

HERRICK TO ANACREON*

David A. Campbell
University of Victoria



When Socrates offered reasons for looking forward with pleasure to life after death, he spoke of the privilege of meeting Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer (Plato *Apol.* 41a); when Horace told of a narrow escape from death, he said that he came close to hearing the music-making of Sappho and Alcaeus, the poets on whose songs he modelled his verses (*Carm.* 2.13).¹ Robert Herrick, in one of his more ambitious poems, *The Apparition of his Mistressse calling him to Elizium* (H-575/205.5),² makes his mistress his guide to the pleasures of paradise, and her account of the amenities of the scene leads to the central theme of the poem, the catalogue of poets whom they will encounter. Her list runs from Musaeus and Homer to Juvenal and Persius before leaping ahead to Beaumont and Fletcher and Ben Jonson; but whereas most of the ancient poets are marked out by a single epithet in the manner of another of Horace's poems, *Carm.* 4.9—"honour'd Homer," "stately Virgil" and the others—, Anacreon takes pride of place in mid-poem, poised between the earlier Greeks and the Romans, and attracts attention by the number of lines allotted to him:

To Linus, then to Pindar; and that done,
Ile bring thee Herrick to Anacreon,
Quaffing his full-crown'd bowles of burning Wine,
And in his Raptures speaking Lines of Thine,
Like to His subject; and as his Frantick-
Looks, shew him truly Bacchanalian like,
Besmear'd with Grapes; welcome he shall thee thither,
Where both may rage, both drink and dance together.
Then stately Virgil... (31-39)

Herrick's name, given only here in the poem, is set beside Anacreon's, and the "full-crown'd bowles" and "burning Wine" establish the symposiastic setting³ of Anacreon's "Raptures." What follows is remarkably bold: Anacreon speaks not his own poetry, as does Homer (27-28), but Herrick's, "Like to His subject"; and the affinity of the two is expressed in the unmistakably Anacreontic activities which they will share.⁴

Anacreon figures elsewhere in Herrick's pages as the poet of drunkenness: in *A Lyrick to Mirth* (H-111/39.3, 9-10),

Rouze Anacreon from the dead;

And return him drunk to bed;
 [334]in *His fare-well to Sack* (H-128/45.1, 31-32),
 Horace, Anacreon both had lost their fame,
 Had'st thou not fill'd them with thy fire and flame;
 and in *An Ode to Sir Clipsebie Crew* (H-544/198.1, 7-12),
 If full we charme; then call upon
 Anacreon
 To grace the frantick Thyrese:
 And having drunk, we raise a shout
 Throughout
 To praise his Verse.

In all three passages Anacreon is linked with Horace, not the sententious but the convivial Horace, to whom appropriate honor is done in "A Goblet ... Of Lyrick Wine" (H-544/198.1, 15-16).

Herrick's Anacreon is for the most part what we know as the *Anacreontea*, the sixty poems of widely varying date written in the meters and ostensibly the manner of the sixth-century B.C. poet. Edited by H. Stephanus (Henri Estienne) and published in Paris in 1554, they were known to Jonson's circle: Jonson owned a copy of the 1598 edition of Stephanus' *Carminum poetarum novem lyricae poesews principum fragmenta*, in which the poems were included, and Herrick is likely to have used one of the many editions of the collection.⁵

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Herrick used the *Anacreontea* in different ways: he sometimes composed a fairly close translation of a poem; more often he made an adaptation for his own purposes; and very often he composed pieces which although redolent of "Anacreon" cannot be shown to depend on any one model.

The versions of the longer narrative poems, *Anacr.* 33 (H-81/26.3) and 35 (H-139/50.1), are to be regarded as translations rather than adaptations. In the first, however, the astronomical detail which enriches the opening lines of the original ("Once at the midnight hour, when Arctus was already turning by the hand of Boötes") is dropped in Herrick's version (*The Cheat of Cupid: or, The ungentle guest*) as is the gadfly simile of line 28; the humorous contrast established in the closing lines ("Stranger, he said, 'rejoice with me: my bow remains undamaged; but *you* will have a sore heart'") is lost; and the rhyme-scheme necessitates weak additions ("And e'en with cold half starved," 12; "And Wings too, which did shiver," 18). Delattre⁶ was the first to note that Herrick followed Stephanus' Latin translation of the poem rather than the Greek original; Stephanus keeps remarkably close to the Greek, but he makes slight additions, e.g., *nuper silente nocte* in the opening line, which Herrick takes over ("One *silent* night of late," 1).⁷ Herrick told his own version of the story in *Upon Cupid* (H-942/295.3): Love, the beggar, given alms by the poet, sets him afire with a touch of his finger.

His translation of *Anacr.* 35, *The wounded Cupid*, is also free: he adds lines (6, 10-11) and drops the humor of line 6 of the original (Love goes

“running and flying”) and 8-9 (“I am undone, mother, I am undone and I die”). In both of these cases it is clear that Thomas Stanley, whose versions were [335]published three years after Herrick’s, aimed at a much closer approximation to the original than Herrick.

Herrick has versions of three shorter narrative poems about Love. He represents the seven lines of *Anacr.* 6 in three neat couplets (*Upon Cupid*, H-229/96.1), close in content and spirit to the original, even if the rhetoric of “And drunk with Wine, I drank him up” (4) is Herrick’s own touch, but he discards Love’s wings (*Anacr.* 6.3 “I seized him by the wings,” and at the end “And now within my body he tickles me with his wings,” where the rare verb *γαργαλίξει*, the last word of the poem, is memorable for its length and alliteration as well as its sense). Herrick’s more sober version may be due to his use of Melanchthon’s Latin translation (*Opera ... omnia* x.481):

nunc ille saevit imis
puer mihi in medullis.

(Now that boy rages in my inmost marrow.)⁸

The Dream (H-40/16.1) is based on *Anacr.* 31, which begins “Love, beating me harshly with a hyacinth rod, ordered me to run with him”: [the race leaves the runner close to death,] “but Love fanned my brow with his tender wings and said, ‘Can’t you love, then?’” Herrick explicitly presents the experience as a dream, dispenses with the race, and writes his own conclusion to the poem. He replaces Love’s hyacinth rod with one of myrtle twigs, providing an explanation: “Love strikes, but ’tis with gentle cruelty.” The myrtle rod is part of the furniture of his Anacreontic verse, a counterpart of Bacchus’ thyrs and Hymen’s torch: Venus whips two quarreling Cupids “with rods of Mirtle” (H-92/31.2) and chastizes the coarse Herrick “with a wand of Mirtle” (H-142/51.1); “a young Enchantresse” stands next to Anacreon “tapping his plump thighs with a mirtle wand” (H-1017/313.1); the pastoral god Faunus beats his wife to death “with a Mirtle Rod” (H-986/306.2); and the poet can himself threaten his mistress with “Mirtle rods ... / For to tame, though not to kill” (H-238/98.2).⁹ Myrtle was sacred to Venus,¹⁰ and Ovid made *Elegeia*, *Love Elegy*, hold a myrtle rod (*myrtea virga*, *Amores* 3.1.34). Herrick’s final couplet is perhaps a distant echo of a different poem, *Anacr.* 28.5-7, where Venus dips the Loves’ shaft-points in honey, while Love adds gall.¹¹ He makes use of the final line of *Anacr.* 31 elsewhere, as Venus’ rebuke in *The Vision* (H-142/51.1, 21-22):

And chiding me, said, Hence, Remove,
Herrick, thou art too coarse to love.

Herrick’s adaptation of *Anacr.* 1, *The Vision* (H-1017/313.1), is freer still. Each poet recounts a dream, and each ends his poem by saying that Anacreon’s garland was given to the dreamer: “and to this very day I have not ceased from love”—so the Greek original; Herrick writes

Since when (me thinks) my braines about doe swim,
And I am wilde and wanton like to him.

Each poet represents himself as Anacreon's successor in the composition of erotic verse, but Herrick makes startling alterations to his original: the Greek poem has two protagonists, Anacreon and the dreamer, Love being mentioned only in passing as the child who leads the drunken Anacreon by the hand; Herrick, after elaborating the picture of the tipsy poet, introduces not Love but [336] "a young Enchantresse" who attempts to seduce Anacreon, is angered by his inability to perform, snatches off his garland and hands it to Herrick. She seems to represent Poetry herself in a piece of symbolism which enriches Herrick's version.¹²

Age unfit for Love (H-852/277.1) is a version of *Anacr.* 7. The first three couplets keep close to the original, even if Herrick dispenses with the dialogue between Anacreon and "the women"; but the last couplet,

Ill it fits old men to play,
When that Death bids come away,

says exactly the opposite of the Greek: "the closer Death is, the more fitting it is for the old man to play his pleasant games."¹³ Herrick's rewriting is surprising, since elsewhere he strikes the Anacreontic note (H-43/17.2):

Young I was, but now am old,
But I am not yet grown cold;
I can play,...

so in H-19/10.4 he resorts to witchcraft in his eagerness to cure the impotence of his old age. The explanation may be that he misunderstood Stephanus' Latin version:

Hoc nescio, sed illud
Certo scio, decere
Senem hoc magis vacare
Amoribus jocisque,
Quo mors magis propinquat.

Stephanus, a superb Latinist,¹⁴ used *vacare* to give the required sense that the old man ought "to have time for" love and fun; but Herrick missed the idiomatic use¹⁵ and took him to mean that the old man ought "to be free from" such pursuits.¹⁶

The poem *On himselfe*, "I feare no Earthly Powers" (H-170/65.1), is a happy abbreviation of *Anacr.* 8.1-10.¹⁷ As often, Herrick prefers the general ("Earthly Powers") to the particular ("Gyges, lord of Sardis"),¹⁸ and he does not hesitate to rearrange his material and add explicit reference to drinking. His original was tightly bound together by the fourfold use of μέλει, "I do not care for..., I do care for..." and Stephanus retained the effect by means of his repeated *curo*; Herrick relies instead on his fine rhyming and discreet alliteration. The seven-syllable lines of his final couplet reproduce exactly the iambic rhythm of the Greek poem and of Stephanus' translation:

This day Ile drowne all sorrow;
Who knowes to live to morrow?
τὸ σήμερον μέλει μοι,
τὸ δ' αὔριον τίς οἶδεν;

Hodierna curo tantum:
 Quis cras futura novit?

Another poem entitled *On himselfe*,¹⁹ “Borne I was to meet with Age” (H-519/191.4), keeps very close to its original, *Anacr.* 40, for six lines, although the terms “pilgrimage” and “Resident” have a fine resonance that is not in the plain language of the Greek poem. Herrick, however, goes his own way in his last couplet, abandoning lines 7-9 (“Before death catches up with me, I shall [337]play, I shall laugh and I shall dance with handsome Lyaeus”) and substituting different Anacreontic activity:

But Ile spend my comming houres,
 Drinking wine, and crown'd with flowres.

In *Anacr.* 50 the stanza-form is clearly established by the repeated introit ὄτ' ἐγὼ πῖω τὸν οἶνον, “When I drink my wine.”²⁰ Herrick's *Anacrontick Verse* (sic: H-996/309.1) has the refrain as the second line of each of his five couplets, but he gives it new life by providing wine with a different epithet in each couplet:

Brisk methinks I am, and fine,
 When I drinke my capring wine:
 Then to love I do encline;
 When I drinke my wanton wine;

in the last couplet he unexpectedly varies the refrain also:

But I languish, lowre, and Pine,
 When I want my fragrant wine.

He does not reproduce the sequence or all of the content of the original, but he captures the atmosphere of love and festivity, dazzling with his rhyming skill.

The theme of gray hair and the consequent risk of rejection in love goes back to Anacreon himself: the girl from Lesbos finds fault with his white hair (358 *PMG*), Love glances at his graying hair and flies past (379 *PMG*). *Anacr.* 51 treats the topic in eight short lines: do not reject my love because I am gray and you are young; in garlands white lilies go well with roses. Herrick used this poem as a starting-point in *To a Gentlewoman objecting to him his gray haire* (H164/63.1) and made a free adaptation of it in *Upon his gray haire* (H-527/194.3). His first couplet in the latter reproduces its first two lines:

Fly me not, though I be gray,
 Lady, this I know you'l say;

his next jumps forward to the flower image of *Anacr.* 51.6-8:

Better look the Roses red,
 When with white commingled.

The three rhymed lines which follow introduce a second color contrast which is not in the Greek, and add the appropriate generalization:

Black your haire are; mine are white;
 This begets the more delight,
 When things meet most opposite.

In his last couplet Herrick leaves his original behind and adds a new image:

As in Pictures we descry

Venus standing Vulcan by.

The simile fits well, since pictures are described or prescribed in several of the *Anacreontea*, and Venus and Vulcan make an appearance in *Anacr.* 28 as co-workers in the Lemnian smithy.

It has gone unnoticed that Herrick drew not only on the *Anacreontea* but on a poem by the real Anacreon (357 *PMG*) which Stephanus printed in his appendix. The text which he offered was badly garbled,²¹ and he set it out as prose, not verse; and instead of giving a translation by himself or Andreas he [338]printed the evasive prose version given by Giraldi in his history of Greek and Latin poetry:²²

O domitor rerum et dux Amor,
 Quicum Nymphae caeruleae
 Et purpurea ludit Venus,
 En genua supplex amplector tua:
 Tu propitius teneras exaudi preces,
 Fave Cleobulo, suscipe amorem meum.
 (O Love, subduer and leader of the world,
 with whom the sea-blue Nymphs
 and rosy Venus play,
 behold, I embrace your knees in supplication:
 listen graciously to my tender prayers,
 show favor to Cleobulus, support my love.)

Herrick used it for the opening lines of *An Hymne to Cupid* (H-874/281.2):

Thou, thou that bear'st the sway
 With whom the Sea-Nymphs play;
 And Venus, every way:
 When I embrace thy knee;
 And make short pray'rs to thee:
 In love, then prosper me.²³

He adds nine lines: a plea for instruction in his wooing and for the avoidance of shame and scorn, and a promise of eternal devotion to the god. In the first six lines he follows Giraldi closely but rejects "purple" Venus, "tender" prayers and, of course, the name of the boy Cleobulus.

In view of this borrowing it becomes possible that Anacreon 411(a) *PMG* was the source for the last couplet of *On himselfe* (H-157/60.2):

Only one Sovereign salve, I know,
 And that is Death, the end of Woe.

Stephanus printed the two lines of Anacreon together with his prose translation: *mori mihi contingat: non enim alia liberatio ab aerumnis fuerit ullo pacto istis* ("May death be my lot: for there is certainly no other release from these troubles").²⁴

Herrick put in his collection two poems which he labelled *Anacreontike* (H-540/197.1, H-993/308.1).²⁵ The first is modelled on no single Anacreontic poem, although echoes are strong and the opening, "Born I was to be old," seems to promise another version of *Anacr.* 40 ("Borne I was to meet with

Age,” H-519/191.4). The second, however, sounds a note not heard in the *Anacreontea*. Despair, brought about by deception, gives place in mid-poem to confidence that bad times change for the better: “And he / Whom we / See dejected; / Next day / Wee may / See erected.” This has the ring of Archilochus (e.g., 128, 130 West) rather than the *Anacreontea*. Each poem is something of a metrical experiment, the first with its tug-of-war between anapaestic and dactylic movement, the second with its tiny rhymed units. Neither effect is derived from the *Anacreontea*.²⁶

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[339]Herrick adopted more than one persona in his *Hesperides*, and the Anacreontic is balanced by others, those of satirist and praise-singer, purveyor of wisdom and celebrator of countryside among them;²⁷ but it is to the Anacreontic that he draws attention²⁸ and in the world of the *Anacreontea* that he seems most comfortably at home: a world of love taken lightheartedly and without commitment, a world of wine and fellowship, a world looking over its shoulder to the poetry of a greater figure. He rarely, however, is content to leave his reader with a close Stanley-like rendering of the original. He never used the term “translation” in connection with the Greek poems, applying it only to his version of Horace’s lyric, *donec gratus eram* (*Carm.* 3.9): *A Dialogue betwixt Horace and Lydia, Translated Anno 1627. and set by Master Robert Ramsey* (H-181/70.1). Perhaps he was referring to the eclecticism of his practice when in one of his few references to his poetry (*Upon his Verses*, H-681/236.3) he wrote:

These are the Children I have left;
 Adopted some; none got by theft.
 But all are toucht (like lawfull plate)
 And no Verse illegitimate.

The adoption could be formal or informal, and many of his most convincingly Anacreontic poems have no single antecedent in the Greek collection. His lines *To Sappho* (H-691/238.3) provide a good example:

Let us now take time, and play,
 Love, and live here while we may;
 Drink rich wine; and make good cheere,
 While we have our being here:
 For, once dead, and laid i’th grave,
 No return from thence we have.

Anacreon, Catullus, Horace²⁹ and others are all blended here into a perfect Anacreontic whole, a brief, tidy, simply-expressed statement of hedonism.



NOTES

*I am grateful to Gordon Braden for advice and encouragement.

1. For other examples see R. G. M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard's introduction to the poem, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book II* (Oxford 1978) 204.

2. References are given in the numeration of *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. J. Max Patrick (New York 1963), together with that of *Herrick's Poetical Works*, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford 1956, repr. 1963), which is valid also for *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick*, ed. F. W. Moorman (Oxford 1915): 205.5 indicates the fifth poem to begin on page 205 of the Oxford editions.

3. Cf., e.g., Tibullus 2.5.98 *coronatus ... calix*; Vergil *G.* 2.528 *cratera coronant*; and Horace *Carm.* 2.11.19 *ardentis Falerni*; both expressions have Greek antecedents.

4. E.g., *Anacr.* 9.2-3, "to drink ... to rage"; 38.21-22, "drunk, I wish to dance and play." References are to M. L. West, ed., *Carmina Anacreontea* (Leipzig 1984).

[340]5. David McPherson, *Ben Jonson's Library and Marginalia (Studies in Philology* [71.5], *Texts and Studies*, 1974) 77 (no. 142); Gordon Braden, *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven and London 1978) 257.

6. Floris Delattre, *Robert Herrick: Contribution à l'étude de la poésie lyrique en Angleterre au dix-septième siècle* (Paris 1912) 405-406. Herrick knew some Greek: in *His Noble Numbers* he set two lines of Hesiod in the title-page and introduced two Greek words into the last poem. He may well have kept an eye on the Greek text of the *Anacreontea* in addition to using the Latin versions of Stephanus and Andreas: see *infra* n. 23.

7. Braden (*supra* n. 5) 248 observes that on two other occasions Herrick added the notion of silence to his original: in the opening lines of H-336/132.3, "Ah Posthumus! Our yeares hence flye, / And leave no sound," and in H-62/21.6, 5-6, "Upon thy Forme more wrinkles yet will fall, / And comming downe, shall make no noise at all."

8. Braden (*supra* n. 5) 257; Michael Baumann, *Die Anakreonten in englischen Übersetzungen* (Heidelberg 1974) 56 with n. 16, had said that there was no Latin version which Herrick could use.

9. See also the additional stanzas of *A Nuptiall Song* (H-283/112.3) printed in Moorman (*supra* n. 2) 431: "The easy Gods / For such neglect, have only myrtle rodde / to stroake not strike."

10. Pliny *NH* 15.29.36.121; Plut. *Qu. Rom.* 20.

11. Love is associated with the bee in *Anacr.* 35 and elsewhere by Herrick, e.g., at H-883/283.2.

12. See Achsah Guibbory in Roger B. Rollin and J. Max Patrick, eds., "Trust to Good Verses": *Herrick Tercentenary Essays* (Pittsburgh 1978) 85-86; Braden (*supra* n. 5) 213-14, 221.

13. Stanley, Birkenhead, and Cowley all keep the sense of the Greek: see Charles Clay Doyle, "An Unhonoured English Anacreon: John Birkenhead," *Studies in Philology* 71 (1974) 194-98.

14. Cf. Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship 1300-1850* (Oxford 1976) 109: "Latin was, we may say, his mother tongue."

15. In his version of *Anacr.* 33 (H-81/26.3) did he take Stephanus' *somniantem* to mean "sleeping" rather than "dreaming"? See Delattre (supra n. 6) 406 n. 4.
16. Baumann (supra n. 8) 56 n. 15 misses the idiom when he says that it was Stephanus who arbitrarily distorted the sense of the original.
17. Stephanus athetized lines 11-15, which are omitted in the *Greek Anthology*.
18. Not, however, in the case of "rigid Cato," who makes five appearances in the *Hesperides*.
19. This time the title corresponds with that offered in the manuscript and in Stephanus' edition, *εἰς ἑαυτόν* (*De Seipso* in Andreas' version).
20. With West's emendation in lines 3-4 seven four-line stanzas emerge.
21. Notably in lines 1-2 *ὦ ἀναξ, ὦ δαμάλης* "Ερωσ, in 4 *ἐπιστρέφεται*, and crucially in 11, where *ὦ Δεόνυσε* is concealed in *ὦδ' εὐνὸν σε*. It was not until the 19th century that the poem was recognized as a hymn to Dionysus, not Eros.
22. *Opera* (ed. 1580) ii.340; the literal translation is my own.
23. Is "thou, thou" an echo of the repeated *ὦ* of his Greek text?
24. Martin in his commentary (supra n. 2) 512 gives Burton's version of Anacreon's lines: "Would I were dead, for nought God knowes / But death can rid me of these woes."
25. In addition to the *Anacrontick Verse* already discussed (H-996/309.1).
26. Braden (supra n. 5) 274 n. 59 refers to Champion's proposal for a four-syllable English Anacreontic line.
- [341]27. See A. Leigh DeNeff, "This Poetick Liturgie": *Robert Herrick's Ceremonial Mode* (Durham, N. C. 1974) 18 for "the four main singer-personae," pastoral, courtly, realistic, artistic.
28. *The Apparition of his Mistress* (H-575/205.5) is "placed at the formal center of *Hesperides*": Ann Baynes Coiro, *Robert Herrick's Hesperides and the Epigram Book Tradition* (Baltimore and London 1988) 129.
29. For "take time" as a translation of *carpe diem* see Braden (supra n. 5) 275 n. 73.