

MYSTERION

at the festival of Lughnasad

They are saying about me
Sappho comes of age
And it's true
In more senses than one
I am a poet
Of spiritual things
Love concerns me most
And the interface
Between our world
And the divine

That is why
I'm about to be
An initiate
Singing songs
Of transformation
And new life

Hermes the trickster
As androgynous as I
Is first to be invoked
Weaver of whispers
Crafty one
Companion
Leaving him I am
Naked and slightly scared
Of the divine communion
To come

I am breathless
Encompassed by
Light of the stars
Lightning of Sun

I find myself
As Orpheus
The divine musician
Charming all kinds of animals
Exalting my *beloved*
With *fine-tuned lyre*
Together practising
The Great Work
Through healing and poetry

I will gladly thank
The powers of heaven
And earth
For this experience
The wonder of lightning
Followed by Sun
And the first-fruits
Of creativity

Made new through magic
Still delighting
In freshness and youth
I will follow
A deeper kind of beauty
Which is untrammelled
By time
And in my stage
Of better balance
And maturity
I search for souls
Whose loveliness is mirrored
In the world below
And celebrate them
In the heights

NOTE

The passages in italics are taken from a Greek poem, recently published, which records a profound experience of the great poet Sappho.

This poem celebrates the goddess and marks the summer festival of Lughnasad, on which some notes follow:

Lughnasad is the most ancient spelling of the name for this Celtic festival of the first-fruits. The name is pronounced Lu'-nasa. It is named for Lug or Lugh, the god of invention, arts, war and commerce, perhaps also of light, whose sacred animal is the raven (lugus). He may have been regarded as a twin deity: he has both light and dark aspects. His identification with the Roman Mercury (Hermes) is likely. Lug was master of many crafts and belonged to the race of fairy folk called the Tuatha Dé Danann. Indeed, in Irish lore he comes over as a combination of divinity and elf. He was the spiritual father of the archetypal hero Cú Chulainn.

The Roman emperor Augustus ordained a large-scale festival to honour the pagan god. The importance of this festival was that it just preceded the harvest. Lughnasad ('assembly of Lug', 'memory of Lug', 'Lug's wedding' or 'Lug's games'), was established in honour of Lug and his mother Tailtiu, the earth-goddess. All ancient Irish festivities in August began at the tumulus of a woman representing this fertile goddess. A sacred marriage between the king and the earth-goddess during harvest-time is implied.