The poems in this collection portray the Greeks in less noble and uplifting moods. I suspect few people will have previously encountered the side of Sappho that produced fragment 55. Many of the poems rebuke enemies named and unnamed, humanity in general, and even a god comes in for abuse from Hipponax (36 W). The remaining verses are fatalistic or gloomy in some way that caught my attention, although a very few are simply crude.

Many of the poems come from the Anthology, including several poems of Palladas, whose moralizing grouchiness I have long been fond of. A number of the poets are prone to coarse language, and, for that matter, coarse thought. I have made no attempt to hide that in the vocabulary notes, where I have used plain English rather than Latinate euphemism.

As I encounter grouchy new verses I will update this collection.

Palladas Anth.11.341

αἰνίζειν μὲν ἄριστον, ὁ δὲ ψόγος ἔχθεος ἀρχὴ·
ἀλλὰ κακῶς εἰπεῖν Ἀττικόν ἐστι μέλι.

Meter: elegiac couplet. 1. αἰνίζω to praise. ἄριστος η ον best; here impersonal, “it is best...” ψόγος ο blame. ἔχθεος το gen.sg. hate, enmity. ἀρχὴ η beginning. 2. κακῶς εἰπεῖν to speak ill (of someone). Ἀττικός η ον Attic. μέλι το honey. Attic honey was famed not only for its quality (and price), but also for its medicinal benefits. One suspects some sort of play related to the adjective Ἀττικόν here, but it’s not clear exactly what.

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Palladas Anth.10.85, “As flies to wanton boys”

πάντες τῷ θανάτῳ τηρούμεθα, καὶ τρεφόμεσθα

ὡς ἀγέλη χοίρων σφαζομένων ἀλόγως.

Meter: elegiac couplet. 1. πάντες i.e., “all of us.” θάνατος ὁ death. τηρέω take care of, guard; observe. τρέφω bring up, rear. 2. ὡς like. ἀγέλη ἡ herd. χοῖρος ὁ pig. σφάζω slaughter; sacrifice. ἀλόγως without reason, absurdly, unintelligibly.

Alcaeus fr. 332, on the death of Myrsilus

νῦν χρῆ μεθύσθην καὶ τινα πὲρ βίαν πώνην, ἐπεὶ δὴ κάτθανε Μύρσιλος.

Meter: (from Alcaic strophe). 1. χρή + acc.inf., subject is τινα “now someone must;” χρῆ Aeolic accenting. μεθύσκω make drunk, pass. get drunk; μεθύσθην Aeol. aor.pass inf. βία ἡ strength, force. τέρα = περί, and also replaces ὑπέρ, which Aeolic lacks. τέρα βίαν “with all your strength...” 2. πώνω (= πίνω) Aeol.pres.inf. drink. κατα-θνήσκω die (away). Μύρσιλος a political rival of A.

Xenophanes fr. 7

πάντα θεοῖς ἀνέθηκαν Ὅμηρός θ΄ Ἡσίοδός τε ὅσσα παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν, καὶ πλεῖστ' ἐφθέγξαντο θεών ἀθεμίστι ἔργα, κλέπτειν, μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.

Meter: hexameter. 1. πάντα everything. ἀνα-τίθημι aor.act.3pl. attribute to + dat. 2. ὅσ(σ)ος η ον as much (many) as, as great as. παρά + dat., beside, near; among. ὅνει-δος τό reproach, blame, disgrace. ψόγος ὁ blame. 3. πλεῖστος η ον superlative of πολύς but best taken as intensive (Smyth §1085), “very many.” φθέγγομαι utter a sound; speak clearly. ἀθεμίστιος ον lawless. 4. The infinitives list the ἀθεμίστια. κλέπτω steal. μοιχεύω commit adultery. ἀπατεύω cheat, trick.

Theognis 1247-1248

φρόντισον ἔχθος ἐμὸν καὶ ὑπέρβασιν, ὅτι δὲ θυμᾶν ὡς σ’ ἔφ’ ἀμαρτωλῇ τείσωμαι ὡς δύναμαι.

Meter: elegiac couplet. 1. φροντίζω aor.imper. consider, reflect (on). ἔχθος τό hate. ὑπέρβασις εως η passage (over); transgression. οἶδα 2sg.imper. know. 2. ἀμαρτωλή ἡ fault, guilt. τείνω τείσω ἐτείσα mid. with ἐνί take vengence for, punish for.
Palladas Anth.10.95

πᾶς τις ἀπαίδευτος φρονιμώτατός ἐστι σιωπῶν,
τὸν λόγον ἐγκρύπτων, ὡς πάθος αἰσχρότατον.


Meleager Anth.5.208

οὐ μοι παιδομανὴς κραδία· τί δὲ τερπνόν, Ἔρωτες, ἀνδροβατεῖν, εἰ μή δούς τι λαβεῖν ἐθέλει; ἡ χεὶρ γὰρ τὰν χεῖρα. καλά με μένει παράκοιτις· ἔρροι πᾶς ἄρσην ἀρσενικαῖς λαβίσιν.

Meter: elegiac couplet. The language is Epic-Ionic with a light Doric dusting. 1. μοι dat. of possession, “I don’t have...” παιδομανής boy-crazy. κραδία heart. τερπνός delightful, pleasant; here a noun, “what pleasure?” “Ερως ὁ Eros, often thought of as a group of armed children, not just the one we’re used to. 2. ἀνδροβατέω mount men, sodomize; it’s not clear how coarse this word is — Justin Martyr uses it, so probably not very. εἰ μὴ unless. δίδωμι aor.act.part. nom.sg.m. give. λαμβάνω aor.act.inf. receive. 3. ἁ = ἡ. χειρ χειρός hand. τάν = τῆν. cf. Epicharmus frag., ἁ δὲ χειρ τὰν χεῖρα νίζει· δός τι καὶ τε λάμβανε, “the hand washes the (other) hand: give something and receive something.” καλά = καλή, μένω remain; wait (for). παράκοιτις 105 (female) bedpartner; wife. 4. ἔρρο pres.act.opt. 3sg. disappear, come to harm, perish; optative of wish. Colloquially, “get lost” or the like. ἄρσην ἐν male, masculine. πᾶς ἄρσην “every male.” ἀρσενικός ὁ ὁν male, masculine. λαβίς ἰδος ἡ dat.pl. handle; holder, tongs. There is an ambiguity, presumably deliberate, in the use of the dative here. It could indicate either accompaniment (Smyth §1524, §1527a) or instrument.

Glycon Anth.10.124

πάντα γέλως, καὶ πάντα κόνις, καὶ πάντα τὸ μηδέν· πάντα γὰρ εἰς ἄλογων ἐστὶ τὰ γινόμενα.

Meter: elegiac couplet. 1. πάντα everything; supply ἐστίν. γέλως ὁ laughter; cause for laughter. κόνις ἐως ὁ dust; ashes. τὸ μηδέν nothing, nominalized. 2. ἄλογος without reason, irrational; unsuited. γινόμενα = γιγνόμενα; πάντα τὰ γινόμενα everything that happens.
Sappho fr. 55

κατάθνησα δὲ κείσῃ οὐδὲ πόθα μναμοσύνα σέθεν ἔσσετ' οὐδὲ πόθα ἕστερον οὐ γὰρ πεδέχῃς βρόδων τών ἐκ Πιερίας, ἀλλ' ἀφάνης κἀν Ἀίδα δόμω φοιτάσῃς πεδ' ἀμαύρων νεκύων ἐκπεποταμένα.

Meter: 1. κατα-θνήσκω aor.act.part. nom. sg.f. die. κεῖμαι fut.mid.2sg. lie; lie dead. ποτα = ποτε. μνημοσύνη η remembrance, memory. σέθεν = σοῦ. 2. ἔσσεται there will be. ποθή η longing for , desire for. ὁυστερον adv. later. πεδ-έχῃς = μετ-έχῃς < μετ-έχω partake of + gen. Here and l.4 φοιτάσῃς an alternate spelling if the 2sg. -εις some editors accept. βρόδων = ῥόδων < ῥόδον τό rose. 3. τὼν article acting as rel. = ἄν. Πιερία Pieria, a home of the Muses. ἀφανῆς ές unseen, unnoticed. κἀν = καὶ ἐν. Ἀίδα gen. 4. φοιτάω go to and fro. πεδ' = μετά. ἀμαυρός (ά) όν dark. νέκυς υος ς corpse. ἐκ-ποτάομαι perf.mid.part. nom.sg.f. fly away.

Hipponax 36 (West)

ἐμοὶ δὲ Πλοῦτος — ἔστι γὰρ λίην τυφλός — ἐς τᾠκί' ἐλθὼν οὐδάμ' εἶπεν “Ἱππωναξ, δίδωμί τοι μνᾶς ἀργύρου τριήκοντα καὶ πολλ ' ἄλλα·“ δείλαιος γὰρ τὰς φρένας.

Meter: choliambic trimeter, ἐμοὶ δὲ Πλοῦτος — ἔστι γὰρ λίην τυφλός — ἐς τᾠκί' ἐλθὼν οὐδάμ' εἶπεν “Ἰππωναξ, δίδωμί τοι μνᾶς ἀργύρου τριήκοντα καὶ πολλ ' ἄλλα·“ δείλαιος γὰρ τὰς φρένας.

1. Πλοῦτος ὁ Wealth. λίην very. τυφλός ή όν blind. 2. εἰς εἰς. τῶκι = τά οἰκία. οὐδαμά not at all; never. 3. τοι = σοι. μνᾶ μνᾶς ή mina, a (substantial) unit of money by weight; 1 mina = 100 drachmae. ἀργυρός ὸ silver, silver money. τριήκοντα indec. thirty. 4. καὶ πόλλα ἔτ' ἄλλα “and many other things besides.” δείλαιος α ον wretched, sorry, paltry; note scansion: δείλαιος τάς i.e. his, Wealth’s. φρήν φρενός ή midriff but usually heart, soul, mind; acc. of respect.

Semonides 2 (West)

τοῦ μὲν θανόντος οὐκ ἄν ἐνθυμοίμεθα, εἴ τι φρονοῖμεν, πλεῖον ἡμέρης μιῆς.

Meter: iambic trimeter. 1. θυνήσκω die; here aor.part. acting like a noun, ὁ θανών, the deceased. ἐν-θυμέομαι opt. pres.mid.3sg. think much of; be concerned at + gen. 2. τι adverbial, “somewhat, at all.” φρονέω opt. pres.act.1pl. be wise, have understanding. πλεῖον ἡμέρης μιῆς continues the sense of the first line. πλεῖον πλεῖον comp. of πολός, more, greater; with gen. for comparand. εἰς μία ἐν gen.sg.f. one.
Callimachus Epigram 28

ἐχθαίρω τὸ ποίημα τὸ κυκλικόν, οὐδὲ κελεύθῳ
χαίρω τίς πολλοὺς ὧδε καὶ ὧδε φέρει,
μισῶ καὶ περίφοιτον ἐρώμενον, οὐδὲ ἀπὸ κρήνης
πίνω· σικχαίνω πάντα τὰ δημόσια.
Λυσανίη, σὺ δὲ ναίχι καλὸς καλός — ἀλλὰ πρὶν εἰπεῖν
tοῦτο σαφῶς, ἤχω φησί τις; “ἄλλος ἔχει.”

Meter: elegiac couplet. 1. ἐχθαίρω hate. ποίημα τό poem; internal correction, scan ποιημα. κυκλικός ή όν circular, cyclic; in common use cyclic poems are Epics, but here C. probably means popular or common poetry. κέλευθος ἡ path, way, voyage. 2. χαίρω rejoice at, take pleasure in; greet + dat. τίς = ἥπερ, i.e., κέλευθος. ὧδε καὶ ὧδε “here and there.” 3. μισῶ hate. περίφοιτος ὁ revolving; wandering around. ἐρώμενος ὁ (young male) lover. κρήνη ἡ spring; well, fountain. 4. πίνω (ι) drink. σικχαίνω loathe. δημόσιος α ὁ belonging to the state; used by the public, common. 5. Λυσανίας ὁ Epic voc. Lysanias. ναίχι yes, truly. Note scansion, καλός. πρὶν + inf. before. 6. τοῦτο object, i.e., the phrase “ναίχι καλὸς καλός.” σαφῶσ clear, distinctly. ἤχω ὁ ὁς echo. We’re meant to take “ἄλλος ἔχει” as echoing “ναίχι καλὸς καλός.”

Semonides 3 (West)

πολλὸς γὰρ ἦμιν ἐστὶ τεθνάναι χρόνος,
ζῶμεν δ’ ἀριθμὸς παῦρα ἡκακῶς ἐτεα.

Meter: iambic trimeter. 1. θνήσκω ἔθανον τέθνηκα Epic perf.act.inf. die; be killed; perf. be dead; complement to πολλὸς χρόνος, “much time to be dead.” 2. ζῶ (ζώω) live. ἀριθμὸς ὁ number; sum; quantity; take with παῦρα, “few in number.” παῦρος ὁ little, small; few. As transmitted there is a missing heavy position in the line before κακῶς. This has resulted in much editorial speculation, which, following West, I have omitted here. ἔτος τό Epic uncontracted acc.pl. year.

Automedon of Cyzicus Anth.11.46

ἄνθρωποι δείλης, ὅτε πίνομεν· ἦν δὲ γένηται
ὄρθρος, ἐπ’ ἀλλήλους θῆρες ἐγείρομεθα.

Meter: elegiac couplet. 1. δείλη ἡ afternoon (early or late); gen. of time within which. πίνω (ι) drink. ἦν = εάν. 2. ὥρθρος ὁ daybreak, dawn. ἐπ’ hostile sense, “against,” as often with military verbs. θῆρ θῆρος ὁ wild animal. ἐγείρομαι be or become awake; rouse, stir oneself; there is a play on the different senses of the word between waking up (ὄρθρος) and getting oneself roused against another (ἐπ’ ἀλλήλους).
Anonymous Anth. 11.8

μὴ μύρα, μὴ στεφάνους λιθίναις στήλαισι χαρίζου, μηδὲ τὸ πῦρ φλέξησ’ ἐς κενὸν ἡ δαπάνη. ζωντὶ μοι, εἰ τι θέλεις, χάρισαι· τέφρην δὲ μεθύσκω πηλὸν ποιήσεις, κοὐχ ὁ θανῶν πίεται.

Meter: elegiac couplet. 1. μύρον τὸ (ὑ) sweet oil, perfume. στέφανος ὁ wreath, garland, crown. λιθίνος (η) ον made of stone; like stone. στήλη ἡ dat.pl. monument, grave-stone. χαρίζομαι pres.mid.imp. 2sg. show favor or kindness; dedicate; + dat. to someone or, as in this case, to something. 2. τὸ πῦρ the funeral fire. φλέγω aor.act.subj. 2sg. burn, kindle. κενός ἢ ὁν empty, void, fruitless; ἐς κενὸν “to no purpose.” δαπάνη ἡ cost, expense. 3. ζῶ <ζώω> pres.act.part. dat.sg.m. live, agreeing with μοι. χάρισαι aor.mid.imp. 2sg.; cf. line 1. τέφρα ἡ Epic acc.sg. ashes, esp. of a funeral pyre. μεθύσκω make drunk; give to drink; moisten. 4. πηλός ὁ clay; mud. κοὐχ = καὶ οὐχ. ὁ θανὼν “the dead.” πίεται (ὑ ὁ ἢ ὁ) drink.

Pindar fr. 61

τί ἔλπεαι σοφίαιν ἐμμεν, ἃν ὀλίγον τοι ἀνὴρ ὑπὲρ ἀνδρὸς ἴσχει; οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ’ ὅπως τὰ θεῶν βουλεύματ’ ἐρευνάσει βροτέᾳ φρενί· θνατᾶς δ’ ἀπὸ ματρὸς ἔφυ.

1. ἐλπομαί uncontracted 2sg. hope, expect; suppose. ἐμμεν = εἶναι. ᾳν = ἦν. 2. υπέρ here, beyond, exceeding. ἵσχω restrain; hold, possess. 3. οὐ γὰρ ἐσθ’ ὅπως i.e., there is not some way that... , it is impossible to... 4. βουλευμα τό resolution, purpose. ἐρευνάω seek, search for, explore. βρότεος η ον Epic mortal, human. φρήν φρενός ἡ midriff but usually heart, soul, mind. 5. θνατας = θνητῆς, θνητός (ἡ) ὁν mortal. ματρός = μητρός. φύω grow; in aor. be.

Anonymous Anth. 11.193

ὁ φθόνος ὡς κακὸν ἔστιν· ἐχει δὲ τι καλὸν ἐν αὐτῷ; τήκει γὰρ φθονερῶν ὄμματα καὶ κραδίην.

Meter: elegiac couplet. 1. φθόνος ὁ ill-will, envy, jealousy. ὡς κακὸν “what an evil/ill thing.” τι καλὸν something good. 2. τήκω melt, cause to waste away. φθονερός ἃ ὁν envious, jealous. ὄμμα τὸ eye. κραδίη ἡ Epic heart.
Pindar fr. 110

γλυκὺ δὲ πόλεμος ἀπείροισιν, ἐμπείρων δὲ τις
tarβεῖ προσιόντα νιν καρδία περισσῶς.

1. γλυκύς εῖα ύ
2. ταρβέω

Palladas 10.81

ὦ τῆς βραχείας ἡδονῆς τῆς τοῦ βίου·

1. ὤ oh, exclamation of pain, here with gen.

Ammianus Anth.11.226

εἴη σοι κατὰ γῆς κούφη κόνις, οἰκτρὲ Νέαρχε,

1. εἴη pres.act.opt.3sg. of εἰμί, to be; opt. of wish.

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