

Ode on a Grecian Urinal

O lowly vessel, oftentimes defiled
By acid streams from many tumid rods,
Historian, unable to express
As Byron did, the minds of ancient gods.
Mayhap the mighty Pericles came here;
Was he more forceful than the common men?
Thou served the great and humble passing through
And what is passing through from year to year.
All those engaged by plow or sword or pen
Still seek thee when thy services are due.

O homely shape, devoid of ornament
Save now and then sly comment or crude art,
Bleak, functional, as thou were thus ordained
Without a soul, yet in some way, a heart.
Those British gentlemen who stop for tea
Will stop again before they end their day.
And emptied are the men who came in haste,
Who soon forgot, yet left their mark on thee.
Thou shalt remain for others on their way
When old age shall this generation waste.

Unlike the trudging, forty-drachma men
Who find relief upon the dusty grass
Which glistens for a while beneath the sun,
Then leaves no sign for those who later pass,
Fair youth who visit from a foreign clime
Approach thee with their noses held on high,
And warm thee with the freshness of their flow
Before they seek the sacred and sublime.
Thou learn'st from every sigh and every fly
All thou know'st of life, or need to know.

JOAN COLGAN STORTZ