

Flower associations questions

Q1: What links might Sappho be suggesting in the following passages? What might be the connotations of plucking flowers in association with females in antiquity?

Sappho fr. 2 (invokes Aphrodite):

“Hither to me from Crete to this holy temple, where is your delightful grove of apple-trees, and altars smoking with incense; therein cold water babbles through apple-branches, and the whole place is shadowed by roses, and from the shimmering leaves the sleep of enchantment comes down; therein too a meadow, where horses graze, blossoms with spring flowers, and the winds blow gently . . .; there, Cypris, take . . . and pour gracefully into golden cups nectar that is mingled with our festivities.” (*Greek Lyric with an English Translation by David A. Campbell, Volume I: Sappho Alcaeus*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 56-57)

Sappho fr.105a (L-P) (of bride) “Like the sweet apple turning red on the branch top, on the top of the top-most branch, and the gatherers did not notice it, rather they did notice, but could not reach up to take it”

Sappho fr.105 c (L-P) “Like the hyacinth in the hills which the shepherd people step on, trampling into the ground the flower in its purple”

Q2: how might the description of Persephone/Proserpina plucking flowers reflect on what will happen?

Q3: How might the description of the meadow and flowers after the abduction in Claudian reflect on what has happened? DRP 3.238-41 (nurse says) “leaden grey seeped over the grass; the streams failed; the meadows were scaly with blight and nothing survived the horses' breath; I saw privets pale, roses expire, lilies shrivel away.”