

## The Jewish reception of Sappho at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

The poetry of Sappho has long resonated among authors exploring themes of alterity. For Jewish poets living in the diaspora during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reading Sappho in the original Greek and in translation prompted explorations of gender, sexuality, and Jewish identity. As this paper will demonstrate, Jewish poets of this time period recognized in Sappho her nonconformity to the dominant male, heterosexual worldview, and reflected upon their own identity as a Jew in a Christian landscape. The work of four Jewish poets will be discussed: the American poet Emma Lazarus, the British poet Amy Levy, and the Russian poets Sophia Parnok and Osip Mandelstam. These poets draw from Sappho when composing their own work, while exploring similar themes of gender and sexuality, as well as their personal and evolving relationship to Judaism.

Although the translation of Sappho's poetry into Hebrew has recently been addressed (Jacobs, 2021), the reception of Sappho by Jewish poets and the particular use of Sappho to explore themes of Jewish identity is a new area of interest in the reception of classical literature.

### Bibliography

Jacobs, Adriana. 2021. "Sappho in Hebrew Literature." In *The Cambridge Companion to Sappho*. Edited by P.J. Finglass and Adrian Kelly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 441-456.