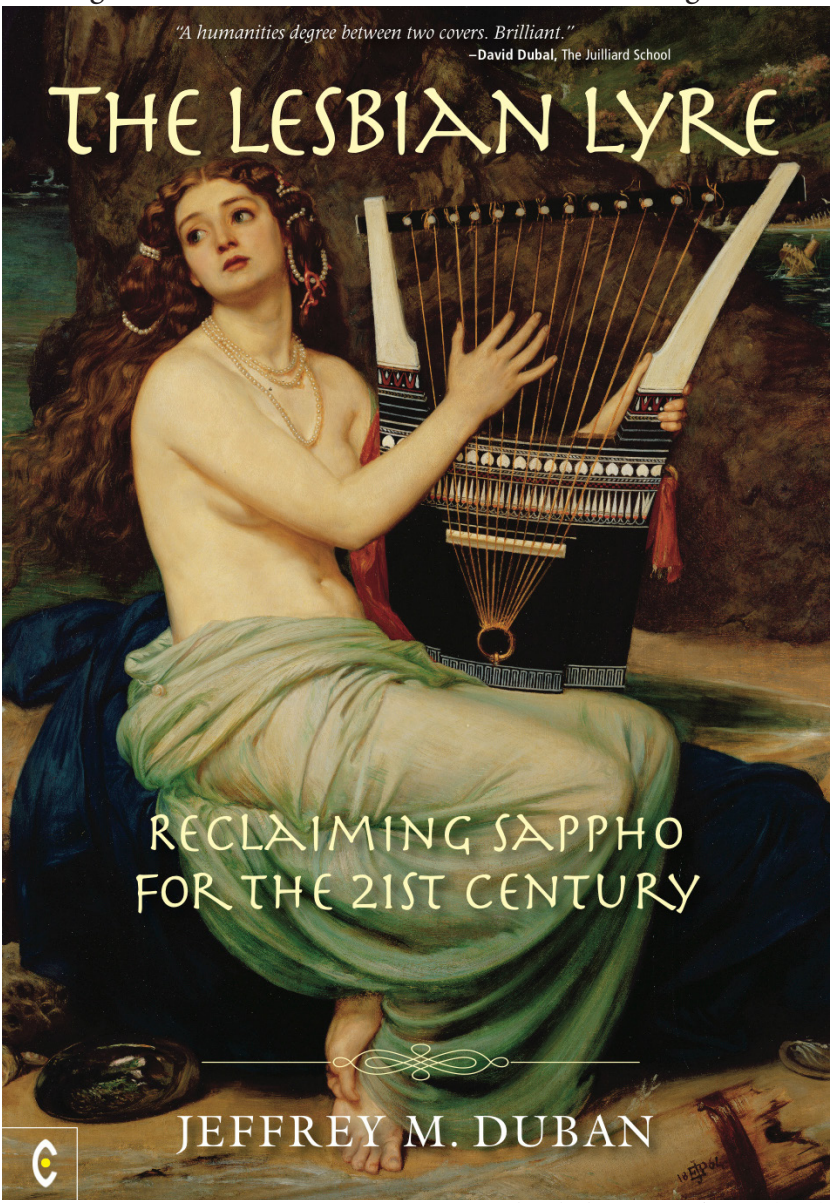
Sir Granville Bantock

SAPPHO, NINE FRAGMENTS FOR CONTRALTO

A Program of Silver Thread Productions and Aegean Arts



Sir Edward John Poynter, *The Siren* (1864)

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SAPPHO

Nine Fragments for Contralto

Words selected by

HELEN F. BANTOCK

Neun Fragmente für eine Altstimme

Deutsche Übersetzung von

JOH. BERNHOFF

Set to Music by

GRANVILLE BANTOCK

BREITKOPF & HÄRTEL
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25150

GRANVILLE BANTOCK

by Jeffrey M. Duban

from available sources as adapted and enlarged

Early Life and Development

Granville Ransome Bantock (1868-1946) was born in London to an eminent Scottish surgeon (George Granville Bantock) and a munificent and vivacious theater-loving mother (Elizabeth "Bessie" Ransome). Though intended by his parents for the Indian Civil Service, he suffered poor health and initially turned to chemical engineering. Sooner drawn to music, at age 20 he entered the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied harmony and composition with Frederick Corder – the first translator of Wagner's Ring into English, and the teacher of illustrious students including Arnold Bax, York Bowen, Alan Blush, and Eric Coates.

Early conducting engagements took Granville around the world with a musical comedy troupe. He pioneered the practice of devoting entire concerts to single composers. In 1890, he became Principal of the Birmingham and Midland Institute School of Music, and in January 1908 premiered Delius' Brigg Fair with the Liverpool Orchestral Society. In the same year, he succeeded Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934) as Peyton Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham, holding the appointment for twenty-six years (1908-1934). Knighted in 1930, Bantock was elected Chairman of the Corporation of Trinity College of Music in London in 1934. Noteworthy in Bantock's succession of Elgar is that Bantock's *Sappho* (1906) and Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (1899) are considered the two greatest mezzo song cycles in the English language.

Music poured from the young Bantock, and though at first Tchaikovsky, Wagner, and Strauss were noticeable models, Bantock's very personal use of voices and orchestra resulted in early twentieth-century recognition as a composer of stature and personality. Wrote *Manchester Guardian* critic Neville Cardus,

> Those of us who were then 'young' and 'modern' regarded Bantock as of much more importance than Elgar. . . . Bantock was definitely 'contemporary.' Indeed it was Elgar himself who referred to Bantock as 'having the most fertile musical brain of our time.'

History, however, has quite reversed Cardus's judgment. For the fame achieved in Bantock's lifetime, a Bantock Society was formed in London shortly after his death in 1946. Its first president was Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), whose music Bantock had championed during the early years of the century. Sibelius had dedicated his Third Symphony to Bantock; Elgar, the second of his Pomp and Circumstance marches.

The Storyteller

Bantock was a vivid musical storyteller. Never at a loss for apt musical images, he regularly produced arresting and colorful scores. He worked on a massive setting of the complete text of Edward FitzGerald's The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, matching flamboyant scoring for voices and orchestra to Omar's teeming invention. Between 1900 and 1914, Bantock produced – counting the three parts of Omar separately, as performed – seven extended works for chorus and orchestra, a dozen colorful orchestral scores, and two large orchestral song cycles – as well as a large

body of songs and choral music. However, with the emergence of a new generation of composers after World War I, Bantock's music lost some of its éclat. The BBC nonetheless commissioned and performed his three biggest scores from the years between the wars: the massive setting of The Song of Songs, The Pilgrim's Progress, and Pagan Symphony.

Bantock and Sappho

Bantock came to Sappho through Henry Thornton Wharton's English translation, first published in 1885. Wharton's *Sappho* (1885, 1887, 1895) – memoir, Greek text, literal translation, selected renderings, and bibliography – was the first edition of Sappho written not "solely by scholars for scholars," but for "those who have neither leisure nor power to read her in the tongue in which she wrote." The volume, of biding interest, is readily available in reprint. Wharton himself could have been no more eminent a Victorian: a master of arts (Oxford), Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, fellow of various medical associations, Honorary Surgeon of Kilburn Dispensary and of Queen Charlotte's Convalescent Home, writer of various scientific papers (on, e.g., ornithology and mushrooms), *and* the author of *Sappho* – collecting and translating all her extant writings.

Bantock wrote an enormous number of songs, often on exotic texts and subjects. In this endeavor he was greatly influenced by his wife, Helen Maude Francesca Bantock, née von Schweitzer (1868-1961), a poet and painter whose writing skills Bantock regularly enlisted; and in the years preceding Bantock's *Sappho*, Helen played a considerable role as librettist and poet for her husband's songs and choral works (e.g., The Time Spirit and Sea Wanderers). Bantock's production of songs and song cycles was a constant of his artistic output. Such work also placed his name on programs across the country, as individual items appeared in song recitals. In the period from 1898 to 1905, one cycle followed another, Bantock completing no fewer than four, all forming a continuum that reflected his interest in the exotic: Ferishtah's Fancies (to words by Robert Browning) and the Five Ghazals of Hafiz (translated by poet-journalist Sir Edwin Arnold), both dating from 1903; and the earliest, the Six Jester Songs (to words by Helen Bantock), dating from 1898. The Sappho songs were last published in 1906.

There can be no other great reputation sustained by so small a body of surviving work than that of the Greek poetess Sappho. It was

English poet and literary critic John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) who wrote,

> The world has suffered no greater literary loss than the loss of Sappho's poems. So perfect are the smallest fragments preserved . . . of all the poets of the world, of all the illustrious artists of all literature, Sappho is the one whose every word has a peculiar and unmistakable perfume, a seal of absolute perfection and illimitable grace.

As it is, what we have is one complete poem, the "Hymn to Aphrodite" (Bantock's first song); a near-complete second (Bantock's "Peer of Gods"); and a succession of fragments of one or two lines, surviving as quotations in the works of others dating centuries or a millennium and more after Sappho. These Helen Bantock took from the Wharton translation, stringing together unrelated fragments and, as she would, changing word orders and adding transitional verses of her own. Thus did she shape nine narratively and emotionally integrated poems, making the thrust and meaning of the work uniquely hers. However, the inspiration of her archaic Greek mentor is apparent.

The Cycle Itself

This is a *dramatic* song cycle, the soloist embodying the changing emotions of the lovelorn Sappho. In the **first song**, "Hymn to Aphrodite," Sappho appeals to the goddess of love for help in her rejected state: it is clearly not the first time Sappho has required such help, a fact that both she and Aphrodite know and playfully acknowledge. In the **second song**, Sappho dismisses her former love, contemptuously consigning her to oblivion; but she, Sappho, will be remembered because she has gathered "the roses of Pieria" – Pieria the home of the Muses and font of poetic inspiration (in Macedonia, north of Mount Olympus).

The **third song** offers a brief interlude in the drama. With "Evening-Song" – under the influence of Hesperus, i.e., the Morning Star, or planet Venus – the soloist hails spring's messenger "the sweet-voiced nightingale." The poem is redolent with images later adopted by many English poets.

In the **fourth song**, Sappho, recalling the grace in her lover's eyes, would have "tireless singing" at the feet of Love and the draining of Love's "thousand cups." In the **fifth song**, by contrast, Sappho sleeps and is tormented by longing in a passionate troubled dream. Resignedly she ends, "Alas! I shall be ever maiden; / Neither honey nor bee for me." The wide range of moods in this song, and the transition to the "yearn[ing]" and build-up to the climax that follows, comprise the song's pivotal moment. The atmosphere turns haunted as the soloist suddenly faces the possibility that all will not come right and sings, "Alas! I shall be ever maiden." The mood is phantom-like; the voice entirely below the stave and directed to sing "with mournful tone"; the poignant closing chords punctuated by the thumping of Sappho's heart. In this fifth song, Helen Bantock combines the texts of several Sapphic fragments to convey conditions ranging from the despair and listlessness of sleeping alone to love's soul-shattering assault, similar to "A wind on the mountain falling on the oaks."

In the **sixth song**, Helen poeticizes Wharton's "That man seems to me peer of gods . . . that indeed makes my heart flutter in my bosom." Sappho here describes the engulfing reactions of rage and despair at the sight of a beloved girl sitting in intimate proximity to a man and laughing in his company. The reaction is one of emotional apoplexy, a near-death experience.

Reflections of death permeate the **seventh song**. Sappho possibly contemplating suicide, is told in a dream by Aphrodite "the daughter of Cyprus" – glossing Aphrodite's birth onto the island of Cyprus – that Death is evil. Helen Bantock joins this to the lyric lamenting the death of Adonis. The dying of Adonis – an annually renewed, ever youthful vegetation god – was a theme in the circle of young girls gathered about Sappho. The epitome of physical beauty and youth, Adonis was beloved of Aphrodite.

A composite of several Sapphic fragments, the **eighth song**, titled "Bridal Song," marks the celebration of marriage and of heterosexual fulfillment by the poet of lesbian love and longing. Sappho's loves – she is thought to have been married and have had a daughter – are thus not in the least restrictive. By the same token, Aphrodite is ever prepared to help Sappho in her same-sex amours, though Aphrodite's own amours are always heterosexual.

Bantock's concluding **ninth song** is a brief hymn to Aphrodite. Aphrodite is bid "pour forth thy nectar of delight" – a delight in all or any form of sanctioned love. Bantock's music celebrates all love, archetypal passion, and the moods and emotions they create. His *Sappho* is in truth written under Aphrodite's very spell. The spell remained. Thirty years after *Sappho*, Bantock composed his Third Symphony, called The Cyprian Goddess – an exaltation of Aphrodite.

Frontispiece to the Mary Robinson
sonnet series, *Sappho and Phaon*, 1796

Antiquity's Poetess and Ours

by Jeffrey M. Duban

❧

Sappho, delectable glory of the Lesbians
– Lucian of Samosata

I have woven in the flowers of Anyte, and many
of Moero, and the few of Sappho, but roses all.
– Meleager of Gadara

Sappho's Lesbos – well wooded, well cultivated, and well populated – lay within several hours of Sardis, the sophisticated capital of the wealthy kingdom of Lydia (in Asia Minor, modern Turkey). The island was active in seventh-century trade and colonization; it was torn by bouts of factionalism and political upheaval to which the aristocratic Sappho was sometimes prey, although her poetry reflects little of this. Indeed, as Aphrodite is Sappho's special goddess and is herself apolitical among the contentious gods, so is Sappho's poetry apolitical. The women of Lesbos were famed for their beauty no less than for their sophistication. Beauty contests were a yearly event.

To place Sappho in historical context, we may briefly note that the principal Biblical event occurring during Sappho's lifetime (c. 620 - c. 570 BC) was Nebuchadnezzar's siege and capture of Jerusalem and destruction of the First Temple; and, with the fall of the Kingdom of Judah, the start of the Babylonian Exile (587 BC). This pivotal event was preceded by the Old Testament prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. In the Greek and Roman worlds, contemporary with Sappho were the Presocratic philosopher Thales – considered by Aristotle the founder of natural philosophy – and Solon, the poet-statesman founder of Athenian democracy. At Rome, close to two and a half centuries of kingship (753 - 509 BC) would end within sixty years of Sappho's death, paving the way for the Roman Republic (509 - 27 BC).

Ancient criticism of Sappho finds its consensus in her poetic supremacy. In epigrams from the *Palatine Anthology* she is regularly counted as the tenth of the Muses: "Memory [mother of the Muses] herself was astonished when she heard the honey-sweet Sappho, wondering whether mankind possessed a tenth Muse." Sappho is deemed "the equal of any god" and the ultimate in her craft: "You have established the beginning and end of all lyric song." Also counting Sappho among the Muses, the Greek historian and biographer Plutarch (46 -120 AD) elaborates: "Sappho utters words truly mingled with fire and gives vent through her song to the heat that consumes her heart." In so doing, she is said to "heal the pain of love with the Muses' melody." Again, in the *Palatine Anthology*, she is considered "sweetest of love-pillows to the burning young," a companion to Hymen, god of weddings at the bridal bed, and to Aphrodite lamenting Adonis in the sacred grove of the blessed.

Sappho was derided as well as praised in antiquity – the former when the concern focused on her sexuality rather than on her poetry. The Greek comic playwrights of the fourth century BC were particularly unsparing (and influential), however much their works are known in merest

fragments or by title alone. A key source is the poet Ovid, who espouses both sides of the issue, thus doing little to resolve it. Ovid asks, "What did Sappho of Lesbos teach but how to love maidens? Yet Sappho herself was safe." By 'safe' (*tuta*) Ovid apparently means that Sappho condoned, without herself practicing, homosexuality. Ovid's position is at variance with the view taken in his famed "Sappho-Phaon Epistle":

> Not Pyrrha's coterie nor Methymna's girls beguile me now, nor any Lesbian maiden. Dazzling Cydro's of no account – Anactoria and Atthis, once embraced, are now disdained; and the hundred others, loved to my reproach, relinquished this their claim to callous you [Phaon] alone.

The rhetorician-philosopher Maximus of Tyre (2d century AD) in an equally famous statement takes a more elevated view:

> But is not love of the Lesbian poetess (if one can compare older with more recent) in fact identical with Socrates' amatory art? It seems to me that each of them pursued a particular kind of affection, for women in the one case and men in the other. Both claimed to have many beloveds, and to be captivated by anyone who was beautiful. What Alcibiades, Charmides, and Phaedrus were to the one, Gyrinna, Atthis, and Anactoria were to the poetess of Lesbos.

Forests have fallen for the writing addressed to this comparison. We may for the present note that much of Sappho's surviving work is ambiguous about the type of love involved, and for that reason the more interesting. The love that Sappho's Aphrodite controls may be heterosexual or lesbian. Both types find expression in Sappho's work and life. The goddess is as responsible for Helen's adultery with Paris as she is for the departure of Sappho's beloved to Lydia. Virginity is a cherished state, but not to be cultivated. Though its loss may be painful, marriage and the handsomeness of the groom find ready praise. Sappho's longest surviving work is a narrative poem celebrating the wedding of Hector and Andromache – Hector the principal defender of Troy. From what we may surmise, Sappho was married and had a daughter named Cleis, though both points are disputable. According to Ovid (our primary source for the legend), Sappho ended her life in a suicidal leap for unrequited love of the ferryman Phaon.

This brings us to the most compelling and elaborate of the legends concerning Sappho: her leap from the Leucadian cliff. Cape Leucas, or the Leucadian Cliff, is a white-rock promontory of Leucas (or Lefkas), an island in the vicinity of Corfu and Ithaca, off the northwest coast of Greece. Though there is report of Sappho's exile in Sicily and travel to

Egypt, nothing except the legend of her death connects Sappho to far-off Leucas. The Leucas legend, moreover, is all we know of Sappho's death. Verses from the *Palatine Anthology*, however, proclaim a different location: "Aeolian earth, you cover Sappho, who among the immortal Muses is celebrated as the mortal Muse." Aeolia names the tribal-linguistic locale of ancient Lesbos, whence *Aeolic*, the dialect of Sappho's poetry. The invocation of Aeolia may indicate that Sappho actually died on Lesbos. Even if not, a tomb may well have been erected there for antiquity's sightseers. The "localization" of Sappho's death appears to have extended to the present. Not to be upstaged by a remote and inessential Leucas, Eressos, the city on the south-central coast of Lesbos known as Sappho's birthplace, *itself* claims the privilege of Sappho's leap. A monument erected at the supposed promontory marks the site, making Eressos – fittingly – the place of both Sappho's birth and death.

According to a character in the comic playwright Menander's (4th century BC) *Leukadia*, Sappho "first leapt from the far-seen rock in wild love-chase of the proud Phaon." According to Ovid's "Sappho-Phaon Epistle," however, the leap was supposed to cure love (that is, if it didn't kill you first). The epistle concludes with Sappho's intention of "seeking her fate in the Leucadian wave." Excerpts from Ovid's rhetorically charged epistle suffice to indicate the factors feeding Sappho's despair.

Sappho laments her spurned condition, extravagantly elaborating on both Phaon's beauty and insensitivity:

> O neither yet man nor boy, but charmed in between, O ornament and glory of your time, return; entrust your beauty to my arms. Oh, take my love though returning it not. I write, and my eyes well up with tears, in drops that blur the page. Resolved though you were, more gracious yet your parting with a brief, 'Farewell, my Lesbian maid.' No tears did you take, no adoring kiss of mine; no hint had I of sorrow's swift approach. Thus were you gone, with no token of me; and no keepsake of yours, but this my pain, have I.

The poem contains the *locus classicus* for the idea that Sappho, in contrast to her beloved, was not especially physically graced:

> If spiteful Nature has denied me Beauty's share, then balance my genius in beauty's place! Though my size is slight, my glory fills the earth; therein my pride and reputation's claim.

Sappho's self-reproach in no way blinded Phaon to her gifts. Sappho's recollection is one of ardent bliss:

> When I read my songs you found me fair enough, and vowed that speech thus never graced another. As I sang, I remember – lovers remember

> all – my lips surrendered kisses to your stealth. These were your praise and how much your pleasure! But then above all, when we labored at love, my playfulness was unaccustomed joy – the resourceful embraces, the whispered jests. . . . And when longing plunged to consummation – Ah then, the deep, deep languor of our wearied limbs.

Their happiness was but an interlude. Sappho views her suffering in the wake of Phaon's departure as the continuation of a traumatic childhood:

> Am I always to anguish, as ever from the start, and my life be endless pain? Six birthdays had I counted when my father's bones, too early gathered, moistened with my tears – while my witless brother burned for a harlot's love, enduring, with his every loss, debasement. Thus reduced, he endangers life and limb at sea, heedless to regain what heedlessly he lost, ever hating me for warnings I had offered. *This* the return for candor and concern. And if I lacked sufficient grounds for care, a young daughter now usurps my thoughts. And now yourself, most recent cause of my distress. I list to unfavoring winds.

The geographer Strabo (1st century AD), as Menander before him, notes an old yearly custom of the Leucadians at the sacrifice of Apollo, whose temple was atop the cliff. As an apotropaic, or averting, rite they would throw some guilty person from the cliff. Flapping birds and feathers were attached to the victim to break the fall. A large crowd waited in boats below to rescue and, if possible, take the victim beyond the frontier to safety.

Thus, what was to have been a curative – but was ultimately a fatal – leap for Sappho later developed into an expiatory offering, a communal scapegoat. It is difficult to say whether the "old custom" practiced by the Leucadians continued through Strabo's time, some five hundred years after Sappho. Curiously, by the time of the Virgilian commentator Servius (4th century AD) – five hundred years later – we find an attenuated version of the ritual. Servius, while not specifying the leap's purpose, speaks of the custom "now in vogue" of hiring people once a year to throw themselves from the cliff into the sea. The notion of hire would suggest some form of entertainment. The longevity of the myth and the practices associated with it attest to its grip on the popular imagination. The materials in fact have origins in myth and cult predating Sappho. Indeed, Strabo, citing the passage from Menander, indicates that Sappho was not first to make the leap.

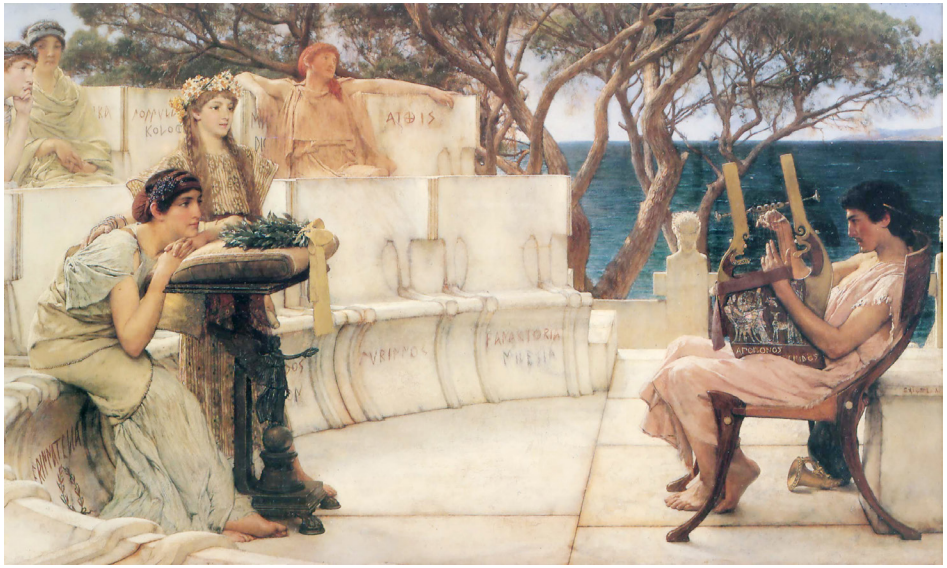
Classicist Gregory Nagy, in a far-ranging discussion, probes the myth's cosmic dimensions. I here summarize and simplify his line of thought. Aphrodite first leaped in love for the dead Adonis, and later, in love for Phaethon, son of the Sun God. The names Phaon/Phaethon are

related in Greek and mean 'bright'. We recall from the tale popularized by Ovid that Phaethon attempted to drive his father Helios' chariot and, in so doing, to be the Sun himself. He lost control and plunged into the sea. Aphrodite, in her astral guise of Hesperos ("evening, west") – the planet Venus, or Evening Star – dives ever after the sinking sun, here the falling Phaethon. She retrieves him the next morning in the guise of Heōsphoros ("dawn bearer") – also the Planet Venus, but this time the Morning Star. In the evening Aphrodite as Hesperos sets after sunset; in the morning Aphrodite as Heōsphoros rises before sunrise. Aphrodite thus pursues the sun at night and is pursued by him at daybreak, bringing on the day. The theme, as an instance of *amor versus*, appears in Sappho's poetry: "For if she flees at first, she'll soon pursue" [from the "Hymn to Aphrodite," p. 29]. Sappho loving Phaon is Aphrodite loving Phaethon. Thus projecting her identity onto the goddess, Sappho vicariously experiences Aphrodite's own love and its despair. The analogy between Sappho and Aphrodite is the mythic counterpart to that close association between them, seen everywhere in Sappho's poetry. Aphrodite is Sappho's special goddess, "a cosmic affirmation of Sappho's own eroticism."

An unrivaled female poet and lover of women in a man's world – where male poets typically wrote of homoerotic loves – Sappho has in turn been admired, derided, moralized, analogized, and, in her despair of a heterosexual rebuff, allegedly driven to suicide in a far-off and undistinguished island locale. The analogy to Socrates intellectualizes – even as it seeks to redeem – Sappho's love of women, placing it on par with the love of man for man, as propounded and practiced by the wisest man of all. It is, however, in the analogy to Aphrodite that Sappho transcends the mortal fray – its partisanship and judgmentalism – making of self-ideation a master-stroke of genius.

The Eastern Aegean showing Sappho's Lesbos in relation to Asia Minor (modern Turkey)

Lesbos: Birthplace of Sappho and musical center of the Greek world in the seventh and sixth centuries BC



Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema,
Sappho and Alcaeus (1881)

Sappho and Alcaeus

Attic red-figure vase,
c. 470 BC (Munich,
Antikensammlungen)

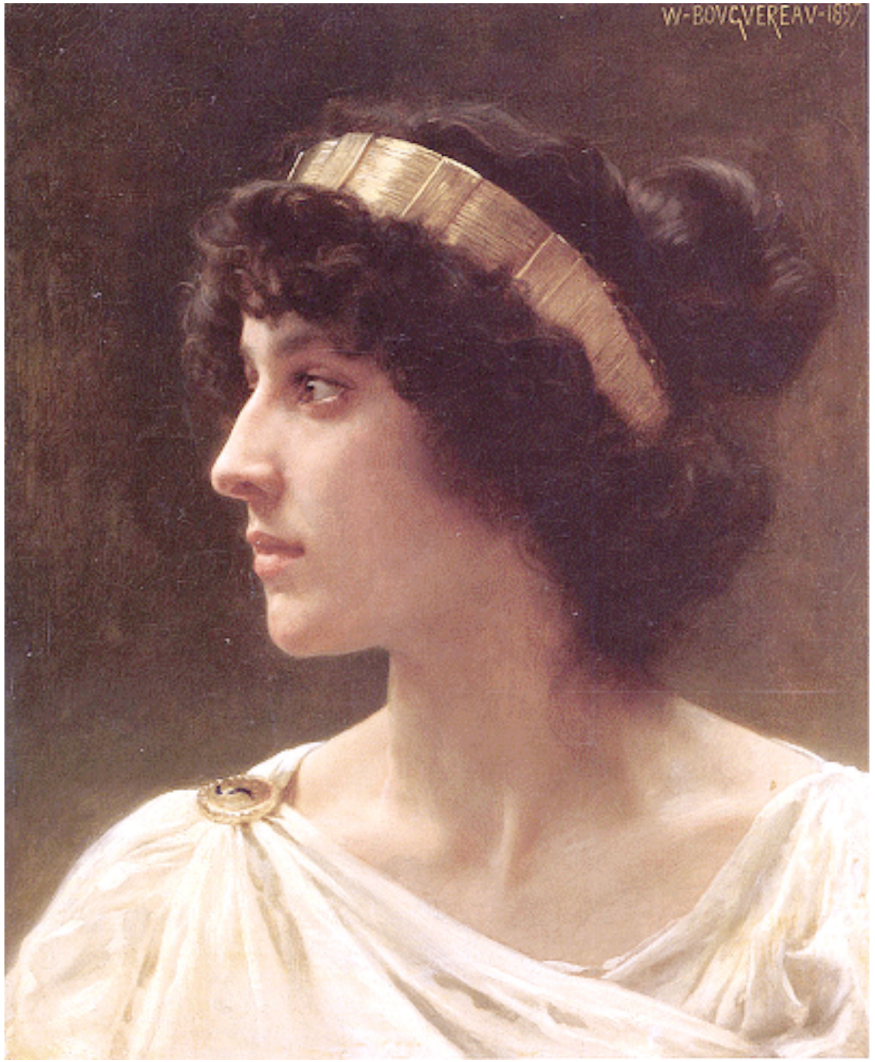
Simeon Solomon,
Sappho and Erinna in the Garden at Mytilene (1864)

Gustave Moreau, *Sappho on the Rocks* (1869)

Gustave Moreau, *Sappho Leaping from the Leucadian Cliff* (1864)

Coupling lovely sparrows to the chariot's rein
that swiftly drew you down to darkened earth . . .

"Hymn to Aphrodite"



William Adolphe Bouguereau, Artistic rendering of Sappho,
Based on image of Anne Reeve Aldrich (1866-1892)
"American Sappho"

Aldrich had published several volumes of poetry when she died at the tender age of 26. Of her posthumously published *Songs About Life, Love, and Death*, the *Springfield Republican* said:

> Passion and agony, the one because of the other, are the keys of Anne Reeve Aldrich's nature and verse. This woman is of the few who nearest share the moods of Sappho and her talents.

KIRSTEN KANE
MEZZO-SOPRANO

Kirsten Kane (mezzo-soprano) is a recitalist and opera singer who has been praised as "a consummate artist with a vividly expressive voice and superb musical imagination. Her beautiful singing, her intelligence, and her keen sense of dramatic focus and pacing are a world-class combination" (David Gordon, Adams Vocal Master Class Director, Carmel Bach Festival).

She made her New York Philharmonic role debut as a Hen in Janáček's The Cunning Little Vixen. Recent roles have included La Badessa in Puccini's Suor Angelica at Weill Recital Hall (New York Lyric Opera Theatre); Paride in excerpts of Gluck's Paride ed Elena (One World Symphony); The Muse/ Nicklausse in Offenbach's Les Contes d'Hoffman (Regina Opera); Venus in Grant Herreid's pastiche L'Amour et la Folie (NY Continuo Collective); and Agricola in Strauss's Eine Nacht in Venedig (Hellenic Music Foundation). At the 2005 New York International Fringe Festival, she originated the role of Kathleen in the world premiere of Susan Stoderl's contemporary opera A.F. R.A.I.D

Recitals have included a Soirée de Musique Française with Thomas Grubb, and an afternoon of French salon song for the Jewish Museum. As a chorister, she has performed with New York City Opera, Mostly Mozart Festival, Bard SummerScape Opera, New York City Ballet, New York Virtuoso Singers, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Kinnara Ensemble, Belcanto at Caramoor, Vienna Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, American Symphony Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, New York Choral Artists, Kyrenia Opera, Teatro Grattacielo, and others.

ERI NAKAMURA
PIANIST

Eri Nakamura has performed widely throughout the United States, Canada, Italy, and her native Japan. Noted for her sensitive and thoughtful playing, she is equally at home as a soloist and as a collaborator.

Eri holds a Professional Diploma in vocal collaborative piano from Mannes College the New School for Music, and has studied with Sergei Babayan and Anita Pontremoli at the Cleveland Institute of Music. She has worked with the Tokyo String Quartet at both Yale University and the Norfolk Music Festival, and holds a Master of Music and Artist Diploma from Yale.

Recent recitals include performances at Carnegie Hall; the Kennedy Center; the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts; D.O.O.R Hall and Aster Plaza in Hiroshima, Japan; and the Aosta Classica Concert Series and Teatro Romano in Italy. She has also appeared as a soloist with Tokyo's Edogawa Philharmonic, the National Repertory Orchestra, and the Cleveland Institute of Music Orchestra in Severance Hall.

A prizewinner of many competitions, Eri was the first prize winner of the Yale School of Music Chamber Music Competition, the Miyazawa Piano Competition in Japan, and the California State Division of the MTNA- Steinway & Sons Collegiate Artist Piano Competition, as well as recipient of the Distinguished Musician Award at the IBLA Grand Prize International Piano Competition in Ragusa, Italy. She is a graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, where she was a student of Victoria Mushkatkol and Stephen Perry. Eri has recently joined the Neave Trio, a group has been performing extensively across the U.S. and U.K.

JEFFREY DUBAN
NARRATOR

Jeffrey Duban attended the Boston Public Latin School, where he began his study of Latin in the seventh grade and classical Greek in the tenth. Graduating from Brown University with a combined B.A.-M.A. in classics, he went on to complete his Ph.D in classical philology at The Johns Hopkins University. After a brief university teaching career, he enrolled in law school, obtaining his JD degree from Fordham Law School. As an attorney, Mr. Duban specialized in academic law, defending professors in promotion and tenure disputes, and professors and students alike in racial discrimination and sexual misconduct cases. More recently an attorney turned writer, Mr. Duban is the author of a far-ranging book on the archaic Greek poetess Sappho, and the Greek lyric and epic song from which Western literature takes its start. The book is entitled *The Lesbian Lyre: Reclaiming Sappho for the 21st Century*, its cover appearing as the cover of this program book. (The term *Lesbian* here signals Sappho's status as a resident of the Greek island of Lesbos.) *The Lesbian Lyre* is also a corrective to the mistranslation of Sappho, and to certain erroneous scholarly tendencies of the past fifty years and more. It is the inspiration for this program of Sir Granville Bantock's *Sappho: Nine Fragments for Contralto.*

Sir Granville Bantock, Sappho: Nine Fragments with a Prelude (1906)[1]

English: Helen F. Bantock (after Henry Wharton)

Hymn to Aphrodite

Daughter of Zeus,
Immortal Aphrodite,
Queen of the broidered throne,
distress'd I pray thee,
Weaver of wiles,
break not my heart with anguish,
O Goddess, hear me!

Now hither come, as once before thou camest,
Hearing my voice afar, and lean to listen;
Camest with golden chariot, leaving swiftly
Thy father's dwelling.

Beautiful, fleet thy sparrows drew thee hither,
Round the dark earth
from heaven's height descending,
Whirled they with wings
through deeps of middle aether,
Fluttering came they.

Then thou, blest one, with lips immortal smiling,
Didst ask—
'Why weepest thou? What is befallen?
Whom wouldst thy heart and beauty
draw to love thee?
Who wrongs thee, Sappho?

She who spurns gifts shall give;
who flies shall follow;
If she loves not, unwilling soon shall love thee.'
Ah, come, from care release, fulfil my yearning;
Help, I beseech thee.

Daughter of Zeus,
Immortal Aphrodite,
Queen of the broidered throne,
distress'd I pray thee,
Weaver of wiles,
break not my heart with anguish,
O Goddess, hear me!

I Loved Thee Once, Atthis, Long Ago

I loved thee once, Atthis, long ago.
Thou loved'st another more than me,
Scornful wert thou, none like to thee.

Me thou forgettest—
As thou wilt—
Thou art nought to me.

I loved thee once, Atthis, long ago.

In the hereafter shall I be remembered,
But thou shalt die, nor live in memory,
For thou didst not gather the roses of Pieria;
Alone and obscure thou shalt wander,
Even in the house of Hades,
Flitting among the shadowy dead.

I loved thee once, Atthis, long ago.

Evening Song

Evening,
thou bringest all that bright morning scattered,
the tender lamb to the ewe,
the babe to its mother;
Then Hesperus shines, of all stars the fairest,
Around the cool breeze
wanders through apple boughs,
And slumber streams from quivering leaves,
While sweeter far than harp,
than gold more golden,
Singeth Spring's messenger
the sweet-voiced nightingale.

Stand Face to Face, Friend

Stand face to face, friend …
and unveil the grace in thine eyes,
All care let buffeting winds bear away;
For in the golden house of the singer
the voice of lamentation may not be.

Then come, O lyre divine,
for me thine echoes awaken,
So all night long,
when sleep holds the eyes of the weary,
Before the feet of Love
may I set my tireless singing.

Ah! delicate Love,
More precious than gold,
Sweeter than honey,
Softer than rose-leaves,
Beautiful Love!

Thou hast the sun's glory and splendour,
Hungry time can never devour thee:
Thou burnest us, thou bitter sweet,
with a swift, with a subtle fire—

We are broken by longing
At soft Aphrodite's will,
Let us drain a thousand cups of Love,
O my sweet, O my tender one.

Ah! a hue as honey pale o'erspreads thy cheek,
Pale are thy lips and thy beautiful eyelids,
As stars fade, when the lovely moon
Lights up all earth with silver,
So there is none other whereunto I may liken thee.

The Moon Has Set

The moon has set, and the Pleiades;
It is midnight; time is going by,
And I sleep alone.

I yearn and seek—
I know not what to do—
And I flutter like a child after her mother,
For Love masters my limbs, and shakes me,
Fatal creature, bitter-sweet—
Yea, Eros shakes my soul,
A wind on the mountain falling on the oaks.

Alas! I shall be ever maiden;
Neither honey nor bee for me.

Peer of Gods He Seems

Peer of gods he seems, who sits in thy presence,
Hearing close thy sweet speech
and lovely laughter,
I beholding, all the life in my bosom
Fluttering, fails me.

For to see thee only, yea, but a little,
Breaks my voice, my faltering soul is silent,
Swiftly through all my veins a subtle fire runs,
All my life trembles.

Sight have I none, nor hearing,
cold dew bathes me,
Paler than grass I am, and in my madness
Seem as one dead, yet dare I, poor and suppliant,
Dare I to love thee.

In a Dream I Spake

In a dream, I spake with the daughter of Cyprus,
'Death is evil, the gods have so judged:
Had it been good, they would die.'

Delicate Adonis is dying; what shall we do?
Beat your breasts, maidens,
and rend your tunics. Ah, for Adonis!

The Dawn shall see thee no more,
what shall we do?
Nor dark-eyed Sleep the daughter of Night.
Ah, for Adonis!

Bridal Song

O fair, O lovely! As the sweet apple
blushes on the end of the bough,
By the gatherers overlook'd,
Nay, but reach'd not till now.
The bride comes rejoicing,
let the bridegroom rejoice.
No other, O bridegroom, like to her
O fair, O lovely!
Raise high the roof beam, Hymenaeus!
Like Ares comes the bridegroom, Hymenaeus!
Tow'ring as the Lesbian singer
'mong men of other lands,
Happy bridegroom, now is thy wedding come,
And thou hast the maiden of thy heart's desire.

Bride, teeming with rosy loves,
Fair as the Goddess of Paphos,
Softly sporting, sweet to the bridegroom
May Hesperus lead thee rejoicing,
Honouring Hera of the silver throne.
Hail, bride; hail, noble bridegroom; all hail!
O fair, O lovely!

Muse of the Golden Throne

Muse of the golden throne, O raise that strain,
Which once thou used to sweetly sing:
Come, Cyprian Goddess, and in cups of gold
Pour forth thy nectar of delight,
Thou and thy servant, Love!

Come, rosy-armed, pure Graces,
sweet-voiced maidens, come
With wingèd feet, dance round the altar fair,
Trampling the fine soft bloom of the grass.

Hither now, Muses, hither, come!

1. Hyperion Records. Bantock: Sappho & Sapphic Poem Web. 8 July 2014

Hymn to Aphrodite

(translation by Jeffrey M. Duban)

Ποικιλόθρον’, ἀθάνατ’ Ἀφρόδιτα,
παῖ Δίος, δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε
μή μ’ ἄσαισι μήτ’ ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
πότνια, θῦμον·

ἀλλὰ τυῖδ’ ἔλθ’, αἴποτα κἀτέρωτα
τᾶς ἔμας αὔδως ἀΐοισα πήλοι
ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα
χρύσιον ἦλθες

ἄρμ’ ὐποζεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ’ ἆγον
ὤκεες στροῦθοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
πύκνα δινεῦντες πτέρ’ ἀπ’ ὠράνωϊθε-
ρας διὰ μέσσω.

αἶψα δ’ ἐξίκοντο· τὺ δ’, ὦ μάκαιρα,
μειδιάσαισ’ ἀθανάτῳ προσώπῳ,
ἤρε’, ὄττι δηὖτε πέπονθα κὤττι
δηὖτε κάλημι,

κὤττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μαινόλᾳ θύμῳ· τίνα δηὖτε Πείθω
ἄψ σ’ ἄγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα, τίς σ’, ὦ
Ψάπφ’, ἀδικήει;

καὶ γὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ’, ἀλλὰ δώσει,
αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
κωὐκ ἐθέλοισα.

ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλεπᾶν δὲ λῦσον
ἐκ μερμίναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τελέσσαι
θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον· σὺ δ’ αὔτα
σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

Our source for the “Hymn to Aphrodite,” the opening of Sappho’s nine books of verse, is the Greek rhetorician and historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1st century BC). Dionysius quotes the poem in full, in his *On Literary Composition,* as an example of the polished and exuberant style.

Appareled in flowered allure, deathless,
Deceiver, daughter of Zeus, Aphrodite!
Subdue not nor destroy this heart, my lady,
with distress.

But come to my side, if ever before
while listening alert from afar as I cried
you attended, and came leaving your father’s
golden door,

Coupling lovely sparrows to the chariot’s rein
that swiftly drew you down to darkened earth,
their wings awhir along the way through aether’s
middle main.

Quickly they arrived, and you, O blessed one,
a smile on your immortal face, were asking
what I suffered this time, why this time did
I summon;

And what it was my maddened heart did long
for most. “Whom this time shall persuasion lead
as captive to your love? Who, O Sappho,
does you wrong?

For if she flees at first, she’ll soon pursue;
the gifts she has spurned, she’ll shortly bestow;
the love she flouts, she’ll soon long languish for
not wanting to.”

Come even now to my side and free me
from crushing concern. Fulfill whatever
yearnings my own heart would fulfill, yourself
my ally be.

From THE LESBIAN LYRE

SAPPHO

The stars about the radiant moon
consider their brilliant orbs unsightly
when in her fullness she burns brightly
upon the earth. . .

*

As the sweet apple reddens atop of the bough
by the tip, at the furthest height,
the pickers forgot it, no, they didn't, not quite
but just couldn't reach it somehow.

*

As the hyacinth
on the mountain top,
trampling shepherds didn't see
the purple flower drop.

*

"Maidenhood, maidenhood,
where go you, leaving me?"
"I leave you for good,
you've outgrown my company."

*

The moon departs the sky
the Pleiads pass from sight
midnight's hour slips by
and I lie alone tonight.

ALCMAN

Maidens with honey tones
and voices of desire,
my limbs no more can
carry me. Ah, but to be
above the flowering wave –
a halcyon, a fearless flier
aloft on wingèd span,
a sprightly bird blue as the sea.

*

Mountain peaks and gullies sleep,
ravines and headlands silence keep,
sleep forests and each quadruped
that dusky earth has ever bred,
sleep mountain beasts and swarming bees,
monsters in blue-chasmed seas,
birds aloft on wingèd spread.

ANACREON

Like a smith –
again love strikes the hammer's blow,
plunging me
in Winter's torrent as I glow.

*

Again do I love, again love not,
this moment sane, the next distraught.

*

Again tossing his purple ball my way
blond Eros strikes, calling me out to play
with a gaily sandaled girl.
But she's of Lesbian pedigree
and won't have any part of me
because my hair is grey,
and gapes that some other girl agree.

*

Thracian filly, why cast sidelong glances,
why flee as if I'd lost my senses?

I could easily bridle your head in place,
rein you in; run you round the race.

Now grazing in meadows you lightly skip
with no nimble horseman to hug your hip.

ARCHILOCHUS

A fig tree on its rock, feeding many crows,
accessible, loved by all, to all exposed.

*

Like a mating crow,
pleasured, perching low,
poised on a jutting peak,
slack-pinioned, sleek.

*

We have a sturdy ox at home,
knows how to plough, need not be shown.

*

Gain gathered by long time and labor
often flows down the gut of a whore.

IBYCUS

In spring the river streams bedew
the quinces in Cydonia,
where sacred stands the Maidens' grove
and shading bough vine-blossomed grows;
this love of mine no season knows
but races – northern Thracian blast
from Aphrodite's shrine outcast
ablaze with flash of lightning, black
with shameless fits of parching rage,
pain unrelenting, unassuaged.

PRAISE FOR *THE LESBIAN LYRE*

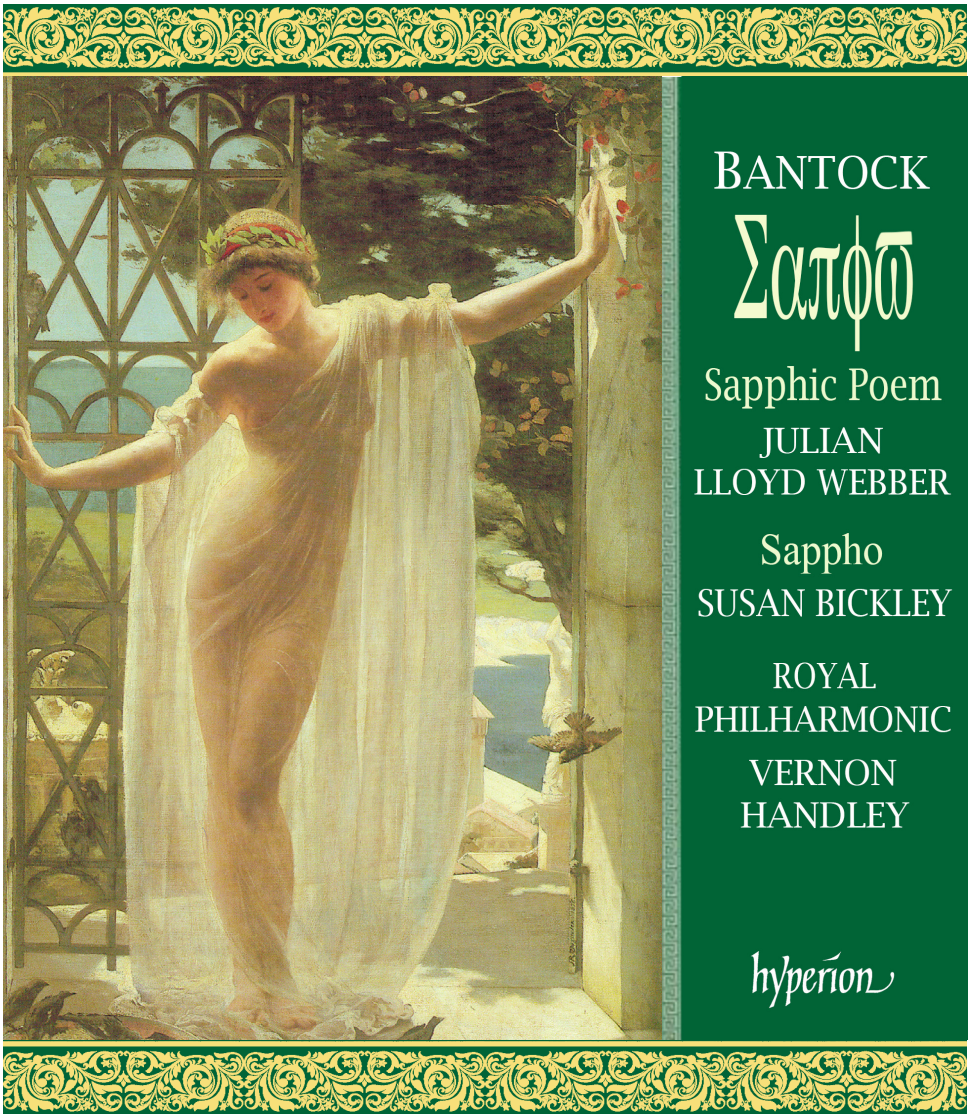
"Jeffrey Duban's *The Lesbian Lyre* is unique. It brings together the story of poetry (and also of the visual arts, and, in important ways, of music) from our first texts in ancient Greece up to the contemporary criticism of the Classics. It deserves comparison with Gilbert Highet's *The Classical Tradition* (1949) for its wide-ranging scholarship. The author is generous to the newcomer to the classical world: geography, cultures, the gods and their myths, the Greek language and its dialects, Greek poetic rhythms, are set as background. The writing is clear, and the essentials in all of this are reviewed quickly. The work is magisterial in its root sense: we enjoy good teaching.

Duban shows that the search for shock, or jagged impact—for energy—in English, often distorts the Greek model; similarly, that Marxist or feminist interpreters have made the Greek poets poster figures for their philosophical programs. I heartily applaud the patient and rational exposure of the way in which such ideologies wage war against the very excellent art already present in the Greek. Central to this book are the author's translations of Sappho and the Greek lyric poets, and of Catullus, who radically recast himself, a Roman lover, as Sappho. The translations and their comparison with other English versions are a strength of this book.

Every part of the work's huge trajectory helps build meaning for the reader. *The Lesbian Lyre* is a masterful synthesis of all the best arguments in classical scholarship for the past sixty or seventy years, illuminated by the changing cultural contexts of the past twenty-five centuries."

– William R. Nethercut, Professor, Department
of Classics, University of Texas, Austin

John Reinhard Weguelin, *Lesbia* (1878)
Here on the CD cover of the sole commercial recording of Bantock's *Sappho*



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