

## A Newly Recovered Poem of Sappho

Rejoice in your beautiful gifts, o youth  
and raise high your thrill-toned, love-song lyre!

Once my skin was soft to the touch  
but now old age has come to my flesh  
and white hair has formed from the dark

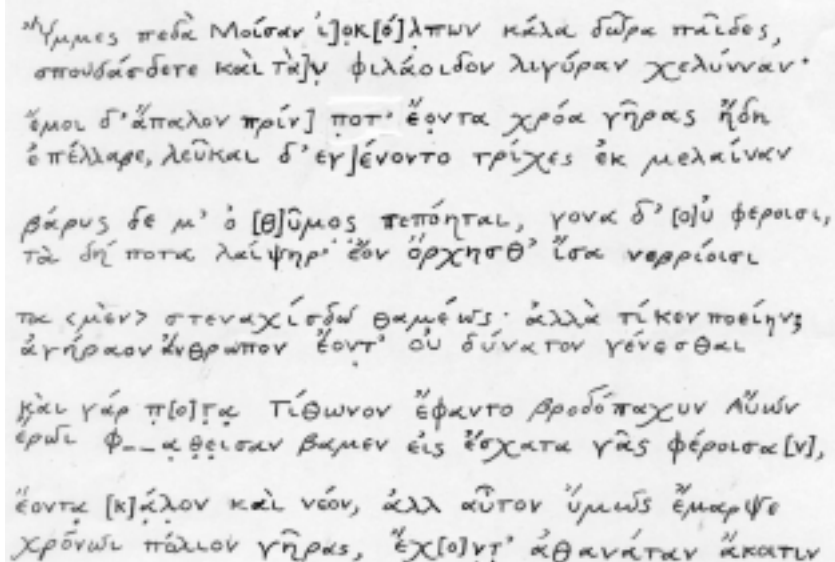
Heavy with suffering my soul has been forged  
and my knees no longer can bear me up  
who used to dance light-legged like gamboling fawns

I groan about it thickly but what can be done?  
for no one has the power to be an ageless human

O once the ruby-limbéd Dawn  
was smitten with eros  
for Tithonos  
and carried him away  
to the farthest reaches of the Gaia

But when she begged of Zeus  
to make Tithonos immortal  
she forgot to ask that  
he be given eternal youth

and so with the passing of time  
she kept her fresh-wrought form  
while gray old age bewizened her lover



ἄγχι μὲν πεδὰ Μοῦσαν ἰσοκρότων κάλα δῶρα παῖδος,  
σπουδάσθετε καὶ τῆν φιλάολδον λιγύραν χελύναν·  
ἔμοι δ' ἀπκλον πρίν] ποτ' ἔοντα χροά γῆρας ἤδη  
ὁπέλλαρε, λεῦκα δ' ἐγ]έροντο τρίχες ἐκ μελαίνων  
βάρυς δε μ' ὁ [θ]ῦμος πεπόηται, γονκ δ' [ο]ῦ φεροισι,  
τὰ δὴ ποτικ λαίψηρ' ἔον ὄρχησθ' ἴσα νεαρῶισι  
τὰς μὲν > στεναχίσι δὲ θαμέως· ἀλλὰ τί κεν ποιήης;  
ἀγήραον ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ' οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι  
καὶ γὰρ π[ο]ῖα Τίθωνον ἔφκντο βροδοπαχυν Αἰών  
ἐρωὶ φ... κ θείσαν βακμεν εἰς ἔσχατα γῆας φέροισα [ν],  
ἔοντα [κ]ῆλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ αὐτον ἕμωὶς ἔμαρψε  
χροῶνι πάλλον γῆρας, ἔχ[ο]ντ' ἀθανάταν ἕκατιν

Note: this poem was recently pieced together from two extant papyrus fragments, one at the University of Cologne, and the other among the Oxyrhynchus papyri housed at Oxford University.

The meter is mainly choriambics,

— ◡ ◡ — | — ◡ ◡ — | — ◡ ◡ —

with a pick-up syllable at the beginning of each line  
and each line ending in a bacchic, ◡ — —

I have added several lines, not in Sappho's Greek,  
which trace for the modern reader the legend of Tithonos &  
the deity of the Dawn.

—Edward Sanders  
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