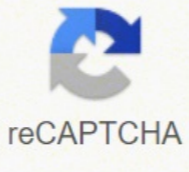




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## Hymn to aphrodite by sappho poetry foundation

Any literary work is a reflection of what is happening in the society. Authors normally voice their opinion about issues affecting the society through various themes. The poem, Hymn to Aphrodite, by Sappho is skilfully written and addresses various issues in the society. The poem explores relevant themes, which makes it appealing to readers on the themes of love, war, and the supernatural power. These themes are closely linked together through analysis of Martin Litchfield West’s translation. Thus, this reflective treatise analyses the poem composed by Sappho on the significance of the era of composition and the bigger picture intended by the poet. Critical analysis The poem, Hymn to Aphrodite, refers to a piece drafted by Sappho. The poem was composed several centuries back. The era of composition can be dated back to the period between the seventh century BCE and the sixth century CE (West, 2008). The poem was one of the premium poems by Sappho, who was one of the greatest renowned poets in the ancient Greek civilization. The poem exposes the themes of love, life, and religion. The main theme is appeal for mercy in order to avoid love rejection. Love is an obsession in the life of this society. Ironically, Sappho paints the affluent goddess as a merciful lady with a big physique to withstand the realities of the love arrows. He asserts, “For though she flee, soon she’ll be chasing; though she refuse gifts, she’ll be giving” (West, 2008, stanza 5). This appeal forms the foundation of moral belief as a solution to the plague of love (Hunh & Kiefer, 2005). Severally, the poem points at the society as a vacillating unit, that appears confused as the social disparities widen. Besides, Sappho is a distrustful and bitter loner who has astringing hatred towards the effects of the love desire (Harding & Doumerc, 2007). To affirm the bad feeling, his poetry adopts a sombre mood in displaying loyalty to the goddess as the best revenge against abnormal circumstances that knock indiscriminately in the direction of anyone seeking romance (Obsidian Dream, 2014). This poem described how love strikes when least expected. In the third stanza, Sappho expressed how he would be devoted to the goddess in dedicating indefinite quantity of time to beg for revival since the high and mighty in the society has no control. He asserts, “scheming daughter of Zeus, I pray you, with pain and sickness, Queen, crush not my heart, but come, if ever in the past you” (West, 2008, stanza 2). Apparently, Sappho would use much time to esteem every organ of his body towards romantic endeavours. The goddess’ denial to conform to Sappho’s request would daunt him and even kill his manhood. Sappho recalls how short a person’s life is in the second verse. The poet asserts, “Soon they were here, and you, Blessed Goddess...asked why I’d called, what was the matter now” (West, 2008, stanza 4). Reflectively, once life has gone, the chance to make pleasure with one another is also gone since nobody can enjoy life in grave. Love is presented as a natural thing, and despite the fact that it is suppose to be an ecstatic affair, it might be more hurting if the other party is not reciprocating the feelings (Wagner, 2003). Irrespective of social class, religious inclination, size of accumulated wealth, epoch inclination, and beauty, love kisses people equality every time it knocks on the door of its prey, as indicated in Sappho’s poem. Sappho urges the goddess to accept his request, explaining that such passionate affection would enable them to use the most of time they have to exist in the world. The poet laments, “what was my heart insanely craving; “Who is it this time I must cozen to love you, Sappho? Who’s unfair to you?” (West, 2008, stanza 3). Actually, Sappho intends to turn over features of time in order to have command over his love life with the goddess. Theme of religion also presents itself in the poem. In fact, if love is a marvellous nasty task to Sappho, then religion is but a fantastic power that he wants to dominate over his adversary. During the era when this poem was created, religious ideas were rarely discussed in public within the great Roman society (Oxford University, 2010). However, with intelligence and braveness, Sappho talks about religion in an open, attractive, and agitating language, without having to adopt a hardliner position (Sappho, 2011). Using a colourful language, the poet adopts the best praise words to refer to the goddess, who has struck his heart with her beauty. Sappho states, “Rich-throned immortal Aphrodite, chariot yoked; and pretty sparrows, brought you swiftly across the dark earth” (West, 2008, stanza 5). Conclusion The poet was a humorous narrator who built an interesting and amusing poem delving on the thin line between love and power. The unique language used in this poem is difficult to understand and interpret. The traditional Greek language makes this poem difficult to understand. Within the complex language, the author uses satire, metaphor, and imagery to add taste to a rather sombre topic. However, the translation by West gives the poem a flow. References Harding, W., & Doumerc, E. (2007). An introduction to poetry in English. Oxford, UK: Presses Miraail. Hunh, P., & Kiefer, J. (2005). The narratological analysis of lyric poetry: studies in English poetry from the 16th to the 20th Century. New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter. Obsidian Dream. (2014). Sappho poetry. Web. Oxford University. (2010). Greek Poetry: Elegiac and Lyric: Oxford Bibliographies Online Research Guide. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Sappho. (2011). Poems of Sappho. Web. Wagner, P. (2003). Poetry Analysis: Poetry analysis 2. London, UK: Learning Essentials. West, M.L. (2008). Greek Lyric poetry: The poems and fragments of the Greek iambic, Elegiac, and Melic poets (excluding Pindar and Bacchylides) down to 450 BC. Oxford, UK: OUP Oxford. This celebration of the indescribably brilliant and sublime poetry by ancient Greek poetess, Sappho (born around 620 BCE in Lesbos, Greece) was originally published in BookRiot. Contributed by Nancy Snyder; reprinted by permission. The poems by Sappho presented following the introduction were all translated from the Greek. “Although only breath, words which I command are immortal,” wrote Sappho around 510 BC. And how glad we are that we have Sappho’s words all these centuries later. Sappho’s lyric poetry, poetry meant to be accompanied by a lyre and sung, entices us to discover Eros and Aphrodite (the god and goddess of romantic love) and all the earthly delights that accompanies such natural pursuits. Sappho’s poetry was a detour from the impersonal, heroic epic singing of wars and battle that played very well in Athens. Sappho extolled the virtues of love, of the primacy of emotion and the subjective experience. The demonization of Sappho Sappho’s verse came to be viewed as a significant milestone in the evolution of poetry - there was just one problem. Sappho repeatedly became the vicious target of the Church and literary critics and historians who were literally out to crush Sappho’s very being. Because it was deemed impossible, unheard of, that Sappho (or any woman) would write such exquisite words to another woman, exalting their beauty and becoming tongue-tied in their presence, Sappho was morphed into a “licentious whore” and her work was publicly burned by Pope Gregory in 1073. Translators and scholars felt free to rearrange a few words to appear that Sappho was singing to a man - to spare potential readers any possible gender confusion about the proper focus for a young woman or man. In brief, Sappho’s life was appropriated to fit the strictures of moralists. The demonization of Sappho became so entrenched that her home, the island of Lesbos, morphed into the word Lesbian. This homosexual woman was at best, promiscuous; at worse, Lesbian was a clear and present danger to society. . . . . Scant details of Sappho’s life There are just a handful of details regarding the facts of Sappho’s life. It has been established that Sappho was born around 615 BC to an aristocratic family on the Greek island of Lesbos during a period of a great artistic rebirth on the island. Sappho had several brothers, married a wealthy man named Cercylas and had a daughter, Cleis. Sappho spent nearly all of her life on Lesbos in the city of Mytilene and died around 550 BC. However, given the unabashed delight Sappho found in the company and beauty of women, Sappho created a world of dominant feminine sensuality that was unimpressed with wars and all of the brutal pursuits of men. Sappho’s subject matter was the feminine world; to deny and disrespect Sappho’s choices is to deny Sappho her humanity and to lessen her work. We will not allow that to happen: let’s celebrate Sappho every month, not just in June during PRIDE, because Sappho brings us an abundance of joy and the moralists who would censor our dear Sappho, are immoral. Contributed by Nancy Snyder, who writes about women writers and labor women. After working for the City and County of San Francisco for thirty years, she is now learning everything about Henry David Thoreau in Los Angeles. Poems included in this post: Ode to Aphrodite 24 Sapphic Fragments Midnight Poem (fragment 48) Epithalamium, [Happy Bridegroom] Like the Very Gods The Anactoria Poem Charaxos and Larichos . . . . . More about Sappho’s poetry . . . . . Ode to Aphrodite Immortal Aphrodite, on your intricately brocaded throne, child of Zeus, weaver of wives, this I pray: Dear Lady, don’t crush my heart with pains and sorrows. Rapidly they came. And you, O Blessed Goddess, a smile on your immortal face, asked what had happened this time, why did I call again, and what did I especially desire for myself in my frenzied heart: “Who this time as I to persuade to your love? Sappho, who is doing you wrong? For even if she flees, soon she shall pursue. And if she refuses gifts, soon she shall give them. If she doesn’t love you, soon she shall love even if she’s unwilling.” Come to me now once again and release me from grueling anxiety. All that my heart longs for, fulfill. And be yourself my ally in love’s battle. Some say an army of horsemen, some of foot soldiers, some of ships, is the fairest thing on the black earth, but I say it is what you . . . . . prefer to see the lovely way she walks and the radiant glance of her face than the war-chariots of the Lydians or their foot soldiers in arms. That man to me seems equal to the gods, the man who sits opposite you and close by listens to your sweet voice and your enticing laughter—that indeed has stirred up the heart in my breath. For whenever I look at you even briefly I can no longer say a single thing, but my tongue is frozen in silence; instantly a delicate flame runs beneath my skin; with my eyes I see nothing; my ears make a whirring noise. A cold sweat covers me, trembling seizes my body, and I am greener than grass. Lacking but little of death do I seem. . . . . 24 Sapphic Fragments 1 Come now, luxuriant Graces, and beautiful-haired Muses. 2 I tell you someone will remember us in the future. 3 Now, I shall sing these songs Beautifully for my companions. 4 The moon shone full And when the maidens stood around the altar... 5 “He is dying, Aphrodite; luxuriant Adonis is dying. What should we do?” “Beat your breasts, young maidens. And tear your garments in grief.” 6 O, weep for Adonis! 7 But come, dear companions, For day is near. 8 The moon is set. And the Pleiades. It’s the middle of the night. Time [hōrā] passes. But I sleep alone. 9 I love the sensual. For me this and love for the sun has a share in brilliance and beauty 10 I desire And I crave. 11 You set me on fire. 12 A servant of wile-weaving Aphrodite... 13 Eros Giver of pain... 14 Eros Coming from heaven throwing off his purple cloak. 15 Again love, the limb-loosener, rattles me bittersweet, irresistible, a crawling beast. 16 As a wind in the mountains assaults an oak, Love shook my breast. 17 I loved you, Atthis, long ago even when you seemed to me a small graceless child. 18 But you hate the very thought of me, Atthis, And you flutter after Andromeda. 19 Honestly, I wish I were dead. Weeping many tears, she left me and said, “Alas, how terribly we suffer, Sappho. I really leave you against my will.” And I answered: “Farewell, go and remember me. You know how we cared for you. If not, I would remind you ...of our wonderful times. For by my side you put on many wreaths of roses and garlands of flowers around your soft neck. And with precious and royal perfume you anointed yourself. On soft beds you satisfied your passion. And there was no dance, no holy place from which we were absent.” 20 They say that Leda once found an egg— like a hyacinth. “Virginity, virginity Where will you go when you’ve left me?” “I’ll never come back to you , bride. I’ll never come back to you.” 22 Sweet mother, I can’t do my weaving— Aphrodite has crushed me with desire for a tender youth. 23 Like a sweet-apple turning red high on the tip of the topmost branch. Forgotten by pickers. Not forgotten— they couldn’t reach it. 24 Like a hyacinth in the mountains that shepherds crush underfoot. (Translated by Julie Dubnof) . . . . . Moonlight Poem (Fragment 48) The moon has set, and the Pleiades; it is midnight, the time is going by and I recline alone. The sinking moon has left the sky. The Pleiades have also gone. Midnight comes-and goes, the hours fly And solitary still, I lie. The Moon has left the sky, Lost is the Pleiads’ light; It is midnight, And time slips by, But on my couch alone I lie. (Translated by J. A. Symonds, 1883) . . . . . Epithalamium, [Happy Bridegroom] Happy bridegroom, Hesper brings All desired and timely things. All whom morning sends to roam, Hesper loves to lead them home. Home return who him behold, Child to mother, sheep to fold, Bird to nest from wandering wide: Happy bridegroom, seek your bride. (Translation by A. E. Housman, 1922) . . . . . Like the very gods Like the very gods in my sight is he who sits where he can look in your eyes, who listens close to you, to hear the soft voice, its sweetness murmur in love and laughter, all for him. But it breaks my spirit; underneath my breast all the heart is shaken. Let me only glance where you are, the voice dies, I can say nothing, but my lips are stricken to silence, under- neath my skin the tenuous flame suffuses; nothing shows in front of my eyes, my ears are muted in thunder. And the sweat breaks running upon me, fever Shakes my body, paler I turn than grass is; I can feel that I have been changed, I feel that death has come near me. (From Greek Lyrics, edited by Richmond Lattimore, The University of Chicago, 1949, 1960) . . . . . The Anactoria Poem Some there are who say that the fairest thing seen on the black earth is an array of horsemen; some, men marching; some would say ships; but I say she whom one loves best is the loveliest. Light were the work to make this plain to all, since she, who surpassed in beauty all mortality, Helen, once forsaking her lordly husband, fled away to Troy—land across the water. Not the thought of child nor beloved parents was remembered, after the Queen of Cyprus won her at first sight. Since young brides have hearts that can be persuaded easily, light things palpitant to passion as am I, remembering Anaktória who has gone from me and whose lovely walk and the shining pallor of her face I would rather see before my eyes than Lydia’s chariots in all their glory armored for battle. (From Greek Lyrics, edited by Richmond Lattimore, The University of Chicago, 1949, 1960) . . . . . Charaxos and Larichos Say what you like about Charaxos, that’s a fellow with a fat-bellied ship always in some port or other. What does Zeus care, or the rest of his gang? Now you’d like me on my knees, crying out to Hera, “Blah, blah, blah, bring him home safe and free of warts,” or blubbering, “Wah, wah, wah, thank you, thank you, for curing my liver condition.” Good grief, gods do what they like. They call down hurricanes with a whisper or send off a tsunami the way you would a love letter. If they have a whim, they make some henchmen fix it up, like those idiots in the Iliad. A puff of smoke, a little fog, away goes the hero, it’s happily ever after. As for Larichos, that lay-a-bed lives for the pillow. If for once he’d get off his ass, he might make something of himself. Then from that reeking sewer of my life I might haul up a bucket of spring water. (Translated by William Logan, Poetry – July/August 2016) facebook twitter instagram pinterest rss youtube



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