Diana Collecott proposes that Sappho’s presence in H.D.’s work is as significant as that of Homer in Pound’s and of Dante in Eliot’s. She undertakes a radical revision of H.D.’s Hellenism and her Imagism, relating both to the literary and sexual politics of the First World War period. She then pursues H.D.’s career to the end of the Second World War, discovering en route important intertextualities with Swinburne, Wilde and Shakespeare. Connecting the fragmentary condition of Sappho’s writings with the erasure of women within modernism and the silencing of lesbians in the wider culture, she traces the Sapphic in H.D.’s prose and poetry and in its modern contexts. Her exploration develops a lesbian poetics not only for H.D. but also for contemporaries such as Bryher, Amy Lowell and Virginia Woolf and for successors such as Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich and Olga Broumas.

Diana Collecott is a senior lecturer in English and American Literature at the University of Durham. She is a co-director of the Basil Bunting Poetry Centre and a Trustee of the International H.D. Society. Her special interests include African American literature and gay and gender studies as well as Anglo-American modernism, and she regularly broadcasts on the BBC.
H.D. AND SAPPHIC MODERNISM
1910–1950

DIANA COLLECOTT
in memory of
Silvia Dobson
‘companion of the flame’

and for
Sandi Russell
‘girl, girl, girlgirlgirl’
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