

Muse Erato

Muse of Love Poetry and Mimicry

Erato is the Muse of lyric poetry, particularly love and erotic poetry, and mimicry. Her name means "Lovely" and she is usually depicted with a lyre. She is so named because she turns those who follow her into men who are desired and worthy to be loved. She is particularly fond of the poets of love.

Muse Erato is known as something of an idealist, frequently looking for the bright side or positive aspect of any given situation. Something of a romantic, Erato can often be found reading or writing romantic poetry and stories. She is eager to try new things and loves meeting and talking with new people. She enjoys the people of Kymer immensely and is particularly impressed with their humor, generosity and warmth. It is her aspiration to provide inspiration and guidance to the residents of Kymer as they explore the various aspects of the arts as they pertain to their individuality and the community. It is her desire that all community members recognize their potential as story tellers, poets and historians.

SAPPHO

One of the great Greek lyricists and few known female poets of the ancient world, Sappho was born some time between 630 and 612 BC. She was an aristocrat who married a prosperous merchant, and she had a daughter named Cleis. Her wealth afforded her with the opportunity to live her life as she chose, and she chose to spend it studying the arts on the isle of Lesbos.

Sappho was called a *lyrist* because, as was the custom of the time, she wrote her poems to be performed with the accompaniment of a lyre. Sappho composed her own music and refined the prevailing lyric meter to a point that it is now known as *sapphic meter*. She innovated lyric poetry both in technique and style, becoming part of a new wave of Greek lyricists who moved from writing poetry from the point of view of gods and muses to the personal vantage point of the individual. She was one of the first poets to write from the first person, describing love and loss as it affected her personally.

Her style was sensual and melodic; primarily songs of love, yearning, and reflection.

Most commonly the target of her affections was female, often one of the many women sent to her for education in the arts. She nurtured these women, wrote poems of love and adoration to them, and when they eventually left the island to be married, she composed their wedding songs. That Sappho's poetry was not condemned in her time for its homoerotic content (though it was disparaged by scholars in later centuries) suggests that perhaps love between women was not persecuted then as it has been in more recent times. Especially in the last century, Sappho has become so synonymous with woman-love that two of the most popular words to describe female homosexuality--*lesbian* and *sapphic* have derived from her.

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I

Peer of the gods, the happiest man I seem
Sitting before thee, rapt at thy sight, hearing
Thy soft laughter and thy voice most gentle,
 Speaking so sweetly.

II

Then in my bosom my heart wildly flutters,
And, when on thee I gaze never so little,
Bereft am I of all power of utterance,
 My tongue is useless.

III

There rushes at once through my flesh tingling fire,
My eyes are deprived of all power of vision,
My ears hear nothing but sounds of winds roaring,
 And all is blackness.

IV

Down courses in streams the sweat of emotion,
A dread trembling overwhelms me, paler than I
Than dried grass in autumn, and in my madness
 Dead I seem almost.

CONSTANTINE CAVAFY



In Alexandria, Egypt, on the southeastern periphery of the Greek diaspora where he lived most of his seventy years (1863-1933), Constantine P. Cavafy wrote the poetry that was to earn him international recognition as one of the most important poets of the twentieth century.

Cavafy is reported to have called himself, late in life, a “poet of old age”, comparing himself with Anatole France who “wrote his colossal work after the age of forty-five”. Indeed, it was after he reached his fortieth year, following a poetic crisis which led to what he termed a ‘philosophical scrutiny’ of his earlier poetic production (1903-04), that Cavafy discovered his own poetic voice—that “unique tone of voice” as W.H. Auden has called it that “survives translation”.

Cavafy was keenly aware that his poetry was ahead of its time, especially within the sphere of modern Greek letters. The poem ‘For the Shop’, published in 1913, speaks of this awareness: a craftsman of exquisite jewels, “beautiful according to his taste, to his desire, his vision”, will “leave them in the safe, examples of his bold, his skilful work”. The “safe” would in fact remain closed for several years, for although Cavafy’s work had been presented to the Athenian public in 1903 by the writer Grigorios Xenopoulos, it was either ignored or ridiculed by the literati of the metropolis until around 1918, when it began to gain wider acceptance—although the voices of detractors were still audible. The reasons for the negative criticism were diverse: Cavafy’s language, a subtle mixture of demotic and purist Greek not in keeping with the directives of the ‘demoticist’ movement; his style, considered prosaic; his lack of idealism; his bold eroticism. It is therefore not surprising that in an interview reportedly given three years before his death (1930) Cavafy described himself as “an ultra modern poet, a poet of future generations” whose poetry “will not simply be closed within libraries as part of the historical record of the development of modern Greek literature”.

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Cavafy's prediction was fulfilled. Not only is his work read more in Greece now than it was during his lifetime, but it has traveled well beyond the confines of the modern

DANGEROUS THOUGHTS

Said Myrtias (a Syrian student
in Alexandria during the reign
of the Emperor Konstans and the Emperor Konstantios;
in part a heathen, in part chistianized):
“Strengthened by study and reflection.
I won't fear my passions like a coward;
I'll give my body to sensual pleasures,
to enjoyments I've dreamed of,
to the most audacious erotic desires,
to the lascivious impulses of my blood,
with no fear at all, because when I wish—
and I'll have the will-power, strengthened
as I shall be by study and reflection—
when I wish, at critical moments I will recover
my spirit, ascetic as it was before.”

DAYS OF 1903

I never found them again -- the things so quickly lost...
the poetic eyes, the pale
face.... in the dusk of the street....

I never found them again -- the things acquired quite by chance,
that I gave up so lightly;
and that later in agony I wanted.
The poetic eyes, the pale face,
those lips, I never found again.

I`VE LOOKED SO MUCH...

I've looked on beauty so much
that my vision overflows with it.

The body's lines. Red lips. Sensual limbs.
Hair as though stolen from Greek statues,
always lovely, even uncombed,
and falling slightly over pale foreheads.
Figures of love, as my poetry desired them
...in the nights when I was young,
encountered secretly in those nights.

HE ASKED ABOUT THE QUALITY

He left the office where he'd been given
a trivial, poorly paid job
(something like eight pounds a month, including bonuses)-
left at the end of the dreary work
that kept him bent all afternoon,
came out at seven and walked off slowly,
idling his way down the street. Good-looking,
and interesting: showing as he did that he'd reached
his full sensual capacity.

He'd turned twenty-nine the month before.

He idled his way down the main street
and the poor side-streets that led to his home.

Passing in front of a small shop that sold
cheap and flimsy merchandise for workers,
he saw a face inside, a figure
that compelled him to go in, and he pretended
he wanted to look at some coloured handkerchiefs.

He asked about the quality of the handkerchiefs
and how much they cost, his voice choking,
almost silenced by desire.

And the answers came back in the same mood,
distracted, the voice hushed,
offering hidden consent.

They kept on talking about the merchandise-
but the only purpose: that their hands might touch
over the handkerchiefs, that their faces, their lips,
might move close together as though by chance-
a moment's meeting of limb against limb.

Quickly, secretly, so the shop owner sitting at the back
wouldn't realize what was going on.

ODYSSEUS ELYTIS



Descendant of an old family of Lesbos, he was born in Heraclion (Candia) on the island of Crete, November 2, 1911. Some time later his family settled permanently in Athens where the poet finished his secondary school studies and later visited the Law School of the [Athens University](#). His first appearance as a poet in 1935 through the magazine "Nea Grammata" ("New Culture") was saluted as an important event and the new style he introduced - though giving rise to a great many reactions - succeeded in prevailing and effectively contributing to the poetical reform commencing in the Second World War's eve and going on up to our days.

Elytis' poetry has marked, through an active presence of over forty years, a broad spectrum. Unlike others, he did not turn back to Ancient Greece or Byzantium but devoted himself exclusively to today's Hellenism, of which he attempted - in a certain way based on psychical and sentimental aspects - to build up the mythology and the institutions. His main endeavour has been to rid his people's conscience from remorse unjustifiable, to complement natural elements through ethical powers, to achieve the highest possible transparency in expression and to finally succeed in approaching the mystery of light, "the metaphysic of the sun" - according to his own definition. A parallel way concerning technique resulted in introducing the "inner architecture", which is clearly perceptible in a great many works of his; mainly in the *Axion Esti - It Is Worthy*. This work - thanks to its setting to music by Mikis Theodorakis - was to be widely spread among all Greeks and grew to be a kind of the people's new gospel. Elytis' theoretical ideas have been expressed in a series of essays under the title *(Offering) My Cards To Sight*. Besides he applied himself to translating poetry and theatre as well as creating a series of *collage* pictures. Translations of his poetry have been published as autonomous books, in anthologies or in periodicals in eleven languages.

The Monogram

I.

Fate will turn elsewhere the lines
Of the palm, like a switchman
Time will consent for a moment

How otherwise, since men love each other

The sky will act out our innards
And innocence will strike the world
With the sharpness of the black of death.

II.

I mourn the sun and I mourn the years that come
Without us and I sing the others that have passed
If that is true

The bodies spoken to and the boats strumming sweetly
The guitars flickering underwater
The "believe me" and the "don't" there
Once in the music, once in the air

The two little animals, our hands
That sought to climb secretly one on the other
The pot of baby's breath through open yard gates
And the pieces of seas coming together
Behind the hedgerows, above the stone walls
The anemone that lay in your hand
So the mauve trembled three times for three days above the waterfalls

If these are true I sing
The wooden beam and the square weaving
On the wall, the Mermaid with unbraided tress
The cat who watched us in the darkness

A child with incense and the red cross
The hour evening falls on the rocks' inaccessibility
I mourn the garment that I touched and the world came to me.

III.

Thus I speak for you and me

Because I love you and in love I know
How to enter like the Full Moon
From everywhere, for your small foot on the huge sheets
How to pluck jasmine flowers -- and I have the power
To blow and move you asleep

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Through moonlit passages and the sea's secret arcades
Hypnotised trees with silvering spiderwebs

The waves have heard of you
How you caress, how you kiss
How you say in a whisper the "what" and the "eh"
Around the neck around the bay
Always we the light and shadow

Always you the little star and always I the dark boat
Always you the harbour and always I the beacon on the right
The wet dockwall and the gleam on the oars
High in the house with the vine arbours
The bound-up rosebushes, the water that feels cold
Always you the stone statue and always I the lengthening shadow
The half-closed window shutter you, I the wind that opens it
Because I love you and I love you
Always you the coin and I the adoration that cashes it:

So much for the night, so much for the roar in wind
So much for the droplet in the air, so much for the quietude
Around the despotic sea
Arch of the sky with the stars
So much for your least breath

That I have nothing more
Amid the four walls, the ceiling, the floor
To cry out of you and so my own voice strikes me
To smell of you and so men turn wild
Because men can't endure the untried
The brought from elsewhere and it's early, hear me
It's too early yet in this world my love

To speak of you and me.

IV.

It's too early yet in this world, hear me?
The monsters have not yet been tamed, hear me
My lost blood and the pointed, hear me
Knife
Like a ram that runs amid the skies
And snaps the boughs of the stars, hear me
It's I, hear me
I love you, hear me
I hold you and lead you and dress you
In Ophelia's white bridal gown, hear me
Where do you leave me, where are you going and who, hear me

Holds your hand over the floods

The day will come, hear me
The enormous lianas and the lava of volcanoes

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Will bury us and thousands of years later, hear me
They'll make us luminous fossils, hear me
For the heartlessness of men to shine, hear me
Over them
And throw us away in thousands of pieces, hear me
In the waters one by one, hear me
I count my bitter pebbles, hear me
And time is a great church, hear me
Where sometimes the figures, hear me
Of Saints
Weep real tears, hear me
The bells open on high, hear me
A deep passage for me to pass through
The angels wait with candles and funeral psalms
I go nowhere, hear me

Either no one or we two together, hear me

This flower of tempest and, hear me
Of love
Once and for always we cut it, hear me
And it cannot come into bloom otherwise, hear me
In another earth, in another star, hear me
The soil, the very air we touched
Are no more, hear me

And no gardener was so fortunate in other times

To put forth a flower amid such a winter, hear me
And such northwinds, only we, hear me
In the middle of the sea
From only the wish for love, hear me
Raised a whole island, hear me
With caves and capes and flowering cliffs
Listen, listen
Who speaks to the waters and who weeps -- hear?
Who seeks the other, who cries out -- hear?
It's I who cry out and it's I who weep, hear me
I love you, I love you, hear me.

V.

Of you I have spoken in olden times
With wise wet nurses and with veteran rebels
Whence comes your sorrow of the wild beast
The reflection on your face of trembling water
And why, then, am I destined to come near you
I who don't want love but want the wind
But want the gallop of the bareback standing sea

And no one had heard of you
For you neither dittany nor mushroom

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In Crete's high places nothing
Only for you God agreed to guide my hand

This way, that way, heedful of the whole round
Of the face's shore, the bays, the hair
On the hill wavering left there

Your body with the stance of the solitary pine tree
Eyes of pride and of the translucent
Depths, inside the house with the old breakfront
With its yellow lace and cypress wood
Alone I wait for where you'll first appear
High on the roof terrace or behind the yard's flagstones
With the horse of the Saint and the egg of the Resurrection

As from a ruined wall painting
Big as small life wanted you
To fit the stentorian volcano glow into the little candle

So that no one might have seen or heard
Anything in the wilderness the ruined houses
Neither the ancestor buried at the yard wall's edge
Of you, nor the old lady with all her herbs

For you only I, perhaps, and the music
That I push down inside me but it returns stronger
For you the unformed breast of twelve years
Turned to the future with its red crater
For you the bitter fragrance like a pin
You find within the body that pricks the memory
And here the soil, here the doves, here our ancient earth.

VI.

I've seen much and the earth to my mind seems more beautiful
More beautiful in the golden vapours
The sharp stone, more beautiful
The violets of isthmuses and the roofs amid the waves
More beautiful the rays where without stepping you pace
Above the sea's mountains invincible as the Goddess of Samothrace

Thus I have looked at you and that's enough
For all time to become innocent
In the wake your passage leaves my soul
Follows like an inexperienced dolphin

And plays with the white and the azure!

Victory, Victory where I've been vanquished
Before love and with it
For the passion flower and the hibiscus
Go, go even if I've been lost

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Alone, and let the sun you hold be a newborn babe
Alone, and let me be the homeland that mourns
Let the word I sent to hold the laurel leaf for you be
Alone, the wind strong and alone the very round
Pebble in the blink of the dark depths
The fisherman who lifted up and cast back again into time Paradise!

VII.

In Paradise I've marked an island out
Identical to you and a house by the sea

With a big bed and a little door
I've cast an echo into the bottomless deeps
To see myself each morning when I arise

To see half of you pass in the water
And half for which I weep in Paradise.

Heleni

By the first drop of rain the summer died
The words that had bore those stary nights got wet
All those words that had one sole destination You!
Where will our hands reach now that weather no longer cares for us
Where will our eyes rest now that the distant lines got dispersed in the clouds
Now that your eyes have shut above the landscapes that were ours
And now that we found ourselves - as if the mist went right through us-
totally lonely surrounded by your inanimate images

With the forehead against the window we wait upon the new torment
It 's not Death that will make us fall since You are alive
Since a wind exists somewhere and he will live you entirely
To dress you from the near like our hope will from afar
Since there is elsewhere
A greenest meadow far from your laughter up to the sun
Telling him secretely that we will one day meet again
No, it is not death we shall confront
But just a tiny drop of the autumn rain
A blurry feeling
The scent of the moist soil within our souls
that are continuously diverging.

And if your hand is not between our hands
And if our blood wont' run within your dream's veins
The music unseen within us and O sorrowful
Wanderer of whatever still keeps us alive
It is the humid air the come of autumn the depart
The elbow's bitter support upon the memory
that comes out when night arrives to divorce us from the light
Behind the square window that looks upon the sadness
That sees nothing

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Because it has become music unseen fire a strike of the big clock on the wall

Because it has become

A poem a verse upon a verse, a sound resembling tears and words

Words not like the rest of them but with the same destination: You!

KIKI DIMOULA



Kiki Dimoula's mature poetry added an altogether new dimension to Modern Greek poetry. Having experienced the drama of the existential dissolution of post-war humanity and at the same time the dead ends in a world that has lost the gift of faith, her poetry mapped a world that's both 'homeless' and insecure; a world in which the poet, in order to survive, had to plunge into the fundamental dynamics of the creative process and interfere decisively with their logic.

Her writing turned the grammar of the Greek language against the meaning of words, attempting, thus, to strengthen the emotive power of verse through astonishment and surprise. All her lines suggest the stability of a world that eyes can't see, but which becomes whole through its imaginary reconstruction within the poem as an organic whole. This dimension of astonishment and surprise has become an active emotive factor in contemporary Greek poetry.

Dimoula's poetry treats the themes of absence and oblivion as in a kaleidoscope, where colours and shapes dissolve and mix in order to be reconstructed into a hidden harmony and order.

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Unexpectedations

Lord what's still not in store for us.

I'm sitting here and sitting.
It's raining without raining
just as when a shadow
returns to us a body.

I'm sitting here and sitting.
Me here, my heart opposite
and still further away
my weary relationship with it.
So we might seem many
whenever emptiness counts us.

Empty room blowing.
I hold tight to the way
I have of being swept off.

I've no news of you.
Your photo stationary.
You stare as if coming
you smile as if not.
Dried flowers at one side
incessantly repeating for you
their unadulterated name semprevives
semprevives—eternal, eternal
in case you forget what you're not.

I'm asked by time
how I want it to pass
exactly how I pronounce myself
as edging or ageing.
Foolishness.
No end is ever articulate.

I've no news of you.
Your photo stationary.
Just as it rains without raining.

Just as a shadow returns to me a body.
And just as we'll meet one day
up there.
In some lush sparseness
with shady unexpectedations
and evergreen rotations.
As interpreter of the intense
silence that we'll feel
—developed form of the intense
intoxication caused by a meeting
down here—will come a void.

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And we'll be enraptured then
by a passionate unrecognition
—developed form of the embrace
employed by a meeting down here.
Yes we'll meet. Breathing fine, concealed
form attraction. In a downpour
of heavy lack of gravity. Perhaps on one
of infinity's trips to ad infinitum;
at the ceremony for loss awards to the known
for its great contribution to the unknown;
guests at destination's starlight,
at cessation's galas on behalf of dissolving
causes and the skies' farewell
importances once great.
Expect that this company of distances
will be somewhat downcast, cheerless
even if non-existence finds cheer from nothing.
Perhaps because the soul of the party will be absent.
The flesh.

I call to the ash
to disarm me.
I call upon the ash
by its code name: Everything.

You'll meet regularly I imagine
you and the death of that dream.
The last-born dream.
Of all I had the best-behaved.
Clear-headed, gentle, understanding.
Not of course so dreamy
but neither worthless or mean,
no toady to all and sundry.
A very thrifty dream,
in intensity and errors.
Of the dreams I raised
my most loving: so I'd not
grow old alone.

You'll meet regularly I imagine
you and its death.
Give it my regards, tell it to come
too without fail when we meet
there, at the loss awards ceremony.

Love me as long as you don't live.
Yes yes the impossible's enough for me.
Once I was loved by that.
Love me as long as you don't live.
For I've no news of you.
And heaven forbid that the absurd
should show no signs of life.

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