Lines of Love, Wine and Song: The Muses at Work

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Anacreon
(563-478BC)

Odd Sandals
(Ed 15)

Today, Eros, of the golden locks used a purple ball to make me play with a child.

A girl, wearing odd sandals.

But she, born in beautiful Lesbos, looks at me, finds fault with my hair - it’s grey, you see!

and turns from me to gawk at some other child,

Another girl.
Prayer to Dionysius
(Ed2)

Please, Dionysius!
Leader of all, whose friends are the omnipotent
Eros and the blue-eyed
Nymphs and the rosy
Aphrodite
and whose compass

is the high peaks of mountains.

Please, be kind enough to come to me and
hear my plea with a smile:

Go, God, and counsel Cleovoulos well and make him
accept my love!
Water and Wine
(Ed75)

I

Boy! Bring water and bring wine
and bring garlands of flowers

that I may do a round or two with Eros

II

Boy! bring here a cup!
and
Boy! mix ten cups of water to five of wine
and
Boy! let me not shut my lips but let me drink
and drink and rage like
a frenzied Bacchus with
impunity.

III

Come, friends! let’s not shout and scream
like Scythian drunks
but
let us study our wine, friends
and
accompany its drinking with beautiful songs
Anonymous
(Ed 6a)

Thinking Mate

I hate a thinking, drinking mate!
That sweet face of Nicorete
much-touched by desire and
much-seen through the shutters of her window high above us

was suddenly ravaged by Those sweet lightning bolts of Cleophon.
His glances, dear Cypris,
as he shot them standing by her gates
Go to the market Dimitri, 
to Amyntos’ stall 
and 
get us three sweet fish -the little, cheap ones- 
and 
ten clams 
and 
twenty four cringing shrimps -let him count them for you himself- 
and 
come directly back.

Oh yeah, 
And 
on your way here get six garlands of roses from Thauvorious 
and 
quickly dash in and invite tender-shaped 
Tryphera
Bacchylides
(c450bc)

(Ed 57)

Happiness

No mortal is happy all the time

(Ed 2)

Ode to Hekate

Hekate!
Carrier of torches,
daughter of black-loined
Night!
(Ed 25)

The Test of Virtue

Whilst gold is tested by the
Lydian stone,
Man’s virtue
and
Wisdom
are tested by
Truth
Hedylus  
c 280bc  

Let Us Drink  
(HE5)  

Let us drink, then  
And  
perhaps we’ll find  
something new  
in our wine -  

some eloquent, honey-coloured word.  

So come!  
Fill me up with jugs of Chian wine and say,  
“Go ahead, Hedylus, play!”  

I hate an empty life -  
empty of wine.
Ibycus
(c 560bc)

No Rest for Love
(Ed1)

The time for the river-watered quinces in the gardens of the chaste virgins and for the blossoms beneath the shady vine shoots to burst is Spring

But as for Me, Eros leaves me no time for resting and,

Bursting with the fires of lightning He rushes from Aphrodite’s isle inside northern gales Crazed,
Scorching,
Cavernous and
Bold
and keeps a guard’s firm hold of my heart.
Ion of Chios
(c490bc)

(Ed 1)

Untamable Child

Untamable child
with the look of a roaring bull.

A youth and yet not a youth.

Beautiful servant of noisy loves
of mind-spinning wine
Melanippides
(c500bc)

(Ed 4)

Wine after Water

So,
All those who had never before tasted wine
fell into hating water

So,
Pretty quickly one lot of them was begging to
Die
whereas the other was stricken by a mania
to shout out words of prophecy
Three-year old Archianax was distracted from his playing by the silent image of his own form in the well. His mother tore the soaked child from the water wondering if he was still alive or which fate had him. But the baby had not sinned against the Nymphs but fell asleep upon his mother’s knees and there he still lies in deep sleep.
Praxilla
(c450bc)

Beware
(Ed 4)

Beware, my friend of the scorpion
beneath every stone

To Adonis
(Ed 1)

The most beautiful thing I miss is the sun’s light
Second, the bright stars
third, the moon’s face

as well as the lovely gourds and apples’ and wild pears
NOTE: The last line (in Greek) is the famous “wrong line.” Scholiasts and translators suggest that it is a silly thing to include gourds (or cucumbers) and pears in the same list of things “one misses most” which includes sunlight, bright stars and the moon’s face.
You Look Great
(Ed 5)

You look great through the fenestrations:
The head of a virgin
The waste of a well married woman.
Sappho

Ode to Aphrodite
(Ed. 1)

Immortal Aphrodite of the splendid throne
Daughter of Zeus, weaver of snares,
Great Woman, grant me this:
Let not my spirit be harnessed by this anguish
and affliction
But come here, by me as you did once before.

On that day,
you’ve heard my distant voice and, nodding,
you left your father’s golden chambers to yoke your
two swift companion birds at your glittering chariot.

They fluttered through the spreading sky and
brought you hurriedly down here,
by me,
upon the black soil

Great woman!
With a smile on your immortal face you had asked me
then
about my sighs, what was it that made me call you yet again?

What was it that my despairing heart wanted you to do this time?

You asked, “Who is it this time, Sappho? Whom do you want me to bring you? Who, Sappho is hurting you now?”
And,
at that time, you offered, “Tell me
Sappho who she is and if she turns from you now,
soon,
by me,
she’ll be turning towards you;
and if she’s not close to you now,
soon,
by me,
she will be -
willingly or not!”

Come to me again now,
Great Woman
and
release me from this great woe;
grant me this, my heart’s greatest desire.
Against all these pains, be my ally.
Abandoned
(Ed 83)

I want to die
honestly
rather than be abandoned
tearfully

Well, I was told all sorts of things
such as,
“Oh, dear, dear Sappho, what awful things we must endure!
Truly,
I’m leaving you against my will.”

To which I replied,
“All right, then, go ahead, abandon me
be happy!
But
remember me because I cared for no one else.

Because if you forget,
I’ll remind you
of the good things we lived through
together.
Remember the many garlands of violets and roses I placed next to you and
the many flower necklaces I weaved around your soft skin
and spread bountiful myrrh
[......]* fit for a queen

and upon the gentle mattress,
[......]* the passion you exuded

and neither the [......]*
nor the singly sacred [......]* did we weave [......]* from which we stayed away.

Note: [..]* Gap in the manuscript source (Lacuna)
And as for Me
(Ed.118a)

And as for me, listen to this, I love luxury: the bright love, the sun and beauty are of one lot.

But I Sleep Alone
(Tr 62)

Midnight!

And like the hour,
The moon and the Pleiades have gone

And I,
I sleep alone.
It Seems to Me

(Ed 2)

It seems to me he’s equal to the gods, the man who sits within the scope of your sweet voice and of your laughter which stirs the heart within my breast

Seeing you like this, even for a second, stops my sighs within.

Yet my tongue freezes and beneath my skin a fire rages and... my eyes are empty but my ears are full.
A torrent of sweat
and
a wild tremor
overwhelm me
and,

I’ve turned the colour of drying grass
just before death.
Mountain wind
(Ed 42b)

Just as the wind in the mountains blows the oaks assunder, so did Eros blow my mind.
To Her Lyre
(Ed 80)

Come to me my Lyre,
Sing loudly
Divinely!
On Eros
(Ed 40-41B)

a)

Again Eros, the
sweet and
bitter God who unfastens the limbs

Again he
shakes me like a snake,
onnipotent.

b)

And you, Atthi, you’ve learnt to
hate me and ran off
to Andromeda
The Stars around The Moon
(Ed 3)

And again when
the moon
casts her brilliance all over earth
The stars
soften the blaze of their
beauty
I

You’re
Just like the sweet apple reddening at the highest branch
and missed by the apple pickers -
No,
They did not miss you!
They just couldn’t reach so high.

II

And,

You’re just like the mountain Hyacinth,
trodden by the shepherds
next to the purple blossoms
Stesichorus  
(c480bc)  

(Ed 15)  
Quinces and chariots

So they overflowed the king’s chariot with quinces and with leaves of myrtle and with garlands of roses and with well-wound wreaths of violets -

more of them than ever!
Timotheus  
(c400bc)  
(Ed 12)  
Ambrosia

Then, he topped a cup made of ivy wood with the dark drops of ambrosia -froth raising- which he then poured into twenty measures of Bacchus’ Blood.

A brew of tears freshly drawn from the eyes of Nymphs
(Ed 22)
I’m coming!

I’m coming!
Why are you shouting at me?
I won’t sing the old songs any more
because
my new ones are far better.
The new king is
Zeus
and the old one is
Kronos.
His rule is over long ago

and so,
Let me abandon the old
Muse

Leader of men