

Anacreon: PMG 358

William S. Annis
Aidoi.org*

October 2010

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
 συμπαίξειν προκαλεῖται.
5 ἦ δ' – ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ' εὐκτίτου
 Λέσβου – τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην –
 λευκὴ γάρ – καταμέμφεται,
 πρὸς δ' ἄλλην τινὰ χάσκει.

*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>.

¹σφαῖρᾶ ας ἡ 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-παίξω 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., ἡ. εὐκτίτος ον well-made; good to dwell in.

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

⁷λευκός ἡ 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.