

# Archilochus 196A (West)

## “The Cologne Epode”

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The “Cologne Epode” is the longest extant fragment of poetry attributed to Archilochus of Paros. The poem survives on a fragment of papyrus (*P. Colon. inv. 7511*) that was discovered in the 1960s among the wrappings of an Egyptian mummy (c. first–second century CE) from Abusir el Melek then held at the University of Cologne (Bremer 24). The surviving portion of the poem begins in the middle of a dialogue between an unidentified maiden and the poet, and concludes with a description of their erotic encounter.

Archilochus lived during the middle of the seventh century BCE. He was recognized in antiquity as the first poet after Homer and Hesiod. His poetry, which was written in the Old Ionic dialect, shares many features with his epic predecessors. But Archilochus was the earliest surviving Greek poet to draw inspiration for his poetry almost exclusively from his own life. A rich biographical tradition developed around Archilochus’ life and exploits; but we should remember that many of these details are likely fiction derived from his poems (Lefkowitz 181-82). Archilochus was said to be the son of Telesicles, an important figure on Paros who led an expedition to colonize Thasos (c. 680 BCE). In his poems, Archilochus characterizes himself as a poet and a warrior (e.g. fr. 1), and he was said to have been killed in battle or a brawl by a Naxian named Caldonas, who was subsequently denied entry into the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi for killing “the servant of the Muses” (Galen, *Exhortation to Learning* 9). Archilochus was revered (and occasionally criticized) in antiquity as the inventor of *iambos*, the poetry of playful censure and vicious blame. Several poems, including the Cologne Epode, mock Neoboule and members of her family. According to legend, the two were betrothed. When but her father, Lycambes, ended their engagement, a furious Archilochus savaged the family in verse until Lycambes and his daughters hung themselves from the shame. But it is likely that Lycambes (‘Mr. Wolfy’) and Neoboule (‘Ms. Fickle’) were not real figures from Archilochus’ life, but stock characters from the iambic tradition (West 27).

With its publication in 1974 (Merkelback-West) the Cologne Epode “unleashed a storm of controversy, much of it centered on the description of a sexual act in the final lines” (Gibert 67). Davenport asks whether “these lines of Archilochos [were] sung in barracks, on the march, in village squares, at singing contests?” and whether “they [are] satire or salacity, private or public?” We are left to wonder whether the poem depicts an innocent seduction or a violent act of sexual revenge directed at Neoboule and her family? Is it a scene from the iambic tradition? Or from the life of the poet? Scholars have examined the dialogue between the speaker and the girl he seduces in light of contemporary, archaic Greek social norms (see Van Sickle) and the multiple roles of women in archaic Greek society (see Gibert). It provides valuable evidence for Archilochus’ metrical practice (Bremer 51-58) and his composition of dramatic vignettes with multiple characters.

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*A Note on the Narrative Structure and Text of the Poem:* the first five lines preserve the conclusion of a speech by a maiden, who is usually identified as the sister of Neoboule. The maiden counsels abstinence before marriage and offers Neoboule as a woman who may be sexually available to the male narrator. The male narrator responds in vv. 6–27. After suggesting that there are ways to experience sexual pleasure apart from intercourse, he then proceeds to revile Neoboule as unworthy of his affections. The final eight lines describe the sexual encounter between the maiden and the poet. Unless otherwise indicated, the text follows Campbell 1994.

*Meter:* 3ia | D | 2ia. This poem is an example of a tristichic epode, in which lines of iambic trimeter alternate with lines that combine a dactylic hemiepes and an iambic dimeter.

$\underline{\text{v}}-\underline{\text{v}}-\underline{\text{v}}|\underline{\text{v}}:-\underline{\text{v}}-\underline{\text{v}}-\quad 3ia$   
 $-\underline{\omega}-\underline{\omega}-\quad || \quad \underline{\text{v}}-\underline{\text{v}}-\underline{\text{v}}-\underline{\text{v}}-\quad D \quad || \quad 2ia$

\* *Note:* the fragment begins with the dactylic line.

“πάμπαν ἀποσχόμενος· ἴσον δὲ τόλμησον ποθεῖν.<sup>1</sup>  
 εἰ δ’ ὦν ἐπείγει καὶ σε θυμὸς ἰθύει,<sup>2</sup>  
 ἔστιν ἐν ἡμετέρου, ἦ νῦν μέγ’ ἰμείρει[ι γάμου]<sup>3</sup>  
 καλὴ τέρεινα παρθένος· δοκέω δέ μιν<sup>4</sup>  
 εἶδος ἄμωμον ἔχειν τὴν δὴ σὺ ποίη[σαι φίλην].”<sup>5</sup> 5  
 Τοσαῦτ’ ἐφώνει· τὴν δ’ ἐγὼ ἀνταμει[βόμεν].<sup>6</sup>  
 “Ἀμφιμεδοῦς θύγατερ, ἐσθλῆς τε καὶ [μακαρτάτης]<sup>7</sup>  
 γυναικός, ἦν νῦν γῆ κατ’ εὐρώεσσ’ ἔ[χει],<sup>8</sup>  
 τέρψιμός εἰσι θεῆς πολλὰι νέοισιν ἀνδ[ράσιν]<sup>9</sup>  
 παρῆξ τὸ θεῖον χρῆμα· τῶν τις ἀρκέσει[ι].<sup>10</sup> 10  
 τ[αῦτα] δ’ ἐπ’ ἡσυχίης εὖτ’ ἂν μελανθῆ[ι μοι γένυς]<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *πάμπαν* reduplicated adv. from *πᾶς πᾶσα πᾶν* *wholly; completely*; often with verbs having negative connotations. *ἀπέχω ὁ* part. aor. mid. *to keep off; to hold off*; here implying, *abstaining from sex*. *ἴσον* adv. *equally; likewise*. *τολμάω* 2. sing. aor. imperat. act. *to endure; to dare to undertake*. *ποθεῖω* pres. infin. act. *to long for, to yearn*.

<sup>2</sup> *ὦν* particle *so, now, then*. *εἰ δ’ ὦν* indicates a significant shift in the woman’s argument; having rejected Archilochus’ proposition, she mentions another woman who could satisfy him. *ἐπείγω* 2. sing. pres. indic. mid. *to be eager, to be pressed*. *θυμὸς οὐ ὁ* *soul, spirit*. *ἰθύω* 3. sing. pres. indic. act. *to go strait; to press right on*.

<sup>3</sup> *ἡμέτερος α ον τοῦ* *our*; with *ἐν*, “*in our house*.” *ἦ* rel. pron. *μέγα* adv. *greatly* *ἰμείρω* + gen. 3. sing. pres. indic. act. *to long for; to desire; to yearn for/after*. *γάμος ου τοῦ* *marriage*; here perhaps euphemistically for sex.

<sup>4</sup> *καλός ἢ ὄν ἢ* *beautiful; fair*. *τέρην εἶνα ἐν ἢ* *soft; delicate*. *παρθένος ου ἢ* *maiden; girl*. *δοκέω* 1. sing. pres. indic. act. *to think; to suppose*. *μιν* Ion. form of *αὐτόν, -ήν, -ό*; fem. sing. acc. 3. pron. *her*.

<sup>5</sup> *εἶδος εος τό* acc. *shape; figure*. *ἄμωμος ον τό* acc. *blameless; faultless*. *ἔχω* pres. act. infin. *to bear; to carry; to bring*. *ποίω* aor. infin. act. *to make*. *φίλος α ον τήν* *friend; dear one; lover*.

<sup>6</sup> Epic language in this verse frames the speech of the maiden and introduces the poet’s response. *τοσοῦτος αὐτῆ οὔτο τά* acc. *so much (and no more)*. *φωνέω* 3. sing. imperf. indic. act. *speak; say*. *τήν* demon. pron. *ἀνταμειβόμεναι* 1. sing. imperf. indic. mid. *to exchange; in the mid. to answer; to reply to*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ἀμφιμεδώ ὄος* or *οὐς τῆς Amphimedo*, a female proper name. The use of the matronymic is notable. Is it a sly insult at a cuckolded father? *θυγάτηρ τέρος* voc. *daughter*. *ἐσθλός ἢ ὄν τῆς* *good; noble*. *μάκαρ αρος τῆς* *blessed* (superlative).

<sup>8</sup> *γυνή αικός τῆς* *woman*. *γῆ γῆς ἢ* *land; earth*. *εὐρώεις εσσα ἐν ἢ* *moldy, dank (of the underworld)*. *κατ’...* *ἔχει* tmesis for *κατέχω* *to hold (back); to confine*.

<sup>9</sup> *τέρψις εως ἢ* *enjoyment; gladness; delight*. *θεά ἄς τῆς* (Ion.) *a goddess*; here, *Aphrodite*. *πολλός ἢ ὄν αἱ* *many* (Ionic of *πολύς*). *νέος ον τοῖς* (Ion.) *new; young*. *ἀνὴρ ἀνδρός τοῖς* *man*. *νέοισιν ἀνδράσιν* dat. of advantage with *τέρψις εἰσι*.

<sup>10</sup> *παρῆξ* + acc. *besides; outside*. *θεῖος α ον* *divine; sacred*. *χρῆμα ατος τό* acc. “*divine thing*” is a euphemism for intercourse. *τῶν* relat. pron.; partitive gen. with indef. pron. *τις*, referring to *τέρψις*. *ἀρκέω* 3. sing. fut. indic. act. *to be sufficient*.

<sup>11</sup> *ἐπ’ ἡσυχίης* (Ion.) has adv. force, *calmly*. *εὖτ’ ἂν* + subj. *when*. *μελανεῖ* 3. sing. pres. subj. *to make dark; to grow a beard*. *γένυς υος ἢ* *cheek*.

ἐ]γώ τε καὶ σὺ σὺν θεῷ βουλευόμεν·<sup>12</sup>  
 [π]είσομαι ὡς με κέλευαι· πολλόν μ' ἐ[ποτρύνει πόθος.<sup>13</sup>  
 θρ]ιγκοῦ δ' ἔνερθε καὶ πυλέων ὑποφ[θάνει<sup>14</sup>  
 μ]ή τι μέγαιρε, φίλη· σχήσω γὰρ ἐς ποη[φόρους<sup>15</sup> 15  
 κ]ήπους. τὸ δὴ νῦν γνῶθι· Νεοβούλη[ν μὲν ὦν<sup>16</sup>  
 ἄ]λλος ἀνήρ ἐχέτω· αἰαῖ, πέπειρα δ[ὴ πέλει,<sup>17</sup>  
 ἀ]νθος δ' ἀπερρύηκε παρθενήϊον<sup>18</sup>  
 κ]αὶ χάρις ἦ πρὶν ἐπῆν· κόρον γὰρ οὐ κ[ατέσχε πω,<sup>19</sup>  
 ἦ]β]ης δὲ μέτρ' ἔφηνε μαινόλις γυνή·<sup>20</sup> 20  
 ἐς] κόρακας ἄπεχε· μὴ τοῦτ' ἐφεῖτ' ἀν[αξ θεῶν<sup>21</sup>  
 ὅ]πως ἐγὼ γυναῖκα τοιαύτην ἔχων<sup>22</sup>  
 γεί]τοσι χάρμ' ἔσομαι· πολλὸν σὲ βούλο[μαι πάρος·<sup>23</sup>

<sup>12</sup> ἐγώ τε καὶ σὺ the complete subject of βουλευόμεν, “I and you.” σὺν + dat. with. θεός οὗ τῷ god; here, likely generic, rather than in reference to a specific deity. βουλεύω 1. pl. fut. indic. act. to plan.

<sup>13</sup> πείθω 1. sing. fut. mid. indic. to persuade; in the mid. to obey. ὡς + indic. introduces substantive clause explaining what will be obeyed. κελεύω 2. sing. pres. indic. mid. to command. πολλόν adv. a lot μ' = με. ἐποτρύνω 3. sing. pres. indic. act. to incite; to rouse. πόθος ου ὁ a desire for what is absent or lost; a longing.

<sup>14</sup> θριγκός οὗ τοῦ top of a wall; cornice; here, euphemism for breasts. ἔνερθε + gen. below; beneath. πύλη ης τῶν (Ion.) gate; here, euphemism for the female sexual organ. ὑποφθάνω 3. sing. pres. act. indic. hasten before.

<sup>15</sup> μεγαίρω 2. sing. pres. imperat. act. to withhold; to begrudge. τι indefin. pron. at all; anything. ἔχω 1. sing. fut. act. indic.; a metaphor drawn from sailing or horsemanship, to guide, to land, to turn. ποηφόρος ον τούς grass-bearing.

<sup>16</sup> κήπος ους τούς garden, here euphemistically. γινώσκω 2. sing. aor. imperat. act. to know; to perceive. Νεοβούλη ης τήν a female proper name; the former fiancée of the poet.

<sup>17</sup> ἄλλος η ο ὁ other. ἔχω 3. sing. pres. imperat. act. “to have for a wife.” αἰαῖ exclamation of lament. πέπειρος α ον ἦ (over) ripe, as in too old. πέλω 3. sing. pres. indic. act. to be; to become.

<sup>18</sup> ἄνθος ους τό nom. flower; bloom. ἀπορρέω 3. sing. perf. indic. act. fall away; decline; perish. παρθένειος ον τό nom. of or belonging to a maiden.

<sup>19</sup> χάρις ιτος ἦ favor; grace; loveliness. ἦ rel. pron. πρὶν adv. before. ἐπειμι 3. sing. impf. act. indic. to be upon; to remain. κόρος ου τόν satiety; enough. κατέχω 3 sing. imperf. act. indic. πω particle, usually with a negative up to this time; yet; at all.

<sup>20</sup> ἦβη ης τῆς youth; young girl. μέτρον ου τά measure; restraint; standard. φαίνω 3. sing. aor. act. indic. to bring to light; to exhibit. μαινόλις ου ἦ raving; frenzied.

<sup>21</sup> κόραξ ακος τούς ravens or carrion-crows. ἐς κόρακας ἀπέχε “go to hell!”, as though said to Neoboule. ἐφήμι 3. sing. aor. opt. act. to send against; to command; the reading ἐφεῖτ' was suggested by Marcovich. ἄναξ ἀνακτος ὁ lord, Zeus.

<sup>22</sup> ὅπως conj. + part. in order that. ἔχω ὁ part. pres. act.

<sup>23</sup> γείτων ονος τοῖς neighbors. χάρμα ματος, τό acc. joy; delight; (malignant) pleasure. εἰμί 1. sing. fut. mid. ind. πάρος adv. in preference; instead.

σὺ] μὲν γὰρ οὐτ' ἄπιστος οὔτε διπλόη,<sup>24</sup>  
 ἢ δ]ὲ μάλ' ὀξυτέρη, πολλοὺς δὲ ποιεῖται[ι φίλους·<sup>25</sup> 25  
 δέ]δοιχ' ὅπως μὴ τυφλὰ κάλιτήμερα<sup>26</sup>  
 σπ]ουδῆ ἐπειγόμενος τὼς ὥσπερ ἡ κ[ύων τέκω.”<sup>27</sup>  
 τοσ]αὔτ' ἐφώνεον· παρθένον δ' ἐν ἄνθε[σιν<sup>28</sup>  
 τηλ]εθάεσσι λαβὼν ἔκλινα· μαλθακῆ δ[έ μιν<sup>29</sup>  
 χλαί]νη καλύψας, αὐχέν' ἀγκάλης ἔχων<sup>30</sup> 30  
 δεί]ματι παυ[σ]αμένην τὼς ὥστε νέβρ[ον εἰλόμην<sup>31</sup>  
 μαζ]ῶν τε χερσὶν ἠπίως ἐφηψάμην<sup>32</sup>  
 ἦ]περ ἔφηγε νέον ἦβης ἐπήλυσις χροά·<sup>33</sup>  
 ἅπαν τ]ε σῶμα καλὸν ἀμφαφώμενος<sup>34</sup>  
 λευκ]ὸν ἀφήκα μένος, ξανθῆς ἐπιψαύ[ων τριχός.<sup>35</sup> 35

<sup>24</sup> ἄπιστος *ον ἢ* not to be trusted; faithless. διπλόος *η ον ἢ* deceitful; treacherous; double-minded.

<sup>25</sup> ἢ δὲ... δὲ establishes a strong contrast between the maiden and Neoboule. μάλ' = μάλα *adv. very; exceedingly.* ὀξὺς εἶα ὅ ἢ (Ion.) sharp; keen (comparative).

<sup>26</sup> δειδῶ 3. sing. perf. act. indic. *to be afraid; to fear;* δέδοιχ' = δέδοικε. ὅπως *conj. introducing fear clause.* τυφλός ἢ ὄν τά *acc. blind; dark; hidden.* κάλιτήμερα = καὶ ἀλιτήμερος *ον τά untimely; missing the right day.*

<sup>27</sup> σπουδῆ *adv. in haste; hastily.* ἐπείγω ὅ *part. pres. mid. "to press by weight."* τὼς *demonst. Adv. so; in this wise.* ὥσπερ *adv. of manner like, as.* κῶν κυνός ἢ (female) dog, Archilochus here compares himself to the female dog in the proverb who because of her haste, gives birth to blind whelps. τίκτω 1. sing. aor. act. subj. *to bring into the world.*

<sup>28</sup> φωνέω 1. sing. imperf. act. indic. *to speak.* ἐν + *dat. in; on.* ἄνθος *ους τοῖς.*

<sup>29</sup> τηλεθάω τοῖς (Ion.) *part. pres. act. to flourish; to bloom.* λαμβάνω ὅ *part. aor. act. to take; to seize;* indicates an aggressive, but not necessarily violent act. κλίνω 1. sing. aor. act. indic. *to incline; to lie down.* μαλθακός ἢ ὄν τῆ *soft.*

<sup>30</sup> χλαίνη *ης τῆ cloak; wrap; mantel.* καλύπτω ὅ *part. aor. act. to cover.* αὐχὴν ἑνός τόν *neck; throat.* ἀγκάλη *ης ταῖς* (Ion.) *a bent arm; anything closely enfolding.*

<sup>31</sup> δεῖμα *ατος τῶ fear; terror.* παύω τήν *part. aor. mid. to stop; to pause.* τὼς *adv. as; in this way;* here, introducing simile. νεβρός οὐ τήν *fawn; a young deer.* αἰρέω 1. sing. aor. ind. mid. *to grasp; to seize.*

<sup>32</sup> μαζός = μαστός οὐ τῶν *breast.* ὥστε *adv. like, as.* χεῖρ χειρός ταῖς *hand.* ἠπίως *adv. gently; kindly.* ἐφάπτω + *gen. 1. sing. aor. ind. mid. to grasp; to grope.*

<sup>33</sup> ἦπερ *conj. in the same way as; where.* φαίνω 3. sing. aor. ind. act. *to reveal.* ἐπήλυσις *εως ἢ approach.* χρώς τός τόν *skin; the body.*

<sup>34</sup> ἅπας *ασα αν τό acc. whole; all; entire.* σῶμα *ματος τό body.* ἀμφαφάω ὅ *part. pres. mid. to touch; to feel all around.*

<sup>35</sup> λευκός ἢ ὄν τό *acc. light; white.* ἀφήμι 1. sing. perf. ind. act. *to let loose; to discharge; to exhaust.* μένος *ους τό might; force.* ξανθός ἢ ὄν τῆς *yellow; golden.* ἐπιψαύω ὅ + *gen. part. pres. act. to touch lightly.* θρίζ *τριχός τῆς hair.*

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