

Anacreon: PMG 358

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This poem comes to us via Athenaeus (13 599C), who claims that the poem is about Sappho. Women from Lesbos had their own reputations independent of Sappho, so a little suspicion about this seems prudent. Unfortunately, the interpretation of line eight depends somewhat on where you stand on this question.

Meter: glyconic quatrain, 1, 2, 3 –––––––; 4 –––––––.

σφαίρη δηῦτέ με πορφυρέη
βάλλων χρυσοκόμης Ἔρωσ,
νήνι ποικιλοσαμβάλω
 συμπαίζειν προκαλεῖται.
5 ἦ δ' – ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ' εὐκτίτου
Λέσβου – τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην –
λευκὴ γάρ – καταμέμφεται,
 πρὸς δ' ἄλλην τινὰ χάσκει.

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¹σφαῖρᾶ ας ἢ ball. δηῦτε = δὴ αὔτε again. πορφύρεος ἡ ον shining; purple, dark-red.

²βάλλω here more pelt, strike (by throwing). χρυσοκόμης οὐ ὁ golden-haired.

³νήνι = contracted sg.dat. of ἡ νεᾶνις girl. ποικιλοσαμβάλω ον with embroidered sandals.

⁴σὺμ-παίζω play with + dat., often with erotic sense. προ-καλέομαι call forth, invite, summon.

⁵The syntax of this entire quatrain is rather parenthetical. ἐστὶν i.e., ἦ. εὐκτίτος ον well-made; good to dwell in.

⁶Λέσβος ἢ Lesbos. κόμη ἢ hair. This phrase is the direct object of 1.7 καταμέμφεται.

⁷λευκός ἢ ὄν white; bright; i.e., 1.6 κόμην. κατα-μέμφομαι find fault with, blame.

⁸προσ-χάσκω in tmesis, gape, stare open-mouthed at; be greedy for. ἄλλην τινὰ The feminine gender of ἄλλην could refer to 1.6 κόμην hair, i.e., a younger man whose hair isn't white. Or it could refer to the girl, in which case ἄλλην is another girl.