

A dark, monochromatic image of a flower, possibly a lily, with a blue horizontal line above it. The flower is the central focus, with its petals and center clearly visible against a dark background. The blue line is a simple, solid horizontal bar located in the upper right quadrant of the image.

The Future of the Lyric Encounter  
Inaugural lecture. June 1, 2022, 5pm. FAB 5.01-03

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# abstract

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This is a lecture about Greek lyric poetry. But what do we think this even is, and how should we frame this question? Moreover, how do we understand not simply what it is, but what it does, and might do, both now and in the future? What are the stakes of its persistence?

I briefly explore a range of ways in which thinking with ancient lyric texts alongside some strands of comparative literature, critical theory, and philosophy helps us to understand afresh and continue to articulate our commitments – now, and for the future – to these ancient, remote, shards of expression. I will illustrate my talk with excerpts of ancient lyric texts – taken from Pindar and Sappho – that seem alternatively to model, or challenge, our own absorption into their realms of experience.

What are the stakes of such absorption for our own self-understanding? And how best might we situate Greek lyric poetry within comparative spaces – beyond familiar scholarly frameworks of ancient politics or religion or social life - to continue to insist upon the nature of its challenges, and with what consequences? How, indeed, might such reflection help us to assess the challenges that make being a Classicist a matter of continuing controversy and fascination?