

## Reading Antiquity: Horace *Epodes* lecture

### A) Background:

- Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus): 65-8BC; father = freedman and auctioneer. b. Venusia in Apulia; educated Rome and Athens; fought on Republican side in civil war, including Philippi; pardoned. Introduced to Maecenas c. 38BC and became client
- *Epodes* (c. 30 BC); *Satires* (Book 1: c. 35BC; Book 2: 30BC); *Odes* (Books 1-3: 24/23 BC; Book 4: c. 13 BC); *Epistles* (Book 1: 21-19 BC; Book 2 c. 18BC??); *Carmen Saeculare* (17 BC); *Ars Poetica* (date uncertain)
- *Epodes*: 17 poems; genre of iambi. Composed 42-30BC; set in run-up to Actium. Eleven in iambic metre; six combination of iambs and dactyls
- Mix of material. Seven involving personal attack (4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 17); 7 and 16= warnings to Romans about civil war; 1 and 9 concern Actium; 3 = joke about garlic; 14 = self-deprecating excuse; 11 and 15 = in style of love-elegy; 2 = ironic form of pastoral; 13 on pleasures of wine and friends

### B) Engagement with archaic Greek iambic tradition: work of Archilochus and Hipponax

- Archilochus' poetry included iambic

1) "Up and down she bounced  
like a kingfisher flapping on a jutting rock.  
Like a Thracian or Phrygian drinking beer through a tube  
She sucked, stooped down, engaged too from behind.  
And his dong ....  
flooded over like a Prienian  
stall-fed donkey's  
.... foam all around her mouth" (Archilochus fr. 41-44; tr. West 1993: 6)

2) "Your tender skin has lost its former bloom,  
dries out in furrows; ugly age  
makes you its prey. Sweet charm from your fair face  
Has hopped it. After all, the winds  
of many winters have assaulted you..." (Archilochus fr. 188; tr. West: 2)

- Tradition that Archilochus attacked Lycambes who initially betrothed his daughter Neobule to Archilochus but later forbade the marriage; Archilochus detailed sex relationship with Neobule and sister > daughters/father hanged themselves

- "Cologne epode" fragment (P.Colon.inv. 7511): on rejection of Neobule and his seduction of (possibly) her younger sister

3) "But know this: another man may have Neobule. Alas, she has become overripe. Gone is her maidenly bloom, gone her former charm. For she could not [curb] her desires, and in her madness the woman revealed the scope of her [folly]." (P.Colon.inv. 7511, 16-20)

- Hipponax: tradition that rejected when sought to marry Bupalus' daughter > attack in verse > Bupalus hanged himself. Abuse of Bupalus and mother in poetry

- 4) “Bupalus, the mother-fucker with Arete [Bupalus' mother]” (Hipponax fr.12)
- 5) “for Arete, bending over for me towards the lamp...” (Hipponax fr. 17)
- 6) “There are two days on which a woman in most pleasing- when someone marries her and when he carries out her dead body” (Hipponax fr. 68)

▪ Horace and Archilochus of Paros and Hipponax

- 7) “I was the first to show to Latium the iambics of Paros, following the rhythms and spirit of Archilochus, not the themes or the words that hounded Lycambes” (Hor. *Epist.* 1.19.23-5)
- 8) “For I am utterly ruthless against villains, and now toss my horns in readiness, like the son-in-law rejected by the treacherous Lycambes, or the fierce enemy of Bupalus.” (Hor. *Epod.* 6.11–14)
- Influence of Archilochus: metrical system of *Epodes* 1-10; title probably *Epodi* cf. Archilochus' title *Epodoi* for collection of poems in epodic metre; sexual invective against women e.g. Hor. *Epod.* 8 and 12 (see Richlin for Latin tradition of sexual invective against women)
- 9) “To think that you, who have rotted away with the long passage of time, should ask what unstrings my virility” (*Epod.* 8.1-2)
- 10) “Be as rich as you like. May the masks of triumphal ancestors escort your cortege! Let no wife be weighed down with fatter pearls as she walks proudly by!” (*Epod.* 8.11-14)
- 11) “What of the fact that slim Stoic volumes nestle on your cushions of Chinese silk? Does that make my organ (which can't read) any stiffer, or my phallic charm less limp? To call it forth from my proud crotch you must go to work with your mouth.” (*Epod.* 8.15-20)
- 12) “The genitalia of all males and their poetry refuse to respond to this women who degrades herself by fellating them and who is soon to die.” (Richlin)
- 13) “What do you want, woman? A black elephant is just the thing for you. Why do you send me presents and billets-doux? I'm not a hard young man, nor do I have an insensitive nose” (*Epod.* 12.1-3)
- 14) “now in her animal heat she breaks the thongs of the bedstead and its canopy!” (*Epod.* 12.11-12)
- 15) “You're not so feeble with Inachia as you are with me. You can manage her three times a night; with me you're too limp for a single session. Damn that woman Lesbia who, when I was looking for a bull, directed me to a passive creature like yourself!” (*Epod.* 12.14-17, woman to Horace)
- 16) “when your teeth are black, and extreme decrepitude ploughs furrows on your forehead” (*Epod.* 8.3-4; cf. Archilochus fr. 188)
- 17) “in both poems the fundamental problem is the poet's sexual impotence, a physical manifestation of the general impotence and lack of power which we have seen as typical of the collection. The physical impotence of the poet himself seems to be much less prominent in the poetry of Archilochus” (Harrison 2001)

- Impotence in the *Epodes* (see e.g. last poem where he recants his words about Canidia; 15.12 pun on Flaccus, “floppy”)

18) “For if there’s any male self-respect in Flaccus [“floppy”] (*Epod.* 15.12)

- *Epode* 1: lack of power

19) “You, Maecenas, will sail on a Liburnian galley among ships with towering superstructures, prepared to undergo every danger that threatens Caesar.” (*Epod.* 1.1-4)

20) “in a small ship you crossed / a mighty sea, and made it back from Gortyn”  
(Archilochus 24 W.1–2; tr. West)

21) “Glaucus, see, the waves are rising and the deep sea is disturbed; all about the heights of Gyrae stands a towering mass of cloud— that’s a sign of storm. I fall a prey to unexpected fear.”  
(Archilochus fr. 105 W.; Tr. West, 1994: storm allegorical for onset of war)

22) “... Or shall I face these hardships, determined to endure them with the spirit that men ought to show, if they are not weaklings?” (*Epod.* 1.9-10)

23) “I, who am all too lacking in toughness and pugnacity” (*Epod.* 1.16)

24) “I am a henchman of lord Ares, / but the Muses’ servant as well, / schooled in their charming gift.” (Archilochus 1 ‘On war’, trans. J. Porter)

25) “the answer is that I shall be less apprehensive by your side. Fear’s grip is stronger on those who are apart from their dear ones” (*Epod.* 1.17-18, Horace to Maecenas)

26) “The Horatian poem puts its speaker in a typical Archilochean situation with a friend and a sea-voyage in the context of war, but immediately modifies that Archilochean pose: this poetic speaker does not have the vigour and martial aspirations of Archilochus,” (Harrison)

- *Epode* 3: comparative lack of power. Horace’s indigestion through Maecenas seasoning his meal with too much garlic. Contrast sympotic Archilochean invective where real revenge. Differences in sympotic setting (client poet though also presented as friend)

27) “Henceforth if anyone with unholy hand chokes the aged throat of his father, let him eat garlic, a plant more deadly than hemlock. Lord, what iron stomachs harvesters must have! What poison is this that rages in my vitals? ” (Hor. *Epod.* 3.1-5)

28) “When Medea fell in love with Jason, who was more splendidly handsome than all the other Argonauts, this is what she smeared on the leader when he was about to fasten yokes on the oxen which had never known them before.” (*Epod.* 3.9-12)

29) “No such heat ever descended from the stars on parched Apulia, nor did that present burn more fiercely on the shoulders of Hercules who had done so many deeds.” (*Epod.* 3.15-18)

30) “ If ever you are greedy enough to eat such stuff, my merry Maecenas, I hope your girl will ward off your kisses and lie on the very edge of the bed.” (*Epod.* 3.19-22)

### Bibliography

Harrison, S. J., *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace* (2007)

Harrison, S. J., 'Some generic problems in Horace's *Epodes*. or, on (not) being Archilochus'. In *Iambic Ideas* edd. Cavarzere et al. (2001), 165-86

Richlin, A., *Garden of Priapus* (1992)

West, M., *Greek Lyric Poetry* (1993)