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A CELEBRATION
OF NATIONAL
POETRY MONTH
April 2021

ODE TO APHRODITE

ποικιλόθρον' ἀθανάτ' Αφρόδιτα,
παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,

πότνια, θῦμον,
ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθ', αἶ ποτα κατέρωτα
τὰς ἕμας αὔδας αἰοῖσα πῆλοι
ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα

χρύσιον ἦλθες
ἄρμ' ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
ῶκεες στρουῖθοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
πύκνα δίννεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνωϊθε-

ρος διὰ μέσσω,
αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
μειδιαίσαις' ἀθανάτω προσώπῳ
ἦρε' ὅττι δηῦτε πέπονθα κῶττι

δηῦτε κάλημι,
κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μαινόλα θυμῷ· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
ἅψ σ' ἄγην ἐς ῥὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ

Ψάπφ', ἀδικήει;
καὶ γὰρ αἶ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει·
αἶ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει·
αἶ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει

κῶτκ ἐθέλοισα.
ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον
ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
θυμός ἱμέρρει, τέλεσον· σὺ δ' αὐτα

σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

Text and translation from *Greek Lyric, Volume 1: Sappho and Alcaeus*, edited and translated by David A. Campbell, pp. 52–55. Loeb Classical Library 142. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Ornate-throned immortal Aphrodite, wile-weaving
daughter of Zeus, I entreat you: do not overpower my
heart, mistress, with ache and anguish,

but come here, if ever in the past you heard my voice
from afar and acquiesced and came, leaving your
father's golden house,

with chariot yoked: beautiful swift sparrows whirring
fast-beating wings brought you above the dark earth
down from heaven through the mid-air,

and soon they arrived; and you, blessed one, with a
smile on your immortal face asked what was the matter
with me this time and why I was calling this time

and what in my maddened heart I most wished to
happen for myself: “Whom am I to persuade this time to
lead you back to her love? Who wrongs you, Sappho?

If she runs away, soon she shall pursue; if she does not
accept gifts, why, she shall give them instead; and if she
does not love, soon she shall love even against her will.”

Come to me now again and deliver me from oppressive
anxieties; fulfil all that my heart longs to fulfil, and you
yourself be my fellow-fighter.

— Sappho
(6th century BCE)

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THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Lugete, o Veneres Cupidinesque,
et quantumst hominum venustiorum.
passer mortuus est meae puellae,
passer, deliciae meae puellae,

quem plus illa oculis suis amabat:
nam mellitus erat suamque norat
ipsam tam bene quam puella matrem;
nec sese a gremio illius movebat,
sed circumsiliens modo huc modo illuc

ad solam dominam usque pipiabat.
qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum
illuc, unde negant redire quemquam.
at vobis male sit, malae tenebrae
Orci, quae omnia bella devoratis:

tam bellum mihi passerem abstulistis.
o factum male! o miselle passer!
tua nunc opera meae puellae
flendo turgiduli rubent ocelli.

From Catullus, Tibullus. *Catullus. Tibullus. Pervigilium Veneris*. Translated by F.W. Cornish, J.P. Postgate, and J.W. Mackail; revised by G.P. Goold, pp. 2–3. Loeb Classical Library 6. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913.

Mourn, ye Graces and Loves,
and all you whom the Graces love.
My lady's sparrow is dead,
the sparrow my lady's pet,

whom she loved more than her very eyes;
for honey-sweet he was,
and knew his mistress as well as a girl
knows her own mother.

Nor would he stir from her lap,
but hopping now here, now there,

would still chirp to his mistress alone.
Now he goes along the dark road,
thither whence they say no one returns.
But curse upon you, cursed shades of
Orcus, which devour all pretty things!

Such a pretty sparrow you have taken away.
Ah, cruel! Ah, poor little bird!
All because of you my lady's darling
eyes are heavy and red with weeping.

— Catullus
(1st century BCE)

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POETRY BLAST!

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HARPER'S SONG FOR INHERKHAWY



*A Song Sung by his Harpist for the Osiris,
Chief of the Crew in the Place of Truth,
Inherkhawy, who says:*

I am this man, this worthy one,
who lives redeemed by abundance of good
tendered by God indeed.

i
All who come into being as flesh
pass on, and have since God walked
the earth;
and young blood mounts to their places.

The busy fluttering souls and bright
transfigured spirits
who people the world below
and those who shine in the stars with Orion,
They built their mansions, they built
their tombs—
and all men rest in the grave.

So set your home well in the sacred land
that your good name last because of it;
Care for your works in the realm
under God

that your seat in the West be splendid.
The waters flow north, the wind
blows south,
and each man goes to his hour.

ii
So, seize the day! Hold holiday!
Be unwearied, unceasing, alive,
you and your own true love;
Let not your heart be troubled during
your sojourn on earth,
but seize the day as it passes!

Put incense and sweet oil upon you,
garlanded flowers at your breast,
While the lady alive in your heart forever
delights, as she sits beside you.

Grieve not your heart, whatever comes;
let sweet music play before you;
Recall not the evil, loathsome to God,
but have joy, joy, joy, and pleasure!

O upright man, man just and true,
patient and kind, content with your lot,
rejoicing, not speaking evil:—
Let your heart be drunk on the gift
of Day
until that day comes when you anchor.

The Harper's Song was inscribed on the south wall of the tomb chamber of Inherkhawy at Deir el Medina, Egypt, around 1150 BCE (20th Dynasty of the New Kingdom).

Translation from *Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology*, by John L. Foster. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001. Image from *Fouilles à Deir el Medineh*, by Bernard Bruyère, plate 23. Fouilles de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Oriental 8. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Oriental, 1930.

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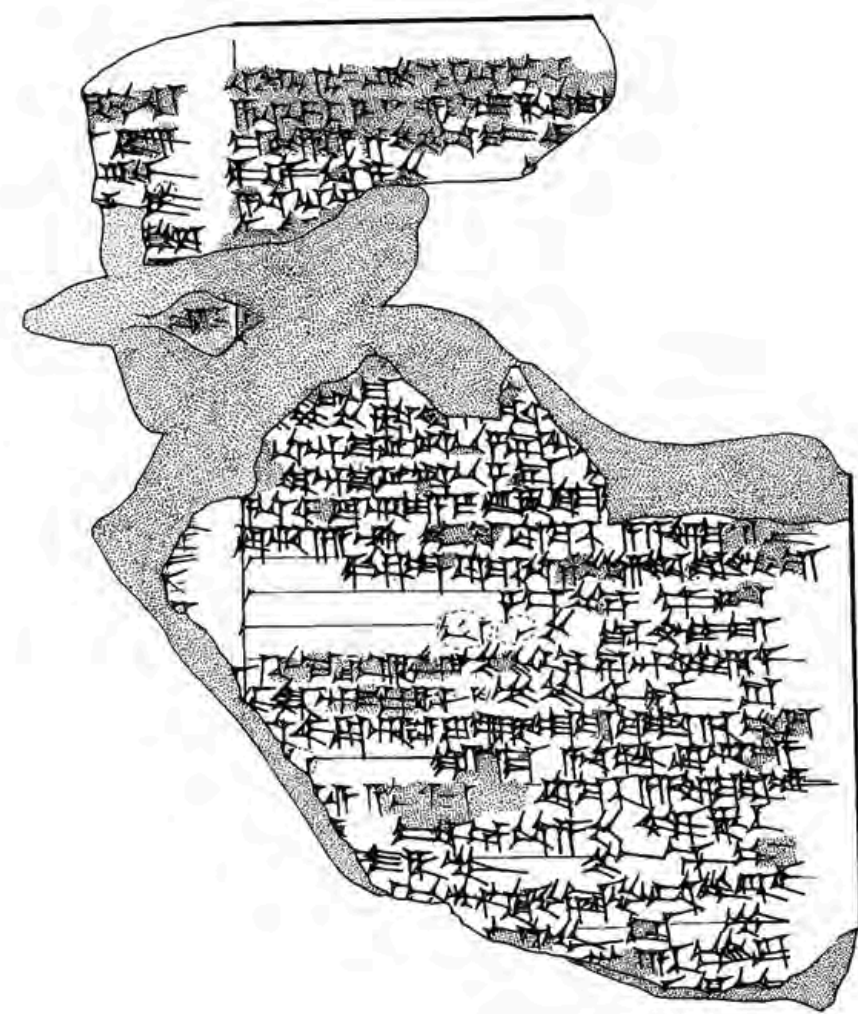


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THE DEATH OF ENKIDU



In this fragment from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (composed ca. 2100–1200 BCE), Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, mourns the death of his companion, Enkidu (tablet 8, lines 45–55).

Translation from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, edited and translated by Benjamin Foster. W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2001. Hand copies by I.L. Finkel and W.G. Lambert in *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, by A.R. George. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Oh for the axe at my side, oh for the safeguard by my hand,
Oh for the sword at my belt, oh for the shield before me,
Oh for my best garment, oh for the raiment that pleased
me most!

An ill wind rose against me and snatched it away!
O my friend, swift wild donkey, mountain onager, panther
of the steppe,
O Enkidu my friend, swift wild donkey, mountain onager,
panther of the steppe!

You stood by me when we climbed the mountain,
Seized and slew the Bull of Heaven,
Felled Humbaba who dwelt in the forest of cedar,
What now is this sleep that has seized you?
Come back to me! You hear me not.

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