

## Drinking Poem, Drunk Rhythm: Anacreon Fr. 396 PMG and its Reception

Text (Bernsdorff 2020):

φέρ' ὕδωρ, φέρ' οἶνον, ὦ παῖ,

φέρε δ' ἀνθεμόεντας ἡμῖν

στεφάνους ἔνεικον, ὡς μή

πρὸς Ἔρωτα πυκταλίζω.

<...>

Μεθυ

Bring water, Bring wine, o child

Bring garlands of flowers to us

So that I may not fight against Eros

(...)

Drunk

Anacreon Fr. 396 is a short fragment preserved in multiple sources (Athenaeus 11.782a, P.Oxy. 220, P.Oxy. 3722). In the poem, a sympotic speaker demands wine, water, and garlands in order to not fight Eros. I follow Bonnie MacLachlan in reading the poem as a *recusatio* of Eros and an escape into the world of the symposium (MacLachlan 2001). The poem is written in anacreontic meter, a variant of ionic dimeter (West 1982: 32) popularized by Anacreon. I argue in this paper that the anacreontic meter of fr. 396 is essential for conveying the convivial and intoxicating tone of the poem. I further argue that this meter is inherently sympotic as reflected

in its use within the surviving fragments of Anacreon and their reception in other authors, most significantly in the anacreontic revel of Polyphemus in Euripides' *Cyclops* 495-518.

I find support for my argument in the discussion of Anacreon's rhythm in the anonymous Hellenistic rhetorical work *On Style* where we are told that Anacreon fr. 396 reflects "the simple rhythm of a drunken old man", (*On Style* 5: μεθύοντος γὰρ ὁ ῥυθμὸς ἀτεχνῶς γέροντος). I propose that this discussion of rhythm, 'ῥυθμός', can be read as a combination of meter and theme. Metrically, the anacreontic, a staccato anaclastic form of the ionic dimeter, is explicitly cited for its appropriateness to the context of convivial poetry. This connection between the anacreontic meter and the symposium can be traced intratextually within other fragments of Anacreon. Anacreon 356 and 412 use anacreontics within a sympotic context, while Anacreon 400 presents a similar scene of avoiding Eros. These similarities stand in contrast with the remaining fragments of Anacreon in non-anacreontic meters, such as his iambic invectives and hymns in glyconic meters. Furthermore, the language of fr. 396 exhibits certain similarities with the speech patterns and vocal tendencies of human intoxication (Pisani and Martin 1989). The elisions in the first two lines suggest the difficulties experienced by intoxicated speakers in opening and closing the vocal tract, while Euripides' subtle imitation of this portion in the *Cyclops* is a noteworthy complement to this reading, "φέρε μοι, ξεῖνε, φέρ', ἄσκὸν ἔνδος μοι" (*Cyclops* 510).

In sum, taking Anacreon fr. 396 as my starting point, I argue that anacreontic meter and rhythm combine to create a texture more expressive than the sum of their parts. The combined elements, including specific sounds that mimic drunken speech, emphasize Anacreon's *recusatio* from desire and his embrace of wine at the symposium as a refuge from Eros. Moreover, this harmony of form and theme is broadly reflected in the archaic period when monodic meters were

malleable poetic mediums on their way to developing associations with specific topics and song traditions. This growing specialization of form and meter is well reflected within later receptions of Anacreon including the theoretical discussion in *On Style*, the anacreontic passages in Euripides' *Cyclops*, and the sympotic *Anacreontea*.

#### Selected Bibliography

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