

Lecture-seminar 4: *Discordia* and powerlessness: Horace's penetrating *Epodes* (I)**1. *Flaccus* the son of a *libertus*****a. *Epode* 15.11-15**

O Neaera, you're destined to grieve long for my virtues!
 For if Flaccus is some sort of man (*nam si quid in Flacco viri est*)
 He'll not allow you to spend every night with another,
Angered (*iratus*) he'll seek a truer mate:
 Nor will his lasting injury be assuaged by your sweet charms
 Once true sorrow has entered him (*si certus intrarit dolor*).

b. *Sat* 1.6.65-77: moral flaws as bodily imperfections

'And yet, if the flaws that mar my otherwise sound nature are small and few in number, even as you might find fault with moles spotted over an otherwise attractive person; if no one will justly accuse me of greed or meanness or lewdness; if, to venture on self-praise, my life is free from stain and guilt and I am loved by my friends – I owe all this to my father, who, though poor with a tiny farm, would not send me to the school of Flavius, which great boys used to go to, the sons of great centurions, with slate and satchel slung over the left arm. No, he boldly took off his boy to Rome, to be taught those studies that any knight or senator would have his own offspring taught.'

c. *Epist.*1.20.4-12, 17-18, 19-28: the slave-like book/ readers as (ab)users of books

...

You grieve at private viewings, praise public life,
 Though I didn't rear you so. Off, where you itch to go!
 Once out, there's no recall. 'Ah, what have I done?
What did I hope?' you'll say, when someone hurts you,
When you're rolled up small, your sated lover weary.
 But unless the augur, hating your errors, has lost all sense,
 You'll be dear to Rome till your youth deserts you:
Then when you've been well-thumbed by vulgar hands,
And start to grow soiled, you'll be silent food for worms....

....

This fate, too awaits you, that stammering age will come upon
 You as you teach boys their ABC in the city's suburbs...

...(19-28)

When a warmer sun attracts a few more listeners,
 You'll tell them I was a freedman's son, that, of slender
Means, I spread wings that were too large for my nest,
And though my birth lessens them, you'll add to my merits:
 Say, in war and peace, I found favour with our leaders,
 Was slight of frame, grey too early, fond of the sun,
 Quick-tempered, yet one who was easy to placate.
 If anyone happens to ask about my age,
 Tell him I completed my forty-fourth December,
 When Lollius, as consul, was joined by Lepidus.

2. The Epodes

a. Epistles 1.19.23-5

Parios ego primus iambos
ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus
Archilochi, non res et agentia verba Lycamben

I was the first to introduce Parian iambics to Latium, adopting the rhythms and the spirit of Archilochus, but not his subject-matter and the words that hounded Lycambes. (23–5).

b. Compare Odes 1.16.22-6

conpesce mentem: me quoque pectoris
temptavit in dulci iuventa
feruor et in celeres iambos

misit furentem. Nunc ego mitibus
mutare quaero tristia

Restrain your spirit! Me too in youth's sweet day eager passion tempted, and drove in madness to impetuous verse! Now I would change those bitter lines for sweet...

c. and Epode 6.11-16:

cave, cave, namque in malos asperrimus
parata tollo cornua,
qualis Lycambae spretus infido gener
aut acer hostis Bupalus.
an si quis atro dente me petiverit,
inultus ut flebo puer?

Take care, take care: I lower my fierce horns eagerly
Against the doers of evil,
Like false Lycambes' slighted son-in-law, or
Bupalus' bitter enemy.
Do you think if a venomous tooth attacks me
I'll cry, un-avenged, like a child?

3. It takes one to know one: the hard-soft iambic voice (initial overview)

- As befits 'not soft men' (*non molles viros*, *Epod.*1.10)
- *Epod.*6.15-16: 'Or if any one with venomous tooth should attack me, shall I forgo revenge and whimper like a child (*puer*)?' Watson 2003 ad loc.: '*puer* suffices on its own to convey the notion of helplessness in the face of aggression.'
- *Epod.*8: an old woman he is sleeping with asks him why he has become impotent (*vires quid enervet meas*)
- *Epod.*11.4: burning with lust for 'soft boys and girls' (*mollibus pueris aut puellis*)

- 12.15-16: your ‘soft performance’ (*mollis opus*)
- 14.1: Why your ‘soft indolence’? (*mollis inertia*)
- 16.37-8: Let the soft and hopeless lie down on doomed couches! (*mollis et expes / inominata perprimat cubilia!*)
- In 17 he is under a woman’s power once more...(Canidia)

4. Vulnerable bodies in the *Epodes*

Epod.1: Maecenas, war, and the baby chicks (SEE POEM BELOW)

- 3:** Garlic, burning up your guts like Medea’s poison cloak (note confusion of inside-outside): for urbanites, who are not toughened to the corrosive effects of garlic like those country folk – see v.4 – protecting boundaries and resisting penetration (cf. 2.21-2) is not so easy.
- 4:** The ex-slave, with his compromised, beaten, scarred body.
- 5:** The young boy hounded by Canidia and her fellow witches; Varus, Canidia’s beloved. The witches themselves, their limbs scattered over the Esquiline.
- 6:** Shall I whimper like a child, unavenged?
- 7:** Shall a city perish by its own hand? (v.10) Remus’ blood was spilt by his own brother.
- 8:** The poet-lover unnerved. The old hag’s incontinent, rotten body.
- 9:** Antony’s soldiers, slaves to Cleopatra’s palace eunuchs (vv.11-14).
- 10:** Mevius’ shipwreck.
- 11:** The *vulnus* and the enslaving power of love.
- 12:** The poet lover’s *mollis opus* and inert body. A lamb or deer fleeing from wolves and lions.
- 13:** Taking refuge from the storm
- 14:** Poet is victim of love’s fires. *me libertina...macerat* (16)
- 15:** Unfaithful Naeara hurts poet’s manhood (*o dolitura mea multum virtute Naeara*, v. 11)
- 16:** Tottering Rome, destroyed *suis viribus* (2). Rid yourselves of *mollitia!*
- 17:** Yielding to Canidia: the poet is old, worn down, fragile, tormented.

- 5. *Epode 1:* look at the lines and phrases **in bold**. In particular, what are we to make of the simile at lines 19-21?**

My friend, Maecenas, you’ll sail among towering
 Bulwarks, Liburnian galleys,
 Ready to suffer, yourself, all of the danger
 That may be threatening Caesar.
 What of us to whom life’s a joy if you survive, 5
 Otherwise, filled with heaviness?
 Shall we, as ordered, pursue ease and idleness,
 That, lacking you, cannot be sweet,
 Or shall we endure these hardships with the resolve
 That’s shown by **resilient men**? 10
 We’ll endure it, **with firm hearts** we’ll follow you,

Whether over the Alpine ridge
 Or on the heights of the savage Caucasus,
 Or to the far vales of the West.
 You ask how I can lighten your hardships by mine, 15
I, unwarlike, and lacking strength?
 If I'm your companion, I'll suffer less fear
 That grips us more when we're distant:
As the mother-bird dreads attack from slithering
Snakes on her unfledged chicks much more 20
When she's left them behind, though she could offer them
No more help if there at their side.
 This and every war I will gladly undertake,
 In hopes of winning your favour,
 Not so that greater numbers of gleaming bullocks 25
 Yoked to the plough can count as mine,
 Not so my flocks can exchange Calabrian fields
 For Lucanian ones, while it's cool,
 Not so I can mention my splendid villa, close
 To Tusculum's Circean walls. 30
 Your generosity's enriched me already
 Enough and more, and I'll not hoard,
 Like Chremes, the miser, burying underground,
 Nor lose it, a reckless spendthrift.

Ibis Liburnis inter alta navium,
 amice, propugnacula,
 paratus omne Caesaris periculum
 subire, Maecenas, tuo:
 quid nos, quibus te vita sit superstite 5
 iucunda, si contra, gravis?
 utrumne iussi persequemur otium
 non dulce, ni tecum simul,
 an hunc laborem mente latenti, decet
 qua ferre **non mollis viros?** 10
 feremus et te vel per Alpium iuga
 inhospitalem et Caucasum
 vel occidentis usque ad ultimum sinum
forti sequemur pectore.
 roges, tuom labore quid iuvenem meo, 15
inbellis ac firmus parum?
 comes minore sum futurus in metu,
 qui maior absentis habet:
ut adsidens inplumibus pullis avis
serpentium adlapsus timet 20
magis relictis, non, ut adsit, auxili
latura plus praesentibus.
 libenter hoc et omne militabitur
 bellum in tuae spem gratiae,
 non ut iuvenis inligata pluribus 25
 aratra nitantur meis
 pecusve Calabris ante Sidus fervidum

Lucana mutet pascuis
 neque ut superni villa candens Tusculi
 Circaea tangat moenia: 30
 satis superque me benignitas tua
 ditavit, haud paravero
 quod aut avarus ut Chremes terra premam,
 discinctus aut perdam nepos.

- **Seminar:**

Epod.3

If any man, with impious hand, should ever
 Strangle an aged parent,
 Make him eat garlic, it's deadlier than hemlock,
 O you strong stomachs that cull it!
 What poison is this that's burning my entrails? 5
 Has viper's blood mixed with these herbs
 Betrayed me? Or has **Canidia** been tampering
 With this unfortunate dish?
Medea, intoxicated with her Jason,
 That most handsome of Argonauts, 10
 Smear'd him all over with this, while he tried to yoke
 Those bulls unused to the harness:¹
 She took revenge on her rival with gifts of this,
 Before mounting her winged dragon.
 Never did such a vapour from any dog-star - = Sirius, the Dog Star 15
 Settle on parched Apulia:
Nessus' gift burnt **Hercules'** shoulders with no less
 Effective a fiery heat.²
 If ever, my dear **Maecenas**, you aspire
 To repeat the jest, I just pray 20
 That your girl with her hands obstructs your kisses, cf. Martial 13.18 (eat leeks, no
 And takes the far side of the bed! kissing), and Catullus 13 (girl's perfume)

¹ Yet in the legend of the fire-breathing bulls (Jason needed to yoke them in order to get the Golden Fleece), Medea coated Jason's body with a salve which was heat-repellent and protective. Watson notes *ad loc.*: 'Diametrically opposite effects are often ascribed to the same magical substances'. (cf. the pharmakon of Nessus' blood - see below).

² The Shirt of Nessus was the poisoned shirt that led to Heracles' death. Once when Heracles and his wife Deianeira tried to cross a river, the centaur Nessus offered to help. However, when Heracles was on the opposite riverbank, Nessus tried to rape Deianeira. The demigod shot an arrow that had been dipped in the poisonous blood of the Lernaean Hydra, and killed Nessus. Just before he died, though, Nessus told Deianeira to take his shirt, which was covered in the now tainted blood of the centaur; she was told to use his blood to make sure that her husband would forever be faithful to her. Deianeira naively believed the centaur and took his blood-covered shirt. Years later, when Heracles fell in love with Ino, Deianeira felt jealous and threatened; so, she gave Heracles the shirt of Nessus. As soon as the hero wore it, he started feeling unbearable pain, as his body started burning. He eventually threw himself into a funeral pyre, and died.

Parentis olim si quis in pia manu
 senile guttur fregerit,
 edit cicutis alium nocentius.
 o dura messorum ilia.
 quid hoc veneni saevit in praecordiis? 5
 num viperinus his cruor
 incoctus herbis me fefellit? an malas
 Canidia tractavit dapes?
 ut Argonautas praeter omnis candidum
 Medea mirata est ducem, 10
 ignota tauris inligaturum iuga
 perunxit hoc Iasonem,
 hoc delibutis ultra donis paelicem
 serpente fugit alite.
 nec tantus umquam Siderum insedit vapor 15
 siticulosae Apuliae
 nec munus umeris efficacis Herculis
 inarsit aestuosius.
 at siquid umquam tale concupiveris,
 iocose Maecenas, precor, 20
 manum puella savio opponat tuo,
 extrema et in sponda **cubet.** – ironic/sarcastic given sexual meaning of *cubare*

1. What, according to Horace in this poem, are the properties of garlic, and how does it affect the body? What is Horace suggesting about iambic poetry?
2. Think about the three mythical figures to which Horace alludes: Canidia, Medea, Hercules. What connects them and what does our knowledge of the myths add to our reading of the poem?
3. Draw out the interpretative implications of the final address to Maecenas.

Follow-up work for reading week:

1) Read Epode 4 and think about the question to follow

Epod.4

Whatever discord obtains, through fate, between lamb
 And wolf, it's so with you and me,
 You whose sides are scarred by the Spanish lash, whose legs
 Are calloused by iron fetters.
 Though you may strut around, so proud of your money,
 Fortune can't alter your breeding.
 As you measure the length of the Via Sacra
 In a toga that's three yards wide,
 Don't you see the unrestrained indignation,
 On the faces of passers-by?
 'This fellow, scourged by the triumvir's whip until
 That officer was wearied,
 Sets plough to a thousand Falernian acres,
 His mules scour the Appian Way,

And ignoring Otho's ruling the great man sits,
Right there in the knights' front row!
What's the point of sending out so many sharp-prowed,
So many heavyweight, warships,
Against the pirates and servile hordes, if this,
This, ends up a soldiers' tribune?'

Lupis et agnis quanta Sortito obtigit,
tecum mihi discordia est,
Hibericis peruste funibus latus
et crura dura compede.
licet superbus ambules pecunia,
fortuna non mutat genus.
videsne, sacram metiente te viam
cum bis trium ulnarum toga,
ut ora vertat huc et huc euntium
liberrima indignatio?
'sectus flagellis hic triumviralibus
praeconis ad fastidium
arat Falerni mille fundi iugera
et Appiam mannis terit
sedilibusque magnus in primis eques
Othone contempto sedet.
quid attinet tot ora navium gravi
rostrata duci pondere
contra latrones atque servilem manum
hoc, hoc tribuno militum?'

- q. 'Horace intends us to be amused by his audacity in attacking one so similar to himself.' Think about the validity of this statement.

2. Read Epodes 8 and 12 for the week 6 lecture-seminar, and consult module booklet or webpages for secondary bibliography.

3. Reflect on the module aims, and on what you have learnt so far both in terms of factual knowledge, and in terms of possible approaches to the close reading of our set texts. E.g.

- How exactly *are* we appreciating how the form, content and poetics of the texts under consideration relate to broader questions about identity, gender, politics and ethics in 1st century BCE-1st century CE Rome?
- What kind of awareness are we developing of comparative dimensions in the study of Latin literature, Roman culture, and thought? E.g. how do contemporary constructs of vulnerability (as it relates to gender, class, race and so on) relate to or differ from the ideas about vulnerability we are dealing with in our texts?