

“On the Pleasures of Love in Old Age” (For Wheelock Chapter 17)

The Suda (a 10th century Byzantine encyclopedia of the ancient world) says about Mimnermus: “Son of Ligyrtiades, from Colophon or Smyrna or Astypalaea, elegiac poet. He flourished in the 37th Olympiad, so he preceded the seven sages; but some say that he was their contemporary. He was also called Ligyastades because of his harmony and sweetness [*ligu*]. He wrote these, many, books.”

Anacreon (c.575-c.490) was a Greek lyric poet whose work concerned primarily drinking and love affairs. William Annis writes of his influence, “While Anacreon himself touched on many subjects in his poetry, his songs of wine, women and song made such an impression that anonymous poets took to writing poems on these subjects in the stereotyped Anacreontic meters.”

The following poems present other views of love in old age, which contrast in different ways with Cicero's passage.

Mimnermus 1 (trans. Zachary McGar)

Quid vīta, quid voluptās sine Venere aureā est?
Moriar,* sī quando ea bona nōn cūro—
coitum* clandestīnum et dōna dulcia et lectum,*
quae sunt flōrēs* adulescentiae
virīs mulieribusque; sed quando senectūs acerba
advenit, quae virum turpem* malumque facit,
cūrae gravēs animum eius semper vexant,*
et eī vidēre radiōs* sōlis nōn placet,
sed puerīs odiōsus, et mulieribus inhonestus* est;
itaque deus senectūtem miseram facit.

Moriar: optative subjunctive: “*May I die!*”
coitus, -ūs, m.: love-making; **lectus, -ī, m.:** bed
flōs, flōris, m.: flower (metaphorically: best)

turpis: base, wicked
vexō (1): to harass, annoy, wear down
radius, -ī, m.: ray (of light)
inhonestus -a -um: dishonored

Anacreontic 7 (trans. Luke Sineath)

dīcunt fēminae:
“Anakreōn, senex es;
tollēns* speculum, spectās
comās, quae nōn ibi est,
et frōns* tua nuda est.”
ego comās, utrum* praesit*
an absit,* nesciō. Hoc sciō:
tantō* senectibus magis
convenit in voluptāte ludere
quantō Mors accedit.

tollēns: pres. act. participle.: *picking up, taking.*

frōns, frontis, f.: forehead.
utrum...an: *whether...or;* **praesit:** subjunctive, *be.*
absit: subjunctive from **absum**
quantō...tantō: *as much as x, y.*

Sketch of a bust of Anacreon.-->

Sic, fēminae, quid dē Anacreonte cōgitātis?
Idne quod vidētis vōbis placet?

