

Two Poems

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (December 2020)



Sappho Embracing her Lyre, Jules Elie Delaunay, 19th Century

Plectrum

[Sappho] wrote nine books of lyric poetry and invented the plectrum for playing the lyre. –The Suda Lexicon

The spring lamb's ring

Of viscera was meant

Receptive, soft.

But razor-rent,

Bleached, plaited, prim,

Hard, surfeit-free,

Becomes a sym-

Bol of Intent.

And now, the string

Will happily discard

The music trough'd

And reservoir'd

(For it dislikes

This custody)

When Sappho strikes

Hard against hard.

Prepared to sing,

She, mastering the grand

Precision heft

Of hatred and

Of medicine,

Insults the three

Tons hidden in

A tightened strand.

The offering

She'll have is not the bed,

Nor the croft

Alive with bread.

"Some paid me love

By giving me

The secrets of

Their works," she said.

These secrets wing,

And sigh, and glow, and strut.
Maintained aloft,
They're sickly, but
They're better than
The poetry
Since secrets can
Be tough as gut.

from *Kindertotenlieder*^[*1]

Just before the child died,
He, without a fuss,
Bent to the receding tide
Like Aurelius.—

Just before the child died.

Just before the child died,
Father studied son
With tenacious, frantic-eyed
Stupefaction.—

Just before the child died.

Just before the child died,
God, however (clad
Firewise, bent, Time-astride)
Went completely mad.—
Just before the child died.

[\[*\]](#) “Songs on the Death of Children”

[Table of Contents](#)

Jeffrey Burghauser is a teacher in Columbus, OH. He was educated at SUNY-Buffalo and the University of Leeds. He currently studies the five-string banjo with a focus on pre-WWII picking styles. A former artist-in-residence at the Arad Arts Project (Israel), his poems have appeared (or are forthcoming) in *Appalachian Journal*, *Fearsome Critters*, *Iceview*, *Lehrhaus*, and *New English Review*. Jeffrey’s book-length collections are available on [Amazon](#), and his website is