

SAPPHO AND ERŌS¹

(fr. 159) λέγει που καὶ Σαπφοῖ ἡ Ἀφροδίτη ἐν ἄσματι·
... σύ τε κᾶμος θεράπων Ἔρος

Aphrodite says to Sappho, at one point in one of her poems:
...you and my attendant/sidekick Eros

(fr. 47) Ἔρος δ' ἐτίναξέ μοι
φρένας, ὡς ἄνεμος κατ' ὄρος δρύσιν ἐμπέτων

And Eros shook my
Mind, like a wind that comes down the mountain & falls on the oaks

(fr. 51) οὐκ οἶδ' ὅττι θέω· δύο μοι τὰ νοήματα

I don't know what to figure: I have two thoughts

(fr. 130) Ἔρος δηῦτε μ' ὁ λυσιμέλης δόνει,
γλυκύπικρον ἀμάχανον ὄρπετον

Limb-loosening Eros is shaking me again
Sweet-bitter, unmanageable, creeping-thing

¹ The standard form is Erōs, but in Sappho's Aeolic dialect of Greek, omicron takes the place of omega: Eros.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

(fr. 168b) δέδυκε μὲν ἄ σελάννα
καὶ Πληΐαδες· μέσαι δὲ
νύκτες, παρὰ δ' ἔρχετ' ὥρα,
ἔγω δὲ μόνα κατεύδω.

The moon has set,
And the Pleiades. It's middle
Night, the time goes by,
And I sleep alone.

(fr. 105) οἶον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ' ὕσδῳ
ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ, λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπης·
οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπίκεσθαι.

As the sweet-apple reddens at the end of a branch
All the way up on the highest one, and the apple-pickers have forgotten it—
No, they haven't forgotten: they couldn't reach it.

(fr. 115) τίω σ', ὦ φίλε γάμβρε, καλῶς εἰκάσδω;
ὄρπακι βραδίνῳ σε μάλιστ' εἰκάσδω.

To what, dear bridegroom, may I well liken you?
I liken you most to a slender sapling.

This epitaph was falsely attributed to Sappho: (What, if anything, is "Sapphic" about it?)

Τίμαδος ἄδε κόνις, τὰν δὴ πρὸ γάμοιο θανοῦσαν
δέξατο Φερσεφόνας κυάνεος θάλαμος·
ἄς καὶ ἀποφθιμένας πᾶσαι νεοθαῖγι σιδάρῳ
ἄλικες ἰμερτὰν κρατὸς ἔθεντο κόμαν.

This is the dust of Timas, who died before marriage,
And the gloomy bedroom of Persephone took her in.
And when she died, all the girls her age cut short
With newly-sharpened iron the lovely hair from their heads.

WHOEVER IS IN YOUR PRESENCE

(fr. 31) He seems to me equal to the gods,
The one who, across from you,
Sits and catches your sweet close words when you speak

And the lovely sound of your laugh, which really
Made *my* heart jump in my breast—
When I see you for a second, I can't speak at all—

My tongue is stuck, a tiny racing fire
Suddenly is under my skin,
And no seeing's in my eyes, and my ears buzz,

And a sweat pours over me, and a tremble
Grabs me all over, and I'm greener than grass,
And little short of being dead do I seem to me.

But all can be endured, since... even a poor man...

(the poem breaks off—the rest is lost)