

# Lesbos

By Charles Baudelaire

Mother of Latin sports and Greek delights,  
Where kisses languishing or pleasurable,  
Warm as the suns, as the watermelons cool,  
Adorn the glorious days and sleepless nights,  
Mother of Latin sports and Greek delights,

Lesbos, where kisses are as waterfalls  
That fearless into gulfs unfathomed leap,  
Now run with sobs, now slip with gentle brawls,  
Stormy and secret, manifold and deep;  
Lesbos, where kisses are as waterfalls!

Lesbos, where Phryne Phryne to her draws,  
Where never a sigh did echoless expire,  
As Paphos' equal, thee the stars admire,  
Nor Venus envies Sappho without cause!  
Lesbos, where Phryne Phryne to her draws,

Lesbos, the land of warm and languorous nights,  
Where by their mirrors seeking sterile good,  
The girls with hollow eyes, in soft delights,  
Caress the ripe fruits of their womanhood,  
Lesbos, the land of warm and languorous nights,

Leave, leave old Plato's austere eye to frown;  
Pardon is thine for kisses' sweet excess,  
Queen of the land of amiable renown,  
And for exhaustless subtleties of bliss,  
Leave, leave old Plato's austere eye to frown.

Pardon is thine for the eternal pain  
That on the ambitious hearts for ever lies,  
Whom far from us the radiant smile could gain,  
Seen dimly on the verge of other skies;  
Pardon is thine for the eternal pain!

Which of the gods will dare thy judge to be,  
And to condemn thy brow with labour pale,  
Not having balanced in his golden scale  
The flood of tears thy brooks poured in the sea?  
Which of the gods will dare thy judge to be?

What boot the laws of just and of unjust?  
Great-hearted virgins, honour of the isles,  
Lo, your religion also is august,  
And love at hell and heaven together smiles!  
What boot the laws of just and of unjust?

For Lesbos chose me out from all my peers,  
To sing the secret of her maids in flower,  
Opening the mystery dark from childhood's hour  
Of frantic laughter, mixed with sombre tears;  
For Lesbos chose me out from all my peers.

And since I from Leucate's top survey,  
Like a sentinel with piercing eye and true,  
Watching for brig and frigate night and day,  
Whose distant outlines quiver in the blue,  
And since I from Leucate's top survey,

To learn if kind and merciful the sea,  
And midst the sobs that make the rock resound,  
Brings back some eve to pardoning Lesbos, free  
The worshipp'd corpse of Sappho, who made her bound  
To learn if kind and merciful the sea!

Of her the manlike lover-poetess,  
In her sad pallor more than Venus fair  
The azure eye yields to that black eye, where  
The cloudy circle tells of the distress  
Of her the manlike lover-poetess

Fairer than Venus risen on the world,  
Pouring the treasures of her aspect mild,  
The radiance of her fair white youth unfurled  
On Ocean old, enchanted with his child;  
Fairer than Venus risen on the world!

Of Sappho who, blaspheming, died that day  
When trampling on the rite and sacred creed,  
She made her body fair the supreme prey  
Of one whose pride punished the impious deed  
Of Sappho who, blaspheming, died that day.

And since that time it is that Lesbos moans,  
And, spite the homage which the whole world pays,  
Is drunk each night with cries of pain and groans,  
Her desert shores unto the heavens do raise,  
And since that time it is that Lesbos moans