

Ancient Egyptian Love Poetry

Written during Egypt's New Kingdom (1539-1075 B.C.) but likely composed much earlier

The Flower Song (Excerpt)

To hear your voice is pomegranate wine to me:
I draw life from hearing it.
Could I see you with every glance,
It would be better for me
Than to eat or to drink.

(Translated by M.V. Fox)

Archaeologists have discovered most of Egypt's love poetry in Deir el-Medina, a village of tomb builders during the New Kingdom.

Findings indicate that these villagers may have been remarkably literate for their time. The local community—not just the scribes and students—may have contributed to the poetry of Deir el-Medina.

The love poems were likely set to music and used events from daily life and the natural world—growing grain, capturing birds, fishing along the Nile—as metaphors to talk about love.

The Crossing (Excerpt)

I'll go down to the water with you,
and come out to you carrying a red fish,
which is just right in my fingers.

(Translated by M. Fox)

Kissing is described in the surviving Ancient Egyptian love poetry from the New Kingdom, found on papyri excavated at Deir el-Medina.

Finally I will drink life from your lips
and wake up from this ever lasting sleep.

The wisdom of the earth in a kiss
and everything else in your eyes.

I kiss her before everyone
that they all may see my love.

And when her lips are pressed to mine
I am made drunk and need not wine.
When we kiss, and her warm lips half open,
I fly cloud-high without beer!

His kisses on my lips, my breast, my hair...
...Come! Come! Come! And kiss me when I die,
For life, compelling life, is in thy breath;
And at that kiss, though in the tomb I lie,
I will arise and break the bands of Death.

Ancient Egyptian Love Poem

Is there anything sweeter than this hour?
for I am with you, and you lift up my heart --
for is there not embracing and fondling when you visit me
and we give ourselves up to delights?

...If you wish to caress my thigh,
then I will offer you my breast also -- it won't thrust you away!

Would you leave because you are hungry?
- are you such a man of your belly?

Would you leave because you need something to wear?
- I have a chestful of fine linen!

Would you leave because you wish something to drink?
Here, take my breasts! They are full to overflowing, and all for
you!

Glorious is the day of our embracings;
I treasure it a hundred thousand millions!

Ancient Egyptian Love Poem

Love, how I'd love to slip down to the pond,
bathe with you close by on the bank.

Just for you I'd wear my new Memphis swimsuit,
Made of sheer linen, fit for a queen--

...

Come see how it looks in the water!
Couldn't I coax you to wade in with me?
Let the cool creep slowly around us?

Then I'd dive deep down and come up for you dripping,
Let you fill your eyes with the little red fish that I'd catch.

Love poem from the Middle Kingdom

The earth trembled as you passed by,
Turning everything sacred as you walked.

And you set your blue eyes upon me for the first time,
speaking at me with the depth of the night
...like a nightingale who doesn't need its wings to fly.
What a blessing it is to be worthy of your look.

I have seen rain on the desert,
and all impossible things coming true.

All of my prayers carry your name.
I wish to be pure so that I can desire you.

Take me as you will.
Your slave...

LOVE POEM FROM ANCIENT EGYPT
Extract from a 3,000 year-old papyrus.

She is one girl, there is no one like her.
She is more beautiful than any other.
Look, she is like a star goddess arising at the beginning of a happy new
year;
brilliantly white, bright skinned; with beautiful eyes for looking, with sweet
lips for speaking;
she has not one phrase too many.
With a long neck and white breast,
her hair of genuine lapis lazuli;
her arm more brilliant than gold;
her fingers like lotus flowers,
with heavy buttocks and girt waist.
Her thighs offer her beauty,
with a brisk step she treads on ground.
She has captured my heart in her embrace.
She makes all men turn their necks to look at her.
One looks at her passing by,
this one, the unique one.

20TH DYNASTY, NEW KINGDOM EGYPT

Her necklace is made of buds.
Her bones are delicate reeds.
She wears a signet ring
and has a lotus in her hand.

...

I kiss her before everyone
that they all may see my love.
She enraptures my heart,
and when she sees me,
I am refreshed.

(an ancient Egyptian spell from 'The Coffin Texts')

I am the lord of fire who lives on truth,
The Lord of Eternity, Maker of Joy, Against whom the otherworldly serpents
have not rebelled.

I am the God in his shrine, The Lord of Slaughter, who calms the storm,

[...]

Who drives off the serpents, the many-named one who comes forth from
his shrine,

The Lord of the Winds who foretells the Northwind,

Many-named in the Mouth of the Ennead,

Lord of the Horizon, Creator of Light,

Who illumines heaven with his own beauty

I am He! Make way for me . . .

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