



The First Poets: Lives of the Ancient Greek Poets

Michael Schmidt

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When Michael Schmidt's last book, *Lives of the Poets*, was published, Mark Strand called it "a tour de force, an astonishing view of the whole of poetry in English, a superb read." Now Schmidt brings the same erudition, insight, and élan to *The First Poets*—the story of the ancient Greeks whose work continues to influence poetry in our own time.

Poetry takes its bearings from the brilliant constellation of early and classical Greek poets, who have long been overshadowed by the great Greek dramatists. In **The First Poets**, Schmidt rescues the lives of these poets from their relative obscurity. Here is Orpheus, the first of the first poets, healer, mystic, and magical fixer; and Homer, about whom almost nothing is known for certain except the magnificence of his two great epic poems. Here are Linos and Arion, who survive only in legend; and Amphion, who survives through the tales we ascribe to him. Here are Sappho, the greatest Greek woman writer, and Hesiod; Hipponax, the "dirty old man of poetry"; and Theocritus, the father of the pastoral; and many others.

Combining the verifiable facts of their lives and the narratives provided by later writers, Schmidt walks the fine line between fact and scholarly conjecture to create vivid, animated, wonderfully compelling portraits of these ancestors of our culture.

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