



If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho

By Sappho

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By combining the ancient mysteries of Sappho with the contemporary wizardry of one of our most fearless and original poets, *If Not, Winter* provides a tantalizing window onto the genius of a woman whose lyric power spans millennia.

Of the nine books of lyrics the ancient Greek poet Sappho is said to have composed, only one poem has survived complete. The rest are fragments. In this miraculous new translation, acclaimed poet and classicist Anne Carson presents all of Sappho's fragments, in Greek and in English, as if on the ragged scraps of papyrus that preserve them, inviting a thrill of discovery and conjecture that can be described only as electric—or, to use Sappho's words, as “thin fire . . . racing under skin.”

"Sappho's verse has been elevated to new heights in [this] gorgeous translation."
--*The New York Times*

"Carson is in many ways [Sappho's] ideal translator....Her command of language is hones to a perfect edge and her approach to the text, respectful yet imaginative, results in verse that lets Sappho shine forth." --*Los Angeles Times*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A classicist at McGill University, Carson has mined Greek literature, and Sappho in particular, to tremendous effect and acclaim in her poetry and essays. Her prose *Eros the Bittersweet* (1986) discussed Sappho's term "glukupikron" ("sweetbitter") among other Greek concepts, while the poems of *Autobiography of Red* (1998) reinvented surviving fragments of the Greek poet Stesichoros, to take just two examples. Here, Carson fully channels one of the most iconic yet least transparent Greek poets, whose work comes to us mostly in fragments. In a four-page preface, Carson addresses the fact that very little is known for certain about Sappho, apart from the fact that she lived in the "city of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos from about 630 B.C." and "appears to have devoted her life to composing songs." She bases her translation, beautifully presented here with the Greek en face, on a 1971 transcription by the scholar Eva-Maria Voigt, published in Amsterdam, and includes all the fragments published by Voigt in which "at least one word is legible," using "the plainest language I could find, using where possible the same order of words and thoughts as Sappho did." Since Sappho's texts are fragments, it is inevitable that Carson offers some pages that are mostly brackets indicating missing material, suggestively interspersed with the words "youth" or "sinful," for example, or the phrases "as long as you want" or "my darling one." As with Joyce's Homeric "winedark sea," Carson includes compounds like "sweetflowing" or "farshooting" to render complex Greek words. Carson grudgingly allows a lesbian interpretation for some of the poems, noting that "[i]t seems that she knew and loved women as deeply as she did music. Can we leave the matter there?" (About an equal number of poems in this collection are about loving men.) With 26 cogent pages of notes to individual poems, an eight-page "Who's Who" of names mentioned in the poems, four pages of "Testimonia" about Sappho and Carson's get-out-of-the-way-of-the-poems approach to translation, the uninitiated should have no problem entering this rich territory and constructing their own versions of the enigmatic poet.

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From Library Journal

The lyric poetry of antiquity is often as important to modern poets as it is to translators and classical scholars. Mulroy is a professor of classics (Univ. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee), and Carson (classics, McGill Univ.; *The Beauty of the Husband*) and the late William Matthews (*After All: Last Poems*) are well-regarded poets. Following Pound's dictum to "make it new," Mulroy and Matthews translate Catullus and Horace into modern American idiom, striving where possible to find cultural equivalents rather than literal translations. At the same time, they try to be true to the shifting tones and rhythms of their originals. The results are fluent, giving some sense of the contemporaneousness that Catullus and Horace would have evoked in their audiences. Carson's translation follows Sappho's diction and form much more closely and includes the Greek original on the facing page. Much of what survives of Sappho are fragments, often just a stray word, phrase, or even a few letters. Like many modern poets, Carson deploys these on the blank page, letting their suggestiveness fill the gaps and create whole lyrics in the imagination of the readers. All three translators aim for a general audience, though Mulroy and Carson also include notes and introductions of value to the more scholarly reader. All three books are recommended for both public and academic libraries. T.L.

Cooksey, Armstrong Atlantic State Univ., Savannah, GA

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Review

"[Sappho's] verse has been elevated to new heights in [this] gorgeous translation." —*The New York Times*

"This Sappho is whispering in our ear in a language we can understand." —*Time Out New York*

“Carson is in many ways [Sappho’s] ideal translator. . . . Her command of language is honed to a perfect edge and her approach to the text, respectful yet imaginative, results in verse that lets Sappho shine forth.”
—*Los Angeles Times*

“A selfless, faithful, and boldly delicate achievement.” —*Boston Review*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Proctor:

What do you ponder on book? It is just for students as they are still students or the item for all people in the world, what best subject for that? Just you can be answered for that problem above. Every person has various personality and hobby for every other. Don't to be compelled someone or something that they don't need do that. You must know how great in addition to important the book If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho. All type of book would you see on many solutions. You can look for the internet solutions or other social media.

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Rose Engle:

The reason why? Because this If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho is an unordinary book that the inside of

the e-book waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will shock you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such wonderful way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of gains than the other book possess such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking way. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I have been you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

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