A LESBIAN ENDING IN THE *ODES* OF HORACE

Lines 9–12 of the newly recovered Tithonus poem of Sappho[1] contain a mythological *exemplum* beginning with καὶ γάρ[2]:

> καὶ γάρ π[ο]τα Τίθωνον ἔφαντο βροδόπαχυν Αὔων
> ἔρωι φ . . αθεισαν βάμεν᾽ εἰς ἔσχατα γᾶς φέροισα[ν,
>
> ἔοντα [κ]άλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ᾽ αὖτον ὔμως ἔμαρψε
> χρόνωι πόλιον γῆρας, ἔχ[ο]ντ᾽ ἀθανάταν ἄκοιτιν.

West[3] and others[4] have argued that these verses form the end of the poem, since the lines that follow are clearly different in the recent Cologne papyrus and in *POxy.* 1787.[5] Gronewald and Daniel have commented, however, that stopping the poem after these lines would be 'sehr abrupt'[6] and suggested that the poem in the Cologne papyrus may have been an abbreviated version. West acknowledged that the ending 'may seem banal, a weak ending to the poem'[7] but argued that Sappho, who complains earlier about aging in the company of young girls, is comparing herself in this passage to Tithonus, who grew old in the presence of his ever-young spouse; and that this 'gives a poignant edge' to her complaint in the rest of the poem.

The strongest argument for believing that the *exemplum* of the Tithonus myth forms the end of Sappho's poem is surely the difference in the text following the poems in the two papyri, but there is another, quite different reason for believing that the poem did end in this way. Bernsdorff[8] has recently drawn attention to several instances of poems by Greek and Latin authors that end with *exempla*. This observation by itself is unhelpful, since an even greater number of ancient poems (of Pindar, for example) have *exempla* in the middle, and there is no *a priori* reason for knowing into which class we are to put the Tithonus poem. Bernsdorff attempts to resolve this uncertainty by giving particular emphasis to the inclusion in Sappho's *exemplum* of a verb of saying, ἔφαντο. He then argues that all 'detailed' mythological *exempla* at the end of ancient poems have either direct or indirect discourse and concludes that the *exemplum* of the Tithonus poem must therefore have occurred at the end.[9] The difficulty with this approach is that it causes him to group the Sappho

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[1] M. Gronewald and R. W. Daniel, 'Ein neuer Sappho-Papyrus', *ZPE* 147 (2004a), 1–8; M. Gronewald and R. W. Daniel, 'Nachtrag zum neuen Sappho-Papyrus', *ZPE* 149 (2004b), 1–4; M. L. West, 'The new Sappho', *ZPE* 151 (2005), 3–6. Text from West.

[2] For καὶ γάρ at the beginning of an *exemplum*, see E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), 185–6.

[3] West (n. 1), at 4.

[4] V. Di Benedetto, 'Osservazioni sul nuovo papiro di Saffo', *ZPE* 149 (2004), 5–6; W. Luppe, 'Überlegungen zur Gedicht-Anordnung im neuen Sappho-Papyrus', *ZPE* 149 (2004), 7–9.

[5] Fr. 58, E. Lobel and D. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* (Oxford, 1955).

[6] Gronewald and Daniel (n. 1, 2004a), at 2.

[7] West (n. 1), at 6.

[8] H. Bernsdorff, 'Offene Gedichtschlüsse', *ZPE* 153 (2005), 1–6.

[9] Bernsdorff (n. 8), at 2: 'keine ausführlichen mythischen Exempla am Gedichtscluß, die nicht mit einer direkten oder indirekten Rede abschließen oder (wie in Sapphos Altersgedicht) insgesamt als indirekte Rede präsentiert werden'. With 'ausführlich' Bernsdorff (at n. 9 on p. 2 of his article) excludes poems that end with more than one mythological *exemplum* (such as Horace, *Odes* 3.20 and 4.7) or with *exempla* that are especially brief (such as Pind. *Ol.* 10). The justification of this is unclear; it does, however, allow Bernsdorff to preserve his generalization, since

poem together with poems (such as Pind. *Nem.* 1 and Hor. *Carm.* 3.27) in which an *exemplum* (albeit at the end) occupies more than half of the poem and can scarcely be said to provide closure in the way the Tithonus myth does in Sappho's poem; and to neglect other poems, particularly of Horace, which may or may not have direct or indirect discourse but are in other ways so similar to the Tithonus poem as to suggest that Horace may very well have known of it and had it in mind in composing his own.

What makes the ending of the Sappho's poem effective is the way the fate of Tithonus is reflected back onto the condition of the poet. The inevitability of aging even in the husband of an immortal comes as confirmation of the mournful reflection Sappho makes at the end of her list of physical ailments, that nothing can be done since ἀγήραον ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ᾽ οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι. The ἀγήραον of this line and the ἀθανάταν in the last line of the poem, of Dawn but by implication also of Tithonus, bring the story of Tithonus into sharp focus and give further emphasis to the moral, that no one can escape old age. In a similar way, the γῆρας of Sappho in line 3 is answered by the γῆρας in line 12 that overtakes even the once νέον Tithonus, and the hair of Sappho no longer black is echoed by the πόλιον of Tithonus' infirmity. These verbal correspondences help to hold the two parts of the poem together and show that there is nothing 'open' about the ending of Sappho's poem.[10] The *exemplum* does not take the poem to some new 'secondary plane' but rather reinforces the principal argument by brief reference to mythological authority, and this provides the feeling of finality and unity that brings the poem to closure.[11]

Horace does a similar thing at the end of several of his *Odes*. I am thinking in particular of three poems in which the *exempla* are brief as in the Tithonus poem and make reference to male mythological heroes distinguished by their youth and beauty, like Tithonus ἔοντα κάλον καὶ νέον. The clearest parallels are in *Odes* 4.7, *Diffugere niues*, which like Sappho's poem is about the inevitable passage of time. The poet tells Torquatus that the changing of the seasons shows us the futility of wishing to be immortal, *immortalia ne speres*. Once we are dead, we are nothing but *puluis* and *umbra*. Horace then particularizes this generalization to Torquatus, telling him that after he has died, none of his virtues will bring him back to life (lines 21–4),

> Cum semel occideris et de te splendida Minos
> fecerit arbitria,
> non, Torquate, genus, non te facundia, non te
> restituet pietas.

These lines are immediately followed by those that give the *exempla* which end the poem (lines 25–8):

> Infernis neque enim tenebris Diana pudicum
> liberat Hippolytum,
> nec Lethaea ualet Theseus abrumpere caro
> uincula Pirithoo.

the *exempla* in the excluded poems lack any form of a verb of saying like the ἔφαντο of the Tithonus poem. As I shall argue, however, the ending particularly of *Odes* 4.7 otherwise shows a much greater similarity to the ending of Sappho's poem than most of the examples Bernsdorff includes within his purview.

[10] 'Der Eindruck, daß dieser Gedichtschluß "abrupt" sei (ich würde eher von "offen" sprechen), stellt sich dadurch ein, daß nach dem *illustrans* des Exempels nicht mehr zum *illustrandum* zurückgeleitet wird. Das Gedicht endet also gleichsam auf einer sekundären Ebene', Bernsdorff (n. 8), at 2.

[11] B. H. Smith, *Poetic Closure* (Chicago, 1968), 36.

As in Sappho, the mythological *exempla* come immediately after a statement of the inevitability of the human condition, *non te restituet*, with the *exempla* in direct response as corroboration and wistful consolation; and the *exempla* reflect directly back upon the preceding argument. For just as the *genus* and *facundia* and *pietas* of Torquatus cannot restore him to the living, so the chastity of Hippolytus and the devoted friendship of Theseus for Pirithous cannot free them from the darkness of the underworld. In the poems of both Sappho and Horace a god or hero is powerless to reverse the ineluctable: Tithonus cannot be spared old age even though the spouse of Dawn, and Hippolytus and Pirithous cannot be rescued from *infernis tenebris* by Diana and Theseus. The parallels are especially striking for the first of Horace's examples: Diana, a goddess like Dawn, and Hippolytus, identified in the poem as *pudicum* but like Tithonus also known for his good looks.[12]

A similar *exemplum* ends another of Horace's poems, *Odes* 1.8, *Lydia dic per omnis*. Bernsdorff includes and even cites this poem in his article,[13] since the *exemplum* contains a verb of saying, but his discussion is limited to the role of indirect discourse and leaves unmentioned the structural parallels with Sappho's poem which seem more significant. Horace asks Lydia why she is ruining her boyfriend Sybaris with love, so that he no longer joins in gymnastics or military exercises but has gone into hiding. The poem ends in the last stanza with an *exemplum* that compares Sybaris to Achilles:

> Quid latet, ut marinae
>   filium dicunt Thetidis sub lacrimosa Troiae
> funera, ne uirilis
>   cultus in caedem et Lycias proriperet cateruas?

This comparison works on many levels. The legend (told in Apollodorus 3.13.8)[14] says that Thetis hid Achilles on Scyros by disguising him as a girl to prevent him from going to Troy. Achilles is said to have used his presence in the ladies' chamber to good advantage and to have had a son with Deidamia, one of the daughters of Lycomedes. We have then Achilles, known for his military prowess, who hides from war among the women; and Sybaris, *saepe disco, saepe trans finem iaculo nobilis expedito*, who hides with his lover Lydia from martial engagement. The hero in the *exemplum* like Tithonus is young and handsome, the most handsome of all the Greeks at Troy (*Iliad* 2.674); and the comparison to Achilles reflects back onto the military accomplishments of Sybaris, whom the poet flatters by comparing him to the greatest (and also the most comely) of Greek warriors, but also signals his disgrace, since he is held back from the fray by the love of a woman. Horace uses the story of Achilles to bring the withdrawal of Sybaris into greater relief, much as the Tithonus myth highlights the lament of Sappho. Rather than taking the poem to a secondary plane, the *exemplum* reinforces the primary theme of the poem by citation of a mythological precedent.

The last of my examples is *Odes* 3.20, *Non uides quanto*. In this poem, a man and a woman are both pursuing the same comely youth Nearchus, and as the two are about to come to blows, the object of their pursuit poses in supreme indifference, treading with his bare foot on the victory palm. Here is the last stanza:

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[12] See e.g. the *Hypothesis* of the *Hippolytus,* where he is said to be κάλλει τε καὶ σωφροσύνῃ διαφέροντα (W. S. Barrett, *Euripides Hippolytos* [Oxford, 1964], 95, at line 3).

[13] Bernsdorff (n. 8), at 3–4.

[14] See also Bion fr. 2 and the discussion in R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book I* (Oxford, 1970), 115.

> fertur et leni recreare uento
> sparsum odoratis umerum capillis,
> qualis aut Nireus fuit aut aquosa
>   raptus ab Ida.

Nearchus is compared to Nireus, the most handsome of the Greeks after Achilles;[15] and to Ganymede, ἰδέᾳ τε καλὸν ὥρᾳ τε κεκραμένον as in the brief mythological *exemplum* at the end of Pindar, *Ol.* 10. Just as Dawn took Tithonus to be her lover, εἰς ἔσχατα γᾶς φέροισαν, Ganymede in Horace's poem was *raptus ab Ida* by another of the immortals. Sappho uses the once handsome Tithonus to underscore the pathos of her own ageing, but Horace brings the comeliness of Nireus and Ganymede into his poem for a rather different reason. The pleasure of the last stanza of *Odes* 3.20 comes from the description of Nearchus, complacent and self-absorbed, waiting for the outcome of the struggle as the wind refreshes his perfumed hair. The brief mythological reference to two archetypes of classical beauty at the end of the poem re-enforces the exaggerated description of Nearchus, the *grande certamen* of the contenders, whose attractiveness is placed on a par with the heroes of legend.

In these three odes Horace casts the ending in the form of a brief *exemplum* to produce closure by reference to the authority of myth. As in Sappho, the *exempla* all contain handsome young men and work in a similar way to mirror the principal themes of the poems. There are striking correspondences in particular of *Odes* 4.7 and the Tithonus poem, which are both about the inevitability of impermanence, and which both seek to console by reference to the immutability of fate even among the gods and heroes of legend. The similarities of these poems support the conclusion 'daß die Annahme des neuen Gedichtschlusses richtig ist',[16] though not in the way Bernsdorff proposed, and provide further reason for believing that Sappho ended the Tithonus poem after twelve lines, as West and others have argued. They also illustrate once again that modern taste is not always a reliable guide to the aesthetics of the ancients. The brief reference to the Tithonus myth might seem an 'abrupt' ending, but similarly brief *exempla* at the end of Horace's poems indicate that this may have been an effective conclusion to the Greek or Roman ear. There is, in any case, little justification for making a determination of the Sappho text on this basis.

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[15] *Iliad* 2.673–4.
[16] Bernsdorff (n. 8), at 1.

THOSE DAMNED GEESE AGAIN (PETRONIUS 136.4)*

After the priestess Oenothea leaves the anti-hero of Petronius' *Satyrica*, Encolpius, alone in her hut, he is assaulted by *tres anseres sacri* (136.4). K. Müller deletes the word *sacri* because 's*acros esse illos anseres Encolpius ne suspicabatur quidem, donec*