Russell's Anthology of Latin Prose

Text 22: The pleasures of old age (Cicero)

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a) Source:

De senectute 47-50.

b) Background (synopsis quoted from Russell's book):

"*De senectute* was written in the spring of 44 BC, probably after Caesar's murder. It is one of Cicero's most accomplished pieces. Cato (the Censor) is the main speaker; the dramatic date is shortly before his death (149 BC). This extract is characteristically rich in *exempla*, both Greek and Latin".

c) Language comment:

The text does not offer any especially difficult characteristics, except lines 16-18, when Cicero makes a complicated comparison to getting rid of military duties. Quite a lot of exclamative sentences towards the end.

d) Content:

In general lines, Cicero tries to make us see that, once one gets old, this person can renounce the anxieties and pleasures that worry youth, or at least he will have enough with just a minimum part of those pleasures: he will be satisfied with just looking at those things from far away; he will be able to get rid of them. Later, Cicero exposes the pleasures of activities that elderly people undertake: scientific activities, the study or rhetoric, etc., and how happy such men have been to have undertaken these activities.

e) Distribution of content:

(numbers refer to the lines in the printed edition)

1-12:	You don't lack what you don't desire.
12-16:	Comparison of the theatre.
16-20:	Statement about the ideal state.
20-35:	Mention of several examples.
35-41:	Comparison and Solon's words.

f) Notes for help:

1) "voluptatum": genitive depending on "titillatio".

"quasi" = "as if".

2) "ne...quidem" = "not even".

4) the ablative "aetate" depends on "adfecto" (= "affecto").

"-ne": the "utrum" for indirect double question.

"di meliora": supply "dent".

10) "ut": comparative.

12) "ut": comparative, in combination with the posterior "sic".

13) "prima cavea" = "first row" (here).

16) "sat" = "satis".

"illa": the things he is going to list in two infinitives.

"quanti": genitive of value.

16-18) "tamquam...omnium": a very long ablative absolute, with a lot of genitives that depend on "stipendiis".

19) "tamquam": make it depend on "pabulum", and make the genitives depend on it.

20) "mori": infinitive (deponent).

21) "dimetiendi": gerundive, it goes with "caeli".

22) "noctu": ablative of time.

"describere": depends on "ingressum".

"ingressum": it goes with "illum", and remember that deponent verbs have a past participle with active meaning.

23) "opprimere" = "catch" (here).

"delectabat": the subject is "praedicere".

25) supply "est", or "dicam", inside this question.

27) historic "cum".

29) "processit aetate" = "he went on living".

30) "pontificii et civilis iuris": these genitives depend on "studio".

31) after this second "de", supply another "studio".

32-33) "his studiis" depends on "flagrantes"

34) "exerceri" has "M. Cethegum" as subject.

36) "scortum, -i" = "prostitute" (here).

36-37) "comparandae" has here a kind of conditional meaning, "if they are to be compared".

37) supply "sunt".

38) consecutive "ut".

39) "illud" is the subject, "honestum" is what it "sit", the predicative object.

"ut": comparative.

40) reported speech, dependent on "ait".

"voluptate" is the antecedent of the relative, as usual put inside the relative clause itself and attacted to the relative case (ablative), it should have remained outside together with "nulla".