

A QUOTATION OF SAPPHO IN JUVENAL SATIRE 6

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*nupta senatori comitata est Eppia ludum
ad Pharon et Nilum famosaque moenia Lagi,
prodigia et mores urbis damnante Canopo.
immemor illa domus et coniugis atque sororis
nil patriae indulsit, plorantesque improba natos,
utque magis stupeas, ludos Paridemque relinquit*

Satires 6.82–87

PARIS IS THE ACTOR of Domitian's reign, notorious for his gallantries; but, since the appellation is not a common one, an audience of the time could hardly fail to be reminded of his illustrious Trojan namesake.¹ "So abandoned was Eppia that she even left her Paris!" The jibe would seem more piquant to a reader who was familiar with Sappho:²

πάγχν δ' εὐμαρες σύνετον πόησαι
πάντι τ[ο]ῦτ', ἃ γὰρ πόλυ περσκέβοισα
κάλλως [ἀνθ]ρώπων Ἑλένα τὸ]ν ἄνδρα
τὸν [ἀρ]ιστον
καλλ[ίποι]σ' ἔβα 'ς Τροίαν πλέοι[σα
καὺδ]᾽ ἐ πα[ίδος] οὐδὲ φίλων το[κ]ήων
πά[μπαν] ἐμνάσθη,

Eppia takes ship for a voyage more perilous than Helen's (6.92 ff.), and the famous walls of Alexandria promise both the majesty and the luxury of Troy.³ The filial reproaches, which would appear to have had no warrant in

¹The actor Paris died by imperial decree in 83 A.D. Juvenal cannot be trusted as a witness to the course of his professional or amatory career, as E. L. Courtney remarks in his *Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal* (London 1980) 273 and 360.

²Sappho Fr. 16 L-P, 5–11 = POxy 1231 Fr. 1 col. i + 2166 (a.) 2. I follow the text of E. M. Voigt (Amsterdam 1971) 42–44, with apparatus. D. L. Page in his *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford 1953) 52–55 suggests πανάριστον or μέγ' ἀριστον as the epithet of Menelaus. For the thought see G. Willis, "The Sapphic 'Umwertung aller Werte'," *AJP* 88 (1967) 434–442, at 440, and A. P. Burnett, *Three Archaic Poets* (London 1983) 285, n. 20. Helen and Menelaus command the agreed superlatives, but such agreement cannot rule the judgment of the heart.

³J. D. Duff, *Fourteen Satires of Juvenal* (Cambridge 1909) *ad loc.*, observes with regard to 6.83–84 that "Eppia's profligacy was too much even for the easy morals of Egypt."

the Greek, express the proper sentiments of a Roman and a satirist. The sister is substituted for the parents, perhaps because Eppia's were dead or unknown to the poet; but social knots are still untied, the children still forgotten, and the well-deserving husband still betrayed.⁴

If Sappho's name is absent from the *Satires* of this poet, she is no stranger to the critics of the period, and Martial was at least acquainted with her reputation.⁵ In the erotic literature of a classic age—in Catullus, Horace, and Ovid—she is spoken of or paraphrased with a frequency upon which it is unnecessary to dwell.⁶ Elegy had also commemorated, and at times had seemed to applaud the infidelity of Helen, who had left the best of husbands for her paramour.⁷ If she would have a warrantable claim upon the notice of the satirist, Eppia's must be a choice by which a Paris would be mortified and even a Helen shamed:

*sed gladiator erat. facit hoc illos Hyacinthos,
hoc pueris patriaeque, hoc praetulit illa sorori
atque viro. ferrum est quod amant . . .* 6.110–112

To say, as Ferguson does,⁸ that the Roman satirist has discerned "the connection between a taste for violence, and a misdirected sex instinct" is to adopt a modern psychology, but renounce the modern insight that a literary topic is more likely to originate in literature than in life. Juvenal's proem tells us, in facetious imitation of the elegists, that the fall of man has inured us both to luxury and to the breach of lovers' promises (6.25–28); according to the poets, infidelity, the use of metals, and maritime adventure are all concomitants of the Age of Iron.⁹ The unduly favoured rival of the

⁴This use of Sappho is not observed by Courtney, Duff, or Ferguson in their commentaries or in S. Nicosia, *Tradizione testuale diretta ed indiretta dei poeti di Lesbo* (Rome 1976).

⁵For Greek witnesses see, e.g., Plutarch *De Pythiae oraculis* 397a, 406a, and pseudo-Longinus *De sublimitate* 10.2. Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 19.9.4 and 20.7.2 shows knowledge of the contents of her poetry. Martial alludes to her at *Epigrams* 7.69.9 and 10.35.15.

⁶Catullus 11.21–24, 51, 62, 65.19–24 and the name Lesbia all reveal a great debt to Sappho (cf. Fragments 31 and 105a–b L-P and Voigt). Horace employs the Sapphic metre at *Odes* 1.22, describes it at *Epistles* 1.19.28, and alludes to her themes at *Odes* 2.13.24–5. Ovid (*Ars amatoria* 3.331) calls Sappho the most lascivious of poets; see also the pseudo-Ovidian *Epistle of Sappho to Phaon*.

⁷Catullus 68.103–104 seems, by its use of *otia*, to imply a tacit comparison between the poet and Paris. Propertius 2.1.50 mocks the taste that slights the whole *Iliad* because of Helen; at 2.34.87–8 he declares that the praise of Helen is diminished by that of "Lesbia"; 2.3.37 praises Menelaus for demanding Helen's return and Paris for denying it, while 3.8.29–32 is not ashamed to compare the bedroom wars of Paris and Helen with Hector's exploits in the field.

⁸J. Ferguson, *Juvenal the Satirist* (New York 1979) 190.

⁹For the Golden Age in the elegists see Tibullus 1.3.47–50, 1.10.1 ff., etc.; against luxury Propertius 1.2, 3.7, etc.; on the breach of morals Catullus 64.397–408. For

elegists is frequently a soldier: his success implies that war and love are not such remote occupations as they pretend, and allows us to suspect a secret motive in the denunciation of iron.¹⁰ They are certain at least that the means of allurements is not the iron itself, but the riches which it enables the martial suitor to appropriate—riches which the lover, because and not in spite of his assiduous devotion, is unable to command.¹¹

Such, however, is the infamy of Eppia's conduct that even gold, that other and more potent weapon drawn by man against his own felicity,¹² fails to detain her culpable affections. Eppia's gladiator—brutal, ugly, and morbidly unhealthy (6.107–109)—is the caricature of that manhood which is exemplified by Sappho's Menelaus or by such a man as Antony in Rome:¹³ the elegiac mistress is at least prudent in her vices, but Eppia is a woman of the iron generation, who has fallen in love with the spirit of the age.¹⁴

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differing Roman estimates of the state of primitive man see Lucretius *De rerum natura* 5.925–987; Virgil *Georgics* 2.532–540. On conceptions of the Golden Age see further A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *A Documentary History of Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* 1 (Cambridge, Mass. 1935). Roman attitudes are discussed in L. P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil* (Cambridge 1969) 132–145; J. Griffin, *Latin Poetry and Roman Life* (London 1985) 1–47.

¹⁰See, for disparagement of the life of *labor*, Propertius 3.4.22, Tibullus 1.1 ff.; for the elegist as an impenitent Phaeacian in a time of war, Tibullus 1.3.3–4; for denunciation of weapons, Tibullus 1.10; of other uses of iron, Propertius 3.5.7–8.

¹¹See, for the notion that the soldier fights for gain, Propertius 3.4.13–14, Tibullus 1.51.4; for the lover as soldier, Propertius 3.5.2, Ovid *Amores* 1.9; for the discomfiture of the wealthy officer, Propertius 1.8.37–38, and on the lover's exiguous resources 1.8.39 ff. See further, e.g., P. Murgatroyd, "Militia amoris and the Roman Elegists," *Latomus* 34 (1975) 59–79.

¹²Cf., e.g., Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.127–140, where the catalogue of vice begins with iron and ends with gold.

¹³On the roaming, concupiscent Antony as a rival of Gallus see Virgil *Eclogues* 10.44, with Servius *ad loc.* On Antony as a pattern for the elegiac wastrel see Griffin, *loc. cit.*

¹⁴I am grateful to the referees of *Phoenix* for their comments on an earlier draft of this note.