

CLAS100

LECTURE 19

October 31, 2015

Lyric Poetry: Sappho and Catullus

- Poetry was meant to be read out loud
- It seemed weird if you were reading something but not speaking it
- Such as Homer, whose work was meant to be heard not read
- Solo(monody) a song sung by one person
- Choral sung by 12-15 person choir
- A variety of metres(not simple like dactylic hexameter)
- The meter is chosen to reflex the tone of the poem
- Personal poetry - love, hate, ambition, spirituality, grief, etc.
- Two Greek Poets from the island of Lesbos: Alkaios and Sappho
- Painting of the two poets by Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema, 1881

Sappho of Lesbos

- 620-580 BC
- Aristocratic family in Mytilene
- Married, with at least one daughter
- Her family was exiled
- Reflection was a big part of her poetry
- Intelligent, cultured, and educated(quite rare and exceptional)
- She wrote for a thiasos(a circle or a group like a frat, or a sorority)
- Religious aspects(she wrote poems for Aphrodite)

- Most of her poetry is not political or military based
- Personal and emotional and Erotic, Sensuous, luxuriant, sibilant, alliterative
- A lot of her poetry was also a look back at what happened in the past(regret)

Gaius Valerius Catullus

- 84-54 BC
- Born in Verona, in a well off family
- Went to school in Rome
- Became friends with Cicero, Caesar, Pompey
- Was on the staff(public office) of Memmius
- Had an affair with Clodia, wife of Metellus Celer
- Didn't refer to her as Clodia but Lesbia(girl from Lesbos)
- Highly personal, colloquial and very direct poetry
- As if he were texting
- Deeply romantic to playful to outrageously scurrilous attacks