

**Lecture-seminar 5: Discordia and impotence: Horace's penetrating *Epodes* (II)*****Epodes 8***

Imagine asking what's stolen my powers, you  
 Stinking whore, all this endless time,  
 When you've one black tooth, and when ripe old age  
 Furrows your brow with wrinkles,  
 When an ugly hole like a leathery old cow's           5  
 Gapes between withered buttocks!  
 Yet that flabby chest, and those breasts, like the teats  
 Of a mare, can still excite me,  
 And that spongy belly, and those scrawny thighs,  
 Set on those swollen legs.                                   10  
 Bless you, and may masculine figures in triumph  
 Bear your funeral along.  
 Let no married woman wander about, weighed down  
 By rounder fruits than yours.  
 What if the little works of the Stoics prefer           15  
 To nest among silken pillows?  
 Illiterate sinews stiffen no less, do they:  
 Bewitched, it droops no less?  
 Either way to rouse it from a fastidious groin  
 It's your mouth must labour hard.                   20

Rogare longo putidam te saeculo,  
       viris quid enervet meas,  
 cum sit tibi **dens ater** et rugis vetus  
       frontem senectus exaret  
 hietque turpis inter aridas natis           5  
       podex velut crudae bovis.  
**sed incitat me** pectus et mammae putres  
       equina quales ubera  
 venterque mollis et **femur tumentibus**  
       **exile suris additum.**                                   10  
 esto beata, funus atque imagines  
       ducant triumphales tuom  
 nec sit marita, quae **rotundioribus**  
       onusta bacis ambulet.  
 quid? quod libelli Stoici inter Sericos           15  
       iacere pulvillos amant,  
 inlitterati num minus **nervi rigent**  
       minusve languet fascinum?  
 quod ut **superbo provoces ab inguine,**  
       **ore adlaborandum est tibi.**                   20

- How do lines 2-14 of *Epode* 8 shape and constitute the old woman's body?
- In the battle for rhetorical/oral supremacy, who wins?

### *Epodes* 12

'What's up with you then, woman, some big black elephant would suit?  
 Why are you sending me letters, and presents,  
 When I'm no powerful youth: nor am blessed with a great fat nose?  
 Besides I'm uniquely skilled at sniffing out  
 Whether a polyp, or some goatish stench sleeps in those armpits, 5  
 Like a keen-nosed hound, that knows where the sow's hid.'  
 What a sweat spreads over her shrivelled limbs, what a foul odour  
 Rises when, with my penis lying all slack,  
 She races to quench her ungovernable frenzy, and her  
 Damp cosmetics and her tinted make-up, dyed 10  
 With crocodile dung won't stay on, and already she's making  
 The over-strained bed and its canopy burst.  
 Or again she's assaulting my pride with her savage verbals:  
 'You're less tired with that Inachia than me:  
 You can do Inachia three times running, with me you're soft 15  
 After one. May she end badly, this Lesbia,  
 I, who'd hoped for a bull, and only proved you were impotent,  
 And there, I'd Amyntas of Cos right to hand,  
 He in whose insatiable groin a prick is planted  
 More firmly than any young tree in the hills. 20  
 These woollen fleeces repeatedly dyed Tyrian purple,  
 Whom were they just run up for? Surely for you,  
 Lest there might be a guest among your peers, whose woman  
 Might think more of him than she does of you.  
 O unhappy me, how you shrink from me, like a lamb 25  
 The fierce wolves frighten, or a deer the lion!'

Quid tibi vis, mulier nigris dignissima barris?  
 munera quid mihi quidve tabellas  
 mittis nec firmo iuveni neque naris obesae?  
 namque sagacius unus odor,  
 polypus an gravis hirsutis cubet hircus in alis 5  
 quam canis acer ubi lateat sus.  
 qui sudor vietis et quam malus undique membris  
 crescit odor, cum pene Solutio  
 indomitam properat rabiem sedare, neque illi  
 iam manet umida creta colorque 10  
 stercore fucatus crocodili iamque Subando  
 tenta cubilia tectaque rumpit.  
 vel mea cum saevis agitat fastidia verbis:  
 'Inachia langues minus ac me;  
 Inachiam ter nocte potes, mihi Semper ad unum 15  
 mollis opus. pereat male quae te  
 Lesbia quaerenti taurum monstravit inertem.

cum mihi Cous adesset Amyntas,  
 cuius in indomito constantior inguine nervos  
 quam nova collibus arbor inhaeret.           20  
 muricibus Tyriis iteratae vellera lanae  
 cui properabantur? tibi nempe,  
 ne foret aequalis inter conviva, magis quem  
 diligeret mulier sua quam te.  
 o ego non felix, quam tu fugis, ut pavet acris   25  
 agna lupos capreaeque leones!

1. Compare and contrast *Epode* 12 with *Epode* 8.
2. 'To apply the term 'impotence' to *Epodes* 8 and 12 is something of a misnomer' (Watson p287). Discuss. Are these poems about impotence?
3. Watson p386: 'It is evident that the primary function of such beast-analogies, when applied to sexually active women, is not, as Richlin has claimed, to dehumanize their subject, but rather to intimate that female lust is animal-like in character: that is to say, dangerous, intemperate and insensate...' Do you agree?
4. What is the effect of the poet-lover being compared to an animal (lamb, deer) in the final lines of *Epode* 12? (Also look at Archilochus' *First Cologne Epode*, below...)

**The Second Cologne Epode of Archolochus (fr.188 W.):** note the verbal similarities between this and *Epodes* 8

[            ] *Back away from that, [she said]*  
And steady on [            ]  
Wayward and wildly pounding heart,  
There is a girl who lives among us  
Who watches you with foolish eyes,  
A slender, lovely, graceful girl,<sup>[[SEP]]</sup> Just budding into supple line,<sup>[[SEP]]</sup> And you scare her and make her shy.

O daughter of the highborn Amphimedo,  
I replied, of the widely remembered  
Amphimedo now in the rich earth dead,  
There are, do you know, so many pleasures  
For young men to choose from  
Among the skills of the delicious goddess  
It's green to think the holy one's the only.  
When the shadows go black and quiet,  
Let us, you and I alone, and the gods,  
Sort these matters out. Fear nothing:  
I shall be tame, I shall behave  
And reach, if I reach, with a civil hand.  
I shall climb the wall and come to the gate.  
You'll not say no, Sweetheart, to this?  
I shall come no farther than the garden grass.  
Neobulé I have forgotten, believe me, do.  
Any man who wants her may have her.  
Aiai! She's past her day, ripening rotten.  
The petals of her flower are all brown.  
The grace that first she had is shot.  
Don't you agree that she looks like a boy?  
A woman like that would drive a man crazy.  
She should get herself a job as a scarecrow.  
I'd as soon hump her as [kiss a goat's butt].  
A source of joy I'd be to the neighbors  
With such a woman as her for a wife!  
How could I ever prefer her to you?  
You, O innocent, true heart and bold.  
Each of her faces is as sharp as the other,  
Which way she's turning you never can guess.  
She'd whelp like the proverb's luckless bitch  
Were I to foster get upon her, throwing  
Them blind, and all on the wrongest day.  
I said no more, but took her hand,  
Laid her down in a thousand flowers,  
And put my soft wool cloak around her.  
I slid my arm under her neck  
To still the fear in her eyes,  
For she was trembling like a fawn,  
Touched her hot breasts with light fingers,  
Spraddled her neatly and pressed  
Against her fine, hard, bared crotch.  
I caressed the beauty of all her body  
And came in a sudden white spurt  
While I was stroking her hair.