

ODE TO APHRODITE:
A Translation of Sappho Fragment 1

By Shen Zhou Hong St. John's College

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Sappho Fragment 1 “Ode to Aphrodite”

Original Aeolic Greek

ποικιλόθρον' ἄθανάτ' Ἀφρόδιτα,
παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
πότνια, θῦμον,

ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθ', αἶ ποτα κατέρωτα
τὰς ἑμας αὖδας αἰοῖσα πῆλοι
ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα
χρῦσιον ἦλθες

ἄρμ' ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
ώκεες στρουῦθοι περὶ γὰς μελαίνας
πύκνα δίννεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνωϊθε-
ρος διὰ μέσσω·

αἶψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
μειδιάσας' ἄθανάτῳ προσώπων
ἦρε' ὅττι δηῦτε πέπονθα κῶττι
δηῦτε κάλημι

κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μαινόλαι θύμῳ· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
μαῖσ' ἄγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ
Ψάπφ', ἀδικήει;

καὶ γὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει,
αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
κῶν ἐθέλοισα.

ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον
ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον, σὺ δ' αὐτὰ
σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

English Translation

Immortal Aphrodite, on the dazzling throne,
Daughter of Zeus, Oh clever seductress, I pray to you!
Please don't overwhelm me, with such grief and heartbreak,
Please, my Queen — don't overwhelm my heart.

But instead, come to me,
If ever my cries you've heard,
on the other side from afar,
leaving your father's golden home, to me.

With your chariot under arm, escorted with
lovely swift sparrows, circling,
down to the dark-soiled earth,
from the stratosphere of mid-air.

Suddenly they arrive, with you, oh blessed one.
A smile upon your immortal face,
to ask me once again, who it was that
broke my heart.

“What is such desperate longing in your heart?
Who is it, that I must bewitch,
in order to bring her back to your love?
Oh Sappho, who is it, that spurns?”

“If she flees your advances, soon she shall pursue
Should she reject your gifts, soon she shall give them, in turn,
And if she loves you not, soon she will love
Even unwillingly.”

Oh come to me now, Goddess. Unbind me
from such anxious thoughts, and accomplish all things that
my heart so desperately longs for, to fulfill.
That you yourself can fight alongside me, in this war.