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**Goat + Gout = V.D.? Catullus 71**

In c. 69 Rufus has had no luck with women, Catullus explains, because it is rumored that a wild goat is living in his armpits. In c. 71 the goat of the underarms resurfaces, but the slander is more complicated this time. As the text stands, a nameless man, probably the Rufus of c. 69, is part of a love triangle that has afflicted the two male participants not only with "the goat" but also with gout. Critics have focused on emending the text or on identifying the participants in the triangle instead of confronting the fact that Catullus is clearly making a joke about sexually transmitting body odor and swollen feet. Admitting that these two afflictions are being linked, as odd as it sounds, to a venereal disease leads to a simple, direct and funny reading, which fits the dominant pattern of Catullus' slanderous epigrams.

In line 4 Catullus says that the man who has been sleeping with the addressee's girlfriend has amazingly contracted body odor and gout from the addressee: "mirifice est a te nactus utrumque malum." Most editors, identifying the addressee as Catullus himself, either obelize *a te* or emend the first half of the line to "mirifice est *apte* nactus": Catullus' rival, assumed in that reading to be Rufus, has suffered from both afflictions deservedly (*merito* in line 2 ) and fittingly (applying the emendation *apte* in line 4). The problem lies in taking the addressee to be Catullus. In other poems in which Catullus addresses himself, he regularly employs the vocative and often shifts from the second person to the first person. Neither the vocative nor the shift in person occurs in c. 71. As Quinn [(1973) 400] has noted, Catullus' tone towards both the addressee and the addressee's rival is disparaging, so it is best to treat the addressee as a separate character.

Whom is Catullus addressing, then? What links c. 69 and 71 is the goat: "valle sub alarum trux... caper" (69.6) and "sacer alarum... hircus" (71.1). What further links them, I suggest, is that Rufus remains the addressee. In 69 all women fear Rufus' goat. Most interpret this to mean that no one would want to sleep with someone with poor hygiene, but what if the joke is that women fear picking up the bad odor from Rufus as though it were infectious (the goat is described as a *crudelis pestis* (69.9))? In poem 71, then, Catullus further slanders Rufus by disclosing not only his body odor problem, but the fact that he suffers from gout. In addition to these problems, Rufus cannot even keep the one woman who will sleep with him, as is evidenced by his rival &ndash; "aemulus iste tuus" (71.3) &ndash; who has picked up the identical infirmities. Therefore, "est a te nactus" in line 4 makes perfect sense, in that Catullus continues to insult Rufus in the same indirect way as in c. 69.

Critics have wondered why Catullus links gout to sexual intercourse. Whatever the reason, he is not the only ancient poet to do so. I will compare jokes relating limping and body odor to sex in Aristophanes, Plautus, Horace, and Martial. Scientifically, of course, neither of these two afflictions is communicable, but they are both discussed in venereal contexts by medical writers such as Celsus. Furthermore, certain sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea can cause foul-smelling discharge and arthritic conditions, which could be confused with gout.

Whether Catullus' audience really believed that body odor and gout could be spread sexually is not the issue here. The notion of someone smelling poorly and hobbling only after sleeping with a woman whose previous boyfriend smelled and limped is simply funny. That is motivation enough for the occasion and structure of Catullus 71.