

Greek Lyric / Sympotic Poetry

6th - 5th c BCE

Mimnermus 1

What life is there, what pleasure without golden Aphrodite? May I die when I no longer care about secret affairs, lovers' gifts, and sex, those blossoms of youth that men and women find attractive. But when painful old age comes on, which makes even a beautiful man ugly, grievous cares wear away his heart and he gets no joy from looking upon the sun; he becomes hateful to boys, and women do not respect him. So harsh has the god made old age.

Mimnermus 5

Precious youth is like a fleeting dream; in no time grievous and hideous old age, hateful and dishonoured, hangs over one's head. It makes a man unrecognisable and darkens eyes and mind when it is poured round.

Ibykos 286

In the spring Cydonian quince-trees grow, watered from flowing rivers in the sacred garden of the muses, and vine-blossoms sprout beneath the shady vine-branches. But for me love rests at no season: like the Thracian north wind blazing with lightning rushing from the Cyprian with parching fits of madness, dark and shameless, it powerfully shakes my heart from the roots.

Ibykos 287

Even now Eros looks at me softly from under dark eyelids, and casts me spellbound into Aphrodite's nets where I lie caught inextricably, for I swear his mere approach makes me tremble like an old champion race horse, drawing a swift cart unwillingly to the race.

Anacreon 358

Eros strikes me with a purple ball and asks me to play with a woman wearing colorful sandals, but she is from lovely Lesbos, and scorns my white hair. She turns her back and runs gaping after another woman.

Anacreon 398

The dice of love are shouting and madness.

Theognis 237-254

I gave you wings to fly high and easy over the boundless sea and entire earth. At every meal and banquet you will be present on the lips of guests. Graceful young men will sing of you in limpid lovely notes to the clean piping of the flutes. When you go under the dark vaults of earth to the mournful chambers of sad Hell, even when you lie dead you will not lose your glory. Your name will be recalled among men always, Kyrnos. You will wheel high over the mainland and Greek islands and cross the unharvested sea pulsing with fish, not by horse but carried to those who love you in the gifts of Muses capped in violet flowers. You will be like a song to the living as long as there is sun, earth. Yet you ignore me and trick me as if I were a child.