The Poems of Sappho

by Sappho

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Title: The Poems of Sappho: An Interpretative Rendition into English

Translator: John Myers O'Hara

Author: Sappho

Release date: February 22, 2013 [eBook #42166] Most recently updated: January 18, 2026

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/42166

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The Poems of Sappho

An Interpretative Rendition into English

BY

JOHN MYERS O'HARA

PORTLAND: MDCCCCX

SAPPHO AND HER COMPANIONS

Contents

Who shall strike the wax of mystery from those priceless amphoræ, and give to the unsophisticated nostrils of the average reader the ravishing bouquet of wine pressed in a garden in Mitylene, twenty-five centuries ago?—MAURICE THOMPSON.

Then to me so lying awake a vision Came without sleep over the seas and touched me, Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I, too, Full of the vision, Saw the white implacable Aphrodite, Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled Shine as fire of sunset on western waters; Saw the reluctant Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her, Looking always, looking with necks reverted Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder Shone Mitylene. —SWINBURNE.

Ω θεόί, πίς ἆρα Κύπρις, ἢ τίς μερος τοῦδε ξνυήψατο —SOPHOCLES.

SAPPHICS

THE MUSES Hither now, O Muses, leaving the golden House of God unseen in the azure spaces, Come and breathe on bosom and brow and kindle Song like the sunglow; Come and lift my shaken soul to the sacred Shadow cast by Helicon's rustling forests; Sweep on wings of flame from the middle ether, Seize and uplift me; Thrill my heart that throbs with unwonted fervor, Chasten mouth and throat with immortal kisses, Till I yield on maddening heights the very Breath of my body.

MUSAGETES Come with Musagetes, ye Hours and Graces, Dance around the team of swans that attend him Up Parnassian heights, to his holy temple High on the

hill-top; Come, ye Muses, too, from the shades of Pindus, Let your songs, that echo on winds of rapture, Wake the lyre he tunes to the sweet inspiring Sound of your voices.

LOVE'S BANQUET If Panormus, Cyprus or Paphos hold thee, Either home of Gods or the island temple, Hark again and come at my invocation, Goddess benefic; Come thou, foam-born Kypris, and pour in dainty Cups of amber gold thy delicate nectar, Subtly mixed with fire that will swiftly kindle Love in our bosoms; Thus the bowl ambrosial was stirred in Paphos For the feast, and taking the burnished ladle, Hermes poured the wine for the Gods who lifted Reverent beakers; High they held their goblets and made libation, Spilling wine as pledge to the Fates and Hades Quaffing deep and binding their hearts to Eros, Lauding thy servant. So to me and my Lesbians round me gathered, Each made mine, an amphor of love long tasted, Bid us drink, who sigh for thy thrill ecstatic, Passion's full goblet; Grant me this, O Kypris, and on thy altar Dawn will see a goat of the breed of Naxos, Snowy doves from Cos and the drip of rarest Lesbian vintage; For a regal taste is mine and the glowing Zenith-lure and beauty of suns must brighten Love for me, that ever upon perfection Trembles elusive.

MOON AND STARS When the moon at full on the sill of heaven Lights her beacon, flooding the earth with silver, All the shining stars that about her cluster Hide their fair faces; So when Anactoria's beauty dazzles Sight of mine, grown dim with the joy it gives me, Gorgo, Atthis, Gyrinno, all the others Fade from my vision.

ODE TO ANACTORIA Peer of Gods to me is the man thy presence Crowns with joy; who hears, as he sits beside thee, Accents sweet of thy lips the silence breaking, With lovely laughter; Tones that make the heart in my bosom flutter, For if I, the space of a moment even, Near to thee come, any word I would utter Instantly fails me; Vain my stricken tongue would a whisper fashion, Subtly under my skin runs fire ecstatic; Straightway mists surge dim to my eyes and leave them Reft of their

vision; Echoes ring in my ears; a trembling seizes All my body bathed in soft perspiration; Pale as grass I grow in my passion's madness, Like one insensate; But must I dare all, since to me unworthy, Bliss thy beauty brings that a God might envy; Never yet was fervid woman a fairer Image of Kypris. Ah! undying Daughter of God, befriend me! Calm my blood that thrills with impending transport; Feed my lips the murmur of words to stir her Bosom to pity; Overcome with kisses her faintest protest, Melt her mood to mine with amorous touches, Till her low assent and her sigh's abandon Lure me to rapture.

THE ROSE If it pleased the whim of Zeus in an idle Hour to choose a king for the flowers, he surely Would have crowned the rose for its regal beauty, Deeming it peerless; By its grace is valley and hill embellished, Earth is made a shrine for the lover's ardor; Dear it is to flowers as the charm of lovely Eyes are to mortals; Joy and pride of plants, and the garden's glory, Beauty's blush it brings to the cheek of meadows; Draining fire and dew from the dawn for rarest Color and odor; Softly breathed, its scent is a plea for passion, When it blooms to welcome the kiss of Kypris; Sheathed in fragrant leaves its tremulous petals Laugh in the zephyr.

ODE TO APHRODITE Aphrodite, subtle of soul and deathless, Daughter of God, weaver of wiles, I pray thee Neither with care, dread Mistress, nor with anguish, Slay thou my spirit! But in pity hasten, come now if ever From afar of old when my voice implored thee, Thou hast deigned to listen, leaving the golden House of thy father With thy chariot yoked; and with doves that drew thee, Fair and fleet around the dark earth from heaven, Dipping vibrant wings down the azure distance, Through the mid-ether; Very swift they came; and thou, gracious Vision, Leaned with face that smiled in immortal beauty, Leaned to me and asked, "What misfortune threatened? Why I had called thee?" "What my frenzied heart craved in utter yearning, Whom its wild desire would persuade to passion? What disdainful charms, madly worshipped, slight thee? Who wrongs thee, Sappho?" "She that fain would fly, she shall quickly follow, She that now rejects, yet with gifts shall woo

thee, She that heeds thee not, soon shall love to madness, Love thee, the loth one!" Come to me now thus, Goddess, and release me From distress and pain; and all my distracted Heart would seek, do thou, once again fulfilling, Still be my ally!

SUMMER Slumber streams from quivering leaves that listless Bask in heat and stillness of Lesbian summer; Breathless swoons the air with the apple-blossoms' Delicate odor; From the shade of branches that droop and cover Shallow trenches winding about the orchard, Restful comes, and cool to the sense, the flowing Murmur of water.

THE GARDEN OF THE NYMPHS All around through the apple boughs in blossom Murmur cool the breezes of early summer, And from leaves that quiver above me gently Slumber is shaken; Glades of poppies swoon in the drowsy languor, Dreaming roses bend, and the oleanders Bask and nod to drone of bees in the silent Fervor of noontide; Myrtle coverts hedging the open vista, Dear to nightly frolic of Nymph and Satyr, Yield a mossy bed for the brown and weary Limbs of the shepherd. Echo ever wafts through the drooping frondage, Ceaseless silver murmur of water falling In the grotto cool of the Nymphs, the sacred Haunt of Immortals; Down the sides of rocks that are gray and lichened Trickle tiny rills, whose expectant tinkle Drips with gurgle hushed in the clear glimmering Depths of the basin. Fair on royal couches of leaves recumbent, Interspersed with languor of waxen lilies, Lotus flowers empurple the pool whose edge is Cushioned with mosses; Here recline the Nymphs at the hour of twilight, Back in shadows dim of the cave, their golden Sea-green eyes half lidded, up to their supple Waists in the water. Sheltered once by ferns I espied them binding Tresses long, the tint of lilac and orange; Just beyond the shimmer of light their bodies Roseate glistened; Deftly, then, they girdled their loins with garlands, Linked with leaves luxuriant limb and shoulder; On their breasts they bruised the red blood of roses Fresh from the garden. She of orange hair was the Nymph Euxanthis, And the lilac-tressed were Iphis and Io; How they laughed, relating at length their ease in Evading the Satyr.

APHRODITE'S DOVES When the drifting gray of the vesper shadow Dimmed their upward path through the midmost azure, And the length of night overtook them distant Far from Olympus; Far away from splendor and joy of Paphos, From the voice and smile of their peerless Mistress, Back to whom their truant wings were in rapture Speeding belated; Chilled at heart and grieving they drooped their pinions, Circled slowly, dipping in flight toward Lesbos, Down through dusk that darkened on Mitylene's Columns of marble; Down through glory wan of the fading sunset, Veering ever toward the abode of Sappho, Toward my home, the fane of the glad devoted Slave of the Goddess; Soon they gained the tile of my roof and rested, Slipped their heads beneath their wings while I watched them Sink to sleep and dreams, in the warm and drowsy Night of midsummer.

ANACREON'S SONG Golden-throned Muse, sing the song that in olden Days was sung of love and delight in Teos, In the goodly land of the lovely women: Strains that in other Years the hoary bard with the youthful fancy Set to mirthful stir of flutes, when the dancing Nymphs that poured the wine for the poet's banquet Mixed it with kisses; Sing the song while I, in the arms of Atthis, Seal her lips to mine with a lover's fervor, Breathe her breath and drink her sighs to the honeyed Lull of the melics.

THE DAUGHTER OF CYPRUS Dreaming I spake with the Daughter of Cyprus, Heard the languor soft of her voice, the blended Suave accord of tones interfused with laughter Low and desireful; Dreaming saw her dread ineffable beauty, Saw through texture fine of her clinging tunic Blush the fire of flesh, the rose of her body, Radiant, blinding; Saw through filmy meshes the melting lovely Flow of line, the exquisite curves, whence piercing Rapture reached with tangible touch to thrill me, Almost to slay me; Saw the gleaming foot, and the golden sandal Held by straps of Lydian work thrice doubled Over the instep's arch, and up the rounded Dazzling ankle; Saw the charms that shimmered from knee to shoulder, Hint of hues, than milk or the snowdrift whiter; Secret grace, the shrine of the soul of passion, Glows

that consumed me; Saw the gathered mass of her xanthic tresses, Mitra-bound, escape from the clasping fillet, Float and shine as clouds in the sunset splendor, Mists in the dawn-fire; Saw the face immortal, and daring greatly, Raised my eyes to hers of unfathomed azure, Drank their world's desire, their limitless longing, Swooned and was nothing.

THE DISTAFF Come, ye dainty Graces and lovely Muses, Rosy-armed and pure and with fairest tresses, Come from groves on Helicon's hill where murmur Founts that are holy; Come with dancing step and with lips harmonic, Gather near and view my ivory distaff, Gift from Cos my brother Charaxus brought me, Sailing from Egypt; Sailing back to Lesbos from far Naucratis, From the seven mouths of the Nile and Egypt Up the blue Ægean, the island-dotted Ocean of Hellas; Choicest wool alone will I spin for fabrics, Winding reel with threads for the cloths as fleecy, Soft and fine as they bring from far Phocea, Sidon or Sardis; While I weave my thought shall engird the giver, Whether here, or far on the sea, or resting Couched in shady courts with the lovely garland Girls of Naucratis.

THE SLEEP WIND Softer than mists o'er the pale green of waters, O'er the charmed sea, shod with sandals of shadow Comes the warm sleep wind of Argolis, floating Garlands of fragrance; Comes the sweet wind by the still hours attended, Touching tired lids on the shores dim with distance, Ever its way toward the headland of Lesbos, Toward Mitylene. Faintly one fair star of evening enkindles On the dusk afar its lone fire Œtean, Shining serene till the darkness will deepen Others to splendor; Bringing ineffable peace, and the gladsome Return with the night of all things that morning Ruthlessly parted, the child to its mother, Lover to lover. From the marble court of rose-crowned companions, All alone my feet again seek the little Theatre pledged to the Muse, now deserted, Facing the surges; Where the carved Pan-heads that laugh down the gentle Slope of broad steps to the refluent ripple, Flute from their thin pipes the dithyrambs deathless, Songs all unuttered. Empty each seat where my girl friends acclaimed me, Poets with names on the tiered stone

engraven, Over whose verge blooms the apple tree, drifting Perfume and petals; Gone Telesippa and tender Gyrinno, Anactoria, woman divine; Atthis, Subtlest of soul, fair Damophyla, Dica, Maids of the Muses. Here an hour past soul-enravished they listened While my rapt heart breathed its pæan impassioned, Chanted its wild prayer to thee, Aphrodite, Daughter of Cyprus; Now to their homes are they gone in the city, Pensive to dream limb-relaxed while the languid Slaves come and lift from the tresses they loosen, Flowers that have faded. Thou alone, Sappho, art sole with the silence, Sole with night and dreams that are darkness, weaving Thoughts that are sighs from the heart and their meaning Vague as the shadow; When the great silence shall come to thee, sad one, Men that forget shall remember thy music, Murmur thy name that shall steal on their passion Soft as the sleep wind.

THE REPROACH Kypris, hear my prayer to thee and the Nereids! Safely bring the ship of my brother homewards, Bring him back unharmed to the heart that loves him, Throbbing remorseful; Fair Immortal, banish from mind, I pray thee, Every discord's hint that of yore estranged us; Grant that never again dissension's hateful Wrangle shall part us; May he never in days to come remember Keen reproach of mine that had grieved him sorely; Words that broke my very heart when I heard them Uttered by others; Words that wounded deep and recurring often, Bowed his head with shame at the public banquet; Where my scorn, amid festal joy and laughter, Sharpened the covert Jests that stung his pride and assailed his folly, Slave-espoused when he, a Lesbian noble, Might have won the fairest in Mitylene, Virgins the noblest; Open slurs that linked his name with Doricha, Lovely slave that Xanthes had sold in Egypt; She whose wondrous charms the wealth of Charaxus Ransomed from bondage. Now that he is gone and my anger vanished, Keen regret and grief for the pain I gave him Pierce my heart, and fear of loss that is anguish Darkens the daylight.

LONG AGO Long ago beloved, thy memory, Atthis, Saddens still my heart as the soft Æolic Twilight deepens down on the sea, and fitful Winds that have wandered

Over groves of myrtle at Amathonte Waft forgotten passion on breaths of perfume. Long ago, how madly I loved thee, Atthis! Faithless, light-hearted Loved one, mine no more, who lovest another More than me; the silent flute and the faded Garlands haunt the heart of me thou forgettest, Long since thy lover.

EPITHALAMIA

THRENODES

HYMENAIOS Artisans, raise high the roof beam! Tall is the bridegroom as Ares, Taller by far than the tallest, O Hymenæus! Ay! towering over his fellows, As over men of all other Lands towers the Lesbian singer, O Hymenæus! Well-favored, too, is the maiden, Eyes that are sweeter than honey, Fair both in face and in figure, O Hymenæus! For there was never another Virgin in loveliness like her, By Aphrodite so honored, O Hymenæus! O happy bridegroom, the wedding Comes to the point of completion; Thou hast the maid of thy choosing, O Hymenæus! See how a paleness suffuses Soft o'er her exquisite features, Passion's benign premonition, O Hymenæus! Go to the couch unreluctant, Rejoicing and sweet to the bridegroom; He in his turn is rejoicing, O Hymenæus! May Hesperus lead thee, and Hera, She whom to-night that ye honor, Silver-throned Goddess of marriage, O Hymenæus!

BRIDAL SONG Bride, that goest to the bridal chamber In the dove-drawn car of Aphrodite, By a band of dimpled Loves surrounded; Bride, of maidens all the fairest image Mitylene treasures of the Goddess, Rosy-ankled Graces Are thy playmates; Bride, O fair and lovely, thy companions Are the gracious hours that onward passing For thy gladsome footsteps Scatter garlands. Bride, that blushing like the sweetest apple On the very branch's end, so strangely Overlooked, ungathered By the gleaners; Bride, that like the apple that was never Overlooked but out of reach so plainly, Only one thy rarest Fruit may gather; Bride, that into womanhood has ripened For the harvest of the bridegroom only, He alone shall taste thy Hoarded

sweetness.

EPITHALAMIUM Vesper is here! behold Faint gleams that welcome shine! Rise from the feast, O youths, And chant the fescennine! Before the porch we sing The hymeneal song; Vesper is here, O youths! The star we waited long. We lead the festal groups Across the bridegroom's porch; Vesper is here, O youths! Wave high the bridal torch. Hail, noble bridegroom, hail! The virgin fair has come; Unlatch the door and lead Her timid footsteps home. Hail, noble bridegroom, hail! Straight as a tender tree; Fond as a folding vine Thy bride will cling to thee.

PIERIA'S ROSE Pale death shall come, and thou and thine shall be, Then and thereafter, to all memory Forgotten as the wind that yesterday Blew the last lingering apple buds away; For thou hadst never that undying rose To grace the brow and shed immortal glows; Pieria's fadeless flower that few may claim To wreathe and save thy unremembered name. Ay! even on the fields of Dis unknown, Obscure among the shadows and alone, Thy flitting shade shall pass uncomforted Of any heed from all the flitting dead. But no one maid, I think, beneath the skies, At any time shall live and be as wise, In sooth, as I am; for the Muses Nine Have made me honored and their gifts are mine; And men, I think, will never quite forget My songs or me; so long as stars shall set Or sun shall rise, or hearts feel love's desire, My voice shall cross their dreams, a sigh of fire.

LAMENT FOR ADONIS Ah, for Adonis! See, he is dying, Delicate, lovely, Slender Adonis. Ah, for Adonis! Weep, O ye maidens, Beating your bosoms, Rending your tunics. O Cytherea, Hasten, for never Loved thou another As thy Adonis. See, on the rosy Cheek with its dimple, Blushing no longer, Thanatos' shadow. Save him, O Goddess! Thou, the beguiler, All-powerful, holy, Stay the dread evil. Ah, for Adonis! No more at vintage Time will he come with Bloom of the meadows. Ah, for Adonis! See, he is dying, Fading as flowers With the lost summer.

THE STRICKEN FLOWER Think not to ever look as once of yore, Atthis, upon my

love; for thou no more Wilt find intact upon its stem the flower Thy guile left slain and bleeding in that hour. So ruthless shepherds crush beneath their feet The hill flower blooming in the summer heat; The hyacinth whose purple heart is found Left bruised and dead, to darken on the ground.

DEATH Death is an evil; so the Gods decree, So they have judged, and such must rightly be Our mortal view; for they who dwell on high Had never lived, had it been good to die. And so the poet's house should never know Of tears and lamentations any show; Such things befit not us who deathless sing Of love and beauty, gladness and the spring. No hint of grief should mar the features of Our dreams of endless beauty, lasting love; For they reflect the joy inviolate, Eternal calm that fronts whatever fate. Clëis, my darling, grieve no more, I pray! Let wandering winds thy sorrow bear away, And all our care; my daughter, let thy smile Shine through thy tears and gladden me the while.

PERSEPHONE I saw a tender maiden plucking flowers Once, long ago, in the bright morning hours; And then from heaven I saw a sudden cloud Fall swift and dark, and heard her cry aloud. Again I looked, but from my open door My anxious eyes espied the maid no more; The cloud had vanished, bearing her away To underlands beyond the smiling day.

PARTHENEIA

DIDAKTIKA

MAIDENHOOD Do I long for maidenhood? Do I long for days When upon the mountain slope I would stand and gaze Over the Ægean's blue Melting into mist, Ere with love my virgin lips Cercolas had kissed? Maidenhood, O maidenhood, Whither hast thou flown? To a land beyond the sea Thou hast never known. Maidenhood, O maidenhood, Wilt return to me? Never will my bloom again Give its grace to thee. Now the autumn skies are low, Youth and summer sped; Shepherd hills are far

away, Cercolas is dead. Mitylene's marble courts Echo with my name;— Maidenhood, we never dreamed, Long ago of fame.

EVER MAIDEN I shall be ever maiden, Ever the little child, In my passionate quest for the lovely, By earth's glad wonder beguiled. I shall be ever maiden, Standing in soul apart, For the Gods give the secret of beauty Alone to the virgin heart.

CLËIS Daughter of mine, so fair, With a form like a golden flower, Wherefore thy pensive air And the dreams in the myrtle bower? Clëis, beloved, thy eyes That are turned from my gaze, thy hand That trembles so, I prize More than all the Lydian land; More than the lovely hills With the Lesbian olive crowned;— Tell me, darling, what ills In the gloom of thy thought are found? Daughter of mine, come near And thy head on my knees recline; Whisper and never fear, For the beat of thy heart is mine. Sweet mother, I can turn With content to my loom no more; My bosom throbs, I yearn For a youth that my eyes adore; Lykas of Eresus, Whom I knew when a little child; My heart by Love is thus With the sweetest of pain beguiled.

ASPIRATION I do not think with my two arms to touch the sky, I do not dream to do almighty things; So small a singing bird may never soar so high, To beat the sapphire fire with baffled wings. I do not think with my two arms to touch the sky, I do not dream by any chance to share With deathless Gods the bliss of Paphos they deny To men behind the azure veil of air.

HERO, OF GYARA I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner; Swifter far was she than Atalanta, When through clinging fleece of her wind-rippled Garments blushed the glimmer of her limbs. I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner; Lovelier was she than Atalanta, When the straining vision of the suitor Saw her beauty mock impending death. I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner, All the singing numbers of Terpander, Metres of Archilochus and Alcman, And my melic verse that glows supreme. I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner, Sapphics with their triple surge of music Melting in the final verse Adonic, Like the foam fall of a spended wave.

COURAGE Faint not in thy strong heart! Nor downcast stand apart; Beyond the reach of daring will there lies No beauty's prize. Faint not in thy strong heart! Through temple, field and mart, Courage alone the guerdon from the fray May bear away.

THE BOAST OF ARES Ares said he would drag Hephestus by force From Poseidon's palace Deep down in the sea; Where he had fashioned The cunning throne With the secret chains. He presented the throne, Forsooth, as a gift To the queen of heaven; But Hera soon found For revenge on her Who had him cast From the home of Gods. For secure in its clasp Of adamant gold She was held imprisoned, The prey of his guile; And Hephestus knew By him alone Could the queen be freed. But the great God of war Made boast of his strength; He would bring the forger Of metals and tricks On high to release Hera, and end Her enraged despair. Ares said he would drag Hephestus by force, But was made to waver And flee when assailed With a blazing brand By the dark God Of the underworld.

GOLD Gold is the son of Zeus, Immortal, bright; Nor moth nor worm may eat it, Nor rust tarnish. So are the Muse's gifts The offspring fair, That merit from high heaven Youth eternal.

GNOMICS I My ways are quiet, none may find My temper of malignant kind; For one should check the words that start When anger spreads within the heart. II Who from my hands what I can spare Of gifts accept the largest share, Those are the very ones who boast No gratitude and wrong me most. III He who in face and form is fair Must needs be good, the Gods declare; But he whose thought and act are right Will soon be equal fair to sight. IV Beauty of youth is but the flower Of spring, whose pleasure lasts an hour; While worth that knows no mortal doom Is like the amaranthine bloom.

PRIDE Pride not thyself upon a ring, Or any trinket thing Of fleeting value, dross or gold. Wealth, lacking worth, is no safe friend, Though both to life may lend, In just

proportion, joy untold.

LETO AND NIOBE Leto and Niobe were friends full dear, The Goddess' heart and woman's heart were one In that maternal love that men revere, Love that endures when other loves are done. But Niobe with all a mother's pride, Artless and foolish, would not be denied; And boasted that her children were more fair Than Leto's lovely children of the air. The proud Olympians vowed revenge for this, Irate Apollo, angered Artemis; They slew her children, heedless of her moan, And with the last her heart was turned to stone.

THE DYE From Scythian wood they brew The dye whose yellow hue Turns gold the lovely hair Of Lesbians fair. So, Zanthis, slave of mine, Shall dip the fleeces fine, And dye the robes I made A saffron shade.

EROTIKA

DITHYRAMBS

HYMN TO PAPHIA Immortal Paphia! have I earned thy hate, That I should burn in passion's fatal flame? Is not my constant service thine to claim, My prayer's appeal with praise of thee elate? Has not my life been one sole hymn of thee, One quivering chord on Love's harp overwrought? My soul has trembled up to thee in thought, Probed to its depth thy every ecstasy. Are not my countless heart-beats each a vow, Of tribute throbs a garland? For thy gain The Fates have drenched my soul in passion's rain, Pieria's roses twined about my brow. The virgin harvest of my heart was thine, I shuddered in the joy that half consumed; The votive garlands on thy altar bloomed, My days were songs to nights of bliss divine. Why try me, then, with torture, gracious Queen? Why verge me on this rapture's dread abyss, Hold breast from breast and stay the yearning kiss? Ah, couldst thou fashion pain that stung less keen? The throe of Tantalus is mine to bear, Beauty that Thetis-like eludes my clasp; Glances that lure, that make each breath a gasp, And then disdainful gloat at my

despair. Scornful she dwells beyond my ardor's clutch, Bathed in an aureole of carnal fire;— O bind her equal slave to fond desire, Let passion's tingling warmth her being touch! Come to me, Goddess, come as once of old, Hearing my voice implore thee from afar, I drew to earth thy dazzling avatar; Accord the smile of piercing bliss untold. Ask me the dear suave question phrased of yore; "Sappho, who grieveth now thy mad fond heart? Wouldst win her beauty, she who frowns apart? Wild as thou lovest, she soon shall love thee more." O fair Olympian, answer thus, I pray! Release me from this torment, yield my arms The transport thirsted of her folded charms, In glow that welds her heart to mine for aye.

EROS From the gnarled branches of the apple trees The heavy petals, lifted by the breeze, Fluttered on puffs of odor fine and fell In the clear water of the garden well; And some a bolder zephyr blew in sport Across the marble reaches of my court, And some by sudden gusts were wafted wide Toward sea and city, down the mountain side. Lesbos seemed Paphos, isled in rosy glow, Green olive hills, the violet vale below; The air was azure fire and o'er the blue Still sea the doves of Aphrodite flew. My dreaming eyes saw Eros from afar Coming from heaven in his mother's car, In purple tunic clad; and at my heart The God was aiming his relentless dart. He whom fair Aphrodite called her son, She, the adored, she, the imperial One; He passed as winds that shake the soul, as pains Sweet to the heart, as fire that warms the veins; He passed and left my limbs dissolved in dew, Relaxed and faint, with passion quivered through; Exhausted with spent thrills of dread delight, A sudden darkness rushing on my sight.

PASSION Now Love shakes my soul, a mighty Wind from the high mountain falling Full on the oaks of the forest; Now, limb-relaxing, it masters My life and implacable thrills me, Rending with anguish and rapture. Now my heart, paining my bosom, Pants with desire as a mænad Mad for the orgiac revel. Now under my skin run subtle Arrows of flame, and my body Quivers with surge of emotion. Now long importunate yearnings Vanquish with surfeit my reason; Fainting my senses forsake

me.

APHRODITE'S PRAISE O Sappho, why art thou ever Singing with praises the blessed Queen of the heaven? Why does the heart in thy bosom Ever revert in its yearning Throb to the Goddess? Why are thy senses unsated Ever in quest of elusive Love that is deathless? Ah, gracious Daughter of Cyprus, Never can I as a mortal Tire of thy service. Thou art the breath of my body, The blood in my veins, and the glowing Pulse of my bosom. Omnipotent, burning, resistless, Thou art the passion that shaking Masters me ever. Thou art the crisis of rapture Relaxing my limbs, and the melting Ebb of emotion; Bringing the tears to my lashes, Sighs to my lips, in the swooning Excess of passion. O golden-crowned Aphrodite, Grant I shall ever be grateful, Sure of thy favor; Worthy the lot of thy priestess, Supreme in the song that forever Rings with thy praises.

THE FIRST KISS And down I set the cushion Upon the couch that she, Relaxed supine upon it, Might give her lips to me. As some enamored priestess At Aphrodite's shrine, Entranced I bent above her With sense of the divine. She had, by nature nubile, In years a child, no hint Of any secret knowledge Of passion's least intent. Her mouth for immolation Was ripe, and mine the art; And one long kiss of passion Deflowered her virgin heart.

ODE TO ATTHIS I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago! My blood was flame that thrilled to passion's throe; Now long neglect has quenched the olden fire, And blight of drifting years effaced desire. I loved you, Atthis—joy of long ago— Love shook my soul as winds on forests blow; This lawless heart that dared exhaust delight, Unsated strove and maddened through the night. I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago! With pain whose surge I felt to anguish grow; Suffered the storms that waste the heart and leave A desert shore where seas but break to grieve. I loved you, Atthis—spring of long ago— Watched you depart, to Andromeda go; Then I, as keen despair its shadow cast, O'er my deserted threshold, sobbing, passed. I loved

you, Atthis, once, long years ago! The thought of me is hateful now, I know; And all the lavish tenderness of old Has gone from me and left my bosom cold. I loved you, Atthis—dream of long ago— * * * * * * * * * * * * * * How the fond words, impassioned music low, Sustain the sigh of love's divine regret No length of time may bid the heart forget.

COMPARISON Less soft a Tyrian robe Of texture fine, Less delicate a rose Than flesh of thine. Whiter thy breast than snow That virgin lies, And deeper than the blue Of seas thy eyes. More golden than the fruit Of orange trees, Thy locks that floating lure The satyr breeze. Less fine of silver string An Orphic lyre, Less sweet than thy low laugh That wakes desire.

THE SACRIFICE Upon a cushion soft My limbs I place, My every garment doffed For deeper grace; From burning doves embalmed In baccharis, The scented fumes have calmed Me like a kiss. Beyond the phallic shrine That tripods light, I pledge with holy wine An image white; Anadyomene, Than foam more fair, When from the ravished sea She rose to air. Daughter of God, accept These gifts of mine! Last night my body slept In arms divine. These sated lips and eyes That erstwhile sued, Accord this sacrifice In gratitude.

LEDA Once on a time They say that Leda found Beneath the thyme An egg upon the ground; And yet the swan She fondled long ago Was whiter than Its shell of peeping snow.

AMŒBEUM: ALCÆUS AND SAPPHO ALCUSÆUS Violet-weaving Sappho, pure and lovely, Softly-smiling Sappho, I would utter Something that my secret hope has cherished, Did no painful sense of shame deter me. SAPPHO Had the impulse of thy heart been honest, It had urged no evil supplication; Shame had not abashed thy eyes before me, And thy words had done thee no dishonor. ALCÆUS Softly-smiling Sappho, longing bids me Tell thee all that in my heart lies hidden. SAPPHO Have no fear, Alcæus, to offend me! Thy emotion stirs my heart to pity.

ALCÆUS I desire thee, violet-weaving Sappho! Love thee madly, softly-smiling Sappho! SAPPHO Hush, Alcæus! thou must choose a younger Comrade for thy couch, for I would never Join thy years to mine—the Gods forbid it— Youth and ardent fire to age and ashes.

THE LOVE OF SELENE Across the still sea's moonlit wave Selene came Softly to seek the Latmian cave, Her breast aflame With secret passion's ruthless throe, Her scruples done, And burning with desire to know Endymion.

THE CRETAN DANCE As the moon in all her splendor Slowly rose above the forest, Silent stood the Cretan women Round the altar. Girdled close their clinging tunics, Made of some transparent fabric, Traced the every curve and lissome Of their bodies. With revering eyes uplifted To the round and rising planet, Soon its drifting beams of silver Lit their faces. Soft and clear its sphere effulgent, Full defined above the treetops, Steeped in pale unearthly glamor All the landscape. When the argent glimmer rested On the altar piled with garlands, And its glow unveiled the marble Aphrodite; Linking hands, the Cretan women Moving gracefully with metric Steps began to dance a measure To the Goddess. All so light their feet unsandalled Pressed the velvet grass in treading, That they scarcely bruised its tender Blooming verdure. Slowly turning in a circle To the east, their voices chanted In a plaintive note the sacred Ithyphallics; Then they paused, their steps retracing Toward the west, and answered strophe By antistrophe with choric Tones accordant; With the aftersong epodic, Standing all before the altar, Lo! the hymn in praise of Paphos Was completed.

TO ALCÆUS Countless are the cups thou drainest In thy hymns to Dionysos, O Alcæus! War and wine alone thou singest;— Whereforenot of Aphrodite, O Alcæus! Spacious halls are thine where many Trophies hang in Ares' honor, O Alcæus! Brazen shields and shining helmets, Plates of brass, Chalcidian broad-swords, O Alcæus! When with winter roars the Thracian North wind through the leafless

forest, O Alcæus! Thou dost heap the fire and banish Care with many a tawny goblet, O Alcæus!

HYPORCHEME Thus contend the maidens In the cretic dance, Rosy arms that glisten, Eyes that glance; Cheeks as fair as blossoms, Parted lips that glow, With their honeyed voices Chanting low; With their plastic bodies Swaying to the flute, Moving with the music Never mute; Graceful the orchestric Figures they unfold, While the vesper heaven Turns to gold. Turns to gold.

LARICHUS While charming maids plait garlands for thy brows, Larichus, bring the pledge for this carouse Like lovely Ganymede, brother mine, And cool from thy patera pour the wine. Thy slender limbs have all a Satyr's grace, Hylas, the Wood-God, dimples in thy face; These maids of mine, beloved and loving me, My dreams have made thy Nymphs to sport with thee. I heard fair Mitylene's plaudits cease O'er Lykas, Menon and Dinnomenes; And hail thy beauty worthy of the prize, Cupbearer to the council of the wise. No noble youth the prytaneum holds, Whose graceful form the purple tunic folds Can match with thee, when on affairs of state All Lesbos gathers with the wise and great.

SPRING Come, shell divine, be vocal now for me, As when the Hebrus river and the sea To Lesbos bore, on waves harmonious, The head and golden lyre of Orpheus. Calliope, queen of the tuneful throng, Descend and be the Muse of melic song; For through my frame life's tides renewing bring The glad vein-warming vigor of the spring. The skies that dome the earth with far blue fire Make the wide land one temple of desire;— Just now across my cheek I felt a God, In the enraptured breeze, pass zephyr-shod. Was that Pan's flute, O Atthis, that we heard, Or the soft love-note of a woodland bird? That flame a scarlet wing that skimmed the stream, Or the red flash of our impassioned dream? Ah, soon again we two shall gather fair Garlands of dill and rose to deck our bare White arms that cling, white breast that burns to breast, When the long night of love shall banish rest.

GIRL FRIENDS

PRELUDE Deftly on my little Seven-stringed barbitos, Now to please my girl friends Songs I set to music. Maidens fair, companions Of the Muses, never Toward you shall my feelings Undergo a change. Chanted in a plaintive Old Ionic measure, All the songs I give you Are the songs of love.

ANDROMEDA What bucolic maiden Now thy heart bewitches, O my Andromeda Of the strange amours? Round her awkward ankles She has not the faintest Sense of art to draw her Long ungraceful tunic. Yet she surely makes thee, O my Andromeda, For thy sweet unlawful Love a fair requital. Joy and praise attend thee, In thy keen perceptive Taste for beauty, daughter Of Polyanax! Of Polyanax!

EUNEICA Aphrodite's handmaid, Bright as gold thou earnest, Tender woven garlands Round thy tender neck; Sweet as soft Persuasion, Lissome as the Graces, Shy Euneica, lovely Girl from Salamis. Slender thou as Syrinx, As the waving reed-nymph, Once by Pan, the god of Summer winds, deflowered. On thy lips whose quiver Seems to plead for pity, Mine shall rest and linger Like the mouth of Pan On the mouth of Syrinx, When his breath that filled her Blew through all her body Music of his love.

GORGO Gorgo, I am weary Of thy love's insistence, Thou to me appearest An ill-favored child. Though I am than Gello Fonder still of virgins, Toward thee I have never Felt the least desire. Yesternight I knew not What to do, for pity Moved my bosom deeply, Seeing thee implore. Harassed by alternate Yielding and refusal, I was half persuaded Then to grant thy prayer. At my door thy presence Lingers like a shadow; Vain wouldst thou reproach me With appealing eyes. Dost thou think by constant Proofs of lasting passion, Slowly my obdurate Will to wear away? Gorgo, I am weary Of thy love's insistence, And my strength exhausted Grants thy wish at last.

MNASIDICA Set, O Dica, garlands on thy lovely Glinting mass of fine and golden

tresses, Sprays of dill with fingers soft entwining While I stand apart to better judge. Those who have fair wreaths about the forehead, Breathing brentheian odor to the senses, Ever first find favor with the Graces Who from wreathless suppliants turn away. Dica, Mnasidica, thou art shapely With the flowing curves of Aphrodite; Eyes the color of her azure ocean Washing wide on Cyprus' languid shore. In thy every movement grace unconscious Sways the rhythmic poem of thy body, Charming with elusive undulation Like a splendid lily in the wind. As I stand apart to judge the better Fair effects that roses add to beauty, All thy rays of loveliness concentered Sun me till I swoon with swift desire.

TELESIPPA Sleep thou in the bosom Of thy tender girl friend, Telesippa, gentle Maiden from Miletus. Like twin petals shyly Closing to the darkness, Dewy on your drooping Lids shall fall her kisses. While her arms enfold you, On your drowsy senses Shall her soft caresses Seal delicious languor. Warm from her desireful Heart the flush of passion On your cheek unconscious, With her sighs shall deepen. All the long sweet night-time, Sleepless while you slumber, She shall lie and quiver With her love's mad longing.

GYRINNO Now the silver crescent Of the moon has vanished, With the golden Pleiads Drifting down the west. It is after midnight And the time is passing, Hours we pledged to passion And I sleep alone. Anger ill becomes thee, Tender-souled Gyrinno, Shapelier is Dica But less loved by me. Art thou still relentless, Wilful one, annulling All thy protestations In the fervid past? Can it, O Charites, Be thou hast forgotten? Dost thou love another, Even now, perchance? Ah, my tears are falling, Yet in my despairing Mood I lie and listen For thy furtive step; For the lightest rustle Of thy flowing garment, For thy sweet and panting Whisper at the door. Now the moon has vanished With the golden Pleiads; It is after midnight And I sleep alone.

MEGARA Thou burnest us, Megara, With thy passions wild; Bringing from Panormus Such unbridled fires. Thou burnest us, a supple Flow of tortured flame,

Raging, biting, searing, Lawless of the will. Thou burnest us, Megara, Love must know reserve, Curbing power to keep it Keener for restraint.

ERINNA Haughtier than thou, O fair Erinna, I have never met with any maiden. Such a careless scorn as thine for passion Proves a dire affront to Aphrodite. When with soft desire she wounds thy bosom, Thou shalt know love's pain and doubly suffer. Keep the gifts I gave thee, long rejected; Fabrics for thy lap from far Phocea, Babylonian unguents, scented sandals, And the costly mitra for thy tresses; Tripods worked in brass to flank the altar With the ivory figure of the Goddess; Where the sacrificial fumes from sacred Flames shall rise to gladden and appease her, In the hour when at her call thy fervid Breast and mouth to mine shall be relinquished.

GONGYLA It was when the sunset Burned with saffron fire, And Apollo's coursers Turned below the hills, That on Mitylene's Marble bridge we met, Gongyla, thou golden Maid of Colophon. Like the breath of morning Or a breeze from sea, Fresh thy beauty smote me, Virile of the north. Startled by thy vision, Transports half divine Flooded veins and bosom, Shook me with desire. Soon the kinder sunglow Of Æolic lands Melted all the futile Snows about thy heart.

DAMOPHYLA Cold of heart and strangely Uninclined to passion, Wisdom's vigil leaves thee, Proud Damophyla. Sapphics thou hast written, Verses in my metre, With a skill surpassing In the melic art. Love's superb enchantment Thou art fain to banish, Like the virgin Huntress Long by thee adored. Molded by thy tunic, Every arching contour Of her chaste and noble Form I dream to see; Even view her stepping From the leafy covert Down the dawn-white valley, Stately as a stag. Long I sued but found thee Deaf to all entreaty, Till one summer twilight Listless in the heat; Soothed by slumber's languor, And my low monodic Voice that hymned a paean In the praise of love; Loth to yield yet vanquished, As I knelt beside thee, All thy long resistance To my kiss succumbed.

ANAGORA Anagora, fairest Spoil of fateful battle, Babylonian temples Knew thy

luring song. Wrested from barbaric Captors for thy beauty, Thou wert made a priestess At Mylitta's shrine. Once these flexile fingers Clasped in mine so closely, Neath the temple's arches Thrummed the tabor soft. Thou hast taught me secrets Of the cryptic chambers, How the zonahs worship In the burning East; Raptures that my wildest Dreaming never pictured, Arts of love that charmed me, Subtle, new and strange. Hearken to my earnest Prayer, O Aphrodite! May the night be doubled Now for our delight. $/

PHAON

PHILOMEL Philomel in my garden, Messenger sweet of springtide, From the bough of the olive tree utter Tidings ecstatic. Linger long on thy olden Note as in days remembered; Ere the Boatman that knew Aphrodite Ravished my vision. Fatal glamor of beauty, Beauty of Gods made mortal; Ah, before its delight I am ever Fearful of heaven. Spring in breeze and the blossom, Grasses and leaves and odors, On my heart with the breath of a vanished April is shaken; Shaken with thrill and regret of Lost caresses and kisses; Anactoria's memory, Atthis Never forgotten. Philomel in my garden, Messenger sweet of springtide, From the bough of the olive tree utter Tidings ecstatic.

GOLDEN PULSE Golden pulse grew on the shore, Ferns along the hill, And the red cliff roses bore Bees to drink their fill; Bees that from the meadows bring Wine of melilot, Honey-sups on golden wing To the garden grot. But to me, neglected flower, Phaon will not see, Passion brings no crowning hour, Honey nor the bee.

THE SWALLOW Daughter of Pandion, lovely Swallow that veers at my window, Swift on the flood of the sunshine Darting thy shadow; What is thy innocent purpose, Why dost thou hover and haunt me? Is it a kinship of sorrow Brings thee anear me? Must thou forever be tongueless, Flying in fear of Tereus? Must he for Itys pursue thee, Changed to a lapwing? Tireless of pinion and never Resting on bush or the branches, Close to the earth, up the azure, Over the treetops; After thy

wing in its madness Follows my glance, as a flitting Child on the track of its mother Hastens in silence. Daughter of Pandion, lovely Swallow that veers at my window, Hast thou a message from Cyprus Telling of Phaon?

TIDINGS She wrapped herself in linen woven close, Stuffs delicate and texture-fine as those The dark Nile traders for our bartering From Egypt, Crete and far Phocea bring. Love lent her feet the wings of winds to reach (Whose steps stir not the shingle of the beach) My marble court and, breathless, bid me know My lover's sails across the harbor blow. He seemed to her, as to himself he seems, Like some bright God long treasured in her dreams; She saw him standing at his galley's prow— My Phaon, mine, in Mitylene now!

HESPERUS Hesperus shines Low on the eastern wave, Off toward the Asian shore; Over faint lines Whose grays and purples pave Where seas night-calmed adore. Fair vesper fire, Fairest of stars, the light Benign of secret bliss; Star of desire, Bringing to me with night Dreams and my Phaon's kiss.

DAWN Just now the golden-sandalled Dawn Peered through the lattice of my room; Why must thou fare so soon, my Phaon? Last night I met thee at the shore, A thousand hues were in the sky; The breeze from Cyprus blew, my Phaon! I drew, to lave thy heated brow, My kerchief dripping from the sea; Why hadst thou sailed so far, my Phaon? Far up the narrow mountain paths We heard the shepherds fluting home; Like some white God thou seemed, my Phaon! And through the olive trees we saw The twinkle of my vesper lamp; Wilt kiss me now as then, my Phaon? Nay, loosen not with gentle force The clasp of my restraining arms; I will not let thee go, my Phaon! See, deftly in my trailing robe I spring and draw the lattice close; Is it not night again, my Phaon?

THE FAREWELL Beloved, stand face to face, And, lifting lids, disclose to me the grace, The Paphic fire that lingers yet and lies Reflected in thy eyes. Phaon, my sole beloved, Stand not to my mad passion all unmoved; O let, ere thou to far Panormus

sail, One hour of love prevail. Dear ingrate, come and let Thy breath like odor from a cassolet, Thy smile, the clinging touch of lips and heart Anoint me, ere we part. Phaon, I yearn and seek But thee alone; and what I feel must speak In all these fond and wilful ways of mine, O mortal, made divine! My girl friends now no more Hang their sweet gifts of garlands at my door; Dear maids, with all your vanished empery Ye now are naught to me. Phaon, thy galley rides Within the harbor's mouth and waits the tides And favoring winds, far to the west to fly And leave me here to die. The brawny rowers lean To bend long-stroking oars; and changing scene And fairer loves than mine shall soon efface This last divine embrace. Phaon, the lifting breeze! See, at thy feet I kneel and clasp thy knees! Go not, go not! O hear my sobbing prayer, And yield to my despair!

DARK-EYED SLEEP Dark-eyed Sleep, child of Night, Come in thy shadow garment to my couch, And with thy soothing touch, Cool as the vesper breeze, Grant that I may forget; Bestow condign release, A taste of rest that comes with endless sleep; Lure off the haunting dreams, The dire Eumenides That torture my repose. For I would live a space Though Phaon has forsaken me, nor yet Be found on shadow fields Among the lilies tall Of pale Persephone.

THE CLIFF OF LEUCAS Afar-seen cliff Stands in the western sea Toward Cephallenian lands. Apollo's temple crowns Its whitened crest, And at its base The waves eternal beat. Its leap has power To cure the pangs Of unrequited love. Thither pale lovers go With anguished hearts To dare the deep and quench Love's slow consuming flame. Urged to the edge By maddening desire, I, too, shall fling myself Imploring thee, Apollo, lord and king! Into the chill Embraces of the sea, Less cold than thine, O Phaon, I shall fall— Fall with the flutter of a wounded dove; And I shall rise Indifferent forever to love's dream, Or find below The sea's eternal voice, Eternal peace.

EPIGRAMS

THE DUST OF TIMAS This is the dust of Timas! Here inurned Rest the dear ashes where so late had burned Her spirit's flame. She perished, gentle maid, Before her bridal day and now a shade, Silent and sad, she evermore must be In the dark chamber of Persephone. When life had faded with the flower and leaf, Each girl friend sweet, in token of her grief, Resigned her severed locks with bended head, Beauty's fair tribute to the lovely dead.

THE PRIESTESS OF ARTEMIS Maidens, that pass my tomb with laughter sweet, A voice unresting echoes at your feet; Pause, and if any would my story seek, Dumb as I am, these graven words will speak; Once in the vanished years it chanced to please Arista, daughter of Hermocleides, To dedicate my life in virgin bliss To thee, revered of women, Artemis! O Goddess, deign to bless my grandsire's line, For Saon was a temple priest of thine; And grant, O Queen, in thy benefic grace, Unending fame and fortune to his race.

PELAGON Above the lowly grave of Pelagon, Ill-fated fisher lad, Meniscus' son, His father placed as sign of storm and strife The weel and oar, memorial of his life.

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