

and Old World wisdom that American culture and simple prudence both forbade. His novel *The Last Puritan* (1935) has a character who is washed out of midshipmen's training school in the Royal Navy for being implicated in a homosexual scandal aboard ship. Today Santayana's reputation has considerably faded, yet he retains interest as a homosexual academic philosopher who after inner struggle against the intolerance of the American society in which he lived, then sought a more congenial atmosphere in the urbanity of the Old World.

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SAPPHO (CA. 612–CA. 560 B.C.)

Classical Greek poet. Celebrated in antiquity as the "tenth Muse," Sappha, as she styled herself in the Aeolic dialect, was born at Eresus on the island of Lesbos, or according to others, in Mytilene. The daughter of Scamandronymus, she had three brothers, one of whom, Larichus, was appointed cupbearer in the prytaneum of Mytilene because of his remarkable beauty. Political struggles on Lesbos forced Sappho into exile in Sicily, but in time she returned to her homeland and there became mistress of a school for daughters of the aristocracy that achieved such fame as to attract pupils from distant parts of the Hellenic world of the early sixth century B.C.

To understand Sappho's life and creative personality is especially difficult for the modern reader because of the enormous cultural distance that separates the milieu in which she loved and immortalized her love in poetry from that of the lesbian of today. In antiquity, and perhaps in all of historic time, she ranks as the outstanding singer of woman's love for her own sex, but this was expressed as an age-asymmetrical relationship that exactly

paralleled the *paidon eros*, the love of a man for an adolescent boy. It was not an unconventional, bohemian passion, but was inspired by the *eros paidagogikos*, the attachment of the teacher for the protégé. And so far from being reproved by religion, the affection was consecrated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

Sappho's poetry, edited by the Alexandrian scholars in nine books, has survived only in fragments, some preserved in quotations in later authors, some recovered on papyri buried for two thousand years in the Egyptian sands. It is an intensely personal lyric poetry, saturated with the unutterable happiness of love and also the unbearable pain of rejection. Of all her girls the dearest was Atthis, and even from the imperfect remains of her poetry the love of the woman for the girl emerges with crystal splendor. Out of the anguish of her heart the poet invokes Aphrodite to float down from heaven and relieve her sorrow. Sappho was drawn to her pupils when they were barely emerging from girlhood, when the hour of their betrothal and marriage was still far distant. When they had outgrown this stage in their lives and were on the threshold of womanhood, Sappho composed epithalamia. Assembled in the ninth and last book of her poems, they symbolize her acquiescence in their passage to a new life as mistresses of aristocratic households. A whole set of poems is devoted to the theme of her resignation to the loss of her beloved pupil, her *eromene*.

Lesbian love played the same role in Sappho's circle as did Dorian *paiderasteia* in Sparta. It was the younger partner's first experience with love, and a step in her initiation to womanhood through intimacy with an older member of her own sex, but also a stage that she would leave behind when she passed on to her adult role as wife and mother. The circle of girls with their headmistress and lover formed a *thiasos*, a cultic union that recited the myths which had already received concrete form in the Homeric poems and performed rites

in honor of their divine patroness. The mythical is the collective, the shared element of Sappho's poetry and the counterpoise to her individual outpourings of emotion.

Even if Sappho's poetry comes at a comparatively early stage of Greek literary history, it stems ultimately from a long tradition in the Aegean and Near Eastern worlds. The artistic perfection of her writing was made possible by thousands of years of poetic composition in Akkadian, Egyptian, and other languages in which men had sung the beauty of women. In the annals of civilization Sappho stands almost midway between the absolute beginning and the modern era, and the legacy of the past brought her craft to its peak of greatness.

Posterity has dealt ambiguously with Sappho's life and work. Leaving aside the dishonesty and hypocrisy of later critics under the influence of the **Judeo-Christian tradition**, comic authors of antiquity, who in a manner incomprehensible to moderns equated the woman attracted to her own sex with one who takes the aggressive role in relations with men, had Sappho marry Cercylas (from *cercos*, "penis") of Andros ("the city of men"), and invented the story that she committed suicide when rejected by Phaon, the man whose love she craved, by leaping into the sea, a literal interpretation of the metaphor "to spring from the Leucadian rock into the sea," meaning to purify the soul of passions. Generations of classical scholars abused these bits of ancient wit to construct the preposterous image of a heterosexual Sappho whose unconventional love was a legend fabricated by slander or even by misogyny, and their falsehoods continue to be parroted in standard reference works.

For the more discerning, Sappho's poetry has been a perennial inspiration to literary creation. The Latin poets, who could read the entire corpus of her work, often imitated it. The frankly homoerotic component of her poems ultimately, in

the nineteenth century, made "lesbian" the designation for a woman enamored of her own sex, and Magnus Hirschfeld appropriately entitled his first pamphlet (1896) on the homosexual question *Sappho and Socrates*.

The significance of Sappho's legacy for the modern lesbian movement is another issue. To identify the Lesbian writer's korophilic affection for her school-girls with the love of two adult women for each other is as misleading as to equate Greek pederasty with modern androphile homosexuality. The one and the other thrive in a cultural context that belonged to their time and place—not that of the resurgent homophile movement of the twentieth century. But to disavow the heritage of ancient Greece is impossible, because it is one of the wellsprings of Western civilization, and every one of its values is a latent value capable of being revived and reinstated, even if in a different form. A creative figure of Hellenic and Mediterranean civilization, Sappho gave lesbian love its classic literary expression, and her work is an enduring part of the poetic treasure of humanity.

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SARTRE, JEAN-PAUL (1905–1980)

French philosopher, novelist, playwright, essayist, and political activist. Sartre, who enjoyed a life-long partnership with Simone de Beauvoir (herself a major contributor to modern feminism), never had a homosexual experience, as far as is known. Yet as the dominant figure in