense for the gods to laugh in this context, where a relevant predicate should rather denote delight or pleasure. Hence so far from evidencing the young Sappho's development of a characteristic style, the phrase is as fictional as the modern narrative into which it has been incorporated; and Goldsmith's fictional Stesichorus, it turns out, was a better critic of poetry than the real, and rash, editor on which his creator relied.

⁴⁹ This more positive assessment is shared by Weigall 1932, 275, for whom Sappho's poem "admirably [...] conveys the feeling of excitement to the reader [...] [and] reveals her as a writer who did not disdain the old epic tales so dear to the Greek poets, and could tell them with a new animation".

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- IEG = West, M.L. (1989-92). *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati*, 2 vols. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- PMGF = Davies, M. (1991-). *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 1 vol. to date. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
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- S.-M. = Snell, B.; Maehler, H. (1987-9). *Pindari Carmina cum Fragmentis*. 2 vols. 8th ed. Leipzig: Teubner.
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