

Sappho's Helen

1. Sappho 16.1-20 (Voigt)

οἱ μὲν ἰππῆων στρότον, οἱ δὲ πέσδων,  
οἱ δὲ νάων φαῖς' ἐπι[ι] γᾶν μέλαι[ν]αν  
ἔ]μμεναι κάλλιστον, ἐγὼ δὲ κῆν' ὄτ-  
τω τις ἔραται·

πά]γχν δ' εὐμαρες σύνετον πόησαι  
π]άντι τ[ο]ῦτ'· ἂ γὰρ πολὺ περσκέθοισα  
κάλλος [ἀνθ]ρώπων Ἑλένα [τὸ]ν ἄνδρα  
τὸν [ ἄρ]ιστον

καλλ[ί]ποι]σ' ἔβα ἴς Τροίαν πλέοι]σα  
κωὺδ[ἐ πα]ῖδος οὐδὲ φίλων το[κ]ήων  
πά[μ]παν] ἐμνάσθ < η >, ἀλλὰ παράγαγ' αὐταν  
]σαν

]αμπτον γὰρ [  
]...κούφωστ[ ]ση . [.]ν  
]με νῦν Ἀνακτορί[ας ὀ]νέμναι-  
σ' οὐ] παρεοίσας·

τᾶ]ς κ < ε > βολλοίμαν ἔρατόν τε βᾶμα  
κάμάρυχμα λάμπρον ἴδην προσώπω  
ἦ τὰ Λύδων ἄρματα κὰν ὄπλοισι  
πεσδομ]άχεντας.

Some say a host of cavalry, some say a host of foot soldiers,  
and some say a fleet of ships is the most beautiful thing  
upon the black earth, but I say it is that thing, whatever it is,  
that someone loves;

And it is entirely easy to make this  
clear to everyone, for she who was surpassing people  
by far with respect to her beauty, Helen,  
[having left behind] an excellent husband,

Having left behind [an excellent husband] she went  
sailing to Troy, entirely without thinking  
of either her child or her beloved parents, but  
[...] led her aside...

for  
lightly  
now she reminds me of Anaktoria  
not present

I would rather see her lovely walk  
and the shining gleam of her face  
than the Lydian chariots and the armed foot  
soldiers.

2. *Iliad* 3.413-7

τὴν δὲ χολωσαμένη προσεφώνεε δι' Ἀφροδίτη:  
‘μή μ' ἔρεθε σχετλίη, μὴ χωσαμένη σε μεθείω,  
τὼς δέ σ' ἀπεχθήρω ὡς νῦν ἔκπαγλ' ἐφίλησα,  
μέσσω δ' ἀμφοτέρων μητίσομαι ἔχθεα λυγρὰ  
Τρώων καὶ Δαναῶν, σὺ δέ κεν κακὸν οἶτον ὄληαι.

But growing angry the goddess Aphrodite spoke to her:  
“Don't provoke me, bold woman, lest growing angry I let  
you go, and hate you just as terribly as I have loved you,  
and I will devise miserable hatred on both sides, from the  
Trojans and the Danaans, and you would meet a bad fate.”

3. *Odyssey* 4.261-4

... ἄτην δὲ μετέστενον, ἦν Ἀφροδίτη  
δῶχ', ὅτε μ' ἤγαγε κείσε φίλης ἀπὸ πατρίδος αἴης,  
παῖδά τ' ἐμὴν νοσφισσαμένην θάλαμόν τε πόσιν τε  
οὐ τευ δευόμενον, οὐτ' ἄρ φρένας οὔτε τι εἶδος.

“I lamented the madness that Aphrodite  
granted, when she led me there from my dear fatherland,  
turning away from my own daughter, my bedchamber, and  
my husband,  
who lacked nothing, either of sense or of form.”

#### 4. Sappho 1 (Voigt)

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

ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθ', αἶ ποτα κατέρωτα  
τάς ἔμας αὔδας αἰοῖσα πῆλοι  
ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα  
χρῦσιον ἦλθες

ἄρμ' ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον  
ῶκεες στρουῦθοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας  
πύκνα δίννεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνω αἴθε-  
ρος διὰ μέσσω·

αἴψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,  
μειδιαίσαισ' ἀθανάτῳ προσώπῳ  
ἦρε' ὅττι δηῦτε πέπονθα κῶττι  
δηῦτε κάλημμι

κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι  
μαινόλαι θύμῳ· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω  
]σᾶγην ἐς σὴν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ  
Ψά]πφ', ἀδικήει;

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

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

Richly-throned deathless Aphrodite,  
wile-weaving child of Zeus, I beseech you,  
don't overpower my heart with distress or grief,  
my queen,

But come here, if ever before, hearing  
my voice from afar you listened, and leaving  
the golden house of your father  
you came,

Having yoked your chariot; and lovely,  
swift sparrows brought you over the black earth,  
quickly whirring their wings down from heaven  
through the ether;

Suddenly they arrived; but you, blessed lady,  
smiling with deathless face, asked  
what now I suffered, and for what I  
called out,

And what I wish to happen in my frenzied  
heart: "Whom should I persuade this time  
to lead into your love? Who wrongs you,  
Sappho?"

For if she flees, soon she will pursue; and if she  
does not now receive gifts, she will give them instead;  
and if she does not love, soon she will love,  
even being unwilling."

Come also to me now, and release me from difficult  
cares, and as many as my soul longs to be accomplished,  
fulfill them; you yourself,  
by my ally.

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