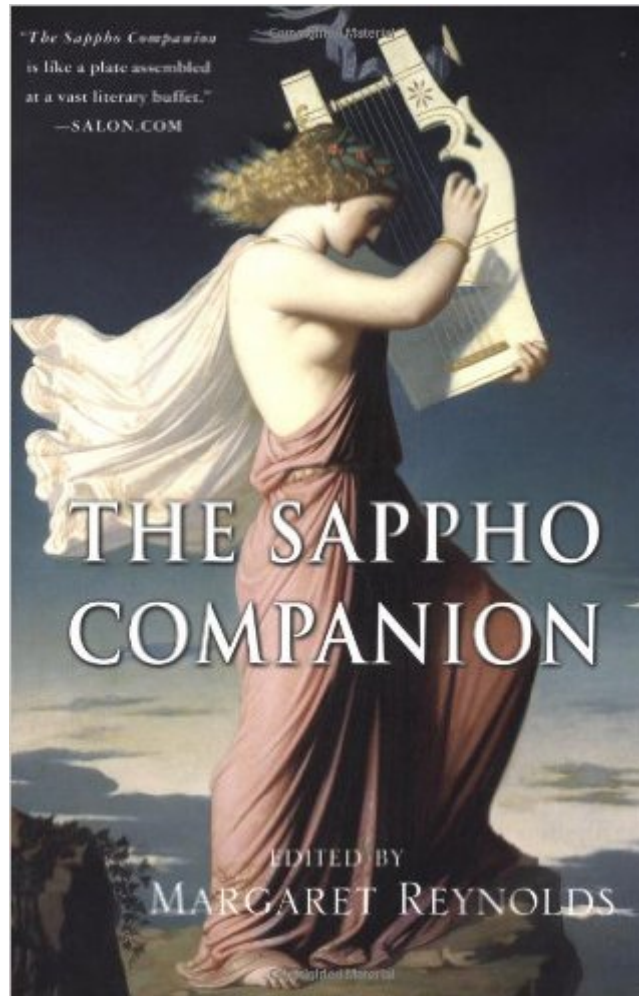


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The Sappho Companion



Synopsis

Born around 630 BC on the Greek Island of Lesbos, Sappho is now regarded as the greatest lyrical poet of Greece. Her work survives only in fragments, yet her influence extends throughout Western literature, fuelled by the speculations and romances which have gathered around her name, her story, her sexuality. The Sappho Companion brings together many different kinds of work, ranging from blue-stockings appreciations to juicy fantasies. We see her image change, recreated in Ovid's poetry and Boccaccio's tales, in translations by Pope, Rossetti and Swinburne, Baudelaire, and H.D., in the modern versions of Eavan Boland, Carol Rumens, and Jeanette Winterson. Artists, too, have felt Sappho's power, and the Companion contains a rich variety of illustrations: classical statues and pre-Raphaelite paintings, Roman mosaics, and Romantic pornography.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I don't know what the previous reviewer is talking about; I loved this book. Granted, I am no scholar of Sappho. Although I have read various translations of her poetry in the past, I do not read Greek and cannot comment upon whether Reynolds' research is accurate. However, given her amazing previous work (editing Aurora Leigh, the Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories, etc.) I am inclined to trust her (and I like her writing style anyway). For me, this book was the perfect introduction to Sappho. It includes historical background followed by many of Sappho's fragments in a variety of translations. But that's just the beginning: Reynolds goes on to show how Sappho has been imagined/created by literature up to the present day. She anthologizes a variety of poems, plays,

and fictions inspired by Sappho. It is amazing to see how, though so little of her writing survived, she has remained a titaness in our imaginations. Each literary generation has reinvented and recreated her. Reading Jeanette Winterson's amazing story "The Poetics of Sex" (narrated by a modern-day Sappho) fills me with hope and joy at the potential for lesbian creativity that is Sappho's legacy. I also appreciated the inclusion of works of art depicting Sappho through the ages. Although they are in black and white, they are an exquisite visual touch to this beautiful volume (the cover art is amazing as well). I urge you not to judge this book by one bad review. It is a book to be perused at leisure, to leaf through in times of anxious sorrow and contemplative joy. Buy or borrow a copy and judge it for yourself.

This is a lovely and loving book on the ways Sappho's poems and the stories about her have been received and reinterpreted by the generations since she wrote. Reynolds discusses the general trends of each period, analyzes how Sappho's work resonated both as a cultural touchstone and in the works of poets and authors of the period; after this, she presents portions (or entirety, in some cases) of the works she has discussed, so that the reader may check her claims and appreciate the works. There are also artworks and some discussion of Sappho as a musical subject. Very readable, and useful as a companion to readings of Sappho's works, especially if one is exploring two excellent contemporary readings with notes--the Anne Carson and Diane Rayor translations.

If you're a Sappho fan, you get everything in this book: her poems and fragments in the original Greek, followed by renderings by poets from Catullus and Ovid onward; her history, as much as is known; commentary on her by writers through the ages; and others' poems based on her work. The extant body of Sappho's work is so slender that the heart aches for what was lost; but these musings, analyses, and celebrations down through the ages help round out our image of her.

Are you wondering about the poet Sappho" the poet the Greek & Roman people revered and respected for her beautiful poetry? Read this book, it unlocks the doors on the life & beauty of the talented "Sappho" a wonder with words that can touch or pierce your heart. Blessings, Donna Swindells

nice book, thanks

I don't know for whom this book may have been written. For the Sapphophile, there are certainly

more exhaustive and interesting books, some are which are noted in the bibliography at the end. Furthermore, for all the treacly editorial reviews about Ms. Reynolds's scholarly resources (which are certainly evident), she abuses them time and time again in two ways, one merely bothersome, and the other approaching dishonesty. 1.) She frequently truncates the passages from other authors just when they begin to get interesting. 2) She frequently selects works of literature, particularly poems, that may or may not have anything to do with Sappho and offers no solid evidence that they do. They are, I guess, Sapphic by association. Reynolds's association. The two most obvious examples are Shelley's "To Constantia, Singing" and Emily Dickinson's "'Heaven'- Is What I Cannot Reach!" To take the latter as a case in point, the poem is supposed to be Sapphic because of a three line Sappho fragment (#105) about an apple on the topmost bough. Need I remind everyone that there was another apple on a bough in another book that has a far more rich cultural history. And given that Dickinson's poem concerns "Heaven" and "Paradise," it seems a stretch, so to speak, to see the poem as influenced by the Sapphic fragment. Truth be known, I spent many more hours meditating on Ms. Dickinson's exquisite 15 line poem than I did in reading the rest of the entire hodgepodge of this book, though I plodded through from start to finish. So, my advice is to buy a book of Ms. Dickinson's poems or a more intriguing and honest study of Sappho. This book is just a non-starter.

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