

Synthesis: an Anglophone Journal of Comparative Literary Studies

No 12 (2019)

Recomposed: Anglophone Presences of Classical Literature



Erica Jong's Sappho's Leap:(Re-)constructing Gender and Authorship through Sappho

Emily Hauser

doi: [10.12681/syn.25258](https://doi.org/10.12681/syn.25258)

Copyright © 2020, Emily Hauser



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Erica Jong's *Sappho's Leap*: (Re-)constructing Gender and Authorship through Sappho

Emily Hauser

Abstract

For contemporary female authors, Sappho is a literary forebear who is both a model for women's writing and a reminder of the ways in which women have been excluded from the literary canon. Poet and novelist Erica Jong takes up the challenge to gender and authorship posed by Sappho in her 2003 novel, *Sappho's Leap*. Jong weaves Sappho's poetry into her fiction to both complement the Sapphic tradition and to supplant it, proving that female poetry—and authorship—is alive and well, with Sappho continually mediated by and validating each subsequent writer in the female tradition. In addition, Jong's emphasis on the authentic expression of sexual desire as a bridge to authorship transcends gender binaries, turning *Sappho's Leap* into a study of authorship that is not confined to gender. This enables Jong to shift the debate away from the sense of burden placed on female authors post-Sappho and to transform her Sappho into a positive role model for all authors, turning the focus towards a poetics of passion and away from prescriptive assumptions of the relationship between gender and authorship.

"Of course they despise us," said Eleanor. "At the same time how do you account for this—I made enquiries among the artists. Now, no woman has ever been an artist, has she, Polls?"

"Jane - Austen - Charlotte - Brontë - George - Eliot," cried Poll, like a man crying muffins in a back street.

"Damn the woman!" someone exclaimed. "What a bore she is!"

"Since Sappho there has been no female of first rate—" Eleanor began, quoting from a weekly newspaper.

"It's now well known that Sappho was the somewhat lewd invention of Professor Hobkin," Ruth interrupted.

Virginia Woolf, *A Society*¹

Despite the fact that we've had Sappho, Emily Dickinson, Jane Austen, the Brontës, Colette, Virginia Woolf, etc., etc., etc., there is still the feeling that women's writing is a lesser class of writing, that to write about what goes on in the nursery or the bedroom is not as important as what goes on in the battlefield...

Erica Jong, *Conversations with Erica Jong*²

Erica Jong's 2003 novel, *Sappho's Leap*, was her first foray into the ancient world after a career that began with poetry and then moved into novelistic fiction with the worldwide success of her 1973 bestseller, *Fear of Flying*. In an interview published in the final pages of the 2004 Norton paperback edition of *Sappho's Leap*, Jong gives several motivations for her decision to write a novel based on the life of Sappho: a childhood fascination with ancient myth, the "surprising modernity" of Sappho's fragments, the importance of the past as a moral compass to the present.³ At another point, however, she asserts strikingly that "Sappho's fragments have endured because they so vividly describe women's feelings [...] Sappho is at once the voice of ancient Greece and a voice we recognize as ours" (*SL* 319, 297).

This article acts as a focused case-study of Jong's relationship to Sappho, her sense of identity as an author and her position in the canon —as well as, more broadly, a dissection of the different potential relationships lying behind modern women's receptions of Sappho and their self-creation as authors. Jong's complication of Sappho as a model for female authorship, I argue, speaks against the reclamation of Sappho as an easy means of defining modern women writers. Instead, what we see through the example of Jong's reception of Sappho is an exploration of the different, flexible modes of self-creation available to a female author through the breaking down of gender binaries, in response to the fraught history of the relationship between women and the literary canon. The discussion of Jong is intended as a jumping-off point for wider issues surrounding women's writing and relationship to the classical tradition, inviting a new way of thinking about how women today receive and re-write the literature of the past.

The sense of Sappho as a model of transcendent womanhood is one which appears again and again in modern and contemporary receptions of Sappho.⁴ "All fictions of Sappho are fictions of the feminine," Joan DeJean observes (1989, 22). Ellen Greene, in the introduction to an edited volume on receptions of Sappho, *Re-reading Sappho*, notes that Sappho is seen by female authors as a kind of "literary foremother": "it is in Sappho's broken fragments that the modern woman poet could reinvent Sappho's verse and thus inscribe feminine desire as part of an empowering literary history of her own" (1999, 4).⁵ Greene's emphasis on the much-commented-upon fragmentary nature of the Sapphic tradition plays an important part on this process of re-inscription (Prins 1999: 23-4). It is precisely the fragmentary nature of Sapphic poetry that has enabled female authors to write themselves into it, inscribing themselves into a tradition that, in its very incompleteness, allows them to become a part of it: "precisely because so many of her original Greek texts were destroyed, the modern woman poet could write 'for' or 'as' Sappho and thereby invent a classical inheritance of her own" (Gubar 1984: 46-7).⁶ Sappho thus becomes an empty space, a potentiality through which female authors could (and can) express and explore the relationship between womanhood, authorship and canonicity.⁷

This relationship, however, has not always been an easy one. Thomas Habinek, in his foreword to *Re-reading Sappho*, suggests three different modes of relationship to Sappho: as either an irrecoverable past, a source of truth, or a mediated experience.⁸ But

these relationships, whilst valid, are ones that are envisioned very much within the constraints of male hegemonic, value-driven standards such as 'tradition,' 'canon,' and 'truth.' The more complex relationships between female authors and Sappho operate instead, I would suggest, on a different plane. Sappho becomes either a refuge for female anxieties, a way of dealing with the "anxiety of authorship," a long-standing feature of historical female literature;⁹ the butt of their frustration with tradition and authority, as Habinek correctly notes in Sylvia Plath's poem "Lesbos";¹⁰ or —and I want to place a particular emphasis on this, as it has not been previously noted— the symbol of an inheritance of inadequacy. The double epigraph to this article bears witness to Virginia Woolf and Erica Jong's shared sense of Sappho, less as the instantiator of an "empowering literary history," and more as a source of admonishment to female authors.¹¹ Both Woolf and Jong articulate their relationship to Sappho in forms of negation that admit their sense of inferiority (perceived or real) in contrast to Sappho's achievements. To paraphrase Woolf, it is precisely Sappho's success that has made it impossible for a woman to achieve greatness in the eyes of the popular press. For Jong, on the other hand, the canon of female authors did not end with Sappho but began there (she cites Emily Dickinson, Jane Austen, the Brontës, Colette, Virginia Woolf as continuators of the female tradition) —and yet still, female authors have consistently failed to be viewed as equivalent to men over their entire history. If Sappho is a safe place to deal with the "anxiety of authorship," then, she also brings it to the table and therefore makes it an issue. As Jong writes in her essay, "The Artist as Housewife" (1980), which clearly functions as Jong's response to Virginia Woolf's seminal essay on women's writing, *A Room of One's Own*,¹² the dominant female cultural stereotype of authorship is based on a sense of lack: "If they were good, they were good *in spite of* being women. If they were bad, it was *because* they were women" (Jong 1980, 118). This ambivalence perfectly sums up what Sappho represents for a figure such as Jong who refuses to reject her: both a symbol of women's writing, and a challenge, a provocation to prove that women can be good writers, irrespective, or even (from Jong's feminist psychoanalyst perspective) because of their gender.¹³

So Sappho provides two different models of authorship for female authors who are willing to accept her as a model, and do not, as Plath does, reject her outright. She represents either the triumphal beginnings of a hidden female tradition of authorship that reaches back in time, a locus of identity and belonging for a modern female author that overcomes the anxieties of self that female artists experience;¹⁴ or she represents the pressure exerted by a monolithic canon upon women who have not, except in a single instance, been allowed to become a part of it. She represents either a model of authorship as belonging, or authorship as loss. For those like Woolf and Jong, who are interested in problematising the notion of an easy relationship to the female tradition, there are some difficult questions to be faced: why has subsequent female literature not lived up (or been perceived to live up) to Sappho? Is it, to reduce the argument to its furthest extent as Woolf does, because women are not as good writers as men —or have they simply been unrecognised as such? Or are female and male writers alike struggling against restrictive notions of canonicity, irrespective of gender?

It is important to note at this point that I do not want to suggest that Jong (or any of the other women authors mentioned above) needed Sappho to construct her identity. Jong herself was already a famous author and poet in her own right, before she ever approached reformulations and receptions of Sappho.¹⁵ What I want to suggest rather is that Jong chooses to use fiction about an ancient female author as a particularly fertile means to reflect on questions of the relationship between gender and authorship; and that Sappho, as the 'icon' of western female authoriality (*SL*-294), and with her particular qualities as both a potentiality for female self-creation and a reproach from the past, is the perfect site for women to explore female authorship. Her double qualities allow female authorship to be explored both within bounds authorised by men ("an invention of Professor Hobkin," as Woolf's parodying of male scholarship has it), as well as to deal with and explore the reasons *why* women's writing has been less acknowledged than men's—why Sappho's influence didn't stick.

With this short survey of receptions of Sappho in modern female-authored literature, I move now to Erica Jong's *Sappho's Leap* to explore how the reception of Sappho plays out in practice in the work of a contemporary female author. Three major questions arise: how does Jong represent Sappho's poetry in her text? Why does she include translations of Sappho's original poetry in her novel, and how does she approach the act of translation as reception? And how does this relate to Jong's own sense of her relationship to Sappho and the tradition of (female) authorship? These questions are intended as a way of focussing key issues around contemporary women authors' complex relationships to Sappho and the (traditionally male) canon —with the potential that this may open up new ways of understanding and thinking about women writers' construction of their identity in relation to the texts of the classical past.

Authorship as female creativity

In the interview included in *Sappho's Leap* (2004), Jong makes an interesting observation: "I don't think you can write a novel about a poet without telling at least some of the story in poetry" (*SL* 319). *Sappho's Leap* is as unusual a novel as is its heroine, interspersed throughout with epigraphs, quotations, songs and poems of Sappho, all of them 'translated' by Jong. As she observes in her Afterword,

translations of Sappho have always reflected the age in which they were created and the personalities of the translators. My reading showed me that different translators tend to produce different Sapphos. After much deliberation, I decided to attempt my own versions – not literal translations but adaptations of Sappho's verses in a style appropriate to the flow of the novel. In my versions I have tried to capture the essence of Sappho's ideas, in a way that approximates (as much as possible) the original Greek. (*SL* 297)

These "adaptations" are anchored in the translation history of the fragments, given that Jong herself does not know Greek (though she worked closely with a classicist, Robert Ball).¹⁶ As Lorna Hardwick points out in her 2000 study *Translating Words, Translating Cultures*, the adaptation of translations and their ability to inspire creative work in changing cultural

contexts is hardly a new phenomenon. This slippery modulation between translation and reception is perhaps especially true of women poet's translations of and responses to Sappho, from Mary Hewitt's 1845 translation of fragment 31 which, as Yopie Prins points out, transposes the poem into a perpetual present (1999: 47–51) to Adrienne Rich's "Hubble Photographs: After Sappho" (2005), which re-stages fragment 16. And Anne Carson's translations of Sappho in *If Not, Winter* (2002), in particular, bridge the gap between translation and reception (no surprise, given Carson's credentials as both a poet and classicist) in the combination of an aim to produce 'plain' translations from the Greek, and the poems' haunting, melodic, very Carsonian style.¹⁷

So what do Jong's "versions" of Sappho and their incorporation into her novel tell us about her understanding of the process of transmission, translation, reception, and the tradition of female authorship? I want to begin with Jong's rendition of the wedding hymn that is sung for Sappho at her wedding with Cercylas:

*Raise high the roof beams!
The groom comes like Ares,
Towering above mortals
As the poets of Lesbos
Tower over all the others!
Lucky bridegroom!
We drink your health! (SL 29)*

The reason this makes such a good starting point for an analysis of Jong's relationship to Sapphic authorship becomes clear in the fourth and fifth lines, which are clearly a translation of fr. 106 LP, *πέρροχος, ὥς ὅτ' αἰδοῖς ὁ Λέσβιος ἀλλοδαποῖσιν* ("superior, as the Lesbian singer to those of other lands"). The controversy over fragment 106 revolves around the question of the identity of the *αἰδοῖς* (bard, poet, singer) and whether the word applies to a singular person or—as I have suggested elsewhere—if it could be seen as a generic masculine ("poets") (Hauser 2016: 140). Interestingly, Jong interprets *αἰδοῖς* here unequivocally as the latter: "the *poets* of Lesbos" [emphasis mine]—even though the singular noun "poet" in English is non-gender marked. In the wedding hymn for Sappho, then, sung by the girls whom Sappho herself has trained, Sappho is named explicitly as a poet and incorporated in her own right into the Lesbian poetic tradition in a specific nod to the textual ambiguities of the Sapphic text.

But it not quite so simple. In spite of the Sapphic signature, the hymn is both entirely Sappho's and entirely Jong's at the same time. Entirely Sappho's, because it is made up of a jigsaw of Sapphic fragments: fr. 111, 106, 112, and 141 LP.¹⁸ The first two lines of Jong's hymn are a reduction of the alternate call-and-response pattern of the Sapphic wedding song at fr. 111 LP: *ἦποι δὴ τὸ μέλαθρον...γάμβρος εἰς' ἴσ' Ἄρεσι...ἄνδρος μεγάλῳ πόλῳ μέζων* ("raise high the roof!...a bridegroom will be coming like Ares...much bigger than a big man!") [translation: Lobel-Page].¹⁹ The comparative *πόλῳ μέζων* is then subsumed into the comparative force of *πέρροχος* in fr. 106, followed by a vocative (*ὄλβιε γάμβρε*, "happy bridegroom!") extracted from the opening line of fr. 112, another wedding hymn, and completed with a paraphrase of the final lines of a third wedding song, fr. 141. The question

is —rather as in the Athenian fable of Theseus' ship, which was replaced plank by plank until none of the original wood remained— is this still Sappho? What is the difference between a “version” and a “translation” —and do either get closer to the ‘meaning’ (lexical or felt) of the original Sappho?²⁰

It is in asking questions like these that *Sappho's Leap* opens up into a deeper and more complex plane: it becomes what Hardwick calls Seamus Heaney's version of the *Antigone*, “a complex and shifting site” (Hardwick 2008: 347). The problem of translation and transmission is explored as a leitmotif throughout the text, especially given the particular instability of the Sapphic fragmentary tradition which is continually used as a site of exploration in *Sappho's Leap*. At page 225, for example, Jong's Sappho comments that someone “misquoted” her in his rendition of fr. 132 LP, hinting at the incompatibility of a “fixed” manuscript tradition with the fluidity of Sapphic performance. At page 221, as Sappho debates how she will resolve her love for Alcaeus and her daughter Cleis, there is a subtle but explicit play with the instability of Sapphic translation. Around halfway through the passage, Jong inserts a block quote into the text in apposition to the body of the prose — not in quotation marks, but in italics, set aside typographically from the flow of the narrative. “I do not know what to do. / My mind's in two” (SL 221). The lines are an interpretation of fr. 51 LP, οὐκ οἶδ' ὅττι θέω· διχα μοι τὰ νοήματα (“I do not know which way to turn; my mind is divided” [translation mine]). At first glance the adaptation of the Sapphic fragment is neatly assimilated into Jong's narrative, the English end-rhyme between “do” and “two” simulating a near-perfect translation in both the ancient Greek sense and Anglophone conventions of rhyming poetry. But the difficulties of rendering the Greek accurately are soon explored, and the seeming perfection of the Sapphic translation exploded. Later in the passage, on the same page, Jong has Sappho exclaim to Aesop, “Don't tempt me, Aesop. My condition is weak. My mind's divided.” The Greek adverb διχα, “two-ly,” is here rendered with an adjective, “divided”, in place of the adverbial phrase “in two.” The same word is given two different meanings, the very “two-ness” intimated by Sappho's divided (διχα) mind in fr. 51 setting the stage for the doubling of meaning and the division of language in translation, as Jong, in effect, provides two words for a word that means two.²¹ At the same time, it points to the instability of the transmission of the text, which preserves two readings for this word: δύο (“two”) according to one tradition, and διχα (“in two”) according to another.²² The two translations for the same word thus hint at the dual transmission history of a word which, itself, literally means “two.”

Jong's awareness of Sappho's potential for manipulation and re-formation into Jong's (or any other author's) mould through the instability and suppleness of her translation thus becomes patently clear: as Jong puts it, “different translators tend to produce different Sapphos” (SL 297). Building on her thematic highlighting of the problems of translation and transmission, Jong also includes at the end of the text, but also, and more importantly, *within* the text itself, her own Sappho-esque poetic creations. For the non-specialist reader who is unfamiliar with Sappho, these Jongian creations are impossible to tell apart from her translations of original Sapphic fragments: they are told in similar

language, using similar vocabulary (and sometimes even adopting vocabulary from Sappho's own poems), and are displayed the same typographically upon the page. Jong's use of Sappho to reformulate her into her own words and, ultimately, into her identity as an author, becomes clear as we progress throughout the novel, where we are able to watch the increasing fluidity of the boundary between Jong's versions/translations of Sappho and Jong's own Sappho-esque creations, in which Jong's voice supplants Sappho's, until ultimately they become fused. As Jong herself writes: "I began to write a sequence of poems in Sappho's voice, in Aphrodite's, and in my own" (*SL* 293).

The process begins, naturally, with Sappho's opening poem, the hymn to Aphrodite, which occurs near the beginning of *Sappho's Leap* as Sappho's first public performance.

*Immortal Aphrodite —
Rainbow-throned
In the shimmering air —
Weaver of webs,
I pray
Do not shackle my heart
With sorrow.
Fly to me
From your father's house
In a whirling of sparrow's wings,
Your chariot descending
Over the dark earth
As you smile
Your sly, immortal smile
Asking whom I desire
So desperately this time,
Asking whom to persuade to love me,
Promising to turn
Indifference to passion
To make her pursue
When she longs to flee...
Oh Aphrodite, give what only you can give,
Be my ally, my co-conspirator! (*SL* 14-15)*

Jong's version of fr. 1 LP is remarkably close to the Sapphic original. True, it is not a literal translation —the fifth stanza of Sappho fr. 1, for example, is transformed into two lines ("To make her pursue / When she longs to flee"), and details such as παῖ Διός ("daughter of Zeus," 1.2) are omitted. But in general, the correspondence is striking: Jong's "rainbow-throned" for Sappho's ποικιλόθρον' (1.1), "in a whirling of sparrow's wings" for ὤκεες στρουθοί.../ πύκνα δίννεντες πτέρ' (1.10-11), "as you smile / your sly, immortal smile" for μειδιαῖσαισ' ἄθανάτῳ προσώπῳ (1.14) —all are close and accurate renditions of the Sapphic Greek.

What is particularly interesting here, however, is not the accuracy of the translation, but precisely that self-reflexivity upon the nature of translation in Sappho which we noted above. At line 20, Jong translates a famous line of Sapphic lyric and one that for a long time lay at the heart of controversies over translations of Sappho: κωὺκ ἐθέλοισα ("though she is unwilling," 1.24). The hymn to Aphrodite, as has been often noted, hides the gender identity of Sappho's lover throughout, masked behind genderless third person verbs,

until the female participle ἐθέλοισα finally reveals that Sappho's beloved is a woman.²³ Translators of Sappho like T. W. Higginson and J. A. Symonds in the late nineteenth century were faced with the dilemma of how to translate this: to maintain the accuracy of translation and incorporate the female pronoun, or to adjust the pronoun to suit contemporary *mores*.²⁴ By maintaining the gender ambiguity and then breaking it near the poem's end with "when she longs to flee..." (SL 20), Jong echoes the sense of Sappho whilst simultaneously opening up the historical debate on her translation. Jong's version of the hymn to Aphrodite here is, then, a strongly marked Sapphic 'translation' in every sense of the word: both close to the original Greek, and self-reflexively commenting upon Sappho's translation history.

But this does not continue to be the case. At page 24, after Aphrodite has just spoken to Sappho and told her of her love for Alcaeus, Jong inserts an italicised verse quote into the text, one which she intimates is in Sappho's thoughts but which is never explicitly identified as such.

*Aphrodite has everything,
Can renew her virginity
With one immersion in the sea.
What can I give her? (SL 24)*

This is very different from the rendition of fr. 1 on SL pages 14-15, which is an explicitly quoted song-performance, aligning Sappho's recorded poetry with its original performance context. Here, the poetry seems to stand in apposition to the text: it is almost intrusive, thrusting its way into the narrative without explanation of who is speaking/thinking (is it Aphrodite? Sappho? The author?) or what it is doing there. This intrusiveness is correlated to its relationship to Sappho: for it is, in fact, not Sapphic poetry at all, but a Jongian creation.

What is particularly fascinating about this is not only the inclusion of Jong's own Sappho-style poems within the text, but the strong sense of a female tradition which Jong's poem contains. The Sapphic influence, with the strong sense of both relationship and debt to Aphrodite, is clearly present here.²⁵ But there is another influence mediating Jong's response to Sappho, another female poet who saw herself in Sappho's tradition and who also wrote poems re-interpreting and even re-embodying Sappho —Christina Rossetti.²⁶ The last line of this Jongian verse, "What can I give her?", is a clear reference to the first and last line of the final stanza of Rossetti's famous poem, *In the Bleak Midwinter*: "What can I give Him, poor as I am? ... Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart" (17-20). As Joseph Bristow comments, Rossetti saw in Sappho a "sister," who "provides [her] with a paradigm for the woman poet who... failed, not in a lesbian, but heterosexual relationship, ending in tragedy" (267-8). Rossetti's self-reflection through Sappho prepares the way for Jong's first meditation on Sapphic verse in her own words, in which she explicitly cites the tradition of female reception and identification with Sappho through association, first with Rossetti, and then with Sappho *through* Rossetti.²⁷ A chain of female receivers of Sappho begins to be built, linking Jong to Sappho through the validation of her female forebears and tying her authorship closely to theirs.

This first Jongian creation in the style of Sappho sets the pattern for a trend that continues throughout the novel. As we progress through the narrative, Jong's quotations/"versions" of Sappho decrease dramatically, to be replaced either by quotations of other authors of the ancient world or, more frequently, Jong's own Sapphic poems. It is if Sappho is morphing into Jong, or as if the process of the narrative itself brings them closer together so that there is less of a break between where Sappho ends and Jong starts: without the typographical separators like block quotes and italics that divided Sappho from Jong at pages 14-15, Sappho *becomes* the text as Jong writes it. This transition is made clear at page 265, another rendition of fr. 1 that frames the text with Jong's near-translation version at pages 14-15 to highlight the process by which Jong both receives Sappho and subsumes her into herself as the beginning and end-point of the female tradition.

Suddenly a line took me and I ran for papyrus and reeds. *No matter what Aphrodite
promised me / There is no road to Olympus / For mortals ...* I scrawled.
I paused, then began again:

*When I think of my love
Far across the seas ...*

No good, too banal.

*Let us sacrifice to Aphrodite,
Inconstant, constant goddess,
Let us bind our locks with dill
And all sweet-smelling herbs
And praise the power of Aphrodite
And her sparrows with whirling wings
Who bless us with fruitfulness and love!
Holy mother Cyprian
And the nereids,
Awake with varied notes
The down-rushing wind of desire
And send Eros as your messenger
To fill our hearts with love,
Our loins with lust,
And shower us
With ... (SL 265-6)*

This is no longer either only a jigsaw of Sapphic fragments, as we saw with the wedding hymn at *SL* page 29, or a purely Sapphic translation, as at pages 14-15, but a complex interweaving of the two. The collage of Sapphic poetry included here—fr. 27.12-13, ὁδὸς μ[έ]γαν εἰς Ὀλ[υμπόν] / [ἀ]νθρώ[π]οις [“(There is no) road to great Olympus for mortals”), 81.4-5 σὺ δὲ στεφάνοις, ὦ Δίκα, πέρθεσθ' ἐράτοισι φόβαισιν / ὄρπακας ἀνήτω συν<α>έρραισ' ἀπάλαισι χέρσιν (“put lovely garlands around your locks, binding together stems of anise”), 1.10-11 ὦκεες στροῦθοι... / πύκνα δίννεντες πτέρ' (“beautiful swift sparrows whirring fast-beating wings”), 5.1 Κύπρι καὶ Νηρηίδες (“Cypris and Nereids”), 183 κατώρη (“down-rushing”) [trans. David Campbell]—shows the extent to which Jong is capable of versatile adaptation and threading together of Sapphic fragments into a newly-created whole. At the same time, the progression of the poem and its culmination in several lines of purely Jongian origin (lines 12-16) demonstrates the process by which Sappho's voice morphs into Jong's

throughout the novel and provides a model for writing and reception: as Jong writes and as the poem/novel progresses, she literally inscribes Sappho into herself and her female poetic identity. The open ending provided by the caesura after “with...” itself models the space in the Sapphic fragments into which female authors can inscribe themselves. And this, ultimately is what paves the way to the nine original poems by Jong, called collectively “Talking to Aphrodite,” which she includes at the end of the novel (*SL* 299-316). Mixing Sappho and Jong into a new creation, the Sapphic “versions” that began the novel become Sapphic collages which ultimately turn into purely Jongian poems separated from the text of Sappho’s life and explicitly autobiographical,²⁸ yet still, nodding to their Sapphic origins.²⁹ The narrative of Sappho’s life collapses into poetry, and the “I” of the Sapphic narrator of the novel (who is, in any case, a ventriloquised Jong) and the “I” of Jong the author (“Aphrodite, I have toiled / in your service forty years / & I am still alive to tell it”) (*SL* 299) become one.³⁰

In this sense, Jong is both inspired by and becomes Sappho. By fusing the female voice and incorporating the female tradition (as we saw above with the Rossetti fragment), Sappho moves seamlessly into Jong. If we look back to the models which were introduced at the opening of this section for female authorial relationships to Sappho, then Sappho is here seen as a forebear, the originator of a female tradition into which contemporary authors can write themselves. One of the most salient examples of this in *Sappho's Leap* is a striking passage at page 52:³¹

She sent greetings back — together with a beautiful sea-green cloak, emblazoned with gold, for baby Cleis. Of course, it was big enough for a five-year-old child, but I draped it over the baby in her crib and said, ‘Your grandmother wove this for you with her own beautiful fingers just like yours. (*SL* 52)

Weaving in the classical world was not only a typical female task, but was also connected imagistically to the act of literary creation. Within the narrative, Jong’s Sappho is portrayed as acutely aware of weaving as deeply implicated in both femininity and poetry.³² The handing down of the cloak from mother to daughter to granddaughter can, within this framework, be seen as symbolic of the continuation of the female tradition of poetry from mother to daughter, woman to woman. What is even more interesting, however, and strengthens the suggestion of the woven cloak as symbolic of a female tradition of poetry, is that the image is itself an act of reception of an ancient female poet—Nossis’ third epigram (*Pal. Ant.* 6.265):

Ἥρα τιμήεσσα, Λακίνιον ἃ τὸ θυῶδες
πολλάκις οὐρανόθεν νεισομένα κατορῆς,
δέξαι βύσσινον εἶμα, τό τοι μετὰ παιδὸς ἀγαυῆς
Νοσσιδὸς ὕφανεν Θεοφιλίς ἃ Κλεόχας.

Most reverend Hera, you who often descending from heaven
behold your Lacinian shrine fragrant with incense,
receive the linen wrap that with her noble child Nossis,
Theophilis daughter of Cleocha wove for you. [trans. Marilyn Skinner]

Nossis' epigram, as Marilyn Skinner has noted, is "a comprehensive statement of personal identity in which a woman writer 'thinks back through her mother' both biologically and artistically" (115). The lineage created through the linen cloak is suggestive of an inherited female tradition of "creative mentor[ship]" (115). Moreover, speaking to the broader female literary tradition, Nossis herself was a self-professed receiver and imitator of Sappho.³³ The cloak presented by Jong's Sappho to her daughter Cleis here thus references the female tradition on multiple layers: the Sapphic connection between weaving, love and poetry; Nossis' (and later female authors') reception of Sappho; Jong's reception of Sappho through Nossis; and the fictional Sappho's handing of her mantle down to future generations, including Jong. Authorship becomes a function of female creativity, symbolised through weaving as both an *artefact* that can be handed down through generations —the tradition— and a *process*, which is unique to each female inheritor.

Authorship as (sexual) authenticity

To reduce Jong's Sappho to a precursor of the female literary tradition, however, is to underplay the complexity of her portrayal, and the complexity of Sappho as a figure for reception beyond her gender. Poets in the ancient world did not exist in a void, and poetic production was a particularly male activity, typically produced by male poets in male social settings for male audiences; moreover, literary *coteries* were common across ancient Greece, particularly on Lesbos which had an especially active poetic tradition.³⁴ That Jong is aware of the (male) Lesbian literary tradition, including Terpander, Sappho, and Alcaeus, is made clear by her use of the generalising "poets" in reference to the *ᾄδοις* of fr. 106 (*SL* 29).

This awareness of the context and male tradition of poetry is demonstrated by the fact that Jong's "versions" of Sappho are not only replaced by her own Sappho-esque creations as *Sappho's Leap* progresses: most of the poetry in the book's second half is, in fact, quotations of male-authored verse from the ancient world, from Alcaeus to Aesop to Archilochus to Anacreon to Homer.³⁵ Moreover, this shift is concurrent with the movement of the narrative towards a modern retelling of the *Odyssey*, as experienced by Sappho,³⁶ and a growing political manifesto on Sappho's part for the equality of the sexes.³⁷

So what is happening here? What is this acknowledgement and incorporation of the tradition of male authorship doing intruding on the linear female tradition built up between Sappho and Jong?

To understand what is going on, we need to look at a second Jongian definition of authorship: authorship as (sexual) authenticity/authority (Jong tends to blur these terms), irrespective of gender. In "The Artist as Housewife," Jong explicitly links authenticity to authorship in an important passage: "authenticity is a difficult thing to define, but roughly it has to do with our sense of the poet as a *mensch*, a human being, an *author* (with the accent on authority)" (Jong 1980: 117). For Jong, authenticity/authority is strongly linked to sexuality and sexual empowerment, irrespective of gender; but even more importantly, it is connected to one's ability to *express* sexuality —thus providing the link to authorship as a

medium for expression. Again and again in her interviews Jong discusses the importance of expressing sexuality as an access point to honesty, self-knowledge, and authenticity:³⁸

I had to learn to trust myself. I had to learn to trust that part of my mind which had the potential of being original ... what analysis teaches you is how to surrender yourself to your fantasies. How to dive down into those fantasies...[Mark Strand] recognized that I was dealing with sexuality in a way that was more daring for me and that I had begun to allow my imagination free rein. (Templin and Jong 2002: 5)

At another point, she says,

I believe we accept a level of intimacy in writing now that we never accepted before. It's still very hard to write honestly and gutsily about your life...The most important thing about a book is whether or not it has the gift of life. (Templin and Jong 2002: 152)

S

e Jong's *Sappho's* free, unbridled expression of her sexuality, her constant mention of her liaisons, her emphasis on and understanding of passion (personified as Aphrodite), and, even more importantly, her bi-sexuality, thus become a metaphor for her deep *authorship* in both senses. Several strands throughout the novel hint at the connection between sexuality and authorship for Jong. There is an interesting point early on in the text at which Sappho and Alcaeus write to each other, and Jong's *Sappho* pauses to reflect on what it means to receive a letter from a lover:

y

What is more personal than a letter written by a hand you love? Words, breath, kisses. Papyrus can transmit all these. Alcaeus' scrawled letters kept me alive. Kissing the papyrus was almost like kissing him!

i

This is the mystery of words. Simple things made of reed and plant fibers, and yet they reproduce our heartbeats and our breath. Mouthfuls of air trapped in timelessness. The miracle of writing! (*SL* 33)

t

The connection between writing and sexuality here is only too clear, with the sensual suggestiveness of words as "mouthfuls of air," the conflation of "words, breath, kisses," and, most strikingly, the comparison drawn between kissing papyrus and kissing Alcaeus. The physicality of the act of writing alluded to here connects to an Attic red-figure vase painting, attributed to the Group of Polygnotos (from c.440-430 BCE), where Sappho is depicted feeding a book roll on which is written the Greek text: "gods, with airy words I begin." This was interpreted by John Maxwell Edmonds as an actual line of Sapphic poetry, and included in his 1928 Loeb text; it appears in many subsequent translations which Jong may have used, creating an interesting chain of transmission from the written text of a vase painting to modern editorial practices and Jong's creative work.³⁹ But it is not only in the physicality of writing that Jong finds a connection to sex. It is no coincidence that Jong's *Sappho* finds her "destiny" (*SL* 223) in Alcaeus, for, as Jong herself points out, it is both his physical attractiveness *and* his ability with words that attract Sappho: "the more we talked, the more I fell in love with Alcaeus. I loved his looks, his poetry, his wild talk. Men with eloquent tongues have always swayed me" (*SL* 20). The sexual pun in "men with eloquent tongues" further hints at the fact that poetic and sexual prowess are portrayed as functions of the same deep connection to authentic sexuality. More importantly, the sexual union of Alcaeus and

Sappho —two authors— suggests that authorship is seen not as *constricted* to gender, but rather as *constructed* through passion. At the moment at which Alcaeus and Sappho first have sex, Sappho exclaims, “So *this* was the thunder of Pegasus —poetry’s racehorse!” (SL 21), suggesting a deep implication between sex and poetry. And beforehand, when Sappho is afraid to lose her virginity, Alcaeus challenges her: “Are you *afraid* of your own goddess? You’ll never become a singer that way” (SL 20). Her apprenticeship to sex and her “real education as a singer” (SL 17) become one and the same, conflating her physical relationship with Alcaeus and her passion for poetry. As Jong herself writes in the interview at the end of *Sappho's Leap*, her Sappho was intended as a devotee of *eros*, not of her gender, where *eros* becomes connected to literature that transcends gender boundaries: “I was drawn to create women protagonists who suffered human limitations rather than the limitations of gender” (SL 321).

This rejection of the limits of gender, and placing of the emphasis upon the connection between male *and* female authors who write through *eros*, is seen on a literary level most clearly in Jong’s deliberate breaking down of the barriers between Sapphic and Alcaic poetry.⁴⁰ We see this in the exchange of letters between Sappho and Alcaeus at pages 32-33, particularly in the letter Jong writes for Alcaeus, where Jong uses the ambiguity of the manuscript traditions of the two poets to explore how fluid their poetics can be. It is the final few lines of Alcaeus’ letter that are of particular interest:

And yet I think always of Sappho – violet-haired, holy, honey-smiling Sappho. I wish to say something to you, but shame prevents me. (SL 32)

Once again, we see Jong making use of a jigsaw-like piecing together of the poetic tradition —only this time, it is not only Sappho or her female counterparts which she includes, but a mixture of Sapphic and Alcaic fragments, put into Alcaeus’ mouth in a book told in Sappho’s voice. The first phrase, “violet-haired, holy, honey-smiling Sappho,” is a near-exact translation of Alcaeus fr. 384, which has been attributed to Alcaeus as a description of Sappho. The second phrase, “I wish to say something to you, but shame prevents me,” translates Sappho fr. 137 LP, a supposed dialogue between Sappho and Alcaeus (according to Aristotle), where Sappho is said to put these words into Alcaeus’ mouth. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that both fragments have a confused and intertwined history of reception, with some scholars suggesting that the words attributed to Alcaeus in Sappho of Sappho fr. 137 to reconstruct an Alcaean poem.⁴¹ The mention of the two fragments in juxtaposition cannot but raise the interconnected reception history of Sappho and Alcaeus’s poetry,⁴² and forms a fascinating example of Jong’s awareness of the fluidity and suppleness of gendered poetic traditions to inform and merge into each other to create something that is informed, less by gender, than by a poetics of sex.

This intertwining of male and female poetics, literally realised in the act of sex between two poets, is symbolised within the novel by the fusing of male and female poetic

traditions through Sappho and Alcaeus' descendant, their grandson Hector. At one point near the end of the book Hector repeats to Sappho a poem he has learnt:

*This wave repeats the one before!
It will take much time
To bale it out!
Let us strengthen the ship's sides
And race into a safe harbor!
Let not soft fear
Seize our strong hearts!
Let every man be steadfast!
Our noble fathers
Who lie beneath the earth,
The earth, the earth, the earth ...*

Here he faltered and spoke baby prattle again. 'Grandmother, I can't remember!'

'Splendid! You take my breath away! And do you know the way the song ends?'

He shook his curls.
So I sang out:

*Let us not disgrace our noble fathers
Who lie beneath the earth.
They built our city and our spirits!
Let us not bow down to tyranny! (SL 259-60)*

Jong's Sappho at once identifies the author: "Should I tell the child it was his own grandfather, Alcaeus?" (SL 260). The poem is, in fact, a close translation of Alcaeus fr. 6. Just as Cleis, Sappho's daughter, inherited the mantle of her song, it is Alcaeus' male grandchild here who recites his poetry, suggesting a mirroring and parallel male poetic tradition, whereby the daughter inherits her mother's poetry, and the son his grandfather's. Yet this coherence and the suggestion of the exclusive separateness of the male/female literary lineages is almost instantly shattered. At the final line of the poem Hector hesitates. "I can't remember!", he exclaims. This can be taken as a reference to the fact that Alcaeus, too, has a troubled textual transmission which —like Sappho— allows for his interpretation as a "potentiality," as we saw above. In this particular fragment, the preserved section of the papyrus ends abruptly at line 14, ἔσλοισ τόκης γὰς ὕπα κ[ειμένοις ("our noble fathers lying beneath the earth" [trans. David Campbell]), to be followed by barely distinguishable words, amongst which the most legible are τὰν πο[(conjectured by Campbell as "city"), ἀπ πατέρω[ν ("from fathers"), θῦμ[("spirit"), μοναρχίαν δ [("tyranny"), and μ]ηδὲ δεκωμ[("let us not accept").

What Jong has done here, then, is to explicitly highlight the instability of the Alcaean transmission tradition alongside that of Sappho. Furthermore, she uses her own fictional Sappho to fill in the gaps, 'correcting' the male tradition and inscribing herself into it by connecting the disparate words of the fragment into a coherent whole, as she supplies: "They built our city and our spirits! / Let us not bow down to tyranny!" (SL 260). The supposed isolation of the male and female poetic traditions is thus broken down as Sappho's

voice intrudes into the tradition of male transmission, refusing to be silenced, and is replaced by a model in which Alcaeus' and Sappho's poetry comes together, both figuratively in Jong's Sappho's supplementing of the Alcaean fragment,⁴³ and literally in the voice of Hector, the product of the sexual union of two poetic traditions.⁴⁴

There is one final move which Jong makes in reference to the connection of authorship to sexuality, and that is her portrayal of Sappho as bisexual.⁴⁵ Given Jong's identification of authorship and *eros* throughout the novel, this is a particularly loaded move and one which begs interpretation, not simply as a statement of sexual choice, but as a metaliterary investigation of the relationship between sexuality and creativity. And it is now—with the observations made above with regards to the creation of a poetic tradition, embodied in Hector and his poetry, the offspring of Sappho and Alcaeus' intercourse—that we can see precisely why Sappho's bisexuality becomes important for Jong's understanding of authorship. In her relationships with women —Praxinoa, Isis, Atthis— throughout the novel, Jong's Sappho's creativity is nourished and her poetry developed in strikingly different ways from her dealings with Aesop, Alcaeus and the pharaoh. It is in her passion for the priestess Isis that Sappho first realises that the truest gift she can give, “an offering from [her] deepest well,” is a poem describing her desire, a version of fr. 47 LP (*SL* 62-4). As Isis tells her when she regrets not having brought a better gift, “You brought me something more precious...your honesty” (*SL* 65). It is in her despair over the loss of Praxinoa that she understands the importance of following her destiny, and in her affection for Timas and Atthis that she understands the importance of developing “[one's] own voice” (*SL* 236). Ultimately, and most importantly, it is these relationships that liberate Sappho entirely from the shackles of *any* gendered tradition, and that teach her that authenticity to her sexual desire is the truest form of authorship.⁴⁶ It frees her in a metaliterary sense from any reliance upon the male tradition, embodied in Alcaeus, and allows her to experience *eros*, and thus to gain her “education as a singer” (*SL* 17), in each and every moment of passion.

Conclusion

For contemporary female authors, the issue at stake —particularly in relation to Sappho— is what it means to participate in a tradition of women's writing that is both acknowledged and exceptional, outside the norm of expectations of men's writing in the classical world and the subsequent, traditionally male, canon. Sappho's unusual status as both the originary icon of the female writing tradition, as well as the perceived start and end of 'good' women's writing, sets her up as both a model and as a reproach for female writers looking to define female authorship through Sappho. Jong takes up this challenge and uses Sappho's poetry, woven into *Sappho's Leap*, to both complement the Sapphic tradition and to supplant it, proving that female poetry —and authorship— is alive and well, with Sappho continually mediated by and validating her successors in the female tradition.

But, as we have seen, there is more to it than this. Jong's emphasis on the authentic expression of sexual desire as a bridge to authorship transcends gender binaries, and turns *Sappho's Leap* into a broader study of authorship that is not confined to gender. This enables

Jong to shift the debate away from the sense of burden placed on modern female authors attempting to create or refute a female tradition, and to transform Sappho into a positive role model for female *as well as* male authors. Jong thus turns the focus towards a poetics of passion, and away from prescriptive assumptions of the relationship between gender and authorship. Male authors and male-author traditions, symbolised by Alcaeus, complicate the notion of a female tradition to suggest a broader definition of literature that is not prescribed by gender, genre or era. This is not about defining a particular type of female authorship, or even defining authorship as particularly female: it is about redefining authorship in a way that is not confined by gender, but constructed in passion.

As such, Jong's Sappho provides an answer to Woolf's caricature of women's writing as beginning and ending with Sappho, or Plath's rejection of Sappho as a literary forebear. The problem, Jong suggests, is the very idea that there might be a women's literary tradition in the first place. When we free ourselves from prescriptive and binary notions of gender, we begin to see that creativity—and authorship—are products of the connection to an authentic, sexual, generative energy. In other words, paradoxically—given Sappho's own canonical status as the originary female poet in the classical tradition—the lesson which Jong takes from Sappho is that women writers do not have to define themselves and their writing as 'female' at all. It is ultimately by rejecting Sappho as a woman, and recovering her as an authentic author in every sense of the word, that we can begin to trace a new tradition for modern women writers.

¹ Woolf 2011: 67.

² Templin and Jong 2002: 8.

³ *Sappho's Leap*, 319. Future references will use the abbreviation *SL*, and refer to the 2004 Norton paperback edition.

⁴ On Sappho's reception, see Ellen Greene's excellent volume *Re-reading Sappho* (Greene 1999), alongside DeJean 1989 and Prins 1999. For her reception in feminist and lesbian thought and literature, see DeJean 1987, Grahn 1985, Gubar 1984, Marks 1979, Mora 1966, Robinson 1924, Stein 1981.

⁵ For a similar formulation, see also (Gubar 1984: 45) on Sappho as a "classical literary foremother."

⁶ Erica Jong makes a similar statement in her afterword to *Sappho's Leap*: "every age that fell in love with her made her its own. Since she became a muse to later poets, they fashioned her in their own image" (*SL*, 295).

⁷ Sappho has increasingly been described in terms of "potential" and "potentiality" in modern scholarship; see Greene 1999: xiii on Sappho as a "figure of potential."

⁸ See Habinek in Greene 1999: xii.

⁹ See Gubar 1984: 45 and n.7, referring to Gilbert and Gubar's seminal study of female anxieties and authorship, (Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 45–92). On the anxiety of influence, see Bloom 1997.

¹⁰ See Greemce 1999: xiii: Plath "denied Sappho's authority" and thus "closed the door on one generation's reading of her poems and their significance." Gubar, in her article "Sapphistries," also speaks in terms of distance, notably in her analysis of Amy Lowell's "The Sisters" (Gubar 1984: 58), and distrust (59). See also Greene 1999: 1 on Robin Morgan's "renunciation of Sappho as literary foremother" ("get off my back, Sappho").

¹¹ It is worth noting Edith Sitwell's comment in comparison, "women's poetry, with the exception of Sappho...is simply *awful*" (Lehmann and Parker 1979: 116).

¹² See, in particular Jong 1980: 120.

¹³ See Templing and Jong 20002: 8-9: "There is a kind of patriarchal prejudice which infuses our whole culture. I think it is not always malicious on the part of men – it's often purely unconscious. The psychological reasons behind this are many. Probably womb envy —that most unrecognized phenomenon— plays a significant part. Since the majority of psychologists and anthropologists have been male, they've been reluctant to recognize it. Men have the feeling that women can create life in their bodies, therefore how dare they create art? A book I'm very interested in is *The First Sex* by Elizabeth Gould Davis. It deals with male envy of the female and its manifestations throughout different cultures."

¹⁴ See Jong 1980: 115-16. Gubar's is an excellent example of the more positive reading of relationship to Sappho, although she focuses the extent of identification by female authors to one which is specifically constructed around lesbian identity.

¹⁵ Though interestingly *Sappho's Leap* was initially poorly received by classicists: see Ball 2010: 72. On the reception of Jong's work generally, see Cotkin 2016: 311-22.

¹⁶ See Ball 2010: 64-65, 69-70, where he recalls how he encouraged Jong to compose her own translations and (since she did not know Greek) to base her close translations on those of other translators, which Ball would then check against the original Greek.

¹⁷ With respect to these qualities of Carson's renderings of Sappho, see Prins 1996; also Siegert 2019.

¹⁸ Robert Ball notes the correspondence between Jong's wedding hymn and fr. 111 LP Ball 2005.

¹⁹ For a summary of the controversy over the last line of the fragment, see Kird 1963.

²⁰ On forms of translation and reception in the ancient world, see Hardwick 2003: ch.2. On the "invasive" model of translation (or, more vividly, using a metaphor of Michael Walton's, the "cuckoo" effect), see Hardwick 2008: 341; Walton 2006, 187.

²¹ Simultaneously, the fact that Jong's Sappho is speaking in prose as she references the second line of fr. 51 LP, as opposed to the verse form of the block quote above, hints at the instability of translations to carry across genres and literary forms.

²² δὸο: Chrysipp. π. ἀποφ. 23 (S.V.F. ii 57 Arnim); δῖχα: ci. Lobel ex Aristaenet. 1. 6 (p. 16 Mazal).

²³ For a survey of the textual controversy over this phrase, see (Bonaria 1974: 159), and in the context of Greek notions of homosexuality see Dover 1989: 180-2. See further Giacomelli Carson 1980: 138, Snyder 1997: 12-13. On the question of whether or not Sappho was a lesbian (and the usefulness of asking such a question), see Hallett 1979: 448-50, Snyder 1997: 2, Wilton 1995: ix.

²⁴ See Gubar 1984: 44 n.2 on the shift from the male pronouns used in reference to Sappho's lover in T. W. Higginson's translation (1871) to the female pronouns favoured by J. A. Symonds (1873). See also Wilton 1995: 53-5 for a discussion of the complications of Sappho's reception in the context of prejudice against lesbianism.

²⁵ See Cameron 1939, Giacomelli Carson 1980, Snyder 1997: 7-25, Stanley 2011.

²⁶ On the connection between Sappho and Rossetti, who wrote a poem titled "Sappho" see Bristow 1995: 67-8 and Linley 1996.

²⁷ For this model of mediated reception, see the introduction to (Porter 2006).

²⁸ "rising over my Connecticut ridge" (SL 299); "Sappho, for her pains, / jumped off a cliff; / & Sylvia stuck her head in the oven, / leaving her mate to become poet laureate. / Anne wrapped herself in furs / & fell asleep forever..." (SL 309).

²⁹ Aphrodite and Sappho occur as figures throughout the collection of poems, but the first-person narrator is now explicitly Jong.

³⁰ Erica Jong graduated from Barnard College in 1963, exactly forty years before the first publication of *Sappho's Leap* in 2003.

³¹ Other examples of the female tradition of authorship referenced in *Sappho's Leap* include page xv, where the epigraph to the Prologue references Sappho fr. 147 LP referencing Helen in *Iliad* 6 referencing a future tradition of female literariness; SL 141, where Jong's Sappho writes a pseudo-epic for the Amazons and is called a "female Homer" (139); and SL 191, where the song of the Sirens is explicitly recorded through the female voice.

³² SL 48: "An olive crown was symbolic of a son, while a tuft of wool meant a girl and her future toil at the loom. 'I would much prefer a tuft of wool,' I said." Compare SL p.182. See also Sappho fr. 102 LP on the connection between weaving, love and poetry.

³³ See Bowman 1998 and Skinner 1989. See especially Nossis' epigram at *Pal. Ant.* 7.718: ὦ Ξεῖν', εἰ τό γε πλεῖς ποτὶ καλλίχορον Μιτυλάναν / τᾶν Σαπφούς χαρίτων ἄνθος ἐωανσόμενος, / εἰπεῖν, ὥς Μοῦσαισι φίλαν τήνα τε Λοκρίν γὰ / τίκτη μ' ἴσαν χῶς μοι τοῦνομα Νοσσίς, ἴθι ("Stranger, if you sail to Mitylene, land of beautiful dances, / to catch there the most out of Sappho's graces, / tell that I was loved by the Muses, and that the Locrian land bore me / My name, remember, is Nossis. Now go!").

³⁴ See Cancik and Schneider 2007 s.v. *Lesbos*, Jackson 1991, Nagy 2004: 28.

³⁵ Examples include Alcaeus (*SL* 10, 12-13, 32, 56, 259-60, 296), Aesop (*SL* 111, and inserted in text at *SL* 161-2, 193), Archilochus (*SL* 153, 208), Homer (*SL* 160, 171, 184, 289), Heraclitus (*SL* 178), Mimnermus (*SL* 201, 273, 276), Anacreon (*SL* 207).

³⁶ On the similarities and differences between Homer's and Jong's Odysseys, see (Ball 2005: 592-3).

³⁷ In *Sappho's Leap*, Sappho rejects the supposed ideal of the Amazons and realises that a society of equal men and women is preferable: this realisation is then transformed into the utopian society which Jong has found. See, for example, *SL* 185: "we taught both boys and girls to be warriors and weavers. We did not make any distinction between the sexes. Girls slaughtered heifers for the sacrifice and boys cooked them. Boys shaped pots and bowls on the wheel and sewed garments of skin and of linen. Girls built houses and learned to sail ships. It was part of our faith that girls and boys could do everything equally." In her essay "The Artist as Housewife," Jong explicitly expresses a wish that the male/female gender dichotomy might be broken down: "Gradually, society will change its false notions of male and female, and perhaps they will cease to be antitheses. Gradually, male and female experience will cease to be so disparate..." (Jong 1980: 120).

³⁸ See Jong 1980: 119, Templin and Jong 2002: 5, 86, 144-5. On sex and power in Jong, see Diot 1986.

³⁹ My thanks to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out: for more detail, see Yatromanolakis 2008: 147, 155-157.

⁴⁰ Other examples of this occur at *SL* 10, 12-13, 32, 33, 45, and 269.

⁴¹ See Campbell 1982: 153 n.1 on Sappho fr. 137 on this: "Aristotle implies a poem by Alc. with an answering poem by S., and some edd. attach 1-2 to Alc. 384; but the anon. scholiast is probably correct to attribute 1-2 like the rest to S., i.e. to credit her with a poem in which she reported the address and then answered it, and it is possible to take Aristotle's words in this sense."

⁴² See Bowie 1981, Nagy 2010: 241, Nicoll 1986, Page 1955.

⁴³ That this is the case is also shown at *SL*, 269, where Jong acknowledges in the epigraph to the chapter the confused traditions of Sappho and Alcaeus and the difficulty of separating them from each other with her attribution, "SAPPHO OR ALCAEUS" (referring to the third and final section of Campbell's Loeb, *Incertum Utrius Auctoris Fragmenta*, 439-455).

⁴⁴ This sense of gender non-specificity and the expansion of a woman-centric view in Sappho has been emphasized by Winkler 1990. An alternative trend emphasises Sappho's difference or distance from male archaic poets: see Greene 1994, Skinner 1996, Stehle 1981.

⁴⁵ This is in line with the evidence from the Sapphic fragments and later sources see Ball 2005: 597; see also Ball 2010: 67-8.

⁴⁶ Interestingly, this openness of authorship as a reflection of Sappho's homoeroticism is also noted in Stehle 1981, where "the dynamic of mutual erotic attraction, the interplay between two women, becomes an invisible bond, or in Sappho's formulation a single enclosure, impenetrable by others, in which the two are so open to one another that they feel united" (58-59). See also Greene 1994: 52.

Works Cited

- Ball, Robert J. "Erica Jong's Sappho and the Classical Tradition." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 11 (4), 2005: 590-601.
- . "Erica Jong, *Sappho's Leap*, and I: Interaction of the Novelist and the Scholar." *Frontiers* 31 (2), 2010: 60-76.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. 2nd ed. New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Bonaria, Mario. "Note Critiche Al Testo Di Saffo." *Humanitas* 25/26. Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, Instituto de Estudos Clássicos, 1974: 155-83.
- Bowie, Angus M. *The Poetic Dialect of Sappho and Alcaeus*. New York: Arno Press, 1981.
- Bowman, Laurel. "Nossis, Sappho and Hellenistic Poetry." *Ramus* 27 (1. 1998): 39-59.

- Bristow, Joseph. "No Friend Like a Sister?": Christina Rossetti's Female Kin." *Victorian Poetry* 33 (2. 1995). West Virginia UP: 257–81.
- Calame, Claude. *Les Chœurs De Jeunes Filles en Grèce Archaique I: Morphologie, Fonction Religieuse Et Sociale*. Rome: Ed. dell'Ateneo e Bizzarri, 1977.
- Cameron, Averil. "Sappho's Prayer to Aphrodite." *The Harvard Theological Review* 32 (1. 1939). Cambridge UP: 1–17.
- Campbell, David A. Ed. *Greek Lyric, Volume I: Sappho and Alcaeus*. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1982.
- Cancik, Hubert, and Helmuth Schneider. Eds. *Brill's New Pauly: Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Carson, Anne. *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.
- Cotkin, George. *Feast of Excess: A Cultural History of the New Sensibility*. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016.
- DeJean, Joan. "Female Voyeurism: Sappho and LaFayette." *Rivista Di Letterature Moderne E Compareate* 40 (1987): 201–15.
- . *Fictions of Sappho, 1546-1937*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Diot, Rolande. "Sexus, Nexus and Taboos Versus Female Humor: the Case of Erica Jong." *Revue française d'études américaines*, 30 (1986): 491–99.
- Dover, Kenneth. *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1989.
- Giacomelli Carson, Anne. "The Justice of Aphrodite in Sappho Fr. 1." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 110 (1980): 135–42.
- Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Grahn, Judy. *The Highest Apple*. San Francisco: Spinsters Ink, 1985.
- Greene, Ellen. "Apostrophe and Women's Erotics in the Poetry of Sappho." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 124 (1994): 41–56.
- . *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Gubar, Susan. "Sapphistries." *Signs* 10 (1. 1984). The University of Chicago Press: 43–62.
- Hallett, Judith. "Sappho and Her Social Context: Sense and Sensuality." *Signs* 4 (1979): 447–64.
- Hardwick, Lorna. *Translating Words, Translating Cultures*. Bristol and London: Bristol Classical Press, 2000.
- . *Reception Studies*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.

- . "Translated Classics Around the Millennium: Vibrant Hybrids or Shattered Icons?" In *Translation and the Classic*, 341–66. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Hauser, Emily. "In Her Own Words: The Semantics of Female Authorship in Ancient Greece, From Sappho to Nossis." *Ramus* 45 (2. 2016): 133–64.
- Jackson, Steven. "Myrsilus of Methymna and the Seven Muses." *Hermathena* 150 (1991). Trinity College Dublin: 27–30.
- Jong, Erica. "The Artist as Housewife." in *In Her Own Image*, edited by Elaine Hedges and Ingrid Wendt, 115–20. New York: The Feminist Press, 1980.
- . *Sappho's Leap: A Novel*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.
- Kirk, G S. "A Fragment of Sappho Reinterpreted." *The Classical Quarterly* 13 (1. 1963). Cambridge UP: 51–52.
- Lehmann, John, and Derek Parker. Eds. *Dame Edith Sitwell, Selected Letters 1919-1964*. New York: Vanguard, 1979.
- Marks, Elaine. "Lesbian Intertextuality." In *Homosexualities and French Literature*. Eds. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks. Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, 1979: 353–77.
- Mora, Édith. *Sappho: histoire d'un poète et traduction intégrale de l'œuvre*. Paris: Flammarion, 1966.
- Nagy, Gregory. "Transmission of Archaic Greek Sympotic Songs: From Lesbos to Alexandria." *Critical Inquiry* 31 (1. 2004): 26–48.
- Nagy, Gregory. *Homer the Preclassic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- Nicoll, W S M. "Horace's Judgement on Sappho and Alcaeus." *Latomus* 45 (3. 1986): 603–8.
- Page, Denys Lionel. *Sappho and Alcaeus: An Introduction to the Study of Ancient Lesbian Poetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.
- Porter, James. *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006.
- Prins, Yopie. "Sappho's Afterlife in Translation." In *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission*. Ed. Ellen Greene. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996: 36–67.
- . *Victorian Sappho*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Telephone Ringing in the Labyrinth: Poems 2004-2006*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007.
- Robinson, David M. *Sappho and Her Influence*. Boston: Marshall Jones, 1924.
- Siegert, Yvette. "Poets Translating Poets: Anne Carson Translating Sappho."

<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/poets-translating-poets>. (2019) Accessed 27 January, 2020.

- Skinner, Marilyn B. "Sapphic Nossis." *Arethusa* 22 (1989). 5–18.
- . "Nossis Thelyglossos: the Private Text and the Public Book." In *Women Poets in Ancient Greece and Rome*. Ed. Ellen Greene. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993: 112–38.
- . "Woman and Language in Archaic Greece, or, Why Is Sappho a Woman?" In *Reading Sappho*. Ed. Ellen Greene, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996: 175–92.
- Snyder, Jane McIntosh. *Lesbian Desire in the Lyrics of Sappho*. New York, Chichester: Columbia UP, 1997.
- Stanley, Keith. "The Rôle of Aphrodite in Sappho Fr. 1." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 17 (4. 2011): 305–21.
- Stehle, Eva. "Sappho's Private World." *Women's Studies: an Interdisciplinary Journal* 8 (1-2. 1981): 47–63.
- Stein, Judith Ellen. "The Iconography of Sappho, 1775-1875." Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1981.
- Templin, Charlotte, and Erica Jong. *Conversations with Erica Jong*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002.
- Wilton, Tamsin. *Lesbian Studies: Setting an Agenda*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Winkler, John. "Double Consciousness in Sappho's Lyrics." In *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. Ed. John Winkler. New York: Routledge, 1990: 162–87.
- Woolf, Virginia. *The Collected Short Stories of Virginia Woolf*. Oxford: Oxford City Press, 2011.
- Yatromanolakis, Dimitrios. *Sappho in the Making: The Early Reception*. Washington DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2008.