

P. J. Finglass

POEM-DIVISION IN SAPPHO'S PAPYRUS FRAGMENTS*

The primary organisational principle of the ancient edition of Sappho was metre.¹ Each of Books 1, 2, and 3 is in the same metre. Book 4 is in two metres (conceivably more),² and poems of the same metre seem to be grouped together. Book 5 has several metres represented; we may presume that Books 6–9 were similarly polymetric. By contrast, metre was not used to organise the ancient edition of the other Lesbian poet, Alcaeus.³

As a consequence, in Sappho's papyrus fragments it is harder to determine where poems begin and end. Sometimes the left-hand margin survives, in which case the presence or absence of a *corōnis* usually determines the matter. But when that margin is missing, metre is not normally available in Sappho's case (whereas it is in Alcaeus') as a criterion for distinguishing individual poems. The problem is particularly acute because Books 1 and 4 of Sappho are by far the most strongly attested in the papyrological record, with

* Whether or not he agrees with all, or any, of the proposals made in this paper, I offer it in honour of my friend and constant inspiration in matters of textual criticism and much more, Carlo Martino Lucarini.

I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for funding the research which led to this article via the award of a Major Research Fellowship. Each text, translation, and critical apparatus are from my edition, Finglass forthcoming 1, the result of collation of the relevant manuscripts, either from digital images or *in situ*. The numeration, though, is that of the most recent previous edition, Neri 2021, which is almost always identical to that of the previous one, Voigt 1971.

¹ For the ancient edition of Sappho see Prauscello 2021, Finglass forthcoming 1.

² Here I differ from Prauscello 2016, who queries the evidence for two metres in this book; see Finglass forthcoming 1.

³ For his ancient edition see Liberman 1999, 1 xl–lxi; Ford 2025.

eight and four papyri respectively; and as just noted, there is no metrical variation in the former, and probably just one such point of variation in the latter.

In such cases we must rely on sense alone. Since we are dealing with fragmentary manuscripts, and since the criterion of sense is potentially subjective, this is often difficult or even impossible. Nevertheless, two factors assist our search. First, the secondary principle of organisation for the edition was alphabetical order of first letter, rather than topic; hence language indicative of the same topic is more likely to indicate text that comes from the same poem than if the secondary organisatory principle had been based on content.⁴ Second, Sappho's poems were relatively short. Very approximately fifty-nine poems took up Book 1, for example,⁵ which means very approximately 59 transition points from one poem to another; across a book of 1320 lines, that works out at a transition – again, very approximately – once every 23 lines. So this is no rare phenomenon, but rather one that will constantly occur in our fragments, whether or not it can be discerned.

Below I cite six instances where current editions present a piece of papyrus (or parchment) as a single poetic fragment when, in my view, we should mark a division. The first two are from Book 1, the next three from Book 4, the final one from Book 5. A conclusion reflects on the significance of this analysis, both for Sappho studies and for editorial technique.

⁴ For alphabetical organisation in the ancient world see Finglass 2025, 232 with nn. 2–4. A tertiary organisational principle may have been at work, whereby poems in the same metre and beginning with the same letter were then ordered by content or function: Finglass forthcoming 1. But such a principle, if it existed at all, would only be tertiary; the randomising effect of alphabetical order of first letter would have had a stronger influence, and so the point made above would still hold.

⁵ Finglass 2022, 6, as modified by Finglass 2026, n. 5.

...	
... and glory/sheen ...	2/3
... with good fortune	
... to control the harbour	5
... of the black earth ...	6/7
... sailors	
... great blasts	
... and on dry land	10/11
... let ... sail from	
... cargoes ... yield/at random	
... when ...	14/15
... many things ...	
...	
...	18/19
... deeds	
... dry land	
...	22/23
...	

This text comes from a second-century Oxyrhynchus papyrus roll. Most of it was published as *P.Oxy.* 1231 fr. 9 by Hunt 1914, 26–29, 42; to this text Lobel 1951, 122 added a smaller piece from the same roll, which he designated *P.Oxy.* 2166(a) fr. 4 A. So despite the different *P.Oxy.* numbers for the two fragments, they both come from the same ancient manuscript.

No *paragaphoi* or *corônides* survive. But we do have language that consistently describes or suits a sea voyage (5, 6/7, 8, 9, 10/11, 12, 13, 21), beginning in the stanza that starts at 4, and ending in the stanza that ends at 22/23. These five stanzas can therefore be confidently assigned to the same poem, as Milne proposes.⁷ He further

⁷ Milne 1933, 177–178.

argues that the poem in question consists of those five stanzas alone, with poem-beginning at 4 and poem-end at 22/23. His proposal concerning poem-beginning is securely founded, for the following reasons:

First, γάνος 'sheen, pride' in 2/3 is inconsistent with the language of a sea voyage. The noun can denote liquids, but never the salt sea.

Second, 4 can easily be supplemented *exempli gratia* to produce the opening to a poem: e.g. Λίτσομαι Νήρευ σε τ]ύχαι σὺν ἔσλαι | [ἄμμ' ἀκινδύτως λί]μενος κρέτηςαι 'I beseech you, Nereus, that we should safely take possession of the harbour with good fortune'.⁸ How the line could be connected with the preceding text is far less clear.

Third, if the attractive restoration of 1 ἐπιθεε μά[καιρα 'put on / impose, blessed one' is adopted (and no other proposal has been made), that rules out the possibility of poem-beginning in that line, since there must be a previous name to which the vocative μά[καιρα 'blessed one' would refer (cf. fr. 1. 13). If we do not have poem-beginning at 4, we therefore end up with a poem of at least seven stanzas, the rarest length attested for this book.⁹ More importantly, this scenario would delay the reference to arrival in harbour until (at least) the third stanza, when it would most naturally appear the beginning or the end of a description of seafaring.¹⁰

As for Milne's proposal concerning poem-end, repetition of χέρσω 'dry land' in 21, after a previous instance in 10/11, might suggest a return to an earlier topic at a poem's conclusion. Poem-end at 22/23 would also yield a five-stanza poem, the most common poem-length in this book. But these considerations are insufficient to establish poem-end to a high degree of probability. Accordingly, this latter proposal should remain in the critical apparatus.

⁸ The first line is owed to Milne 1933, 178; the second is mine.

⁹ Finglass 2022, 4.

¹⁰ Cf. Hor. C. 1. 14. 2–3 *fortiter occupa | portum* 'bravely make for | the harbour!' Sappho fr. 15. 7/8 τ]ύχαι λίμμενος, from a penultimate stanza, is no counterexample, since it brings a section concerned with seafaring to a close.

2. Fr. 27
strophae sapphicae

] . αι . [] . [] . [] γος[— ∪ ∪ —]αι·	2/3
—————]	
— ∪] . και γὰρ δὴ cὺ πάϊς ποτ[? — —	
—]ι . ης μέλπεςθ' — ἄγι ταῦτα [— —	5
—] ζάλεξαι, κάμμ' ἀπὺ τῶδεκ[— × ἄ]δρα χάριςσαι·	6/7
—————]	
c]τείχομεν γὰρ ἐς γάμον· εὖ δε[— —	
κα]ἰ cὺ τοῦτ', ἀλλ' ὅττι τάχιτα [— —	
πα]ρ[θ]ένοικ ἄπ[π]εμπε, θεοὶ [δ(ἐ) (∪) — × —]εν ἔχοιεν[.	10/11
—————]	
— ∪ —] ὄδος μ[έ]γαν εἰς Ὀλ[υμπον	
— ∪ ἄ]νθρώ[π- — ∪ (∪)]αῖκ . [∪ — —	

1]κ vel]λ . π[vel γ[**2/3** ι . **4** Μῖκ]α Benelli: ἀλλ]ὰ Di Benedetto αἰ [ἦcθα Voigt **5** κάφ]ίλης Di Benedetto **5–6/7** θύμωι | cὼι Benelli **6/7** Hunt ξαι· τῶδε κ[άδουc Benelli **8** Hunt ον· δ' ἐ[πίcτηι fere Snell: [δέρκηι Di Benedetto **9** Edmonds υτ· παίcαιc Diehl: τῦδε fere Theander **10/11** Hunt ἀπ Hunt πε· (ex ηε· factum) Edmonds ἄτιμον μηδ]έν Di Benedetto **12** Οὐδάμωc Snell: Ἀcτίβηc Benelli post Diehl Lobel **13** πάμπαν vel παῖcιν Diehl Hunt: ἄ]νθρώ[πωι Snell: -οic Edmonds

...
 ...

2/3

... for you [were] once a . . . child
 . . . to sing – come, consider . . . 5
 these things, and from/after this . . . grant us generous favours. 6/7

For we are going to a wedding. And well . . .
 and you . . . this . . ., but with all speed . . .
 send the maidens back, [and] may the gods have . . . 10/11

. . . road to great Olympus
 . . . for human(s) . . .

This fragment results from the combination of many individual pieces of papyrus from a single roll – the same one that provided the previous fragment. *P.Oxy.* 1231 frs. 50–54 were published by Hunt 1914, 38, who gave these fragments adjacent numbers “as having been found rather apart from the rest” (p. 43); he also proposed a join between fr. 51 and 52 (*ibid.*). Subsequently Lobel 1920–1922, 192 (cf. *id.* 1922, 120) connected them together; after that he added two further pieces from the same roll, published as *P.Oxy.* 2166(a) fr. 5 in Lobel 1951, 123.

We lack a left-hand margin, and thus *paragraphoi* and *corônides*. Poem-beginning at 4 is excluded by the καὶ γάρ phrase only three syllables in; the content of the phrase that follows rules out the possibility of an opening imperative explained by γάρ such as is found at Pindar, *Pythian* 6. 1. Poem-beginning at 8 is excluded by the γάρ-clause which opens that verse. Hence 1–10/11 are all part of the same poem, which was therefore at least three stanzas long. Poem-beginning at 12 is secure, however, for the following reasons.¹¹

First, the content in 12–13 is entirely different from what precedes.¹² 12–13 evidently contain a general statement remarking that it is difficult or impossible for mortals to reach (the top of) Olympus. By contrast, the previous stanzas are delivered by a narrator who forms part of a group on the way to a wedding, and culminate in a short prayer; a move from this to the gnomic statement as just described would be unexplained. We cannot account for the juxtaposition by saying that “on an occasion such as a wedding, where humans were at the peak of their physical desirability and their blessedness, it was appropriate to sound a note of caution, and to remind the audience that even the most exalted and godlike couple were only frail mortals”.¹³ Neither bride nor bridegroom is the focus in the two stanzas preceding the gnomic statement, nor do those stanzas contain anything that would merit a reminder about the difference between mortals and divinities. Nor does the warning μή τις ἀνθ]ρώπων ἐς ὠρανὸν ποτήσθω ‘let no-one among mortals fly to heaven’ at Alcman fr. 1. 16 *PMGF* have any relevance here, either, even though it comes from a *partheneion*

¹¹ It was first tentatively proposed by Edmonds 1928, 16; and subsequently by Snell 1944, 287 = 1966, 74, Ferrari 2007, 39 n. 1 ≈ 2010, 32 n. 1.

¹² Thus Snell, cited previous n.

¹³ Swift 2021, 212; similarly Wasdin 2018, 192.

(maiden-song);¹⁴ such a remark is as germane to Alcman's poem, with its preceding description of violent and arrogant behaviour, as it would be irrelevant here.

Second, at least two credible supplements for the start of 12 are available that would enable this line to open a poem: Οὐδάμῳς 'In no way is there a road . . .' and Ἀκτίβης 'Pathless is the road which . . .'¹⁵ By contrast, nothing has been proposed for the start of 12 that would connect it with the text that precedes; neither ἀκτίβης δ'] 'and pathless . . .' (*suppl.*) nor οὐ γὰρ ἔστ'] 'for there is not . . .' fits the space.¹⁶

Third, such a generalisation at poem-beginning is entirely in Sappho's manner; cf. fr 16 a. 1–2 Ὀλβιον] μὲν οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι | [πάμπ]αν ἄνθρωπ[ον 'It is not possible that [a] person should be | completely [fortunate]', which with its emphasis on mortal limitations is particularly close to the present instance, as well as the second poem represented in fr. 96 (§ 6, discussed below). Fr. 16 also begins with a generalisation, albeit of a different type, involving a priamel.

Fourth, the stanza that precedes 12 provides a fine conclusion, with its closing instruction to the addressee and brief closing prayer. By finishing here, "our poem would end right on the verge of the wedding ceremony with a final prayer to the gods",¹⁷ a situation matched in its energetic tone by the endings of two other epithalamia by Sappho, frs. 30 and 43.

3. Fr. 71

× — ∪ ∪ — —] ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — — *hag*^{2cho}
 × — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ θέ]μις ἐὲ Μίκα
 × — ∪ ∪ — — ∪]ελα[ἄλ]λά σ' ἔγωϋκ ἑάσω
 —————]
 × — ∪ ∪ — —]ϋ φιλότ[ατ'] ἦλεο Πενθιλήγα[
 × — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — —]δα, κα[κό]τροπ', ἄμμα[
 —————]

¹⁴ It is compared with our passage by Griffiths 1972, 14 n. 19.

¹⁵ *Suppl.* Snell 1944, 287 = 1966, 74 and Benelli 2017, I, 150 n. 317 respectively.

¹⁶ *Suppl.* Diehl 1935, 222 and Theander 1946, 65 respectively.

¹⁷ Kurke 2021, 105 n. 33 (without endorsing or rejecting the proposal).

× — ∪ ∪ — — ∪] μέλ[οc] τι γλύκερον . [∪ — — 5
 × — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪] α μελλιχόφων[οc — —
 —————]
 × — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ —] δει, λίγυραι δ' ἄη[ται
 × — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — —] δροc[ό]εcca [— —

1 οὐδὲ] Treu Treu μί 2 γ]έλα[v Ferrari Hunt
 άc' άcω 3 παιδω]v Hunt λό Hunt]ή ήā
 4 παῖ]δα Finglass κα[- Hunt οπ' Hunt: οπ Π ἄμμα[ic
 vel ἄμμα[v Ferrari 5 μέ Hunt λύ 6]ā Hunt
 7 ἀει]δει Hunt εἰ· ραῖδ' ἄη Lobel 8 Hunt [']

. . . it is (not) right that you, Mika,
 . . . but I will not allow you

. . . you chose the friendship of the Penthilids
 . . . our . . . , malignant person!

. . . some sweet song 5
 . . . gentle-voiced

. . . , and clear-sounding winds
 . . . dewy . . .

The source of this poem is another papyrus roll from Oxyrhynchus, dating to the late second or early third century. The larger piece was published as *P. Oxy.* 1787 fr. 6. 1–4 by Hunt 1922, 32–33, 43; a further fragment of the same roll was added by Lobel 1951, 135 and given the name *P. Oxy.* 2166(*d*) fr. 6.

No left-hand margin survives, no *paragraphoi*, no *corónides*. But second-person references are prominent in both the first couplet (1 *cé*, 2 *c'*) and the second (3 ἤλεο, 4 vocative κα[κό]τροπ'). Both these couplets present an oppositional stance between speaker and addressee: 'I will not allow you' (2) and the probable phrase 'it is not right that you' (1) in the first couplet; 'malignant person!' (4) and 'you chose the friendship of the Penthilids' (3), implying rejection of friendship with the speaker's party (probably denoted by ἄμμα['us / our' in 4) in the second. These four lines clearly belong to the same poem.

Then the tone changes. We move from 'malignant person!' (4) to 'some sweet song' (5); and that focus on pleasant sound is repeated

× — ∪ ∪ —] αἰγίοχῳ . — [∪ ∪ — ∪ — —
 × — ∪ ∪ — —] Κυθήρη' εὐχομ[ένα- ∪ — —
 × — ∪ ∪ — —] ὄν ἔχοια θυμο[ν
 —————]
 × — ∪ ∪ — κλ]υθί μ' ἄραc αἶ π[οτα κάτέρωτ- — 5
 × — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ —] ac προλίποια κ[— —
 × — ∪ ∪ — —] πεδ' ἔμαν ἰώ[αν
 —————]
 × — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — —] ν χαλέπαι . [∪ — —

1 ἄκά ν[? **2** λ . [vel γ . [vel π . [**3** εὐχομ[έναιc
 ἄκουcον West : εὐχομ[έναι μ' ἄρηξον Ferrari **4** ἴλλα]ον
 Diehl νέ θυ Fraenkel **5** Fraenkel ὕθιμ'ά άί
 Lobel Fraenkel **6** ἐράνν]ac . . . Κ[ύπρω Diehl **7**]c vel]ε
 ἐδέ ἰώ Gallavotti **8** λέπᾱ μ[ερἰμναι Fraenkel

... peaceful/beautiful . . .

... of aegis-bearing . . .

... Cytherea, . . . praying . . .

... having a . . . spirit

... hear my prayer, if ev[er on another occasion too 5

... leaving . . .

... after my cry

... difficult . . .

This fragment comes from the same manuscript as the previous two, and was first published as *P.Oxy.* 2166(*d*) fr. 1 by Lobel 1941, 44. With no left-hand margin, we lack *corônides* and *paragraphoi*. Nevertheless, content shows that stanzas 2–4 and 5–7, which both are in the mode of a prayer, must be connected. We would not expect such an elaborately worded prayer to conclude a poem (the prayer which ends fr. 1 is a short recapitulation of the more elaborate prayer that has come before), so the following stanza (at least) will form part of the same poem too. The content of that stanza, thin though it be, is fully compatible with that hypothesis; the adjective χαλέπαι ‘difficult’ (8) would be entirely suitable to the the situation which has prompted the prayer in the first place, especially after the cry for help, ἰώ[αν (7).

Moreover, the elaboration of the prayer expressed in 2–7 makes it extremely likely that a new poem begins in 2. In that line, ‘aegis-bearing’ must refer to Zeus, which indicates that Aphrodite’s paternity is mentioned, and that her father is given an epithet. Aphrodite gets her own epithet in the following line (3), before she is asked to adopt a certain sort of spirit, presumably a positive one (4). A request comes from the narrator to hear her prayer, as in the past (5; a supplement, but a safe one), and to depart from where she currently is (6) in response to the narrator’s cry (7), whose cause appears to be described in what follows (8). Such a well defined prayer can hardly stand anywhere else than at the opening of a poem.

6. Fr. 96

— ∪ — × × — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —	^ia gl
× × — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —	gl
× × — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ —	gl ia^

× × — ∪ ∪] Καρδ [∪ —
 × × πόλ]λακι τυίδε [∪]ων ἔχοικα

ὡς π [∪ —] ὠομεν, [∪ ∪ —]. ∪ . χ[—
 ce θέαι c' ἰκέλαν ἀρι-
 γνώται, cāi δὲ μάλιcτ' ἔχαιρε μόλπαι·

5

νῦν δὲ Λύδαιcιν ἐμπρέπεται γυναι-
 κεccιν ὥc ὄτ' ἀελίω
 δύντοc ἀ βροδοδάκτυλοc cελάννα

πάντα περρέχοικ' ἄcτρα· φάοc δ' ἐπί-
 cχει θάλαccαν ἐπ' ἀλμύραν
 ἴωc καὶ πολυανθέμοικ ἀρούραιc·

10

ἀ δ' ἔερα κάλα κέχυνται, τεθά-
 λαιcι δὲ βρόδα κᾶπαλ' ἄν-
 θρουcκα καὶ μελίλωτοc ἀνθεμώδηc·

←————→

πόλλα δὲ ζαφοίταιc' ἀγάνασ ἐπι-
 μνάcθειc' Ἄτθιδοc ἡμέρωι
 λέπταν ποι φρένα κ[—]ρ . ∪ . — . βόρηται·

15

] κῆθι δ' ἔλθην ἄμμ[— √] . ια τόδ' οὐ νωντα[]υκτονυμ[—] πόλυς γαρούει [√]αλον[√ —]το μέσσον.	20
ε]ῦμαρ[εσ μ]έν οὐκ αἰμιθέαισι μόρ- φαν ἐπή[ρατ]ον ἐξίω- θθαι· κυ[—]ροσέχηιθ' ἀ[—] . νίδιον	
— √ — × × — √]το[—]ρατι- μαλ[× — √ √ —] . ερος καὶ δ[×]μ[— √ √ —]ος Αφροδίτα	25
κα . [√ — × ×] νέκταρ ἔχευ' ἀπὸ χρυσίας [√ √ — √]ναν ×]απουρ[√ √ — √] χέρι Πείθω	
] — √ — × × — ἐ]θ[έλ]ησεν ἦ × × — √ √ —]ακις × × — √ √ —] . . . — . . . — . . . αἰ	30
] — √ — × ×] ἐς τὸ Γεραίτιον × × — √ √ —]ν φίλαι × × — √ √]υκτον οὐδενο[—	35
] — √ — × × —]ερον ἴζο[μ]αι	

1 ἀπὸ] Καρδί[ων Blass : ἐνὶ] Κάρδε[σιν Edmonds **2** ναίει]
 Edmonds : πρὸς cè] Blass Fraccaroli et Gomperz τυῖδ
 Blass **3** ὡς πο[τ' ἐ]ζώομεν Blass εν· **4** -σε Lobel : cè
 Schubart **4–5** θέαι σ' . . . ἀριγνώται Lobel : θεας . . . αριγνωτα
 Π ἴκ **5** cā Fraccaroli : σε Π **6** ἐμπρέπεται Lobel : ενπ-
 Π **7** ὄτ' West : ποτ Π **8** κελάνα Schubart : μνηνα Π
9 περ<ρ>έχοις' Schubart **11** ἴσ **12** <ἐ>έρσα Schubart
16 ἱμέρω<ι> Schubart **17** κ[α]ρτέρωι Kamerbeek **18** κῆθι
 Wilamowitz : κηθσ Π **21** Diehl **22** Lobel **23** δέ
 Finglass, π]ροσ- Diehl χη<ι> Lobel–Page ιθ' **24** τὸ[ν
 Zuntz ἄνδ]ρα Diehl **24–5** τιμα- Lobel : τιμαλ[φ- Neri
27 κάλ[πιδος Zuntz, tum δ' ἄμμι idem, δέ σοι Vogliano
28 [προχόω Diehl : κύλικος Zuntz **30** Zuntz **31** πόλλ]ακις
 Zuntz **35** ἄπ]υκτον Lobel οὐδένο[c Zuntz **36** ἄψ]ερον
 vel ὕκ]ερον Diehl [μ Lobel, cett. Zuntz

. . . Sardis . . .
 . . . often setting her mind in this direction,
 that . . . we . . .
 . . . that you were like a manifest
 goddess, and it was in your song that she took especial delight. 5

But now she is conspicuous among the women
 of Lydia, just like, when the sun
 has set, the rosy-fingered moon

overcoming all the stars. And the light
 extends over the salt sea, 10
 I suppose, and the field rich in flowers.

And the beautiful dew has been poured, and
 the roses have bloomed and the tender
 chervil and the flowery melilotus.

And often, as she goes to and fro, she remembers 15
 gentle Atthis and doubtless is consumed
 in her tender mind with desire . . .

But to go there . . . this . . . not . . .
 . . . much
 proclaims . . . middle . . . 20

It is not easy to equal demigoddesses
 with respect to their lovely shape
 . . .
 . . .
 . . . 25
 and . . . Aphrodite

. . . was pouring nectar from
 a golden . . .
 . . . in her hands . . . Persuasion

. . . he/she/it wanted . . . 30
 . . .
 . . .
 . . . to the Geraestian

... friends/dear
 ... of/than nothing 35
 ... shall go

This text comes from *P.Berol.* inv. 9722, a parchment codex dating to the late sixth or early seventh century of unknown Egyptian provenance; it all comes from the same folium. The first twenty lines were published by Schubart 1902, 198–201, and then again by Schubart 1907; the next sixteen lines were published by Lobel 1925, 80. The text is all in the same metre, but as noted above, that provides no positive indication of poem-continuity, even in a polymetric book.

For much of this text the left-hand margin is preserved; several *paragraphoi* are extant, but no *corônides*. We cannot, however, rule out the possibility of poem-end in those places where a *paragraphos* survives without a *corônis*, since no instances of a *corônis* are found anywhere in this manuscript; it may therefore not have used this sign at all.

Lines 1–20 are mostly well preserved and clearly continuous in sense. The only place where poem-end might even be posited is after 2; but the sense of 2 must be continuous with 3, which itself can scarcely be by the beginning of a line, and the reference to Sardis (1) is obviously consistent with the subsequent mention of Lydia (6).

Poem-continuity is also secure between 26 and 27. The pouring of nectar from a golden vessel – an action set in the world of the gods – coheres with a mention of Aphrodite in the nominative, and Aphrodite at the end of that stanza coheres with Persuasion, her frequent companion, at the end of the next one. No further demonstrable instances of poem-continuity can be identified.

The one place where poem-end has been proposed is after 20.²² The hypothesis has received a range of reactions: endorsement,²³ cautious favour,²⁴ tepid consideration,²⁵ rejection.²⁶ The most common

²² Edmonds 1928, 21.

²³ Diehl 1935, 224–225; Hutchinson 2001, 185–186 (though he does not mark it in his text, p. 31); Tsantsanoglou 2020, 208, 219; Nicolosi 2022.

²⁴ McEvilley 1973, 276–278 ≈ 2008, 97–99; Kirkwood 1974, 118.

²⁵ Ferrari 2007, 58–59 with n. 2 ≈ 2010, 52 with n. 29.

²⁶ Körte 1939, 491; Vogliano 1942 = 2019, 112–117; Gentili 1966, 54 n. 86 ≈ 2006, 153 n. 60.

reaction, though, has been simply to ignore it; discussions of fr. 96 rarely even touch on the possibility that more than one poem is represented here. The proposal is however to be warmly welcomed, for the following reasons:

First, the sense of 21–23 does not follow on from what precedes.²⁷ After Sappho’s sombre meditations on the woman from Lesbos who now lives in Lydia (presumably Sardis), and immediately after a reference to the impossibility of going to see that woman (since much lies in between: such must be the sense of 18–20), the difficulty of equalling demigoddesses in beauty has no relevance.

Second, 21 is in asyndeton; there is no way of restoring it so as to include a connecting particle.²⁸ Such connectors are essential in Sappho (and other poetry of this period) unless specific circumstances apply, none of which is relevant here.²⁹ A maxim can be introduced in asyndeton if it is explanatory;³⁰ but as just established, 21–23 provide no explanation for what precedes.

Third, emphasising the difficulty of equalling demigoddesses would fatally undermine the earlier comparison of someone to a ‘manifest goddess’ (4–5). The specious similarity between the two statements only underlines their incompatibility – a problem that disappears if they come from different poems.

Fourth, poem-beginning at 21 is perfectly paralleled by the opening of fr. 16 a (cited above, p. 7), down to the structure: opening predicative adjective, followed by μέν, followed by the negative.³¹ As we have seen (*ibid.*), opening a poem with a generalisation about the human condition is a recognisable feature of Sappho’s poetry.

Fifth, although little text is present after 21–23, what survives tells against the hypothesis of poem-continuity. References to goddesses

²⁷ So rightly Kirkwood 1974, 118.

²⁸ So rightly Kirkwood 1974, 118.

²⁹ Calling the asyndeton “unusual” and “discouraging” for the hypothesis of poem-continuity, Hutchinson 2001, 185 nevertheless cites three supposed parallels: but fr. 1. 25 shows the resumption of a narrative mode after the close of direct speech, at fr. 94. 3 the syntax is continuous, and Alcaeus fr. 73. 7 begins with a resumptive pronoun.

³⁰ Cf. Sappho’s ‘Tithonus Poem’, line 8.

³¹ So rightly Nicolosi 2022. Hutchinson 2001, 186 had already used this passage to counter the strange view expressed by Voigt 1971, 109 that it is suspicious for οὐκ to be delayed until after the adjective.

(26, 29), one of whom appears to be predicated with the pouring of nectar from a golden vessel, point in a different direction and show a different tone from what has come before; and 'the coast of Euboea [33] is not startlingly germane to a poem about Lesbos and Lydia'.³²

Following from that point, a further hypothesis may be ventured: could 33 mark the opening of a new poem? That is, 1–20 would come from one poem, 21–32 from a second, and a third would begin at 33. Since we have only one other text by Sappho in this metre (fr. 94, where a poem at least 15 lines long can be determined on ground of sense), we cannot object that a poem beginning in 21 and ending in 32 would be too short; the data required to establish any such parameter are lacking. The reasons for positing such a division are as follows. First, Geraestus in Euboea has nothing to do with Aphrodite (Poseidon was the god worshipped there). Second, whereas 26–30 offer a third-person past-tense narrative about the gods, the only verb in 33–36 is a first-person-singular future, whose meaning, 'I will come', coheres with the expression of motion towards in 33. Third, if φίλαι (34) is vocative plural rather than dative singular, that would indicate an address by the speaker to her female friends about a trip which she is planning to take, and could suit a poem-beginning.

That evidence is insufficient, however, to establish poem-division as the likeliest option. In particular, the absence of virtually all content from the preceding stanza, 30–32, leaves open the possibility of a transition within the same poem from narrative to address. Nevertheless, it could be right, and interpreters of the text will need to take it into account.

Conclusion

Since the current numeration system was introduced by Lobel and Page (1955), Sappho scholars have generally been content to assume that the text found under each fragment number represents a single poem, without considering points that tell either in favour or against poem-continuity. There have been welcome exceptions to this tendency, as we have seen, but on the whole it has been the rule.

³² Hutchinson 2001, 186.

Crucially, none of the editions of Sappho published after Lobel–Page has examined the question afresh; so whether readers turn to Lobel–Page, to Voigt, to Campbell, to Neri, or to Bierl, they virtually always find the same texts under the same numbers.³³ As a result, poem-divisions proposed before 1955, but not adopted by Lobel–Page, have languished; and many low-hanging scholarly fruit have remained on the tree.

One might argue that without a *corónis* or change of metre or some other definitive criterion of that kind, poem-breaks might be suggested in a critical apparatus, but not marked in the text. An edition of Sappho might in theory be constructed on that basis, though how useful it would be is unclear; would supplements and emendations be dealt with on the same basis? Certainly, it is not what we have in our current editions, which tend simply to pass over the question of where poem-breaks are plausible, without mentioning them in the apparatus. These editions are moreover happy to acquiesce in cases where Lobel–Page have themselves inserted poem-break without direct papyrological evidence. Compare Sappho’s ‘Tithonus Poem’ (fr. 58), where an arbitrary poem-division printed by Lobel–Page has been retained in all subsequent editions, despite no arguments having been made in its support, and despite its falsification by a papyrus published in 2004.³⁴

There is no neutral presentation of the evidence: just as dividing fragments into poems is a choice, so too is not dividing them. Refraining from making divisions even when they are probable, indeed omitting consideration of the crucial question of continuity versus poem-break altogether, inevitably leads to readers interpreting chunks of text as a single unit when they are no such thing.³⁵ The consequences for the interpretation of individual poems, as well as of Sappho’s corpus and of the body of archaic lyric as a whole, should be obvious.

P. J. Finglass

University of Bristol

patrick.finglass@bristol.ac.uk

³³ Lobel–Page 1955; Voigt 1971; Campbell 1982; Neri 2021; Bierl 2021.

³⁴ See Finglass forthcoming 3.

³⁵ See Finglass 2020, 188–189 for a discussion of editorial pusillanimity in a different context.

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This paper examines how poem-division can sometimes be determined in Sappho's papyrus fragments even when the left-hand margin of the papyrus is missing and there are therefore no *corônides* to guide us, by paying careful attention to language and style. Six instances are examined, from Books 1, 4, and 5 of Sappho's ancient edition, and a division is advocated in each case.

В статье показано, как иногда в папирусных фрагментах можно определить границу между отдельными стихами Сапфо, даже если поля с левой стороны, где стоял коронис, не сохранились, на основании языковых и стилистических критериев. Рассматривается шесть случаев из книг I, IV и V античного издания Сапфо, и в каждом случае обосновывается разделение.

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