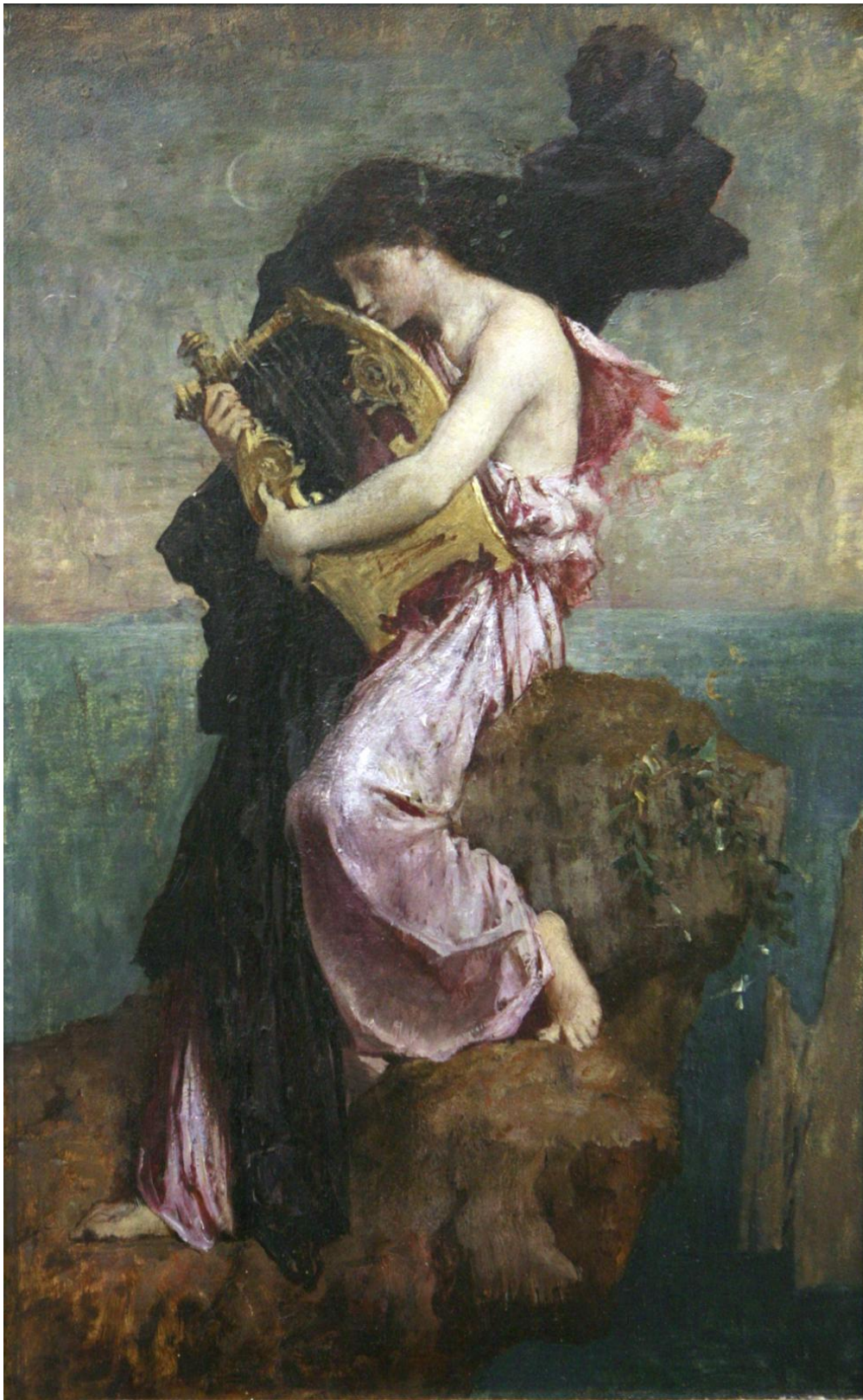


# Two Poems

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*<sup>[\*]</sup>[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.*

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

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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