



SAPPHO

***THE POEMS
OF SAPPHO:
AN INTERPRETATIVE
RENDITION
INTO ENGLISH***



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Sappho

The Poems of Sappho: An Interpretative Rendition into English

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*Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I, too,
Full of the vision,*

*Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
Saw the reluctant*

*Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking always, looking with necks reverted
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
Shone Mitylene.*

—SWINBURNE.

Ω θεοί, πῶς ἄρα Κύπρις, ἢ τίς
μερος
τοῦδε ξυλήψατο

—SOPHOCLES.

SAPPHICS

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THE MUSES

Hither now, O Muses, leaving the golden
House of God unseen in the azure spaces,
Come and breathe on bosom and brow and kindle
 Song like the sunglow;

Come and lift my shaken soul to the sacred
Shadow cast by Helicon's rustling forests;
Sweep on wings of flame from the middle ether,
 Seize and uplift me;

Thrill my heart that throbs with unwonted fervor,
Chasten mouth and throat with immortal kisses,
Till I yield on maddening heights the very
 Breath of my body.

MUSAGETES

Come with Musagetes, ye Hours and Graces,
Dance around the team of swans that attend him
Up Parnassian heights, to his holy temple
 High on the hill-top;

Come, ye Muses, too, from the shades of Pindus,
Let your songs, that echo on winds of rapture,
Wake the lyre he tunes to the sweet inspiring
 Sound of your voices.

LOVE'S BANQUET

If Panormus, Cyprus or Paphos hold thee,

Either home of Gods or the island temple,
Hark again and come at my invocation,
Goddess benefic;

Come thou, foam-born Kypris, and pour in dainty
Cups of amber gold thy delicate nectar,
Subtly mixed with fire that will swiftly kindle
Love in our bosoms;

Thus the bowl ambrosial was stirred in Paphos
For the feast, and taking the burnished ladle,
Hermes poured the wine for the Gods who lifted
Reverent beakers;

High they held their goblets and made libation,
Spilling wine as pledge to the Fates and Hades
Quaffing deep and binding their hearts to Eros,
Lauding thy servant.

So to me and my Lesbians round me gathered,
Each made mine, an amphor of love long tasted,
Bid us drink, who sigh for thy thrill ecstatic,
Passion's full goblet;

Grant me this, O Kypris, and on thy altar
Dawn will see a goat of the breed of Naxos,
Snowy doves from Cos and the drip of rarest
Lesbian vintage;

For a regal taste is mine and the glowing
Zenith-lure and beauty of suns must brighten
Love for me, that ever upon perfection
Trembles elusive.