

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF SAPPHO (illustrated)

*An Interpretative Rendition into English*  
BY JOHN MYERS O'HARA

*Who shall strike the wax of mystery  
from those priceless amphoræ, and give to  
the unsophisticated nostrils of the average  
reader the ravishing bouquet of wine  
pressed in a garden in Mitylene, twenty-five  
centuries ago?*

-MAURICE THOMPSON.

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.

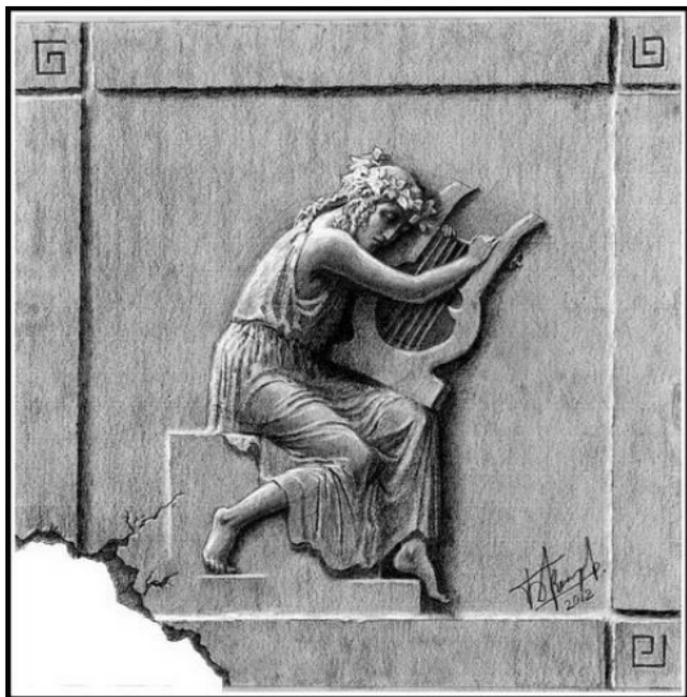
– *SWINBURNE.*

Ω θεοί, πῶς ἄρα Κύπρις, ἢ τίς μέρος  
τοῦδε ζυγήσατο

– *SOPHOCLES.*

# SAPPHICS

## 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.*

## **MOON AND STARS**

*When the moon at full on the sill of heaven  
Lights her beacon, flooding the earth with  
silver,  
All the shining stars that about her cluster  
Hide their fair faces;*



*So when Anactoria's beauty dazzles  
Sight of mine, grown dim with the joy it gives  
me,  
Gorgo, Atthis, Gyrinno, all the others  
Fade from my vision.*

## ODE TO ANACTORIA

*Peer of Gods to me is the man thy presence  
Crowns with joy; who hears, as he sits beside  
thee,*

*Accents sweet of thy lips the silence breaking,  
With lovely laughter;*

*Tones that make the heart in my bosom flutter,  
For if I, the space of a moment even,  
Near to thee come, any word I would utter  
Instantly fails me;*

*Vain my stricken tongue would a whisper  
fashion,  
Subtly under my skin runs fire ecstatic;  
Straightway mists surge dim to my eyes and  
leave them  
Reft of their vision;*