

**Rosenmeyer, P.A. (2019) “A Delicate Bridegroom: *Habrosyne* in Sappho fr. 115V”, *Classical Quarterly* 69 62-74** (co-written with Giuliana Ragusa, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil)

In Sappho’s two-line fragment 115V, an unidentified speaker addresses a lucky bridegroom, wondering how best to describe him; the answer follows immediately: τίω σ’, ὃ φίλε γάμβρε, καλῶς ἐικάσδω; / ὄρπακι βραδίνω σε μάλιστ’ ἐικάσδω (“Dear bridegroom, to what do I best compare you? / I compare you most of all to a delicate branch.”) Brides are often compared to plants in melic poetry, where the image suggests youthfulness and eroticism. In Sappho fr. 105bV, for example, a bride is imagined as a hyacinth trampled by a careless shepherd, and in fr. 105aV, she resembles a ripe apple high up in a tree, beyond the reach of an eager apple-picker. But the comparison of a groom to a delicate plant strikes an odd note. In other Sapphic *epithalamia*, grooms are more often huge, tall, and virile; in fr. 111V, for example, the groom is compared to the hyper-masculine Ares. The questions posed here concern the context of the comparison, and the nuances of the phrase ‘delicate branch’. Is it an image more appropriate for the groom or for the bride? Would ancient audiences have understood it as a compliment or as an insult? In search of answers, we first discuss what we know about Sappho’s *epithalamia*, then consider the evidence for songs of comparison (*eikasia*) performed at weddings, and finally survey other instances of the words (*h*)*orpax* and (*b*)*rhadinós* in archaic epic and melic.