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Tithonus, Eos and the cicada in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* and Sappho fr. 58

When Sappho's poem on old age (fr. 58 Voigt) was published in 2004, it was not universally welcomed; thus Germaine Greer declared, on the basis of M. L. West's translation, that the new ode was unworthy of the poetess.¹ Perhaps she was repelled by what appears to be its totally pessimistic conclusion: there can be no remedy for old age, since not even the handsome Tithonus, whom the dawn goddess Eos loved, could escape the horrors of senescence. However, I shall argue that her poem is far more elegant in expression and subtle in thought than may at first appear. I shall discuss, firstly, the text of the ode; secondly, its structure; and finally the myth of Tithonus in relation to the version of the story in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, in which I shall develop my argument, first advanced in 2005,² that the legend that Tithonus was turned into a cicada and therefore able to continue to sing was already known in the north-east Aegean by Sappho's time and was therefore available to both her and her audience, if only they chose to recall it. We can in this respect go beyond the usual scepticism³ or agnosticism,⁴ just as we can be confident that Sappho knew the *Hymn to Aphrodite*.⁵ I shall argue that the poem fully measures up to what we

1 Stothard (2005).

2 Janko (2005).

3 So Zellner (2008); Edmunds (2009) 65 n. 41, 67 n. 43; Carrara (2011) esp. 103–9.

4 So Geissler (2005) 107 n. 12; Rawles (2006) 7.

5 So Meyerhoff (1984) 187–98; Di Benedetto (1985); Rösler (1985) 161; Nünlist (1998) 54–6; Geissler (2005) 106–7; West (2005) 6 n. 8; Bettarini (2007) 1; Carrara (2011) 85–6 with n. 12.

This paper develops the argument made in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 23 Dec. 2005, 19–20, which I had first advanced in August 2005 at Methymna in a symposium organized by Apostolos Pierris, the publication of which suffered the fate of Tithonus. I thank the participants on that occasion, and especially the cicada in the pine-tree outside, who began to sing right on cue. Its present metamorphosis is owed to the editor's request that I write on the *Hymn to Aphrodite* to honour Professor Rengakos, with whom I had the rare privilege of sharing an office while teaching at the Aristotle University on a Fulbright Fellowship in winter 2017. I also thank Jürgen Hammerstaedt and the conservator of the Papyrussammlung for helping me to study the papyrus in Cologne in 2007. Translations are mine.

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already knew of Sappho's oeuvre, and in particular that the myth of Tithonus is not simply 'banal, a weak ending to the poem', as West held.⁶

I. The text of Sappho's Tithonus Ode

My reconstruction below is based on the two articles by Gronewald and Daniel in which it was first published,⁷ together with the typically brilliant treatment of it by West,⁸ who incorporated some excellent ideas of V. Di Benedetto,⁹ and the subsequent efforts to improve it. I have also studied the Cologne papyrus under the microscope. The poem survives in two overlapping papyri, *P.Oxy.* 1787 fr. 1 and *P.Köln* inv. 21351+21376. It is proved to be a complete poem by the fact that the two papyri place different verses before and after it.¹⁰ This is a better explanation for the facts than the idea that it survives in a shorter and a longer version (incorporating the next four lines in *P.Oxy.* 1787 fr. 1), since the latter hypothesis violates Occam's razor by positing an entity unnecessarily. As West showed,¹¹ in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus the poem that follows began with a priamel, in a fashion known elsewhere in Sappho.

The roll from Oxyrhynchus was presumably a copy of the standard ancient edition of Book IV of Sappho's poems. The Cologne papyrus, however, represents an anthology, because the poem following it is not by Sappho.¹² There are two grounds for thinking that our poem as there transmitted derives from a miscellany. First, it presents the poems in a different arrangement from that in *P.Oxy.* 1787 fr. 1. Secondly, the piece which follows in the Cologne papyrus is definitely not by Sappho, as West deduced from its metre;¹³ if it is felt that the presence of a piece by another poet next to this poem undermines the case for Sappho's authorship of the Tithonus ode, its inclusion in the standard ancient edition of her works more than counterbalances that argument. The case for authenticity rests ultimately on both this external evidence and the internal evi-

6 West (2005) 6; cf. Rawles (2006, 3), who regards Tithonus as a poor example, as his fate does not illustrate a universal law.

7 Gronewald and Daniel (2004a); (2004b).

8 West (2005) 3–6.

9 Di Benedetto (2004).

10 So Di Benedetto (2004); Luppe (2004) 7–9; West (2005) 3–4. On the question see most recently Nardella (2012).

11 West (2005) 7.

12 Gronewald and Daniel (2004a) 1, (2005); West (2005); Rawles (2006); Hammerstaedt (2009) 18–21.

13 West (2005) 1.

dence of language and thought. Finally, the Cologne papyrus preserves the original usage of ζ that must have been standard in the poet's original manuscripts; in the Alexandrian edition ζ has been replaced in non-initial position by cδ, while ζ is used in initial position for the Lesbian pronunciation of δι-.¹⁴ I have applied the spelling-conventions of the Alexandrian edition, removing both its original use of ζ and the sandhi-effects current in the earlier papyrus (e.g. τὰ]μ φιλάοιδον). The line-numbers used are those of the poem.¹⁵

× - υ υ - - υ υ - - υ υ - υ - ο

ὔμμεσ τάδε Μοΐσαν ἰ]οκ[ό]λων κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες, 1
 σπουδάσδετε καὶ τὰ]ν φιλάοιδον λιγύρα χελύνναν·
 ἔμοι δ' ἄπαλον πρίν] ποτ' [ἔ]οντα χροά γῆρας ἦδη
 κατέσκεθε, λεῦκαι δ' ἐγ]έοντο τρίχες ἐκ μελαίαν,
 βάρυς δέ μ' ὁ [θ]ῦμος πεπόηται, γόνα δ' οὐ φέροισι, 5
 τὰ δὴ ποτα λαΐψηρ' ἔον ὄρχηθ' ἴσα νεβρίοισι.

τὰ <νῦν> στεναχίδω θαμέωσ· ἀλλὰ τί κεν ποεῖην;
 ἀγήραον, ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ', οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι.
 καὶ γάρ π[ο]τ]α Τίθωνον ἔφαντο βροδόπαχυν Αὔων,
 ἔρωι δεδῆθειςαν, βάμεν' εἰς ἔσχατα γᾶσ φέροισα]ν, 10
 ἔοντα [κ]άλλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ' αὐτόν ὕμωσ ἔμαρψε
 χρόνωι πόλιον γῆρας, ἔχ]ο]ντ' ἀθανάταν ἄκοιτιν. 12

Π¹ = *P.Oxy.* 1787 fr. 1 (saec. iii p. C.); Π² = *P. Köln* inv. 21351+21376 (saec. iii a. C.)

edd.: Gronewald et Daniel 1 ὔμμεσ τάδε scripsi: ὔμμεσ πεδὰ West: φέρω τάδε edd.: γεραί-
 ρετε Di Benedetto: νῦν δὴ μ' ἔτι vel νῦν μ' ἦδεα Lidov, spatio brevius: τέττιξ ἄτε Livrea |
 Μοΐσαν ἰοκό]λων Stiebitz 2 σπουδάσδετε West (σπουδάσετε scripserit librarius, cf. v. 7):
 χορεύσατε Di Benedetto: λάβοισα πάλιν vel ἔλοισα πάλιν edd.: φιλημμι Lidov, spatio
 multo brevius | καὶ West: κατ Ferrari: δὲ Lidov | τὰ]μ edd. e Π² | φιλάοιδον intellexit
 Maas 3 ἔμοι Snell: κέκαρφ' edd.: νῦν γάρ μ' Lidov post Di Benedetto | δ' Di Benedetto:
 μὲν Snell | ἄπαλον edd. | πρίν Di Benedetto: μοι edd. | ποτ' [ἔ]οντα edd. 4 κατέσκεθε
 West (cf. Hes. fr. 133.4, ἄλφος γάρ χροά πάντα κατέσχ(ε)θ): ἐπέλλαβε West, fort. brevius:
 διώλεσε Di Benedetto, brevius: ὄγμοισ(ιν) vel ὄγμοι δ' ἔνι edd. | λεῦκαι Hunt | δ' Lobel: τ'
 Hunt | ἐγ]έοντο Hunt | ἐκ Π¹: ἐγ Π² 5 θ]ῦμος edd. 6 νεβρίοισι West: νεβρίοισιν Π¹Π² 7 τὰ
 <νῦν> supplevi: <ῆ> τὰ Burzacchini et Führer, bene: <ζά> τὰ Lundon: <ταῦ>τα vel <δν δὲ>
 (i.e. ἀνὰ δὲ) edd.: τὰ <μὲν> West: τὰ <γ'> ὄν- Tsantsanoglou | στεναχίδω West: στεναχίζω
 Π²: deest Π¹ | κεν Π¹: κεν Π² 9 π[ο]τ]α edd. 10 δεδῆθειςαν scripsi: δ. α.εισαμ Π² (deest Π¹):
 δ' ἐ]λάθειςαν Piccioni: διελάθειςαν Tsantsanoglou: δε]λάθειςαμ leg. Hammerstaedt:
 δέ]πας εἰσάμ- edd. | litt. δ certa est, tum ε potius quam ιε, tum partem sup. litt. η esse cen-
 sent edd., ubi tamen Tsantsanoglou λ legit; deinde litt. α mihi certa videtur; dein θ vel ς, ο |

14 Bowie (1981) 138.

15 Editors's note: since the lunate c is used in the papyrus fragment and the critical apparatus of the Sappho poem, we have decided to keep it throughout R. Janko's piece, so as to avoid having side by side two different types of sigma.

βάμεν' divisit West: εἰσαμβάμεν' edd., quod tamen εἰσομβάμεν' Aeolice scriptum fuerit, ut monuit Blümel | φέροισα[v Stiebitz 11 ἔοντα [κ] | ἄλον vel ἔοντ' ἄ[π]αλον edd. 12 πόλιον vel πόλιον edd. | ἔχ[ο]ντ' edd.

Pursue the violet-laden Muses' handsome gifts,
my children, and their loud-voiced lyre so dear to song;
But me – my skin which once was soft is withered now
by age, my hair has turned to white which once was black,
my heart has been weighed down, my knees give no support
which once were nimble in the dance like little fawns.

How often I lament these things. But what to do?
No human being can escape decrepitude.
For people used to think that Dawn with rosy arms,
by love instructed, took Tithonus fine and young
to reach the edges of the earth; yet still grey age
in time did seize him, though *his* consort cannot die.¹⁶

My reconstruction agrees with those of Di Benedetto and West¹⁷ in seeing a contrast between the girls and the speaker rather than between the actions of singing and dancing, as Lidov suggested.¹⁸ But it differs in four places from what has previously been proposed. In line 1, I have combined elements suggested by West and the first editors. West's ὕμμεσ forms an excellent contrast with ἔμοι δ', which Di Benedetto rightly desiderated in line 3.¹⁹ But I do not understand West's πεδά. Perhaps it is meant to govern the accusative δῶρα and form a tmesis with σπουδάσδετε, but no compound μετασπουδάζω is attested. His translation 'Muses' gifts' corresponds to the natural sense of the passage. Accordingly, τάδε, proposed by the first editors, should be retained. The deictic points vividly to the festivities which the performers can see with their own eyes, but which must be left to our own imaginations. One can show that the missing letters fit the spacing by drawing them onto the image of the papyrus.²⁰ For reasons of spacing I

16 This is a revision of my prior translation (Janko 2005), which is reprinted in Obbink (2009) 14–15, where its authorship is erroneously ascribed to West.

17 Di Benedetto (2004); West (2005).

18 Lidov (2009) 84–5, 93–4. He proposes an elided μ' for μοι in line 1, indicating a dative of the possessor without an ἔστι. The elision is possible in this dialect, but the construction would be found impossibly obscure by readers or listeners. His reading remains possible, but better supplements are needed if it is to be sustained. His objection to τ'ὰν in line 2 can be met by taking it as 'their', i.e. belonging to the Muses.

19 Di Benedetto (2004).

20 There is an image of the main portion of the papyrus, *P.Köln Inv. nr. 21351*, at http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/NRWakademie/papyrologie/Verstreutepub/21351_ZPE147.html. The left halves of the final five lines are preserved in *Inv. nr. 21376*, a photograph of which is printed

also prefer West's alternative κατέκκεθε in line 4 to ἐπέλλαβε, which he printed, and to Di Benedetto's διώλεσε.²¹ Lastly, I supply the lost syllable in line 6 as νῦν, since this is easier than West's μὲν *solitarium*; an indication of time reinforces the contrast between past youth and present age, and νῦν often has the sense of 'as things are' and conveys a sense of resignation to current misfortune.²²

The lacuna in line 10 is the worst *crux* in the poem. It has seemed impossible to think of a feminine passive participle that fills the space, matches the traces, and has the right kind and number of syllables; as West noted, ἔρωτι cannot be read and the obvious aorist passive participle δαμείσαν is one syllable too short. However, scholars' failure to identify such a participle does not mean that none exists, and that we must fall back on the first editor's 'cup' (δέπας), as Carrara holds.²³ At first I sought a present indicative active participle of a contracted verb in -ε-, since its accusative singular feminine would end in -εῖσαν. This is the normal formation in Lesbian dialect: compare ἄδου φωνεῖσας ὑπακούει καὶ γελαῖσας ἰμέροεν (fr. 31.3–5), where φωνεῖσας is from φωνέω, or rather φώνημ(μ)ι. But my original idea ἔρωι λαλάγεισαν 'murmuring with love' proved upon inspection of both the digital photograph and the original not to match the traces, since the second doubtful letter is certainly not A.²⁴ Hammerstaedt regarded the papyrological basis for textual restoration as δε[]αθειασμ, observing that the only proposed supplements that match the traces are δέπας εἶσαν (Gronewald and Daniel), δέμα θεῖσαν (Danielewicz), δέμας εἶσαν (Austin), and δέμας εἰσαμβάμεν' (Livrea).²⁵ Tsantsanoglou has described the traces as follows: 'a Δ is clearly visible. After that, the faint traces of the middle of a vertical are perceptible, apparently an iota, followed by at least two parallel horizontals, most likely an epsilon. The papyrus fragments, as seen in the Web photograph, have to be adjusted as to the size of the gap between them. ... Then, the upper part of the left-hand oblique and, faintly, the foot of the right-hand oblique of a triangular letter, apparently a Λ, are visible, followed by a more or less clear A with a

in *ZPE* 149 (2004), 1. As the papyrus is mounted, the gap after approximately the sixth letter is too wide; see further the plates in Hammerstaedt (2009). Digital editing of these images, by bringing the separated fragments together, helps to resolve the *crux* in line 10.

21 Lidov (2009, 94) too prints κατέκκεθε.

22 For other proposals see Lundon (2007); Hammerstaedt (2009) 25–6.

23 Carrara (2011) 83 n. 6.

24 Bettarini's palaeographical objections (2007, 6) are correct; Carrara's point that the participle should have applied to Tithonus rather than Eos (2011, 104 n. 61) could not have the same force, since, as I show below, the sexual roles in the poem are thoroughly intermingled. Bettarini's own proposal ἄν[ι] ἄφεισαν (2007, 6–7) entails serious difficulties, both metrical, since it demands an unparalleled synizesis, and dialectal, since the correct Lesbian form would be ἄπεισαν.

25 Hammerstaedt (2009) 26, citing Danielewicz (2006), Austin (2007), and Livrea (2007).

marked serif in its right-hand foot ... There follows the left-hand part of a rounded letter.²⁶ I certainly agree that the initial letter is the usual small Δ with a raised baseline. However, the second letter, once the upright to the left and the horizontals to the right are digitally reunited, is by Occam's razor surely E rather than IE, since we should not posit any more uprights than are necessary (the papyrus is so early that it still uses the angular epigraphic form of E). Like Tsantsanoglou, I perceived traces of a third, triangular, letter, i.e. Λ or Δ, where others have supplied M. The following A is certain, and the last damaged letter is undoubtedly a rounded Θ or C.

On this basis Tsantsanoglou proposed ἔρωι διελάθεισαν, 'pierced by love', from the compound verb διελαύνω; independently, Piccioni proposed ἔρωι δ' ἐ[λ]άθεισαν, 'driven by love', from the simplex ἐλαύνω. These two proposals are much closer than those listed by Hammerstaedt to the traces in the papyrus. Although the scansion of δι(α)- as ζ(α)- is not impossible, since there is the parallel ζάειαι from δι-ἄημι,²⁷ to introduce the particle δέ so late in its sentence is extremely difficult, to say the least.²⁸ I now suggest instead ἔρωι δεδάθεισαν, which is syntactically and metrically unproblematic. This hitherto unattested participle is from the old root *δαc- seen in the verb *δάημι with the meaning 'to learn, teach', which is based on the root that also underlies the reduplicated present διδάσκω.²⁹ Debrunner showed that the underlying Indo-European root is *d \acute{h} ns-, which yielded the aorist δαῖναι < *δαc-ῆναι 'to know', future δαίτσει, and perfect δεδάηκα 'I have learned, I know', as well as the causative present *δι-δάc-κω 'I teach', the reduplicated causative aorist active δέδαε < *de-d \acute{h} ns-et 'he taught', and the plural noun δήνεα < *d \acute{e} ns-es-a 'wiles'.³⁰ The form δεδάθεισαν will be the aorist passive participle corresponding to the third person plural aorist indicative active δέδαον, which is in Hesychius,³¹ and to the more familiar third person singular δέδαε, which appears four times in Homer and again in Hellenistic poetry.³² Here, δεδάθεισαν is in agreement with Αὖων, i.e. 'Dawn, schooled by love'. I find love's gentler approach more appropriate to the poetic

26 For further discussion of the traces see Buzzi and Piccioni (2008) 12–13.

27 Tsantsanoglou (2009), citing inc. auct. 35,7 Voigt.

28 Piccioni's parallels (2010, 73–4) do not convince, as her instances of δέ mark the beginnings of new clauses.

29 Chantraine (1968–72) i. 278; Giannakis (1997) 238–40; Beekes (2010) i. 296.

30 Debrunner (1937).

31 δέδαον· ἔδειξαν. ἐδίδαξαν (Hsch. *Lex.* δ 355 Latte).

32 *Od.* 6.233 = 23.160, ὃν Ἥφαιστος δέδαεν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη / τέχνην παντοίην; 8.448, ἐπὶ δεσμὸν ἦλε / ποικίλον, ὃν ποτέ μιν δέδαε φρεσὶ πότνια Κίρκη; 20.72, μήκος δ' ἔπορ' Ἄρτεμις ἀγνή, / ἔργα δ' Ἀθηναίη δέδαε κλυτὰ ἔργαζεσθαι.

context, in which the speaker teaches her charges, than the verb *διελαύνω* connoting violent compulsion.

II. The Tithonus Ode: structure and meaning

Let us now turn to the poem's structure. It is in stichic verse rather than the stanzas that were used in much of what we know of Sappho's oeuvre. Yet the poem has a very elegant formal structure. The scribe, and West's translation, divides the whole poem into couplets. In an English rendering based on this, Lachlan MacKinnon³³ carefully replicates the twelve lines of the original; these are printed without a break, but the incidence of heavy punctuation divides them into couplets, except for the final four lines. The version by Edwin Morgan published with it divides the poem into six three-line stanzas. In all these versions the last pair of couplets are separated only by a comma or indeed by no punctuation at all.

However, the most natural articulation of the ode divides it into two 'stanzas' of six verses each. I do not expect that we will find 'stanzas' of six verses in other poems in this metre; the poem probably falls into this pattern by accident. However, for convenience within this poem I will refer to them as such. In each stanza the first two lines form a distinct couplet. Lines 1–2 seem to exhort the young people to enjoy themselves, in contrast to the four-line description of the devastating effects of advancing age on the speaker herself. This description, and with it the first stanza, ends with a very brief comparison: her knees used to be as nimble in the dance as fawns'.

The second stanza has an identical structure. The couplet formed by lines 7–8 asks what can be done about old age, and answers that no human can be free of it. Lines 9–12 explain this iron law: 'for' (*γάρ*) not even Tithonus was immune from it, and *a fortiori* the speaker herself will not be. This mythological illustration is itself equivalent to the brief comparison with which the first stanza ends in line 6.

This perfection of form is complemented and diversified by verbal and thematic echoes between the two stanzas. These will have seemed elegant to the ancients, who were less annoyed by verbal repetition than we may be, as Pickering has shown;³⁴ indeed, they must have held that it intensified the attractive or

³³ MacKinnon (2005).

³⁴ Pickering (2000); id. (2003) 493–5, citing Pausimachus from Philodemus, *De poem.* 1.85–91 Janko.

agreeable features of the repeated words. Repetition troubled them less because the predominant mode of performance of ancient poetry was oral. Provided that the repeated sounds were agreeable, repetition was considered pleasing to the ear. Many of these echoes conform to the circular pattern known as ‘ring-composition’. Thus the ‘handsome’ gifts of line 1 are picked up in line 11 by the ‘handsome’ Tithonus near the end of the poem. The implicitly immortal Muses in the same line are counterbalanced by the explicitly ‘immortal’ spouse of the last verse. Just as the speaker was ‘once’ young (line 3), and her knees were ‘once’ nimble (line 6), so Tithonus was ‘once’ snatched by Dawn (line 9); the repetition underscores regret for the passing of youth.³⁵ ‘Old age’ has ‘grasped’ the speaker (line 3), just as Tithonus was ‘seized’ (line 11) by ‘old age’ (line 12); the word is also embedded in the privative adjective ἀγήραον in line 7. The speaker’s hair has turned ‘white’ (line 3), while ‘grey’ old age seizes Tithonus (line 12, since we cannot construe it ‘Tithonus grey with time’). The speaker’s knees do not ‘carry’ her (line 5), but Dawn ‘carried’ Tithonus off (line 10). Finally, references to flowers link line 1 (the ‘violet-bosomed Muses’) with line 9 (Dawn ‘of the rosy forearms’).

The crucial contrasts, however, are built into each stanza. The first stanza opposes youth to age. Lines 1–2 and 6 are devoted to youth—the youth of the addressees, and the lost youth of the speaker; these verses frame lines 3–5, which are mostly on old age, with glances at the speaker’s once soft skin and dark hair.

The anguished question and answer of lines 6–7 set up a different and more subtle contrast, that between immortality and agelessness, which permeates the second stanza. Old age was, notoriously, something which humans can do nothing to prevent. The phrase ‘immortal and ageless’ was part of the standard epic diction—the stock description of any divine being in Homer and Hesiod.³⁶ Line 7 asks how a human being can be ‘ageless’, and then sets up the terrible contrast between the aging Tithonus and his divine consort, who is duly called ‘immortal’ in line 12. The standard version of the myth of Tithonus and Eos, from the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* onwards, is of course that the goddess omitted to ask for her lover to have agelessness as well as immortality; thus she was landed with a partner who declined into an endless and horrifying old age from which he could never escape. As Zellner put it, ‘even given Dawn’s blunder, it would seem that Tithonus had advantages such that he would have been expect-

³⁵ On the importance of the contrast between ‘then’ and ‘now’ in the poem see Stehle (2009).

³⁶ See Janko (1981). The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) twice replaces the formulaic pattern ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον ἤματα πάντα with ἀθάνατον τ’ εἶναι καὶ ζῶειν ἤματα πάντα (221, 240), which reflects exactly the issue that is at stake there, as we shall see in §III below.

ed to have eternal youth, if anyone could. After all, he had an immortal as a lover, and was at the ends of the earth, where marvels are to be found.³⁷

Thus the poem moves from the first stanza's contrast, which is between the addressees' singing and dancing and the aging speaker's inability to join the dance, to the antithesis, in the second stanza, between old age and immortality. Here the speaker is implicitly compared with the aged Tithonus. The comparison suddenly evokes another motif, namely erotic desire. It invites its youthful audience to recognize that the speaker's aged body cannot have the appeal that the young Tithonus had for his lover. But at the same time Dawn is implicitly still married to her aged spouse. The deathless goddess is still his 'consort', the word with which the poem ends. What use could such a divine being possibly have for such a human partner?

Before we address that question, we must note one other peculiarity of the poem. Nowhere does the speaker signal her gender; this ode is unisex. Even though Greek is a highly inflected language, with a separate feminine gender in nouns and adjectives (but not in verbs, unlike Semitic languages), nowhere, in the text as it is plausibly reconstructed, does the speaker indicate her sexual identity, nowhere does she even indicate the sexual identity of the young people whom she is addressing, and nowhere does she signal whether the speaker's and the addressees' desires incline towards others belonging to the same sex, to the opposite sex, or to both. This poem could be performed by a man as easily as by a woman, and addressed to boys or both boys and girls just as easily as to girls. Not even the 'fawns' to which the speaker is compared in line 6 are gendered: the word is a neuter diminutive.³⁸

The only passage where genders are differentiated is the comparison with Tithonus. Yet here the gendering of the text is highly complex. The syntax of line 9 is so striking that it suggests that the poet was deeply aware of this question. The use of 'they used to say' (ἔφασκε) to introduce the story of Tithonus and Eos has been controversial; I believe that it can best be understood as serving multiple purposes, which we should welcome in a subtle poem. It has been proposed that (i) it indicates that this story goes back to a time before the young ad-

37 Zellner (2008) 47.

38 However, this may be less neutral than it appears, since in Thessaly, an area closely related by dialect and tradition to the settlement of Lesbos, girls undergoing puberty-rituals were called 'fawns', just as in Attica they were called 'bears'; for the probable cognate νεβρεύω, presumably once *νεβρεύω, means 'to serve Artemis'; see in Πολέμων, ἐπιστημονικὸν ἀρχαιολογικὸν περιοδικόν (Athens, 1929), 1.249 (Larissa) and IG 9(2).1123 (Demetrias), second cent. BC; cf. LSJ⁹ suppl. s.v. I thank Barbara Smith for this information.

dressees were even born;³⁹ (ii) it distances the speaker from believing the myth, particularly if one version of the story, implicit in Homer (*Il.* 11.1–2, *Od.* 5.1–2), was that Eos and Tithonus lived happily ever after, like Zeus and Ganymede;⁴⁰ and (iii), it suggests that going to the ends of the world might be expected to lead to immortality, just as Croesus was taken to the land of Hyperboreans.⁴¹ None of these possibilities conflicts with the others, and they can all be accepted. It has not been noted, however, that ἔφαντο also obscures who does what to whom. The first person mentioned is Tithonus, the second Eos; only at the end of line 10 does it become clear that Eos is the subject and Tithonus the object, since she is carrying him off rather than the converse. But the gender of the possessor is reversed in the last line, where it is Tithonus who ‘has’ the immortal spouse; this is equally unexpected, since once old age has reduced him to a completely debilitated state he depends entirely on her. This reversal puts the lovers on an equal footing. The complexity of this passage suggests that the lack of gender-markers in the earlier part of the poem is deliberate.

This comparison between the speaker and Tithonus would be completely unproblematic if this poem were held to be the work of a man. Indeed, if a male speaker were addressing a chorus of girls, he could easily flatter his audience by likening them to the goddess. Such addresses by an aged male poet to a chorus of girls are known in archaic Greece, as witness Alcman fr. 26.⁴² In this fragment the speaker complains that he is too old to take part in the dance, and therefore wishes he could become a κηρύλος, i.e. a male halcyon,⁴³ so that he could fly across the waves amongst the (female) halcyons:

οὐ μ' ἔτι, παρσενικαὶ μελιάρυες ἰαρόφωνοι,
 γυῖα φέρην δύναται· βάλε δὴ βάλε κηρύλος εἶην,
 ὅς τ' ἐπὶ κύματος ἄνθος ἄμ' ἀλκυόνεσσι ποτῆται
 νηδεὲς ἦτορ ἔχων, ἀλιπόρφυρος ἰαρόσ ὄρνις.

Maidens of honeyed song and holy voice,
 my knees can bear me no longer. Let me be a halcyon,
 who flies with his ladies on the spume of the wave,
 fearless in heart, a bird that is sacred and blue as the sea.

³⁹ I owe this attractive idea to Lardinois (2009) 47.

⁴⁰ So Meyerhoff (1984) 190; Bettarini (2007) 2–4. Cf. Carrara (2011) 92–3.

⁴¹ So Zellner (2008) 47, 50–1, followed by Brown (2011) and Carrara (2011).

⁴² The comparison, first made by Calame (1983, 474), is also in Lardinois (2009) 51–2. I thank Richard Seaford for making me look again at this poem.

⁴³ One source shows that it was believed that this bird dies having intercourse (*Suda* s.v. κηρύλος, iii. 112 Adler).

The speaker calls his addressees ‘maidens’. Although he does not express his gender in the four lines that survive, we infer from the biographical tradition that he is male; the genders in the simile correspond to this difference, since the single male wishes to consort with the plural females. Calame⁴⁴ has shown that both Alcman and Sappho composed poetry for choruses of girls to be performed in religious festivals of various kinds, but above all rites of puberty and marriage. They would also have led the performances, or at least represent themselves as doing so. Hence the parallel with Alcman should be highly pertinent.

If, in the Tithonus ode, the speaker is a woman, the situation becomes far more complex, because the genders in the myth are reversed. The speaker compares herself to the male Tithonus; just as she is ‘carried’ by her youthful knees (line 5), so Eos ‘carries’ the youthful Tithonus to the ends of the earth (line 10). Conversely, the speaker implicitly compares her audience to the dawn-goddess; yet there is also a comparison between the goddess and the speaker, since the goddess wants to free her companion from old age, just as the speaker wishes she could become free of it.

The fact that the speaker compares herself to Tithonus may seem on the face of it to suggest that the poem is after all by a man, and so not the work of Sappho. Archaic lyricists could and did write in the *personae* of others, even of the opposite sex. Sappho’s contemporary and compatriot Alcaeus apparently wrote a poem in which the speaker is a woman (fr. 10B). But that poem is incomplete, and the speaker’s identity could have been revealed by a narrator at the end, as in Archilochus fr. 19, where Aristotle⁴⁵ tells us that Charon the carpenter is speaking (he could have known this only from the poem itself), or fr. 122, where, as he says in the same passage, a father (Lycambes?) is speaking about his daughter. Likewise, Horace undercuts his *Epod.* 2, the celebration of country life, by revealing at the end that it is spoken by the money-lender Alfius. Horace also wrote a poem with no narrator, in which a male and a female speaker alternates,⁴⁶ and in this he no doubt imitates an earlier model. Sappho could certainly have imagined herself into other roles than the biographical; that is, after all, essential to poetry. However, the fact remains that in her oeuvre there is no definite case in which she does this. On the contrary, the narrator identifies herself with the author, giving the name Sappho, in two places. In fr. 1.19–20, Aphrodite asks the narrator ‘who is wronging you, Sappho?’, and in fr. 94.5 the departing

⁴⁴ Calame (1977).

⁴⁵ Arist. *Rhet.* 3.17, 1418^b23.

⁴⁶ *Od.* 3.9.

girl says to the narrator ‘Sappho, I am truly leaving you against my will’.⁴⁷ Thus it seems unlikely, if our poem is by Sappho, that the *persona* of the narrator is not also that of the author.

Other explanations for this gender-reversal are possible. First, Sappho could well be using a reversal of gender to indicate her ability to empathise with others. Similar gender-reversals are known in the work of the (presumably male) poet Homer. The most famous case is at *Odyssey* 8.523–31. When Demodocus sings of the fall of Troy, Odysseus, who took part in sacking that city, weeps like a woman who sees her husband killed defending their city. The simile, given in the narrator’s voice, is developed at length, so as fully to bring out the woman’s misery:

ὥς δὲ γυνὴ κλαίῃσι φίλον πόσιν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα,
 ὅς τε ἔης πρόσθεν πόλιος λαῶν τε πέσσειν,
 ἄστεϊ καὶ τεκέεσσιν ἀμύνων νηλεὲς ἦμαρ·
 ἢ μὲν τὸν θνήσκοντα καὶ ἀσπαίροντα ἰδοῦσα
 ἀμφ’ αὐτῶι χυμένη λίγα κωκύει· οἱ δέ τ’ ὄπισθε
 κόπτοντες δούρεσσι μετάφρνον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμους
 εἴρερον εἰσανάγουσι, πόνον τ’ ἐχέμεν καὶ οἴζυν·
 τῆς δ’ ἐλεεινοτάτῳ ἄχεϊ φθινύθουσι παρειαί·
 ὥς Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐλεεινὸν ὑπ’ ὀφρύσι δάκρυον εἴβεν.

As cries a woman fallen about her dear husband,
 who falls before his own citadel, before his own people,
 warding his town and his children from the day of no mercy—
 she, seeing him dying and gasping for breath,
 draping herself over his body keens with a shriek—
 but they with spears from behind beat her back and her shoulders,
 driving her into bondage, so she can have labour and torment;
 her cheeks wither away in pain that needs pity.
 Just so Odysseus shed a pitiful tear from under his brows.

What is so remarkable about this reversal of roles is that Odysseus is himself the attacking warrior whose wiles have caused the kind of destruction that the woman laments. The reversal of aggressor and defender is compounded by the reversal of gender, as if the poetic narrative brings out the complete humanity of the veteran, who, upon hearing the tale of war, is compelled to recognize the terrible losses that it entails both for the victor and for the defeated. Two similar reversals of gender appear in similes uttered by Achilles. At *Iliad* 9.323–5 the warrior compares himself to a mother-bird who toils ceaselessly to bring back morsels for her chicks. Achilles is a famously sensitive hero, who learns to em-

47 Sappho is also addressed in damaged contexts at fr. 65.5 and 133.2.

pathise even with the father of his worst enemy; the gender-reversal is one way in which the poet indicates this aspect of his character. He is no less sympathetic towards Patroclus at *Iliad* 16.7–11, even though he disguises his sympathy:

τίπτε δεδάκρυσαι Πατρόκλεες, ἤϋτε κούρη
νηπίη, ἢ θ' ἅμα μητρὶ θεοῦς ἀνελέσθαι ἀνώγει
εἰανοῦ ἀπτομένη, καί τ' ἐκκυμένην κατερύκει,
δακρυόεσσα δέ μιν ποτιδέρκεται, ὄφρ' ἀνέληται·
τῆι ἴκελος, Πάτροκλε, τέρεν κατὰ δάκρυον εἶβεις.

Why are you tearful, Patroclus, resembling an infant
who toddles after her mother, asking to be picked up,
clutching her dress, holding her back in her haste,
looking at her through her tears, until she's picked up?
Like her, Patroclus, you're shedding a delicate tear.

Patroclus is derisively likened to a toddler who clings to her mother's skirts asking to be picked up. Yet even here Achilles' own simile turns the gruff warrior into the child's mother.⁴⁸ In these cases male speakers in the poetry of a male poet compare themselves to female figures. Thus Sappho could well be doing the same thing in reverse, both to show her ability to empathise with others, and indeed to show that her poetry is as good as any man's.

In addition, Sappho could have written a poem that could be performed by speakers of either gender and to audiences of either or both genders, since this would give it a wider diffusion and hence a greater success. Stehle⁴⁹ has shown convincingly how myths like that of Tithonus and Eos, in which a mortal man has intercourse with a goddess, bring into conflict two basic Greek hierarchies, male versus female and divine versus human, and thereby open up a space in which the female partner can occupy a non-traditional, dominant position in the relationship. Stehle noted that Sappho is strongly attracted to this theme, and indeed that she focuses precisely on the moment when the man is weakest, as she does in the case of Tithonus.⁵⁰ These are all very valuable explanations, and they can all apply at the same time; the best poetic creativity is of course multiply determined.

However, a further explanation for the reversal of gender in the poem, which I regard as the most important, is that there was in this case a particular purpose to Sappho's self-identification with Tithonus—a detail of his story that could

⁴⁸ See further Janko (1992) 316–17.

⁴⁹ Stehle (1996) 197–210.

⁵⁰ Stehle (1996) 193–6, 219–25.

have been known to her entire audience, but which is unknown to all but a few of her new readers of today. Just as the aged poet Alcman wishes in fr. 26 that he could turn into a bird to consort with the dancers, so too, in legend, the aged Tithonus turned into another winged creature, a cicada, that can continue to sing for ever – an ideal image for the aged poetess herself, with her well-attested wish to have her poetry confer glory beyond the grave; Nünlist already suspected, even before the new papyrus completed the damaged verses on Tithonus, that his transformation into a cicada here was an image for the poet.⁵¹ Out of tact or subtlety, Sappho leaves it to her audience to fill in the missing ending of the tale.

III. Tithonus and the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5)

Tithonus' name is of obscure origin;⁵² Callimachus' name for Dawn, Τῆτώ,⁵³ may seem to suggest an original meaning 'husband of dawn'.⁵⁴ According to Homer,⁵⁵ he was the son of Laomedon and brother of Priam. Hesiod tells us that, in turn, he begat by the dawn-goddess Eos the Ethiopian Memnon and his brother Emathion.⁵⁶ Apollodorus summarises these traditions, adding that his mother was either Leucippe, Strymo the daughter of Scamander,⁵⁷ or Placia the daughter of Otreus; his sisters were Hesione, Cilla, and Astyoche, and his half-brother was Bucolion.⁵⁸ The earliest attested version of Tithonus' fate is that he was immortalized and lived with Eos, since Homer says that he lives with Eos, from whose bed she rises each day; this must imply that he was immortal and ageless like her.⁵⁹ It is not clear, as we shall see, whether this is the oldest form of the story, but I think it most probable. As if to contradict this tradition, Horace in-

51 Nünlist (1998) 47, 54–6.

52 von Kamptz (1982, 363–4) records various modern explanations, comparing the Etruscan form *Tinθun* and the Cappadocian place-name *Tintunia*, which, he supposes, might support an Anatolian etymology. Cf. Chantraine (1968–80) ii. 1122 (s.v. Τῆτῶνec).

53 Fr. 21.3 with the notes of Pfeiffer and Harder.

54 W. Brandenstein, 'Tithonos', *RE* Suppl. vi. 174.

55 *Il.* 20.236–8; *Il.* 11.1–2, *Od.* 5.1–2.

56 *Th.* 979–80.

57 J. Tzetzes gives the name of Scamander's daughter as Rhoeo or Strymo (schol. ad *Lyc. Alex.* 18, ed. Scheer); the name 'Rhoeo' may come from Hellenic (see below).

58 *Bibl.* 3.146.1.

59 So, rightly, Meyerhoff (1984) 190, followed by Bettarini (2007) 2–4, and Carrara (2011) 92–3.

sists, from his usual Epicurean perspective,⁶⁰ that even Tantalus, Tithonus, Minos, and Euphorbus/Pythagoras all succumbed to our common human lot, which is death:

*occidit et Pelopis genitor, conviva deorum,
Tithonusque remotus in auras
et Iovis arcanis Minos admissus, habentque
Tartara Panthoidem iterum Orco demissum.*⁶¹

There died both Pelops' father, who'd dined with the gods,
Tithonus, swept into the breezes,
and Minos, let into Zeus' secrets; and Tartarus
holds Panthoides, twice sent to Hell.

The familiar tragic version of Tithonus' fate first appears in two sources: Mimnermus from Smyrna or Colophon, and the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*. Mimnermus, a generation before Sappho's time, cites Tithonus as an example of something to be avoided at all costs—old age. For Mimnermus, even the most handsome man, once youth is gone, is not honoured or loved by boys even if he is their father.⁶² Youth is what the poet loves; would that it had lasted longer! It is brief as a dream, whereas 'painful, ugly old age hangs over ones's head, hateful and without honour; it makes a man unrecognizable, harming his sight and his mind once it buries him'.⁶³ This cult of youth contrasts with the respect for age often expressed in the Homeric poems. Mimnermus continues:

Τιθωνῶι μὲν ἔδωκεν ἔχειν κακὸν ἄφθιτον (οἶτον),
γῆρας, ὃ καὶ θανάτου ρίγιον ἀργαλέου.⁶⁴

To Tithonus he gave an evil, immortal <fate>,
old age, more chilling still than painful death.

The poet takes for granted the version of the myth in which Eos asked him for immortality for her spouse and obtained it, but omitted to ask at the same time for eternal youth for him, with disastrous consequences. It is presumably Zeus who 'gave Tithonus an evil, endless fate as his possession, old age, that

⁶⁰ See Frischer (1984).

⁶¹ *Odes* 1.28.7–10. See Carrara (2011) 94 n. 32, with discussion of the contortions of the Horatian commentators who tried to emend Tithonus away.

⁶² Fr. 3 West.

⁶³ Fr. 5 West.

⁶⁴ Mimnermus fr. 4 West. For the supplement, see Janko (1990); the usual <αἰεί> does not explain why a word fell out, whereas the loss after ΑΦΘΙΤΟΝ of ΟΙΤΟΝ would be easy.

is more chilling than even painful death'; in the myth it was, after all, Zeus who gave him immortality.

The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* is the other early source for this version. The poet brings in Tithonus when Aphrodite, who has terrified her lover Anchises by appearing to him as a goddess after their intercourse, sets out to reassure the Trojan prince, but also to express her chagrin at the limits that Zeus sets to her power. She promises him a child, notes that Anchises' family were always 'close to the gods', and then recounts the story of Ganymede, who was snatched away by Zeus and given eternal youth among the immortals. Zeus gives his grieving father Tros magical horses in recompense (202–17). The following⁶⁵ story of Eos and Tithonus, whom she snatched because he was 'like the immortals', has a worse outcome. 'She went to ask the son of Cronus of the dark clouds for him to be immortal and to live for ever. Zeus nodded in agreement and fulfilled her wish. A fool, lady Eos did not think in her mind to ask for youth, and that he *rub off* baneful age' (220–4). As long as youth held Tithonus, he lived happily with Eos by the streams of Ocean at the end of the world (225–7). 'But when the first grey hairs fell from his lovely head and well-bearded chin, lady Eos kept from his bed, but nursed him in her halls with corn and ambrosia, giving him fine clothes' (228–32). The word for 'nurse', ἀπιτάλλω, is normally used of infants and children. The dénouement is grim: 'but when hateful age crushed him completely and he could not move or lift any of his limbs, this seemed to her the best plan. She put him in a chamber, and set on it shining doors. His voice flows ineffably, but there is no strength such as there was before in his bent limbs' (233–8). Aphrodite concludes from this that 'I would not choose for you to be among the immortals and to live for ever in such a state' (239–40). She insists that hateful old age is inevitable for human beings, and will envelop him too (244–5). His consolation is, as she has already told him (196–7), that his son by her will have a continuing line of descendants in the Troad; not even the tree-nymphs who will rear Aeneas are immortal—even they die with their trees, albeit after centuries (257–72). As King showed, Aphrodite's argument in this speech is that old age is inevitable for mortals unless Zeus grants escape from it, and he will not do this for Anchises: 'the story is cut short at a point which must terrify the listening Anchises . . . she thus makes human aging appear almost as the mediating term between Ganymedes and Tithonus; unlike Gany-

65 The combination of these two stories in the same order recurs in Ibycus, fr. 289 Page (τὰ εἰρημένα ὑπὸ Ἰβύκου ἐν οἷς περὶ τῆς Γανυμήδους ἀρπαγῆς εἶπεν ἐν τῇ εἰς Γοργίαν ὠιδῇ, καὶ ἐπιφέρει περὶ τῆς Ἡοῦς ὡς ἤρπασε Τιθωνόν, quoted by schol. ad A. R. 3.114–17); hence I suspect that Ibycus knew this passage of the *Hymn*, just as fr. 282.18–27 proves that he knew Homer's *Iliad* 2.484–92 and Hesiod's *Works and Days* 649–60 (Barron 1969, 134).

medes, Anchises will remain mortal, but unlike Tithonus he will age in a way that is οὐλόμενον' (246).⁶⁶

In many extant versions of the story other than those of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* and of Mimnermus there is eventually some consolation for Tithonus and his lover. This consolation is that, once his old age has become completely unendurable, Tithonus is turned into a cicada. This variant first appears in the fifth-century historian Hellanicus of Lesbos: 'Day fell in love with Tithonus, the son of Laomedon and brother of Priam, and had by him a son Memnon. When he (i.e. Tithonus) had become spent by a long life, the goddess turned him into a cicada. This is why the poet (i.e. Homer) compares the councillors, his relatives, to cicadas'. It is not clear whether the last sentence belongs to Hellanicus or to the well informed *Mythographus Homericus* who quotes him.⁶⁷

The metamorphosis of Tithonus is usually deemed an accretion to the earlier, tragic form of the myth, since its earliest datable occurrence is later than the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.⁶⁸ However, this is in fact another among many cases where a later source preserves a very ancient variant of a myth. Kakridis⁶⁹ was the first to argue that the motif of Tithonus' ceaseless (ἄσπετος) voice (*HHymn to Aphr.* 237), which is otherwise unexplained in the *Hymn*, shows that its composer already knew, and even presupposes, Tithonus' metamorphosis into a cicada.⁷⁰ The poet suppressed this story, because it contradicts the argument that Aphrodite needs to make to Anchises; for, although it is a lowly, even ugly, insect, the cicada was believed to have an immortality of a sort, since it was thought to feed on nothing but dew and to be able to rejuvenate itself by shed-

⁶⁶ King (1989) 79–80; cf. Smith (1987) 77–82.

⁶⁷ Τιθωνοῦ τοῦ Λαομέδοντος, Πριάμου δὲ ἀδελφοῦ, ἡράσθη ἡ Ἥμερα, ἐξ οὐπερ ἐποίησεν υἱὸν Μέμνονα. μακρῶι δὲ βίωι δαπανηθέντος ἐκείνου μετέβαλεν αὐτὸν εἰς τέττιγα ἢ θεός. διὸ δὴ αὐτοῦ τοὺς συγγενεῖς δημογέροντας τέττιξιν εἰκάζει ὁ ποιητής (sc. Homerus). ἰστορεῖ Ἑλληνικός (fr. 140 Jacoby ap. schol. D ad Hom. *Il.* 3.151). Jacoby in his note *ad loc.* thinks Hellanicus is cited only for the genealogy, and is followed by Pfeiffer (1928, 325 n. 1). The D-scholium deriving from the *Mythographus Homericus* are erudite: cf. Kakridis (1930) 26 n. 4; Janko (1986) 51–5.

⁶⁸ See, for instance, the scepticism of King (1986) 27–30; Edmunds (2009) 65 n. 41, 67 n. 43. Geissler (2005) 107 n. 12, is more circumspect.

⁶⁹ Kakridis (1930), followed by Davies and Kathirithamby (1986) 126 n. 97, and King (1989) 80. Forbes Irving (1990, 318–19) rejects this on the weak grounds that, when Eos ceases to feed Tithonus, she leaves him to his fate, that the transformation is based on the simile at *Iliad* 3.151 (which I find most improbable), and that the legend that cicadas feed on dew makes them suitable lovers of dawn (this last point proves nothing about the date of the legend). For similar arguments see Carrara (2011) 107.

⁷⁰ This central point is put backwards by Carrara (2011) 106–7, who implausibly suggests that the cicada's legendary origin was based on the babbling of old Tithonus, neglecting the evidence that Homeric poetry tended to suppress metamorphoses (see next n.).

ding its skin periodically, like a snake. Such a suppression also matches the tendency of more elevated epic compositions like Homer's (and the *HHymn to Aphrodite*) to play down or conceal more egregious types of metamorphosis,⁷¹ and indeed the immortalizations of heroes like Heracles or Achilles that were so prevalent in the Epic Cycle, as Griffin demonstrated.⁷² Kakridis added that Eos seems to stop feeding Tithonus once he is locked away, in just the same way as the Greeks believed that the cicada feeds on nothing but dew. Since one late source, which accords with Hellanicus in that it calls the goddess 'Day' rather than 'Dawn', adds that once Tithonus had grown old she used to carry him around in a basket like a baby in a cradle, this detail too may go back to Hellanicus.⁷³ Tithonus is enclosed just as a cicada is shut in a basket, which was a common prank in Aetolia when Kakridis was a child.⁷⁴ With old age the human body shrinks, and if one grew older for ever it would presumably shrink infinitely. Horace hints at this metamorphosis when he writes 'longa Tithonum *minuit* senectus', i.e. 'a long old age *reduced* Tithonus'.⁷⁵

Kakridis rightly argues that the myth of Tithonus was an aetiology for the cicada's extraordinary life and song. Perhaps the story even incorporated the fact only male cicadas sing; this characteristic, familiar to Aristotle and Aelian,⁷⁶ was already known to the comic poet Xenarchus, who jokes that they are lucky to have silent wives.⁷⁷ In any case, Plato followed in the footsteps of the first myth-makers when he playfully invented a human origin for cicadas: they are men who were so enchanted by the singing of the Muses that they forgot to eat and drink as they sang, and were turned into creatures that could sing with-

71 Kakridis (1930) 27–8; cf. Griffin (1977) 40–1. Homer and Hesiod knew of many transformations into birds (Janko 1992 on *Il.* 13.62–5 and 14.290–1). One suspects, for instance, that the surprising array of wild animals that greet Aphrodite on Ida and then mate under her influence (*HHymn to Aphr.* 69–74) is a bowdlerized version of a Near Eastern tradition that Ishtar turns her former lovers into animals (*Epic of Gilgamesh* tablet VI).

72 Cf. Griffin (1977).

73 J. Tzetzes, schol. ad Lyc. *Alex.* 18 Scheer: φασι γοῦν ὅτι τὸν Τιθωνὸν τοῦτον κύνεινον ἔσχεν ἡ Ἥμερα, ἐξ οὗ γενναῖα Μέμνονα καὶ Ἥμαθίωνα. ἀθάνατον δὲ τὸν Τιθωνὸν ποιήσασα ἐπελάθετο ποιήσαι καὶ ἀγήρω. γηράσαντα δὲ τοσοῦτον ὡς ἐν ταλάρῳ καὶ λίκνῳ αὐτὸν περιφερόμενον δίκην βρεφυλλίου καθεύδειν εἰς τέττιγα μετέβαλεν.

74 Kakridis (1930) 31 n. 20; in antiquity crickets commonly suffered this fate, as is attested by a series of epitaphs of crickets that died in their cages (*AP* 7.189, 193–5, 197–8). An epigram of Anyte (*AP* 7.190) shows that it happened to a cicada too (Kakridis 1930, 31–2 with n. 21). Cf. Longus 1.174.

75 *Od.* 2.16.30, my emphasis; cf. Kakridis (1930) 32–3. Horace also knows of the variant in which Tithonus was immortalized (*Od.* 1.28.7–10), as we saw above, n. [60].

76 Arist. *HA* 4.7, 532^b17, 5.30, 556^b11; Ael. *NA* 1.20.

77 εἶτ' εἰς ἰν οἱ τέττιγες οὐκ εὐδαίμονες, / ὧν ταῖς γυναῖξιν οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν φωνῆς ἔνι; (fr. 14 K.–A.).

out food or drink until they died, while after death they report to the Muses who among men honours those goddesses.⁷⁸

The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* is intended for an audience that knew of a dynasty in the Troad claiming descent from Aeneas.⁷⁹ One wonders, indeed, whether it originated on Lesbos, since it has elements of Aeolic dialect and shares vocabulary with Sappho, who may imitate it.⁸⁰ Its dating has been highly contested; this proved so difficult to pin down, whether by statistics or by literary arguments, that my own view of the matter has fluctuated. On the one hand, the linguistic data that I compiled point to a date contemporary with Homer's *Odyssey*.⁸¹ However, outliers among the statistics suggest a date contemporary with Hesiod;⁸² there are also many post-Homeric innovations in formulae.⁸³ If the latter data are reliable, the poem's diction has been affected by 'false archaism', i. e. by the poet learning from much older texts which had already received a form fixed by writing. Adopting a different approach, on the basis of literary *imitatio* I concluded that the hymn postdates Hesiod's *Theogony* but is imitated in his *Works and Days* and in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.⁸⁴ However, Faulkner has advanced persuasive arguments that the hymn borrows from both of Hesiod's poems;⁸⁵ if he is right, as now seems to me more likely, its composition must fall between Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Thus it probably antedates Mimnermus, who was active in the late seventh century. In this context, however, the only conclusion that matters is that the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* antedates Sappho, as Mimnermus certainly does, since her contemporary Solon responds to the latter's wish to die at sixty rather than grow old.⁸⁶

It is surely no coincidence that, like Sappho, Hellanicus, who first recounts Tithonus' metamorphosis, was from Lesbos; given Tithonus' genealogy, this tale

78 Plato, *Phaedr.* 259a–b.

79 See Faulkner (2008) 3–10, 47–50. On elements of Aeolic dialect in it, see Janko (1982) 176–9.

80 Janko (1982) 169–70, noting the parallels between *HHymn to Aphr.* 12–15 and Sappho fr. 44.12–20, including the rare word $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\iota}\nu\eta$. For more parallels cf. Carrara (2011) 85 n. 12.

81 This is the conclusion supported, after a careful restudy of the data, by Rodda (2016) esp. 96–101, who, however, acknowledges the complexity of the problem and is concerned that the method of linguistic clustering may not work in this case, and that dialectal influences and 'false archaism' may be involved.

82 Janko (1982) 151–80.

83 Hoekstra (1968) 38–48; Faulkner (2008) 27–31.

84 Janko (1982) 225–8.

85 Faulkner (2008) 35–8, 47–50; his arguments cause me to retract my second thoughts about the value of *exemplum* and *imitatio* for dating the hymn, where I discounted the abundant evidence for its lateness relative to Homer (Janko 2012, 21 n. 3).

86 Solon fr. 20 West.

must have been invented and diffused in the north-east Aegean before it became pan-Hellenic in distribution. Whether or not the explanation of Homer's verse where Priam's councillors, 'good speakers', are compared with cicadas that 'sit on a tree in the forest and let forth a flowing voice'⁸⁷ is also owed to Hellanicus, it can hardly be accidental that the councillors belong to Tithonus' family and are stated to be worn out with old age but good speakers; speaking is all cicadas can do.⁸⁸ It follows that Homer, too, knew of two versions of the fate of Tithonus, his immortalization and his transformation into a cicada.

No artistic representations of Tithonus' old age have been identified,⁸⁹ but his transformation into a cicada is mentioned in many other sources from the fourth century BC onwards. Aristotle's pupil Clearchus of Soli says that 'in accord with his wish Tithonus put off his old age and became a cicada'.⁹⁰ Hieronymus of Rhodes in the third century BC shifts the blame from the goddess onto Tithonus, since it is he who makes the flawed request: 'Tithonus asked for immortality from Eos, but not, however, agelessness too. When he began to be troubled because of his advanced age, he asked for death. But as she was unable (sc. to bring this about) she turned him into a cicada, so that she would get continual pleasure from hearing his voice.'⁹¹ The explicit motivation that Eos wished to hear his voice is a new detail, but matches the fact that the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* notes that all that is left of Tithonus, once Eos confines him in his chamber, is his flowing voice (237).⁹² The variant that Tithonus was enclosed

87 *Il.* 3.150–1.

88 So Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2004) 251–2, who regard the Homeric passage as an important intertext for Callimachus' *Aetia* fr. 1.25–32 (below, n. [98]).

89 A. Kossatz-Deissmann in Kahil (1997) viii.1: 34–6.

90 Fr. 56 Wehrli: Τιθωνοῦ γῆρας: ἐπὶ τῶν πολυχρονίων καὶ ὑπεργήρων τάττεται. ἱστορεῖται δὲ ὅτι Τιθωνὸς κατ' εὐχὴν τὸ γῆρας ἀποθέμενος τέττιξ ἐγένετο, ὡς φησι Κλέαρχος ἐν τῷ Περὶ βίων.

91 Fr. 15a Wehrli, perhaps from his lost *On Poets*: Ἰερώνυμος φησὶ τὸν Τιθωνὸν αἰτήσασθαι ἀθανασίαν παρὰ τῆς Ἥοῦς, οὐ μέντοι καὶ ἀγηρασίαν· ὡς δὲ πολλῶι τῷ γῆραι χρώμενος ἐδυσφόρει, αἰτήσασθαι θάνατον· ἢ δὲ ἀδυνατοῦσα εἰς τέττιγα αὐτὸν μεταβάλλει, ὅπως ἦδοιτο διηλεκῶς τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούουσα. Cf. Servius on Vergil *G.* 3.328: *Tithonus, maritus Aurorae, post optatam longissimam vitam in cicadam dicitur esse conversus*. This account is related to a version which adds that, once Tithonus was turned into a cicada, Eos made him immortal (Σ *Hom. Od.* 5.1), as if the goddess could exercise this jurisdiction over insects at least.

92 After citing Hieronymus, Eustathius offers a similar version, from an unnamed but presumably different source, in which Tithonus' own request again causes the tragic outcome, but he is turned into an incessantly singing cicada because of the endless pleas that he had made to be turned into an animal (*Comm. ad Hom. Il.* 11.1, p. 825,53–61).

in a basket appears in other sources.⁹³ As we saw, the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* replaced this motif by the otherwise unparalleled detail that Eos shuts him in a chamber (236).⁹⁴

By turning into a cicada, Tithonus could finally cast aside his old age, albeit in a way that is only consoling from a very particular point of view, that of a poet. The reason lies in entomology.⁹⁵ The Greeks thought cicadas, like serpents, slough off their old skins or exuvia and are thereby rejuvenated⁹⁶ (in fact neither they nor snakes are made any younger by this process). Strikingly, the word for ‘skin’ in both cases was γῆρας, the same word as ‘old age’, as Hesychius records.⁹⁷ Although this usage of γῆρας is first attested of both snakes and insects in Aristotle,⁹⁸ it is already implied by the phrase ξύσαι τ’ ἄπο γῆρας ὀλοῖόν (*HHymn to Aphr.* 224): for the verb ξύω connotes the action of a snake that rubs against a rock to slough off its old skin (γῆρας). This phrase adapts by transposition a formula which occurs in Homer at *Iliad* 9.444–8 (οὐδ’ εἴ κέν μοι ὑπ-οσταίη θεὸς αὐτόν / γῆρας ἀποξύσασθαι θήσειν νέον ἠβώνοντα, / οἶον ὅτε πρῶτον ...), where Phoenix is describing his own hypothetical rejuvenation,⁹⁹ and in the Cyclic *Nostoi* describing Medea’s rejuvenation of Aeson (γῆρας ἀποξύσασθαι).¹⁰⁰ This phrase is further evidence that the hymnic poet already had in mind the transformation of Tithonus into an animal that can be ‘rejuvenated’ by casting

93 Ath. *Epit.* 2.2 p. 97,3–5, where the detail that he was ‘hung’ up implies the basket, which is ‘hung’ up in Suet. *Περὶ βλασφημιῶν* 8.3. Suetonius indicates that he knows of Tithonus’ transformation into a cicada from sources other than those that speak of the basket; J. Tzetzes knows of both motifs (Σ *Lyc. Alex.* 18 Scheer, from Hellanicus?).

94 King (1986, 73–4) suggests, following Kakridis (1930) 32–3, that Tithonus’ fate resembles that of the Cumaean Sibyl, who shrivelled up with extreme age so that Trimalchio could claim to have seen her hanging in a flask at Cumae (Petr. *Sat.* 48.8), with only her voice remaining (cf. Ov. *Met.* 14.101–53).

95 On the cicada, see the exhaustive treatments by Davies and Kathirithamby (1986) 113–33 and Tsagalis (2008) 115–19.

96 Present-day Greeks say that it is so hot that the cicadas are bursting out of their skins — *κκάει ο τζιτζικας* (I thank D. Margomenou for this information).

97 The relevant entries are γράπιν· γῆρας τέττιγος ἢ ὄφραως καὶ τῶν ἐκδυομένων (*Lexicon* γ 901 Latte), and ἐστὶ δὲ “λεβηρίς” τὸ τοῦ ὄφραως γῆρας . . . τάττουσι δὲ τὴν λέξιν ἐπὶ τέττιγος καὶ συνόλωσ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀποδυομένων τὸ γῆρας (γ 1003 Latte).

98 Crabs ἐκδύνουσι τὸ κέλυφος τοῦ ἔαρος, ὡς περ οἱ ὄφραι τὸ καλούμενον γῆρας (*Hist. An.* 5.17, 549^b26); τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον (as in snakes) καὶ τῶν ἐντόμων ἐκδύνει τὸ γῆρας, ὅσα ἐκδύνει, οἶον κύλη κτλ. (*Hist. An.* 7.17, 601^a1–2).

99 I thank Prof. Tsagalis (*per litt.*) for this reference, as for suggesting that Phoenix’ name might already bear a relation to the imaginary bird, the phoenix, which was emblematic of rejuvenation.

100 Fr. 6 Davies = 7 Bernabé.

off its old skin. The first undoubted application of the term γῆρας to cicadas is in the prologue to Callimachus' *Aetia*, where the poet wishes that he could become a cicada so that he could cast off his γῆρας.¹⁰¹

Sappho too surely knew the myth of Tithonus' metamorphosis, since it was the standard *aition* for the cicada, and originated in her part of Greece. Indeed King proposed¹⁰² that Sappho may have referred to his metamorphosis in an ode in sapphics, fr. 21, which uses the same phrase χροῖα γῆρας ἦδη that appears in line 3. However, although it is likely that Sappho here described her 'pitiable' state, with 'trembling' limbs and 'skin now' ruined by 'age' (3–6), it is more convincing to suppose that the masculine subject that 'flies in pursuit' (8) is Love, as Campbell suggested.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, the theme would have been attractive to Sappho, since the recollection that Tithonus became an immortal singer evokes the desire for poetic immortality that pervades her work, as West reminded us.¹⁰⁴ Thus the speaker of fr. 55 tells a rival that she will not be remembered after her death as she has no share in the roses of Pieria, the home of the Muses; this implies that the speaker will have a better fate. In fr. 32 the feminine speaker says her works have made her honoured. In fr. 147 the speaker says she will be remembered. In fr. 65 Sappho is addressed by name, presumably by a deity, and told that she is a favourite of Aphrodite and will have great fame across the earth and even in the land of Acheron. As we have seen, in Sappho the speaker and the author are one and the same. These parallels encouraged West to supplement, very plausibly, lines 4–8 of the poem in the new Cologne papyrus that precedes the Tithonus ode, so that the feminine speaker (who is presumably identical with Sappho herself) makes the following claim: 'may it provide me with great glory under the earth, as is right, since I have the favour of the Muses, and may they admire me on all sides, just as now when I am on the

101 ἐνὶ τοῖς γὰρ αἰείδομεν οἱ λιγὺν ἦχον / [τέττιγος, θ]όρουβον δ' οὐκ ἐφίλησαν ὄνων. θηρὶ μὲν οὐατόεντι πανεῖκελον ὀγκήκαιτο / [ἄλλο]ς, ἐ[γ]ώ δ' εἶην οὐλ[α]χύς, ὁ πτερόεις, / ἅ πάντως, ἵνα γῆρας ἵνα δρόσον ἦν μὲν αἰείδω / πρῶκιον ἐκ δίης ἡέρος εἶδαρ ἔδων. / αὐθι τὸ δ' ἐκδύοιμι, τό μοι βάρος ὅσσον ἔπεστι / τριγλώχιν ὀλοῶι νῆκος ἐπ' Ἐγκελάδω (fr. 1.25–32). Pfeiffer (1928, 325 n. 7, = *Ausgewählte Schriften* 118–19) rejected any link with the metamorphosis of Tithonus, following Jacoby in denying that Hellanicus recounted it (so too Faulkner 2008, 276), but this seems hyper-sceptical: for a valuable corrective, and a full survey of ancient beliefs about cicadas, see Tsagalis (2008) 115–19, esp. 118–19. On the cicada in Callimachus see Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2004) 251–3, and Geissler (2005).

102 King (1989) 86 n. 22.

103 Campbell (1982) 71.

104 West (2005) 2–3, to which I am indebted for this collection of parallels. For a similar argument that the 'open' ending of the poem implies as positive reading, in which the poetess will continue to have an immortal voice, see Geissler (2005) esp. 108–9.

earth they call me the clear-voiced swallow, whenever I take up the *pâktis*, *barbitos* or lyre and sing in the chambers'.¹⁰⁵

Along the same lines, Stehle has shown that Sappho likes to depict herself as performing in a moment that lies between a remembered memory of happiness and a future point when she is in some way close to divinity;¹⁰⁶ she argues that the metamorphosis of Tithonus into a cicada makes the poem conform to a pattern repeatedly found in Sappho's poems. Stehle rightly concluded: 'there has been debate over whether we should assume that Sappho is alluding to that conclusion of the story. I think that, just as in [fr.] 16 V she "finishes" Helen's story with her wish to see her own love again, so it is open to us to construe this poem as Sappho completing Tithonos' story by singing in her old age.'¹⁰⁷ The daring and subtlety with which Sappho leaves her audience to fill in the end of the story against the grain of the initial pessimistic reading to which its argument logically leads,¹⁰⁸ and thereby completely to transform its tone, is matched only by some of the odes of Bacchylides. I have in mind *Od.* 5, in which the myth breaks off abruptly when Heracles is told he can marry Deianeira, or the paean that is *Od.* 17, where we know that Theseus will not only best Minos by escaping from his ordeal in Crete but will also elope with his daughter—an apt riposte to Minos' unwanted attention to Eriboea on the voyage to Crete, which we witness at the start of the poem. What is truly extraordinary about Sappho's poem how powerfully she achieves this effect in a mythic narrative only four lines long.

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105 I translate the text of West (2005) 3.

106 Stehle (2009) 119.

107 Stehle (2009) 127–8. Similarly Clayman (2009) 133.

108 So Zellner (2008), who ably explicates the logic of Sappho's *modus tollens* argument.

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