

The distaff

Only a few fragments of Erinna's works remain but she is most noted for the heartfelt and elegiac style poem *The Distaff*, written in the local Dorian Greek dialect. Although it is unclear as to the nature of their relationship it has been assumed that Baukis (Baucis), is a childhood friend that died, or either married someone else or died before he and Erinna could consummate their love. However, the popular consensus is that Erinna's poem is about the death of her childhood friend Baukis (Baucis), and this may have played on the irony of her early death; Erinna may have indicated in her poem that she wanted or expected such a fate too.

In *The Distaff*, Erinna plays on the theme of weaving by using it as a metaphor to assist in her personal retelling of a childhood friend. Weaving is a metaphor for writing poetry and alludes to the thread of life spun by the Fates, as well as referring to a traditional female activity. Erinna recalls her childhood and the games they used to play—the recollection of a shared past is a theme found also in Sappho. Erinna's mourning seems to have been for the loss of her friend, to marriage, as well as her death. These two themes, death and marriage, are united as early as the myth of Persephone. Erinna's poem has also been deemed important by scholars for the glimpse it gives us of a girl's view of her relationship with her mother.

Poem (Papyrus)

- 8 [□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] ἐοίσα[α]ς
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] ε κώρας
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] σ ι νύμφαι
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] χελύνναν
- 12 [□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] σ]ελάννα·
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] χε]λύννα·
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] τε λῆσ[□]
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] ὤκει
- 16 [□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] α φύλλοις
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] μ]αλάσσει·
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] σε]λάνναν
[□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] ἀμ]νίδα πέξα[ι]
- 20 [□□ □□ □□ □□ □□] ἐς βαθ]ὺ κύμα
[λε]υκὰν μαινομέν[οισιν ἐσάλατο π]ορσῖν ἀφ' ἴ[π]πω[ν]
[αἰ]αἰ ἐγώ, μέγ' ἄϋσα φ[ί]λα. τὸ δ' ἔοισα] χελύννα,
[ἀλ]λομένα μεγάλας [ἔδραμες κατὰ] χορτίον αὐλάς.
- 24 [τα]ῦτα τὺ, Βαυκί τάλαι[να, βαρὺ στονα]χεῖσα γόημ[ι]
[τα]ῦτά μοι ἐν κρα[δίαι □ □□] παίχνια κείται
θέρμ' ἔτι τῆν[α δὲ τοῖσιν ἀθ]ύρομες ἄνθρακες ἦδη,
δαγύ[δ]ων τε χ[ιτῶνες]7] □ □ [ἴδες ἐν θαλάμοισι
- 28 νύμ[φαι]σιν [□ □□ □] ἔες· ἄ τε πὸτ ὄρθρον
μάτηρ ἀε[ἰδοῖσα □ □□] οἰσιν ἐρεῖθοις
τήνας ἦλθε[ε □ □□ □] μέ]να ἀμφ' ἀλίπαστον,
αἰ μικρᾶι στ[ι □ □□] μέγα]ν8] φόβον ἄγαγε Μο[ρ]μῶ,
- 32 [τᾶ]ς ἐν μὲν κο[ρυνφᾶι] μεγάλ' ὦ]ατα, ποσσί δὲ φοιτῆ
[τέ]τρ[α]σιν· ἐκ δ' [ἑτέρας ἑτέραν] μετεβάλλετ' ὄπωπᾶν.
ἀνίκα δ' ἐς [λ]έχος [ἀνδρὸς ἔβας, τ]όκα πάντ' ἐλέλασο,
ἄσσο' ἔτι νηπιάσα[σα] τ[ε]ᾶς παρὰ] ματρὸς ἀκουσας,
- 36 [Β]αυκί φίλα· λάθα[ν ...] ε[ι(□)□ □] Αφρο[δ]ίτα.
τῶ τυ κατακλαίοισα τα[□□ □]...ε λείπω·
οὐ[τ] γ[ὰρ] μοι πόδες [ἐντι λιπῆν] ἄπο δῶμα βέβαλοι,
οὐδ' ἐσιδῆν φαέε[σσι] θέλω νέ]κυν, οὐδὲ γοᾶσαι
- 40 γυμναῖσιν χαίταισιν, [ἐπεὶ φο]νίκεος αἰδώ
δρύπτε[ι] μ' ἀμφι[χ]υ[θει]σα □ □□ □□□ □□]
αἰε[ἰ] δὲ προπάροισ[ε □ □□ □□□ □□]
ἐννεα[κα]ιδέκατος [□ □□ □] ἐνιαυτός]
- 44 Ἡρίννα[ι] τε φίλα□ι π[ι □ □□ □□□ □□]

- ἀλακάταν ἐ[σ]ορει[σα] □ □ □ □ □ □
 γνῶθ' ὅτι τοι κ[] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 ἀμφ[έ]λικες γελ[ά]οισα[9] □ □ □ □ □ □].
- 48 ταῦτ' αἰδώς μ' [] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 παρθε[ν]ίοισι[] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 δερκομένα δ' ἐγ[](□) □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 καὶ χαίταν ἀν[](□) □ □ □ □ □ □ γύνακες[10]
- 52 παῦλόγοι[11] πο[]λιαί, ταὶ γήραος ἄνθεα θνατοῖς □ ·
 τῶ τυ□, φίλα, φο[](□) □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 Βαυκί, κατακλα[ί]οισα[12] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □,
 ἄν φλόγα μιν τ[] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
- 56 ὠρυγᾶς ἄϊοισα ο[](□) □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □.
 ὦ πολλὰν ὕμέν[αιε] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 πολλὰ δ' ἐπιψαύ[οισα] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 [π]άνθ' ἑνός, ὦ ὕμ[έναιε], □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
- 60 αἰαῖ, Βαυκί τάλαινα[α], □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □.

Stobée's fragment (used from mes. 61 to 113 Soprano 1 et Alto)

Ἥλακάτη

Τουτόθεν εἰς Αἶδαν κενεὰ διανήχεται ἄχῳ·
 σιγὰ δ' ἐν νεκύεσσι, τὸ δὲ σκότος ὅσσε κατέρρει

Erinna (IVth century BC)