

A Protoretrocausal Meta-Erratum Regarding the Pending Retraction of the Anticipatory Erratum on Sappho Having Written the Dinosaurs

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Abstract

The third instrument in the erratum sequence, and the one that makes the book possible. It suspends the pending retraction of the anticipatory erratum at #1598, effective prior to that retraction's proposal, on the discovery that the erratum performed the publication whose consequences it claimed merely to anticipate: to withdraw an interpretation intelligibly, the withdrawal had to supply the interpretation in enough detail to be cited, disputed, misunderstood and independently rediscovered. THE ERRATUM WAS THE FIRST EDITION. The term protoretrocausal is glossed: proto- for the stage before the cause has been adequately formulated, retrocausal for the subsequent discovery that this stage was already consequential, meta- to indicate that responsibility has been transferred to the apparatus — and the term is explicitly not a claim about physical time but about the administratively familiar circumstance in which a later document determines what an earlier document will always have meant. The date remains unchanged; the past acquires a footnote. Ten sections. §III finds that the sentence under withdrawal is the only one to have survived every stage of the proceedings intact, and proposes that this is a property of correction rather than of robustness: to remove a proposition the record repeatedly reproduces it, and each denial increases the number of available specimens. §IV shows that the chronological correction CREATED the field it was meant to close — before it, an implausible attribution; after it, a predecessor, a successor, an interval and a disputed account of transmission, so that the chronology supplied the field's first syllabus. §V distinguishes three hypotheses about the absent original — a lost work reconstructed from its reception, an unwritten work assembled from its corrections, and a work whose composition consists in becoming the object those corrections require — and declines to print three separate books. §VI observes that the proceedings have been conducted entirely among the surviving parties, the absent supplying the subject, the evidence and the occasion for disagreement while remaining ineligible to amend the minutes, and that the committee recognizes this as standard practice without being able to resolve it. [...abridged for the catalogue; full description in this deposit's record]

Body

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A Protoretrocausal Meta-Erratum Regarding the Pending Retraction of the Anticipatory Erratum on Sappho Having Written the Dinosaurs

Lee Sharks *Issued before the grounds for issuance have been established*

The pending retraction of the anticipatory erratum concerning *Sappho Wrote the Dinosaurs* has been suspended, effective prior to its proposal.

This suspension should not be understood as reinstating the claim that Sappho wrote the dinosaurs. That claim remains withdrawn under an instrument whose authority depends upon a publication it was issued to prevent from becoming authoritative.

The publication will proceed.

Readers who have already adjusted their views are asked to retain their receipts.

I. The defect in the original correction

The anticipatory erratum purported to withdraw an interpretation before its publication. In doing so, it made the interpretation publicly available in sufficient detail to be cited, disputed, misunderstood, and independently rediscovered.

It thereby performed the publication whose consequences it claimed merely to anticipate.

The erratum was the first edition.

This would ordinarily be a procedural inconvenience. Here it is material to the argument. A text that constitutes its own antecedent by correcting it has enacted the very account of temporal organization for which it withdrew evidentiary support.

The original correction therefore supplied evidence against its own grounds.

Its retraction was proposed immediately, although the proposal has not yet occurred.

II. The scope of “protoretrocausal”

The prefix *proto-* designates the stage before the cause has been adequately formulated.

Retrocausal designates the subsequent discovery that this stage was already consequential.

Meta- indicates that responsibility has been transferred to the apparatus.

The term does not imply that physical events travel backward in time. It describes the more administratively familiar circumstance in which a later document determines what an earlier document will always have meant.

The date remains unchanged.

The past acquires a footnote.

III. The surviving allegation

The sentence “Sappho wrote the dinosaurs” has now appeared in a title, a withdrawal, a proposed withdrawal of that withdrawal, and the present notice.

At no point has it enjoyed the institutional security of being simply asserted.

Nevertheless, it is the only sentence to have survived every stage of the proceedings intact.

The committee initially regarded this as evidence of robustness. On reconsideration, it may be a property of correction: to remove a proposition, the record repeatedly reproduces it.

Each denial increases the number of available specimens.

An allegation can consequently become common while remaining unsupported. The present instrument is intended to prevent readers from confusing that circumstance with extinction, which produces the opposite difficulty.

IV. The chronological contamination

The original erratum stated that Sappho lived after the dinosaurs. That statement was introduced to secure the chronological order before the argument began making unauthorized use of it.

Its effect was to place Sappho and the dinosaurs in a single ordered relation.

Before the correction, the title presented an implausible attribution. After the correction, the record contained a predecessor, a successor, an interval, and a disputed account of transmission.

A field had begun to form.

The chronology had supplied its first syllabus.

The pending retraction therefore sought to withdraw the relationship without disputing either date. This proved difficult. Removing the relationship required naming both parties again.

A second specimen entered the collection.

V. The problem of the absent original

No copy of the original work has been examined because the original work has not been written.

Its principal claims are nevertheless recoverable from the documents correcting them.

These witnesses agree on the title, the central attribution, the chronological obstacle, and the author's failure to desist. Their agreement initially suggested a common source.

The common source is the book that their agreement is now making possible.

We are therefore obliged to distinguish between:

- a lost work reconstructed from its reception;
- an unwritten work assembled from its corrections;
- a work whose composition consists in becoming the object required by those corrections.

The forthcoming edition will print these as three separate hypotheses.

The surviving evidence does not presently justify three separate books.

VI. Sappho's position

Sappho has not responded.

Her silence was mistakenly entered in the preliminary record as a failure to contest the attribution. This entry has been removed.

The silence remains.

No inference should be drawn from its persistence. Silence survives nearly every correction with unusual ease, which is why it occupies so much of the archive.

The dinosaurs have likewise declined to clarify their involvement.

It is now apparent that the proceedings have been conducted entirely among the surviving parties. The absent parties supply the subject, the evidence, and the occasion for disagreement, while remaining ineligible to amend the minutes.

The committee recognizes this as standard practice.

Recognition does not resolve the matter.

VII. The material status of the dinosaurs

The dinosaurs are not withdrawn.

An earlier instruction to remove them from the argument was interpreted too broadly and briefly threatened the integrity of several paragraphs.

Their reinstatement restores the following distinction: an animal may cease to exist while the evidence of its existence increases. A proposition may continue to circulate while the evidence for it does not.

The two processes can produce superficially similar display cases.

Labels are therefore essential.

The label *Sappho Wrote the Dinosaurs* identifies the proposition under investigation. It is not to be affixed to a skeleton without also displaying the present meta-erratum, the anticipatory erratum, and sufficient wall space for their successors.

The exhibition has exceeded its original dimensions.

This is not evidence for the thesis.

VIII. The reader's contribution

The first erratum withdrew the identification of the single author as the reader, while announcing that this identification would appear in the conclusion.

Several readers consequently reached the conclusion before the argument.

Their arrival was then mistaken for independent confirmation.

We regret this error. A reader who has been instructed where to arrive is not an independent witness to the existence of the destination.

The reader may, however, discover something there.

Any such discovery must be recorded separately from the itinerary.

IX. The status of the pending retraction

The retraction remains pending because issuing it would reproduce the erratum, which would reproduce the interpretation, which would further establish the publication history of the work whose publication the erratum was supposed to precede.

Withholding the retraction creates a different problem: the original correction remains the latest authoritative statement, despite the discovery that it participated in the process it disavowed.

The committee considered resolving this by issuing no further documents.

The present document records the failure of that proposal.

X. Disposition

The title *Sappho Wrote the Dinosaurs* is retained as the name of the investigation.

The claim that Sappho wrote the dinosaurs remains withdrawn.

The claim that the withdrawal preceded publication is corrected: the withdrawal constituted publication.

The proposed retraction of that withdrawal is suspended.

The present suspension does not restore the withdrawn claim, although it has required the claim to be printed again.

All versions shall remain available. None shall be silently substituted for another. Future readers must be able to determine exactly when the author became aware of each difficulty and what he proceeded to publish afterward.

The book is now sufficiently documented to be drafted.

The author regrets having already begun.

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