

Sappho: Fragment 58

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The Greek text is by M.L West, from the *Times Literary Supplement*. No. 5334, June 24 2005.

This text is a little more complex than usual Aoidoi.org commented texts: I have left the text-critical notations in place. Normally I replace adscript with subscript iota, but in this text the subscript is liable to be interpreted as an underdot signalling an unclear reading. So I have left 1.10 ἔρωι (ἔρω) and 1.12 χρόνωι (χρόνω). Note also that in the first four lines the text to the left of the ‘]’ sign is conjecture by West.

The meter is couplets of *hag*^{2c} :

⏟ — — — — — ⏟ — — — — — ⏟ — — — — — ⏟ — — — — —

which, according to the Appendix on Metres of Page’s *Sappho and Alcaeus*, puts it in the fourth book of the Alexandrian edition of Sappho’s poems.

ὔμμες πεδὰ Μοίσαν ἰ]οκ[ό]λπων κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες,
σπουδάσδετε καὶ τὰ]γ φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνναν·

ἔμοι δ’ ἄπαλον πρίν] ποτ’ [ἔ]οντα χροά γῆρας ἦδη
ἐπέλλαβε, λευκαὶ δ’ ἐγ]ένοντο τρίχες ἐκ μελαίναν·

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¹ὔμμες = ὑμεῖς you pl. πεδὰ = μετὰ with and after; with acc. also in the sense of “in search, pursuit of.” Μοίσαν = Μουσῶν, gen.pl of Μοῦσα, Muse. ἰόκοπος on with violet (some flower) belt/clothing. καλός ἡ ὄν good, noble; beautiful; neut.acc.pl. δῶρον τό gift. παῖς, παιδός ὄ,ῆ child; boy, girl; vocative.

²σπουδάσδε = σπουδάζω be hasty, busy, zealous; pursue earnestly; take this as an imperative, not a simple present. τάν = τήν. φιλάοιδος on fond of singing. λιγυρός ἄ ὄν clear, sharp, clear-toned. χελύννα = χελώνη ἡ tortoise; tortoise-shell, lyre.

³ἔμοι dat. of interest; probably best translated as possessive, my. ἄπαλός ἡ ὄν soft, delicate. πρίν formerly; before. ποτα = ποτε once ἔοντα masc.acc.sg pres.part. of εἶμι be. χρώς, χροός, χροί, χροά, ὄ body; complexion. “my once (formerly) delicate body” γῆρας aos τό old age. ἦδη now; already.

⁴ἐπέλλαβε = ἐπ-έλαβε aor. ἐπι-λαμβάνω seize, take, attack (among other things, used to describe affliction by a disease). λευκός ἡ ὄν white; shining. γίγνομαι γενήσομαι ἐγενόμην become. θρίξ τριχός ἡ hair. ἐκ out of, away from. μέλας μέλαινα μέλαν black, dark.

5 βάρυς δέ μ' ὁ [θ]ῦμος πεπόηται, γόνα δ' [ο]ῦ φέροισι,
τὰ δὴ ποτα λαίψηρ' ἔον ὄρχησθ' ἴσα νεβρίοισι.

τὰ <μὲν> στεναχίσδω θαμέως· ἀλλὰ τί κεν ποείην;
ἀγήραον ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ' οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι.

καὶ γὰρ π[ο]τὰ Τίθωνον ἔφαντο βροδόπαχυν Αὔων
10 ἔρωι φ..αθρῖσαν βάμεν' εἰς ἔσχατα γᾶς φέροισα[ν,
ἔοντα [κ]ᾶλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ' αὐτον ὕμως ἔμαρψε
χρόνωι πῶλιον γῆρας, ἔχ[ο]ντ' ἀθανάταν ἄκοιτιν.

⁵βαρύς εἶα ὁ heavy; hard to bear, grievous. μ' = μοι, dat. of interest. ὁ = ὁ. θυμός ὁ spirit, soul, heart, mind. πεπόηται = πεποίηται, mid.pf. ποιέω do, make; middle with adj. complement become; “my spirit has become heavy.” γόνυ γόνατος τό knee; γόνα is Aeolic nom./acc.pl. φέροισι = φέρουσι.

⁶τά take as a relative pronoun, antecedent 1.5 γόνα. ποτα = ποτε once; sometimes. λαίψηρός ἄ ὄν swift, quick. ἔον = ἦν, 3.sg.ipf. were (sg. verb with neut.pl. noun). ὄρχεομαι to dance; ὄρχησθαι pres.inf., complement to λαίψηρα, “were quick to dance.” ἴσος ἦ ὄν equal (to), (even) as + dat.; νεβρίον τό fawn; I assume diminutive of νεβρός ὁ, though I can find this in no dictionary available to me. West translates it “fawn.”

⁷τά these (things). στεναχίσδω = στεναχίζω groan, sigh; lament. θαμέως often. κεν = modal particle ἄν. ποείην = ποιείην, 1.sg.pres.opt of ποιέω; “but what can (should) I do?”

⁸ἀγήραος ὄν ageless, undecaying. ἔοντα masc.acc.sg pres.part. of εἶμι be; agreeing with ἄνθρωπον. δυνατός (ἦ) ὄν strong, able; + inf. possible. γένεσθαι aor.inf. = γίγνομαι become. Prose order: οὐ δύνατον (τινὰ) ἄνθρωπον ἔοντα γένεσθαι ἀγήραον. Remember the subject of inf. is acc.

⁹ποτα = ποτε once. Τίθωνός ὁ Tithonus, human Husband of Dawn. ἔφαντο 3.pl.ipf. φημί say, here “they say” as for a story. βροδόπαχυν = fem.acc.sg. ῥοδόπηγυς rosy-armed. Αὔων Aeol. acc. of Ἡώς ἡ Dawn.

¹⁰ἔρωι ὁ love, desire; dat. of means or cause. φ..αθρῖσαν - not enough of this word is clear to be sure what it is. Drawing on myth: Dawn, somethinged by love, goes... βαίνω go, come; βάμεναι Aeol. aor.inf. Based on Hom. βήμεναι I would not expect βᾶ-, but cf. δόμεναι from δίδωμι. ἔσχατος ἦ ὄν furthest, utmost; last. γᾶς = γῆς gen.sg. γῆ ἡ earth. εἰς ἔσχατα γᾶς “to the ends of the earth.” φέροισαν acc.fem.sg. pres.part. φέρω.

¹¹ἔοντα masc.acc.sg pres.part. of εἶμι be; agreeing with Τίθωνον; take this participle temporally “when/while he was...” νέος ἄ ὄν young, youthful. ὕμως = ὅμως the same; nonetheless, still. μάρπτω μάρψω ἔμαρψα seize, hold, reach.

¹²χρόνος ὁ time; dat., χρόνωι, at last, in time. πολίος (ἄ) ὄν grey, grizzled; grey-haired. γῆρας τό old age. ἔχω have, ἔχοντα masc.acc.sg. pres.part. agreeing with αὐτον. ἀθάνατος (ἦ) ὄν (initial ā) immortal, deathless. ἄκοιτις ἰος ἡ wife.