

This paper explores an illuminating instance of Plato's influence on Ps.-Longinus in the *On the Sublime*. More specifically, it addresses the ancient critic's praise of Sappho's famous 31 V for her selection and successful arrangement of material that comes *from truth itself* (ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτῆς ἐκάστοτε λαμβάνει... τὰ ἄκρα αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπερτεταμένα δεινῇ καὶ ἐκλέξαι καὶ εἰς ἄλληλα συνδῆσαι, 10.1.9-11). While scholars have previously noted Ps.-Longinus' debt to Plato's dialogues (Weber 1935, 38-41; Segal 1959, 143nn.18-19 and 145n.29), that Plato is likely to lie behind this interesting comment has remained unnoticed.

Yet this well-known statement by Ps.-Longinus has puzzled several scholars. Russell (*ad* 10.1), for example, notes that the aesthetic criteria which Ps.-Longinus applies to Sappho's poem are an unusual formulation, but concludes simply that "the concepts of ἐκλογή and σύνθεσις (cf. 8.1) are here employed for a new purpose." Indeed, what Russell seems to imply is that Ps.-Longinus' more traditional use of these terms (in the sense of selection and arrangement *of words*: "ὀνομάτων τε ἐκλογή... σύνθεσις," 8.1.9-12; cf. too D.H. *passim*) is put in a new perspective in this passage. I suggest that what makes Ps.-Longinus' statement sound innovative is his peculiar emphasis on the selection of material *from truth itself* (ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτῆς). This critical point has no clear parallel in other extant rhetorical treatises.

I will argue that Ps.-Longinus is very likely to have inherited the terms of his praise of Sappho from a well-known critical response to an encomium of Eros, namely Socrates' harsh criticism of Agathon's 'Gorgianic' speech in Plato's *Symposium* (cf. Hug 1909, *ad loc.*; Bury 1932, xxxiv-xxxvi; Dover 1980, *ad loc.*). We find a perfect precedent for Ps.-Longinus' odd expression in Socrates' response to Agathon's speech: ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ ὑπ' ἀβελτερίας ὤμην δεῖν τὰ ληθῆ λέγειν... ἐξ αὐτῶν δὲ τούτων τὰ κάλλιστα ἐκλεγόμενους ὡς εὐπρεπέστατα τιθέναι ("Thanks to my stupidity, I thought one had to tell the *truth*... and that from these *truths* one should select the most beautiful and arrange them most suitably"; 198d3-6). That is, Ps.-Longinus praises Sappho for succeeding in the very respect that Socrates feels Agathon's overly rhetorical encomium fails, and chooses to do so using the very same, and very striking, expression.

Not only is this a probable source for the terms that so struck Russell, but it also underscores the equally surprising emphasis on the rhetorical arrangement of *truthful* material in relation to erotic discourse. Here, too, Ps.-Longinus shows himself a true disciple of Socrates, for Socrates concludes his interrogation of Agathon, and prefaces his own speech, with the statement that, while Agathon might contradict Socrates, he cannot contradict the truth (Οὐ... τῆ ἀληθεία... δύνασαι ἀντιλέγειν, 201c8-9). Truth itself, then, is the very touchstone of Socrates' introduction to his own famous discourse on Eros, just as it is in his conclusion (cf. esp. 212a5).

Socrates' critique of the poet Agathon, in combination with his own speech in the *Symposium*, makes a plausible frame for Ps.-Longinus' praise of Sappho 31 V in the *On the Sublime*. While Agathon's sophisticated encomium to Eros strays from the truth, in Socrates' account the lover comes into contact with it. From just such a place and by precisely such rhetorical arrangement as Socrates describes in the *Symposium*, Ps.-Longinus suggests Sappho has successfully composed her own poetic account of Eros.