

SHORTER NOTES

SAPPHO 110aLP: A FOOTNOTE

110aLP(= 110 Voigt) mocks the doorkeeper's big feet:

θυρώρῳ πόδες ἐπτορόγγυιοι,
τὰ δὲ σάμβαλα πεμπεβόηα,
πίσσυγγοι δὲ δέκ' ἐξεπόναισαν.

Critics comment on the simplicity of the jest here, not without reason.¹ But the levity also has some sophistication, of a literary kind. For a start, ἐπτορόγγυιοι and πεμπεβόηα are aptly long and are carefully left to the end of their clauses and lines for maximum effect. In addition, these striking words, which appear for the first (and last) time in Sappho, may well have been deliberate adaptations of two adjectives which had previously occurred only in Homer,² and they would in any case have called to mind the Homeric ones, because of their close similarity and because there are no other variants of these compounds in surviving literature down to the time of the poetess.³ At *Odyssey* 11.312 the poet had said of Otus and Ephialtes μῆκός γε γενέσθην ἐννεόργυιοι, and at *Iliad* 7.220, 222, 245, 266 and 11.545 he had described the shield of Ajax as ἐπταβόειος. So, given the epic flavour of Sappho's epithets, it was amusing of her to include them at all in such a light and frivolous context. There is also pawkiness in the poetess's application of these terms with their Homeric tinge to quite different and very mundane objects; and the humour is increased when one takes into account the associations that these words had (in connection with the feet of a human she uses an adjective that recalls the extent of the whole bodies of two Giants; and with reference to the sandals of an ordinary man she uses one which conjures up the huge shield of a hero). This strikes me as an early instance of witty adaptation of epic diction such as is found in Anacreon 358 and 417 PMG.⁴

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¹ D. A. Campbell in *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Exeter, 1982), p. 283 suggests that the joking may have a more intellectual aspect: 'Perhaps she is mockingly making the conventional point that the bridegroom (together with his attendants?) is of epic stature, an Achilles... or an Ares'. But in the lines that we have only the feet (and the sandals) are said to be large, and they seem to me to be too enormous to make one think of epic or even mock-epic size.

² It may not be a pure coincidence that Sappho's measurements are two units less each time than Homer's.

³ Although ἐπταβόειος and its one other variant (τετραβόειος) subsequently appear only in poetry, compounds involving ὄργυια did later become common enough in prose, and the rest of Sappho's language is quite at home in prose and comedy. All of this presumably explains the remark of Demetrius (*Eloc.* 167) that the poetess here mocks the doorkeeper ἐν πεζοῖς ὀνόμασι μάλλον ἢ ἐν ποιητικοῖς.

⁴ See A. E. Harvey, *CQ* 7 (1957), 211–13.

ARISTOPHANES, *THESMOPHORIAZUSAE* 148

In response to Mnesilochus' disparaging comments regarding Agathon's unusual dress, the tragic poet replies:

ὦ πρέσβυ πρέσβυ, τοῦ φθόνου μὲν τὸν ψόγον
ἤκουσα, τὴν δ' ἄλγησιν οὐ παρεσχόμην·