

SAPPHO AT ROME: A REVIEW ARTICLE

Thea S. THORSEN, Stephen J. HARRISON (eds.), *Roman Receptions of Sappho*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019 (Classical Presences), XV, 455 pp., ISBN 978-0-19-882943-0, £95.00.

This volume, consisting of fifteen essays, tries to shed new light on the history of the reception of Sappho in Rome. Along with a more profound analysis of what can be labelled as “Sapphic” in Latin poets, further perspectives are offered through some new findings (i.e., the Papyrus of Cologne and the Newest Sappho, recollecting the *Brothers Song* and the *Kypris Song*) which allow us to better recognise how carefully Latin poets reworked their Greek predecessor. In the introduction (“*Ecce Sappho*”, pp. 1–26), Thea THORSEN takes into account three Sappho scholars, Friedrich Gottlieb WELCKER (1784–1868), Ulrich VON WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF (1848–1931), and David M. ROBINSON (1880–1958), underscoring how their times were ideologically different from ours. After revisiting some important evidence for Sappho’s ancient reception and focusing on Roman literature, the introduction integrates Shane BUTLER’s new concept of Deep Classics with a particular interpretation of Kyaer Tofte’s painting reproduced on the cover of the book: the shadow (something distant but, like Sappho, always present), the flower (symbolising the perishable nature of our world) and the bottle (associated with luxury, exuberance, and celebration).

The volume deals with many topics, although the level of persuasiveness of the discussions varies, so I have decided to organise them into six thematic groups (and some essays will appear more than once), focusing on the content displayed and from time to time adding some brief remarks of my own.

How many “Sappho(s)”?

Talking about the Roman reception of Sappho means facing authors (from Catullus and Lucretius on) who reworked a Greek model according to their own sensibility; to do so, however, they had many more – and much clearer – materials available to them than we do; that is to say not only direct testimonies, but also a considerable amount of literary criticism. On the other hand, the situation for us as later recipients of classical poetry means that, while the “original” Sappho is only available to us in fragments, the reworked Sappho that we find in Latin literature shows some peculiar features depending on how Latin poets decided to exploit the various elements of Sapphic poetry or of the Sappho legend to fashion a single poem or a part of it. Therefore, one could say that we cannot claim to deal with a single “Sappho”, since we possess her mostly in terms of the (ancient and modern) perspective from which we are reading.

To introduce us to all these issues, Thea S. THORSEN (“Sappho: Transparency and Obstruction”, pp. 27–44) focuses on some preliminary problems about *our* reception of Sappho: the loss of material about her, the lack of scholarly recognition of her work and some claims of inauthenticity. As for the first issue, we must hopefully state that some recently discovered papyri shed new light on Sappho’s influence on Roman poets: one of the most striking instances is no doubt the words τὰδ’ ἄλλα | πάντα δαίμονεσσιν ἐπιτροπέωμεν (“Let us entrust all other things to the gods”, *P.Sapph.* OBBINK, *Brothers Song*, 13–14), which closely recalls Hor. *Carm.* I 9, 9: “permitte diuis cetera”. This statement is even more important if we think that the Horatian sentence is generally related to the “Epicurean” component of the poem.

Other precious testimonies, however, have been ignored: see for instance Chamaeleon’s treatise on Sappho (4th/3rd cent. BC) which is left out of even the best-known reference sources such as *OCD*, but also Tatian’s account (2nd cent. AD), referring to the poet’s statue that was brought from Syracuse to Rome (not to mention the general distrust about the authenticity of Ovid’s *Heroides* 15).

Some further stereotypes about Sappho are also far from being overcome. The first concerns Sappho's alleged ugliness, which is contradicted by some reliable testimonies depicting her as very beautiful: Alc. fr. 384 CAMPBELL; Anacreon fr. 358, 3; Pl. *Phaedr.* 235C. Indeed, the only texts stressing the poet's ugliness date from much later than those previously adduced (*P.Oxy.* 1800, fr. 1, but I should observe that in Ovid's *Heroides* 15, 32 we read "formae damna [...] meae", see ELISEI below), so their value should not be overestimated as has been the case in the past.

Something new also needs to be said about the idea of Sappho as a prostitute: this concept probably derives from the misunderstanding of a homonymy between Sappho the poet and another Sappho who was *actually* a *hetaera*. In the *Brothers Song*, indeed, we read that Sappho chastises her brother for his alliance with a *hetaera*, a circumstance that surprisingly confirms what we read in Herodotus (II 135), who tells us about a poem in which Sappho disapproved of the *hetaera* with whom her brother Charaxus had fallen in love. This antipathy is confirmed by a quotation from Posidippus in Athenaeus' *Learned Banqueters*. Any other attempt to demonstrate that Sappho was a *hetaera* rests on the misreading of ancient texts, the statements of which relating to Sappho's attractive power over a number of poets should not be understood in a sexual sense, but rather as symbolising her poetic relevance and style from which her male colleagues drew inspiration. To separate Sappho the poet from Sappho the *hetaera*, we can, therefore, rely on the third-century AD writer Aelian, who names Phaon, Sappho the poet, and Sappho the *hetaera* in three separate but consecutive passages (*VH* XII 18 f.), and on the Byzantine lexicon *Suda*, which shows in two separate entries "Sappho" as the Λεσβία [...] λυρική ("Lesbian lyric poet", Σ 107) and Sappho as the Λεσβία [...] ψάλτρια ("Lesbian lyre-player", Σ 108), an obviously ambiguous term. Overall, we must say that the only reliable evidence supporting this negative portrait of the poet is the oration of the Christian apologist Tatian who criticises Sappho as a "miserable little love-crazed whore of a woman" (γύναιον πορνικὸν ἔρωτομανές, *Ad Gr.* 33, 5, line 20 MARCOVICH). It is quite easy to imagine that this humiliating label has to do with the general contempt for everything which ancient Greek civilisation stood for in the eyes of the Christian writer, who saw the pre-Christian world as poisoned by all kinds of immorality.

Against the generally accepted (mis?)conception according to which Sapphic love is poor in kisses and caresses, THORSEN lists a conspicuous series of passages from Catullus, Propertius, and the disputed Ovid's *Heroides* 15 where the "amalgamation of love as sex and love as poetry [...] proves particularly productive in Sappho's Roman reception" (p. 42).

'Roman' Sappho, therefore, is a poetic character whose 'true' essence blurs through the many lenses poets and critics put in front of her, so that it is perhaps not surprising to find authors who rework Sapphic cues also considering what literary criticism said about her and critics who follow earlier scholarly remarks and deliberately ignore her poetry. R. HUNTER ("Notes on the Ancient Reception of Sappho", pp. 45–60) helps us to explore this topic: Quintilian, probably influenced by Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *On Imitation*, does not mention Sappho among the Greek lyric poets; both critics, concerned with drawing the profile of the perfect orator or writer of πολιτικοὶ λόγοι, were reluctant to take into account Sappho's love pains.

The situation changes if we look at Catullus' diptych poems 50 and 51, which show a high level of poetic self-consciousness in terms of how to interact with an illustrious model of the past and also with contemporary critical reflections about it. HUNTER's proposal starts from Ps.-Longinus' commentary on Sappho 31 (*Subl.* 10, 3): the Greek poet recalls a lot of physical symptoms to describe her love diseases (παθῶν σύνοδος, Ps.-Longinus says) and Catullus claims that watching Lesbia in love with another man "omnis eripit sensus" (51, 6). Ps.-Longinus, nonetheless, says something more, observing that Sappho seems to describe all those symptoms "as they belonged to someone else" (πάνθ' ὡς ἀλλότρια διοιχόμενα ἐπιζητεῖ). That closely resembles what Catullus does when he translates, because he actually looks back to the poetry of the past merely in search of *someone else's emotions* to be carried into his description of jealousy and dejection. Another Sapphic feature of Cat. 51 is probably the anaphora featured in the so-called *otium* stanza (see fr. 104a and 114 VOIGT), while the stanza itself, with its sudden thematic change, could reflect the Sapphic technique

of μεταβολή, as we can see in fr. 111 VOIGT. Did Catullus ‘learn’ these techniques merely by reading Sappho or perhaps also by taking into account contemporary critical observations about her style? In any case, the Roman poet does not limit himself to *one* rendition of his model: poem 50 develops the list of symptoms of erotic distress by focusing more on their behavioural *facies* (lack of appetite, the inability to sleep, etc.) than on the simply internal and physical one as in poem 51 and Sappho 31. Moreover, the description is highly metaphorical, so that the ‘modernised’ Sapphic rendition of love pains (Cat. 50) comes before the ‘archaic’ (or traditional) one (Cat. 51).

A critically reworked Sappho, in other words, foregoes the ‘traditional’ one. It is not, therefore, very striking that a contemporary of Catullus, Lucretius, even tries to activate a kind of ‘anti-Sappho in Sappho’, undermining, for example, Sappho’s understanding of love (L. FULKERSON, “Lucretius and Sapphic *uoluptas*”, pp. 61–76). A comparison of *De rerum natura* III 152–160 (about the general feeling of fear) and Sappho 31 shows that Lucretius describes the physical effects of fear in a manner that is very close to Sappho’s love symptoms. In this way, the Latin poet makes a double poetic reversal: Sappho’s poems had already reworked the Homeric experience of engaging in a battle with a superior who is often seen and feared like a god; in *De rerum natura* we see that love turns again into fear: Lucretius succeeds in showing “the unstable nature of all vividly felt human emotions” and the identity of love and terror (p. 69).

To see how critical observations about Sappho can be used to explicitly mark one specific poetic choice instead of another, we must wait for the Augustan age: as we read in R. HUNTER’s second essay, “Sappho and Latin Poetry. The Case of Horace” (pp. 151–164, a reprinting of a previous paper of 2007), after declaring in Sapphic terms (i.e. with intertextual allusions to Sappho 1 and 31) his love for Ligurinus (*Carm.* IV 1), Horace in *Carm.* IV 2 expresses his rejection of Pindaric style, showing a high degree of consciousness regarding contemporary literary criticism. We must, in fact, remember that the extant text of Sappho 1 comes to us from Dionysius’ treatise (*Comp.* 23, 11) and that it is quoted there simply as an example of a smooth (γλαφυρά) style of composition, in opposition to the αὔστηρά (‘harsh’) poetic manner of Pindar which shows itself in the dithyrambs. So, since in *Carm.* IV 2 Pindar’s poetry is compared to a swollen torrent and his dithyrambs are called *audacis*, we may suppose that Horace follows Dionysius’ statement about both the roughness of Pindar’s style and the importance of Sappho as the forerunner of Hellenistic/Roman poetic taste. That helps us to explain why Horace pursues Ligurinus “per aquas [...] uolubilis” (*Carm.* IV 1, 40), because the imagery recalls the idea of Sapphic lines which flow easily and gently as expressed in Dionysius’ treatise (see the general explanation in 23, 2: ὥσπερ τὰ ρέοντα καὶ μηδέποτε ἀτρεμοῦντα).

Finally, just to confirm how challenging the path to knowing ‘Sappho’ is, this volume ends with the most comprehensive collection of Greek and Latin testimonies on Sappho to date, with English translations (Thea S. THORSEN, Robert Emil BERGE, “Receiving Receptions Received. A New Collection of *Testimonia Sapphica* c. 600 BC–AD 1000”, pp. 289–402). The authors explain the criteria applied to this collection and the differences from previous ones, the most significant of which are undoubtedly the choice to consider as a *testimonium* of a specific work or author a statement which actually includes some sort of reference to this work or author, and the organisation of texts in chronological order, with a temporal span from Alcaeus and Herodotus to c. 1000 AD. All the assembled items thus represent “a case of classical reception to the third degree, namely the present volume’s contemporary reception of twentieth-century scholarly receptions of pre-medieval receptions of the poetry and poet-figure of Sappho” (p. 289): of course, all these degrees must be taken into account when approaching such a complex but at the same time fragmentary poet, in order to avoid biased or superficial interpretations of what antiquity let survive of her artistic magnitude.

(2) *Catullus and Sappho (and Callimachus): rework and reversal*

What has been mentioned above leads us to one of the core themes of the volume, i.e. the way Sapphic inspiration is reworked by Catullus in terms of a subtle reversal of some significant

Sapphic cues, along with the capability of getting closer to and then distancing himself from his model.

In her second contribution (“As Important as Callimachus? An Essay on Sappho in Catullus and Beyond”, pp.77–94), Thea THORSEN deals with this relationship and begins with a teasing question: can Sappho be considered as important as Callimachus in the context of Roman literature? The answer is in the affirmative, but of course, many details need to be taken into account. Beyond any doubt, Sappho and Callimachus are the most appreciated Greek poets in Catullus, even considering the fact that he decides to artistically translate *only* their poems (instead of anything else) with an exact metrical rendition (the Sapphic stanza common to Cat. 51 and Sappho 31, the elegiac couplet common to Cat. 66 and Callimachus’ *Coma Berenices*). Both poets, besides, could provide Catullus with cues to develop both erotic and literary topics (see p. 88: THORSEN does not agree with the idea that “Sappho is traditionally seen as the great model for concepts of love and gender, while Callimachus is seen as a model for poetics and aesthetic ideals”). For instance, Callimachus can pair a discussion of literary values and homoerotic love: see *Epigr.* 28 PF. = *Anth. Pal.* XII 42 and *Epigr.* 30 (MAIR and MAIR). On the other hand, Catullus deals with Sapphic inspiration, showing how problematic a relationship with a (great) female model could be for a Latin male poet. A reading of poem 51 and poem 11 not only encompasses the main focuses of Catullus’ love (jealousy and renunciation), but also enlightens his ‘use/abuse’ of the Sapphic model: in fact, the archaic poet is firstly ‘embraced’ (Cat. 51) and then ‘dismissed’ (Cat. 11). Thus, declaring his jealousy towards Lesbia (employing Sapphic vocabulary) and then his firm determination to end any relationship with her (again in a Sapphic stanza) is also a way of showing a personal poetic evolution from dependence to independence from Sappho. The Roman poet seems therefore to fashion a literary canon that, from Sappho *via* Callimachus, ends with himself; a canon, we may notice, “where the ancient dynamics of ζήλος (‘zeal’/‘eagerness’/‘rivalry’) provide the principle for the selection and certain ideas of style and taste provide the intrinsic affinity” (p. 90).

Focusing now on Sappho, the multi-faceted tradition about her as a woman, a Muse or a *hetaera* helps Catullus in shaping Lesbia’s portrait: L.M. GRAM (“*Odi et amo*. On Lesbia’s Name in Catullus”, pp. 95–118) displays the many perspectives bound to the multiple significance of the name ‘Lesbia’ and argues that the first set of links is composed by the triplet Lesbia – Sappho – Muse. Many ancient sources used to consider Sappho as the tenth Muse (see e.g. *Anth. Pal.* VII 14 or VII 407, 1–4), and this parallel is also evident in a Latin poet who is very close to Catullus, i.e. Propertius (see II 3, 13–20). So, if we turn to Cat. 35, where the poet addresses a *puella* who is more learned than a *Sapphica Musa*, we can easily argue that Catullus too associates Sappho with the Muses. However, if we go further, accepting HEYWORTH’s hypothesis (see p. 100) which reads *Sapphica Musa* as “the girl who inspired Sappho”, it is also easy to connect this statement to Cat. 51: here, with the well-known reversal, Catullus plays the ‘Sapphic’ role of a jealous lover and contemplates *Lesbia*, her *Muse*, in love with another man, who inspires a poem written in a *Sapphic* stanza.

Lesbia’s beauty should also lead us to dismiss the notion of Sappho’s alleged ugliness, since many sources underline the legendary attractiveness of Lesbian women. As for Sappho the *hetaera*, Catullus could have exploited the ambiguousness of this account to assign to his beloved some features of the *hetaera* of New Comedy, such as unfaithfulness and promiscuity. Moreover, Sappho’s alleged ‘masculinity’, regarding her dominating role in a homosexual relationship, could have helped Catullus to fashion Lesbia’s role as an active subject. Finally, reflecting upon the most detrimental implications of the name ‘Lesbia’, namely its connection to sexual acts like *fellatio*, GRAM agrees with all the previous scholarship and reads beyond the name Lesbia and some verbs like *glubit* (see Cat. 58) the obscene allusion to the Greek verb λεσβιάζειν.

To come closer to the issue of poetic reversal, O. THÉVENAZ (“Sapphic Echoes in Catullus 1–14”, pp. 119–135) draws attention to some Catullan *polymetra* (namely poems 2, 3, 6 and 8) in order to find Sapphic echoes which rise from the opposition between Sappho’s erotic voice and her nuptial voice. I will focus on poems 2, 3 and 8 (since in my opinion the connection between poem

6 and Sappho fr. 137 is too weak). I feel that the parallels taken into account are not all equally convincing: the most perspicuous one is undoubtedly found in Cat. 11, where the closing simile (lines 22–24, the poet compared to a flower cut by a plough), recalls what we read in fr. 105b VOIGT (i.e. a wedding song), thus activating a clever reversal from a poem celebrating marriage, love and the loss of virginity to a poem in which a quasi-matrimonial situation breaks up into a sad farewell due to her numerous liaisons.

THÉVENAZ takes into account other poems characterised by subtle intertextuality, e.g. the dip-tych of poems 2–3, which according to him were inspired by Sappho's *Ode to Aphrodite*. The first of the *passer* poems (Cat. 2) shows the ABA structure (invocation-narration-final invocation) typical of a cletic hymn and formally identical to that of the Sapphic ode (but precisely the fact that this structure is such a widespread feature of cletic hymns means that Sappho 2 cannot be considered as a primary source). A weak point of this analysis is the idea that the solemn Sapphic aura would be brought down to earth through a fictional dialogue with a sparrow (i.e. a courtesan's pet), while on the other hand, by means of idealising the epigrammatic situation, the *puella* would be elevated to divine status, since the sparrow is an attribute she shares with Aphrodite. I would not like to say how much humour and desacralisation even the cleverest reader of Catullus could perceive when reading the first *passer* poem, nor do I think he could be convinced that the dead sparrow's descent to the Underworld recalls the descent of Aphrodite's sparrow from Heaven to earth. I also have some difficulties in recognising intertextual parallels between the two poems and Sappho (Cat. 2, 7–8 ~ fr. 25–26 Voigt: χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον | ἐκ μερίμναν; Cat. 3, 10–11 ~ fr. 114 VOIGT: “‘Virginity, virginity, where are you gone, leaving me behind?’ ‘No longer will I come to you, no longer will I come’”). Similar observations can be made about Catullus 8. Instead of an alleged structural analogy with Sappho 2, I find the reversal triggered when Catullus makes a self-exhortation to stop the love pains more convincing: while Sappho would like Aphrodite to help her to *make* the beloved girl *want* to return her love, Catullus *does not want* to desire Lesbia *anymore*. Sappho's girl should fall in love with the poet even against her own will, while Lesbia is assured she will never be loved *invitam*.

(3) *Literary forerunning and reverse aemulatio: Sappho in Horace and Ovid*

We noticed above that Horace expresses the idea of Sappho as a forerunner of Augustan poetic taste. To understand how he views his condition of an epigone, Thea S. THORSEN in her third essay (“Sappho, Alcaeus, and the Literary Timing of Horace”, pp. 165–184) tries to reconsider the relationship between Horace's *Carm.* IV 9 and I 15 through the double lens of Alcaeus fr. 42 and 283 and Sappho fr. 16, with particular regard to the latter. I must say that THORSEN's argument is not always lucid, even though the conclusions are fascinating. Some doubts arise when the scholar tries to argue a significant connection between Sappho and Helen in Horace's *Carm.* IV 9, 10–16 due to their position at the centre of a catalogue of Greek male poets and mythical heroes; the poet and the heroine would also be paired by their burning love (Sappho's *calores* are symmetrical to Helen, who “*comptos arsit adulteri crinis*”). To capture the essence of the discourse, it is perhaps better to concentrate only on *Carm.* I 15, where Nereus prophesies to Paris, who has just abducted Helen, all the disasters his actions will produce. In recalling what caused the Trojan War (i.e. Helen's abduction), Sappho fr. 16 particularly insists on the power of love, which led Paris to bring Helen to Troy, while the Greek princess shows neither grief nor regret in comparison with the Homeric account of *Il.* III 176, but on the contrary, plays a remarkably active role. Moreover, it is in fr. 16 that Helen is depicted as totally infatuated with Paris before her arrival at Troy. This strong statement also has a metapoetic function since it underlines the “upper hand” of the lyric genre “compared to the epic genre of Homeric war” (p. 168). A slightly different picture seems to be drawn by Alcaeus fr. 283 VOIGT: his narrative of the relationship between Helen, Paris and the Trojan War shows that Helen's commitment strongly overcomes that of Paris (who, as in Sappho fr. 16, is not even named) but, in contrast to Sappho, the Greek princess seems totally lacking in rationality and overwhelmed by the strength of her love. That leads THORSEN to conclude that from

Sappho's perspective, in contrast to that of Homer and Alcaeus, the Trojan War 'depends' on a love affair in a hierarchic sense, as well as, from a metapoetic point of view, love and love poetry are far superior to war and epic poetry: as Helen 'controls' Paris, so the lyric inspiration 'controls' the epic one. That could help us to understand what Horace really wants to mean when composing *Carm.* I 15: he probably wants to show his awareness of the fact that Sappho has already tried to emulate both the Homeric and the Alcaic model, so he in turn is ready to emulate Homer, Alcaeus, and Sappho. To understand this we may add Alc. fr. 42 VOIGT, where we find a summary of the wedding ceremony of Peleus and Thetis and the mention of the old Nereus leading his daughter to her future groom. It is quite clear that Horace, in *Carm.* I 15, is rewriting an elegant compression of the Iliadic narrative created by Sappho and Alcaeus, but in addition he develops the second suggestion that is present in Alcaeus: why does Nereus the prophet lead his daughter to the wedding ceremony despite his foreknowledge of all the ugly consequences of the nuptial banquet? In Horace: why does Nereus prophesy to Paris things that are by now unavoidable? Why, in other words, is there this belated (i.e. useless) prophecy? Probably Horace, in his bold attempt to emulate *three* Greek predecessors, is aware of the risk of this operation and shows the typical attitude of the Hellenistic-Augustan poets who feel that they 'come after' a long and respectable tradition (but, from another point of view, 'after' could also mean 'too late'). Nereus' lyric prophecy, which takes place *before* the events chronicled in the Homeric poems, but *cannot stop* nor *change* the course of events, expresses precisely this feeling: many things have already been done in poetry, so a younger artist has to make a greater effort than before in order to find his own place and reach poetic immortality.

If Horace, and Catullus before him, considered Sappho as the (lyric) inspiring model for their (lyric) poetry, Ovid definitely goes beyond his predecessors, merging many aspects of the Greek poet to offer his audience a picture of Sappho as a forerunner of *elegiac* poetry, but also as a reliable teacher of loving strategies. As J. INGLEHEART ("*Vates Lesbica*. Images of Sappho in the Poetry of Ovid", pp. 205–226) argues, we find the first of the Ovidian portraits of Sappho in *Amores* II 18, 26. Even though the Greek poet is unnamed, Ovid not only mentions her as a forerunner of elegy, but also emphasises, in a stronger stress than before, her activity as a producer of *written* poetry, in harsh contrast to the tradition of oral performances of Lesbian poetry. Ovid is thus clearly depicting Sappho according to more modern literary ideas, which bring her closer to the spirit of Augustan poetry. This symbolic *magistra-discipulus* relationship seems further underscored when Ovid names Sappho and asks "quid enim lascivius illa?" (*Ars am.* III 331): this 'Ovidian' adjective (see n. 35) lets the reader think that Ovid *himself* is *lascivior* than Sappho, so he is fully entitled to recommend Sappho's readings in order to learn 'Lesbian' love in the lowercase meaning. These witty puns go on in *Remedia amoris* 757–766, a passage which in reverse establishes the role of Sappho as a mistress of heterosexual love: her poetry makes Ovid "meliorem [...] amicae" ("better company for my girl-friend") and, differently from Anacreon's poetry, leads the reader into "rigidos [...] mores" (with all the spicy meaning this expression evokes). Sappho is also the forerunner of all erotodidactic poetry (see also *Trist.* II 365: "Lesbia quid docuit Sappho nisi amare puellas?" – should this verse mean that Sappho's poetry helps Ovid to become a good heterosexual lover or that homosexual love with girls is the key-teaching of the Greek poet?). With all these features recognised, it is not surprising that in *Her.* 15 Sappho calls herself *uates*: in the Ovidian picture she plays a complex role, since she can deal with Aphrodite both in the religious and the erotic meaning. She plays her role as a forerunner in the sense that Ovid, instead of representing himself as a Sapphic poet, sketches a pre-Ovidian Sappho, portraying her "as the wanton instructor of women and the knowledgeable purveyor of erotic lore to men" (p. 225).

This connection of Sappho with elegy allows the witty 'Ovid' of *Her.* 15 to be very playful in making Sappho (the forerunner) display all the rhetorical strategies typical of her Roman 'disciple': when she addresses Phaon, her words, in fact, recall the *praecepta amoris* expressed in the *Ars Amatoria*. C. ELISEI ("*Sappho as a Pupil of the praeceptor amoris* and Sappho as *magistra amoris*. Some Lessons of the *Ars Amatoria* Anticipated in *Heroides* 15", pp. 227–248) carefully lists all the features of Sappho's speech. Firstly, she praises her beloved's beauty, comparing him

and herself to mythological pairs such as Apollo and Daphne or Bacchus and Ariadne (ll. 21–30); a further aim of these comparisons becomes apparent in the following lines. Since she is perfectly aware of being not so beautiful, the mention of those fair heroines of the past allows her to underline her *true* beauty, that is to say her poetic talent, which is so great as to cast a shadow over the question of her ugliness. This strategy of underestimating one's own disadvantages (*excusatio vitiorum*, see ll. 31–40) while exalting one's good qualities (*commendatio virtutum*, see ll. 41–50) is also typical of Ovidian erotodidaxis: in *Ars am.* I 595–596 the poet recommends “si uox est, canta; si mollia bracchia, salta | et, quacumque potes dote placere, place”, while the strategy of diminishing one's flaws is expressed in *Ars am.* II 661–662 (“dic habilem, quaecumque breuis; quae turgida, plenam, | et lateat uitium proximitate boni”) as well as in III 261–263. The same is done by Sappho when she compares her *brevis mensura* with the *unmeasurable* extension of her fame (*nomen*, see *Her.* 15, 28). There can also be the intermediate situation of *accipere in meliorem partem* (i.e. not replacing a fault with an equivalent virtue, but by using a euphemism). Seeking the way of debunking the problem of having a dark complexion, Ovid distinguishes *niger* from *fuscus* (see *Am.* II 4, 40: “est etiam in fusco grata colore uenus”) in order to soften the contrast with the more acceptable *candor* and so to mitigate the negative idea connected to physical ‘darkness’. In *Her.* 15 Sappho does not claim to be *nigra* or *fusca*, but only says “candida si non sum” (35). This strategy naturally also works, in reverse, in the *Remedia amoris*, where in order to get rid of his erotic passion, the lover must consider only the girl's faults to convince himself that she is not worth loving (see *Rem.* 315: “profuit assidue uitis insistere amicae” and again, but this time in reverse, 327: “turgida, si plena est, si fusca est, nigra uocetur”). All that being the case, I think that more evidence may be presented in support of the authenticity of *Her.* 15, and something more can also be said thanks to the comparison to the newest Sappho (see below).

(4) *The newest discoveries and their importance*

Some recently discovered papyri which have provided us with new fragments of Sappho help us understand something more about how Augustan poets received her poetry. For instance (according to R. HUNTER, “Sappho and Latin Poetry...”, p. 153), the fine Sapphic intertextuality of Horace's *Carm.* IV 1 mentioned above is confirmed by what we read in the new Cologne poem by Sappho (fr. 58), where the poet complains about old age (see *Carm.* IV 1, 29–31: “Me nec femina nec puer | iam nec spes animi credula mutui | nec certare iuuat mero”). The same fragment is used by S. HARRISON (“Shades of Sappho in Vergil”, pp. 147 f.), but his proposal is less convincing: a divine being (Dawn) carries a young man overtaken by old age (Tithonus) to the ends of the earth. Vergil could have reworked this cue in the story of Cycnus' metamorphosis after the death of his beloved, Phaeton (*Aen.* X 189–193), thus giving a smart homoerotic touch to Sappho's heterosexual account. By the admission of the scholar himself, this hypothesis is somewhat speculative (and I totally agree).

In any case, the most striking set of intertextual readings is provided by the newest Sappho papyrus, discovered by Dirk OBBINK in 2014 and then published in 2016¹, which belongs to a Roman-period copy of an Alexandrian edition of Sappho and develops a couple of themes in particular (personal erotic desire and family/autobiography). These themes echo strikingly in *Her.* 15, so that

¹ A. BIERL, A. LARDINOIS (eds.), *The Newest Sappho: P. Sapph. Obbink and P. GC inv. 105, frs. 1–4*, Leiden–Boston 2016 (Studies in Archaic and Classical Greek Song, vol. 2). I report here a notice by the book's editors published on the Brill website (June 2020): “In the past years, following the first publication of this book, serious doubts have been raised about the reported provenance of the papyri discussed in this book, especially in Chapter 2: See M. Sampson, ‘Deconstructing the Provenances of P.Sapph.Obbink,’ in *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 57 (2020, 143–169). These questions about the provenance do not affect the authenticity of the fragments themselves – they appear to be authentic” (<https://brill.com/view/title/32801>).

the Ovidian poem becomes an even more precious testimony of Sappho's reception in Rome (and, in my opinion, many doubts about its authenticity can now be definitely overcome).

About that issue, we may read some interesting remarks in another essay by Thea S. THORSEN, "The newest Sappho (2016) and Ovid's *Heroides* 15" (pp. 249–264): in the new fragment called *Kypris Song*, Sappho addresses Aphrodite with an epithet Κύπρι, δέσποιν' (something one would never expect, for instance, in epic poetry) and represents herself in a complaining pose that we could define as "loving but not loved": in *Her.* 15 Sappho says exactly the same thing (96: "non ut ames oro, me sed amare sinas") after invoking Aphrodite with a precious epithet (57: "tu quoque quae montes celebras, Erycina, Sicanos"), which could also contain an allusion to Sappho's exile in Sicily as we now can read in the newest fragments.

As for the family/autobiographic element of Sapphic poetry, the new findings add crucial evidence to what we already knew about this topic. The newest papyrus shows that the poet is very concerned about her brother Charaxus in view of a dangerous sea journey which he has undertaken or his 'enslavement' to a prostitute on whom he has been able to spend all his money (in addition to the already well-known fr. 5 and fr. 15 VOIGT, see now fr. 5 and fr. 15 OBBINK and *Brothers Song*). In both cases, Sappho is all but careless, and in the second one in particular she does not hold back from expressing her full disapproval of Charaxus' moral conduct.

We may find something similar in *Her.* 15, where Sappho says, for instance, "arsit iners frater meretricis captus amore" (63) and "factus inops agili peragit freta caerulea remo" (65), expressions which adequately summarise the content of Sappho's fragments, also with apparent reference to the Herodotean account of Charaxus' misbehaviour (see *Hdt.* II 135). Secondly, in *Her.* 15, 117–120 Sappho complains about the mocking ingratitude that Charaxus showed when Phaon abandoned her (see 117–118: "gaudet et e nostro crescit maerore Charaxus | frater") which closely recalls behaviour Sappho complains about in fr. 16a OBBINK:] ατ· ὅττινας γάρ | εὐθέω, κῆνοί με μάλιστα σίννον· | τ' ἐξἄδοκῆ[τω.] ⊗ ("For whomsoever I treat favourably, those most of all harm me without warning"). In OBBINK's fragments and in the *Brothers Song*, Sappho strongly underlines her loyalty, which is so badly repaid by her brother. Similarly, *Her.* 15 features this sorrow (see 68–68: "me quoque, quod monui bene multa fideliter, odit; | hoc mihi libertas, hoc pia lingua dedit") and also reminds us of the importance of prayers and invocations to the gods in the relationship between the two siblings.

There is, however, a detail which shows how far the author of *Her.* 15 wants to push his Sapphic inspiration: while in Sappho's fragments about Charaxus we can see some optimism about the destiny that is in the hands of the gods (see fr. 16a: [ὄλβιον] μὲν οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι | [πάμπ]αν ἄνθρωπ[ον· π]εδέχην δ' ἄρασθαι | [ἔστιν ἔσλων μοῖραν. ἔγω] δ' ἔμ' αὐταί | [τοῦτο σύνοιδα]), in *Her.* 15 the poet seems less confident about fate (see 59–60: "an grauis inceptum peragit fortuna tenorem | et manet in cursu semper acerba suo?"). That is probably due to the elegiac spirit of the text: also the optimism of the Greek model needs to be turned into something closer to the *fleBILE carmen* required by the rules of this genre.

(5) Sapphic Aphrodite in programmatic passages: the case of Lucretius and Horace

Some observations about the connection between Sappho 1 and the opening invocation to Venus in Lucretius' *De rerum natura* allow us to recognise the thin line that separates good intertextual proposals from more generic (and therefore not satisfying) solutions. L. FULKERSON ("Lucretius and Sapphic *uoluptas*", p. 66) reflects on the way Lucretius reworks Sappho's imagery: if Sappho 1 calls Aphrodite *symmachos*, Lucretius wants Venus to be his *socia* (in Greek: *epikouros*) in writing philosophical verses, thus activating a double set of allusive levels, both to the ancient poet and the Hellenistic philosopher. This observation can be enhanced by R. HUNTER's argument ("Sappho and Latin Poetry...", p. 160): since Venus, metonymically, means also 'grace', Lucretius turns the Sapphic request for help from love affairs into the composition of elegant verses (see I 123: *amabile*, that is to say *uenustum*). In this way, the proem also gains a Callimachean nuance (see *Aitia* fr. 7, 13–14 PF.). HUNTER also finds a Sapphic reworking in Horace's *Carm.* IV 1 when the poet, involved not with one but two addressees, invokes the goddess' aid (see 1–2: "Intermissa, Venus,

diu | rursus bella moues? Parce precor, precor”, where *bella* recalls σύμμαχος and “parce, precor precor” translates λίσσομαι σε...). Even if at the beginning of the poem he seems less than eager to fight for love again, his erotic desire will show in the end. So far, both scholars deliver a convincing analysis; some more doubt emerges when they try to go further in their intertextual comparison, wondering why neither Sappho nor Horace *actually* explain what exactly Venus should do to tame her/his love pains. In FULKERSON’S view (p. 67), this fact would lead to the conclusion that the Sapphic goddess somewhat foreshadows the impersonal Love of Empedocles or the ‘atomistic’ Venus (or any other god) of Lucretius, that is to say, deities whose intervention cannot assure the total fulfilment of human desire nor the absence of strong delusions (see e.g. how the Iphigenia story ends). Similarly, Horace’s incomplete request should be an interpretation of what Sappho lets shine through her ode, the incapability of conjuring away the real pain of ‘Aphrodite’, i.e. of unrequited desire (HUNTER, p. 159). If the latter explanation would probably need to be deepened, FULKERSON’S proposal sounds a little anachronistic to me.

(6) *A less echoing Sappho: Propertius, Vergil, and Roman Epigram*

As for other Latin authors, the Sapphic influence is sometimes very slight, and is sometimes only less in quantity, but not in significance. After careful scrutiny of Propertius’ elegies, S.J. HEYWORTH (“Sappho in Propertius?”, pp. 185–204) argues that every time the Augustan poet seems to recall anything worth tracing back to Sappho, it can be more easily placed in parallel with some Hellenistic predecessors, if not with Catullus. At the end of his investigation, HEYWORTH argues that it is not Propertius, but only Cynthia who is influenced by Sappho. When we read *Carmina* II 3, 19 (“et quantum Aeolio cum temptat carmina plectro” etc.), we must conclude that Propertius means to praise his beloved’s poetic ability, clearly influenced by the Aeolian poet.

S. HARRISON (“Shades of Sappho in Vergil”, pp. 137–150) argues that modern scholarship has not yet noticed the importance of allusions to Sappho in *all* three works by Vergil, considering only the description of Lavinia’s love symptoms (*Aen.* XII 67–69) as having been influenced by Sappho fr. 31. There are many more elements worth taking into account, however. For instance, the image of the Evening Star shepherding flocks home (see the hexameters in fr. 104a CAMPBELL) is reworked in the final lines both of *Ecl.* 6 (see 85–86: “cogere donec ouis stabulis numerumque referre | iussit et inuito processit Vesper Olympo”) and *Ecl.* 10 (see 77: “ite domum saturae, uenit Hesperus, ite capellae”), but also *Georg.* IV 186–187: “Vesper ubi e pastu tandem decedere campis | admonuit”. Neither Callimachus nor Apollonius, although they both mention ἄστὴρ ἄλλιος, provide Vergil with such a reliable model. Differently from HAYWORTH, however, HARRISON also tends to consider those Vergilian passages which show similarities with Catullus as having been influenced by Sappho: see *Ecl.* 8, 37–38 compared to Sappho fr. 105 VOIGT and Catullus 62, 39–47, but also *Aen.* IX 434–437 (Euryalus) and XI 68–71 (Pallas) compared to Sappho fr. 104 VOIGT and Catullus 11, 21–24; 61, 87–89; 62, 39–47. Vergil probably connects the Sapphic allegory of defloration to the idea that these young warriors (to whom Sapphic allusions could also add some kind of homoeroticism) will not be allowed to know the status of marriage.

Of course, Aeneas is also involved: the beginning of the *Aeneid* could recall Sappho fr. 17, 1–7 VOIGT/CAMPBELL, representing heroes leaving Troy. Moreover, in Book IV Aeneas keeps resisting Anna’s entreaties and is compared to an oak standing against the Alpine north winds (see Sappho fr. 47 VOIGT: Ἔπος δ’ ἐτίναξέ <μοι> | φρένας, ὡς ἄνεμος κὰτ ὄρος δρύσιν ἐμπέτρων): Vergil reworks his model so that “the Sapphic invincibility of love is [...] itself overcome for communitarian purposes” (p. 146).

Finally, G. NISBET’S survey (“Sappho in Roman Epigram”, pp. 265–288) shows that, in the span from the 1st century BC to late antiquity, some Greek epigrammatists used to quote Sappho (see Tullius Laurea in *Anth. Pal.* VII 17, Philodemus of Gadara *ibidem* XII 7, Damocharis in *Anth. Pal.*, Planudean Appendix 310). On the Latin side, we can read something undoubtedly Sapphic in Valerius Aedituus (1st century BC), whose lines describing love symptoms were preserved in Aulus Gellius’ *Attic Nights* (“uerba labris abeunt, | per pectus manat subito <subido> mihi sudor”). On the

other hand, very little evidence is available to argue that Sappho had a strong influence on Martial's epigrams (see pp. 274 ff.).

To sum up, this volume's overall contribution to a deeper awareness of how Sappho was received in Rome is unquestionable. From among the parallels discussed, only a few seem too bold and in need of being more substantiated. Perhaps, a Latin poet significantly missing in this volume is Seneca *tragicus*: since two choruses of his tragedies, written in Sapphic metres (*Phaedra* 274–324 in minor Sapphic hendecasyllable and *Medea* 579–606 in Sapphic stanza), deal with erotic issues (jealousy and the overwhelming power of love), some possible relationship with the Greek poet could have been investigated.

Giuseppe Bocchi
Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Brescia
giuseppe.bocchi@unicatt.it

ORCID:0000-0002-8476-0722