

## HORACE ODES

### BOOK III

I hate and keep at bay the vulgar mob;  
Silence! The Muses' priest, I sing a song  
Never heard before  
For maids and boys.

Dread princes' power is the power Jove  
Wields over *them* – he famously put down  
The Giants and rules all  
With just one nod.

One man may plant his vineyards wider than  
Another. The candidate who's on the Campus  
Will claim more virtue;  
One claims more fame,

Another boasts more followers; equally  
Necessity sorts fates for high and low;  
The roomy urn holds  
The names of all.

Sicilian feasts won't give sweet fare to him  
Whose neck is threatened with a sword; nor lyres  
Nor birdsong will bring  
Calm slumber back

To him: calm sleep does not despise the house  
Of a poor yeoman or the shady banks,  
Nor will the breeze-stirred  
Vale of Tempe.

He who wants just enough's not rattled by  
The roaring sea nor fierce Arcturus' rising  
Nor yet the falling  
Of the Haedi,

His hail-lashed vineyards nor his treacherous farm,  
The rain upon his trees, the star that sears

His pasturage  
Nor cruel winter.

Fish feel the seas contract when piles are driven  
Into the deep; the builder pours the rubble,  
With all his workers,  
The lord, as well,

Who scorns the land: but Fear and Menace climbs  
Where the lord is climbing while the bronze trireme  
Is met by Care who  
Will sit behind

The knight. Phrygian stone nor purple, brighter  
Than the stars, can't solace sorrow nor good wine  
From Campania  
Nor Persian scents.

Why should I build, with envy-bringing pillars,  
A lofty, modern home? My Sabine valley  
Why should I change for  
More onerous wealth?

## II

Let the boy learn harsh poverty in arms,  
Befriending it, and vex fierce Parthia  
With his fearful lance  
Upon horseback,

Living outdoors in danger, while the wife  
And adult daughter of his tyrant foe  
Look down from their walls  
At him and sigh,

“Don't let the beau, kinglike yet green, provoke  
The harsh and dangerous lion who is urged  
Into slaughter's midst  
By bloody rage.”

It's sweet and right too die for one's homeland:  
Death dogs the runaway nor spares the limbs  
Or back of the youth

Who's cowardly.

Virtue, not knowing base defeat, shines out  
In stainless fame, not taking up nor leaving  
Arms at the request  
Of fickle mobs.

Virtue, which heavenwards sends the unworthily dead,  
Goes whither others mayn't, spurning the throng  
And the bloody earth  
On soaring wings.

Staunch silence earns rewards: he who betrays  
Ceres's secret rites shall never share  
The same roof as I  
Nor loose with me

His fragile ship: Jove often carelessly  
Mixes the good and bad: lame Penance rarely  
Forgets the wicked  
From earlier times.

### III

Folks' wrong, seeking wrong, won't shake the man  
Who's firm of purpose from his settled plan  
Nor the tyrant's threats  
Nor the South Wind,

The strong lord of the troubled Adriatic,  
Nor Jove's great lightning: if the fractured world  
Falls, he, unafraid,  
Will meet his fate.

Thus Pollux and great Hercules strove and reached  
The fiery fortress, where one day Augustus  
Will lie, his lips stained  
With quaffing wine.

Thus, Father Bacchus, with their untamed necks  
Your tigers draw you for your virtue; thus  
Romulus Mars' steeds  
Removed from Hell;

In divine counsel Juno welcomed him:  
“Foul Paris’ wicked judgment tumbled Troy  
To dust, as well as  
The foreign dame;

For since Laomedon cheated the gods,  
Both Ilium and her treacherous kings belonged  
To chaste Minerva  
As well as me.

The infamous guest no longer shines for her,  
That Spartan whore, and Priam’s perjured house  
And keep warlike Greeks  
Away, even with

Hector’s help; our feud is ended. Now I’ll cease  
My savage rage and give my grandson back –  
A Trojan priestess  
Gave birth to him.

I’ll let him join the shining thrones and quaff  
Sweet nectar and to take his place among  
The untroubled ranks  
Of all the gods.

While Troy and Rome are cleft by savage seas,  
Let exiles live in peace wherever they wish;  
While herds tread the tombs  
Of Priam and

Paris, while wild beasts hide their young, unharmed,  
While gleams the Capitol and warlike Rome  
For the conquered Medes  
Devised laws.

Her name extends to distant lands, lands where  
The straits part Africa and Europe, where  
Fields are flooded by  
The swollen Nile,

While unfound gold, best buried in the earth,  
It staunchly keeps from human use when hands  
Greedy snatch up  
All sacred things.

Let Roman arms attain the worlds’ confines

And joy to see where fires revel, where  
The nebulous mists  
And rain pour down.

Such fate do I predict for savage Rome,  
Lest overly pious, trusting in their strength,  
They wish to repair  
The roofs of Troy.

Troy's fate with evil omens would revive  
And cause sad ruin while I, Jove's sister  
And wife, will lead on  
The conquering troops.

If their bronze walls rise thrice with Phoebus' help,  
The Greeks would thrice defeat them, thrice would wives,  
Now captured, bewail  
Husband and sons."

This does not suit the happy lyre: Muse,  
Don't wilfully repeat divine discourse  
Or with trivial verse  
Weaken great themes.

#### IV

Royal Calliope, fly down and play  
A lengthy tune or, if you choose, sung out  
Or pluck at the strings  
Of Phoebus' lute.

You hear her? Or is this some manic fancy?  
I hear and feel I walk through sacred groves  
Where fair waters steal  
And fair winds stray.

In Vultur, beyond nurturing Apulia,  
When a boy, exhausted from both play and sleep,  
The famed doves screened  
Me with new leaves,

Which stuns all in Acherontia's high nest  
And Bentia's woodland groves and Forentum  
Whose valley is rich

In fertile fields,

Where, safe from sable snakes and bears, I slept,  
With sacred bay and myrtle spread all round,  
A courageous child  
With the gods' help.

Muses, I'm yours! I climb the Sabine hills,  
Frigid Praeneste or the Tiber's slopes  
Or liquid Baiae –  
They all please me.

Your springs' and chorus' ally, Philippi,  
And that cursed tree and the Sicilian sea  
Of Palinurus  
Failed to kill me.

When you're with me I'll sail the raging waves  
Of Bosphorus and travel to the sands  
That burn the shoreline  
Of Assyria.

I'll visit fierce, unfriendly Britain and  
The horse-blood-drinking Spaniards, unharmed,  
The quivered Thracians  
And Scythian streams.

You cool our noble prince, when he seeks rest,  
In your Pierian caves, when he has settled  
In all the cities  
His weary troops.

You're kind with calm advice and gifts. We know  
The wicked Titans and their savage friends  
By falling lightning  
Were beaten down

By him who rules the mute earth, windy sea,  
Dark regions, cities, the gods and the mob  
Of men, in splendid  
Justice, alone.

Bristling with hands, those warriors brought great fear  
To Jove, as did those brothers who once tried  
To pile Pelion  
On Olympus.

But what could Typhoeus or strong Mimas  
Or threatening Porphyryon or Rhoetus  
Or Enceladus,  
Tree-uprooter,

Bold hunter, do against the bronze aegis  
Of Minerva? Here stood greedy Vulcan, here  
Juno and that god,  
Ever quivered,

Who bathes his flowing hair in pure dew, who  
Protects the groves and woods of Lycia,  
Apollo of Delos  
And Patera.

Force without wisdom slays itself: the gods  
Aid tempered power; likewise do they hate  
All force that's intent  
On wickedness.

May hundred-handed Gyas be my witness,  
And chaste Diana's tempter, Orion,  
By a virgin dart  
Quite overthrown.

Earth, heaped with her own monsters, mourns and grieves  
Her children sent to murky Hell by lightning;  
Swift fire has not yet  
Consumed Etna,

Vultures still peck rash Tityus's liver,  
Guardians of his sin; three hundred chains  
Hold fast the lover  
Perithous.

## V

Thunderous Jupiter rules the sky, say we:  
Augustus will be thought a god on earth,  
Britain and Persia  
Brought to our realm.

Our soldiers basely lived with foreigner wives

And, thanks to the Senate and our perverse ways,  
Served the hostile kings  
Who'd sired those wives

Till death. Mede-ruled, Apulians forgot  
Shields, togas, names, eternal Vesta, though  
Jove's altars and Rome  
Remained intact.

Far-seeing Regulus knew this and spurned  
Shameful surrender, thinking such a course  
Would in the future  
Bring destruction

Unless the captives won no clemency.  
"I've seen our arms, and standards too, displayed  
Upon Punic shrines,  
Bloodless," he said,

"Our citizens' arms twisted behind their backs,  
Their gates wide open and the fields we ravaged  
In martial conflict  
Now ploughed again.

You think our men, ransomed for gold, will fight  
More keenly? You add harm to shame: the wool  
Dyed purple never  
Regains its hue;

True courage, once it's gone, has no desire  
For a weaker soul. As a deer that has been caught  
In a hunting net,  
He'll show his pluck.

He'll face treacherous foes and once again  
Crush Carthage, having felt chains on his wrists  
Without a struggle,  
Afraid of death.

Not knowing how to live life, he confuses  
War with peace. Shame! Great Carthage, mightier now  
Due to the disgrace  
Of Italy!

It's said he spurned the kiss of his chaste wife  
And babes as less important and then turned

His manly visage towards the ground  
To brace  
The wavering Senate by a deed  
Unseen before while hastening away  
From his grieving friends  
Into exile.

And yet he knew what tortures were in store  
Abroad; he pushed aside his thronging friends  
And those who delayed  
His setting out

As if, his tedious client-work deserted  
And some decision made, he headed now  
For Venafran fields  
Or Tarentum.

## VI

Guiltless, you'll pay for your forefathers' sins,  
Rome, till you rebuild the crumbling shrines  
And the gods' statues  
Grimy with smoke.

You rule by your subservience to them:  
All starts and ends with them. Outraged, they've brought  
Unnumbered woes  
On grieving Spain.

Monaeses and Pacorus' gang have twice  
Crushed our ill-starred onslaughts and grin that they  
Adorn their bracelets  
With spoil from us.

Dacian and Aethiopia defeated Rome  
Beset with civil strife, the latter feared  
At sea, the former  
Skilled with the bow.

This sinful age has soiled the marriage-bed,  
Our issue and our home: sprung from this source,  
Disaster has swept  
Through our land.

Young girls learn Grecian dances happily,  
And flirting: thus they plan corrupt affairs  
Exuberantly  
Soon will they seek

Young lovers at their husbands' tables nor  
Spend time to choose the one to whom they'll bring  
Illicit delights  
When lamps are doused,

They'll boldly rise, within their husband's ken,  
For a peddler or a Spanish admiral,  
That lavish buyer  
Of disrepute.

*Their* parents did not stain with Punic blood  
The sea or crush the mighty Pyrrhus and  
Great Antiochus and  
Grim Hannibal;

No, these were rustic soldiers trained to turn  
The sod with Sabine hoe and bring firewood  
Cut at the bidding  
Of strict mothers,

The mountain shadows shifting with the sun,  
The weary beasts unyoked and welcome rest  
Arriving when the cart  
Is led away.

What does time's ravages not harm? The age  
Of our parents, worse than that of theirs, made us  
More wicked and warns  
Of worse to come.

## VII

Why weep, Asterie, for Gyges who  
With spring's first zephyrs will return to you,  
Rich with wares  
Of Bithynia,

Your constant beau? Driven to Oricum  
By the South Wind after the Goat's wild rising,

He with many tears  
Spends chilly nights.

His love-soaked hostess' messenger, however,  
Tells how poor Chloe sighs and burns for him  
And wickedly tempts  
Him countless times –

How a false dame had lied to naïve Proctus  
And drove him with dispatch to put to death  
The overly-chaste  
Bellerophon;

She tells of Peleus almost doomed to die  
For rightful shunning of Hippolyte;  
She aids perfidy  
With such cases.

In vain: still honest, deafer than the rocks  
Of Icarus, he hears. Don't let your neighbour  
Enipeus, though, please  
More than he should,

Though none is more adroit at guiding steeds  
Upon the Martian sward, and no-one else  
In Tibur's channel  
Swiftly can swim.

Lock up at nightfall, don't gaze at the street  
To hear the plaintive playing of his flute;  
He'll call you often,  
Yet remain firm.

## VIII

What am I, a bachelor, on the first day  
Of March, doing and what means this array  
Of flowers, why this incense-casket, why  
These embers that lie

On fresh grass? You, bilingual, find this odd.  
I vowed a savoury feast to the Wine-God  
And a white goat because a falling tree  
Almost did for me.

Now every year upon this festal day  
A wine-jar's well-pitched cork I'll pull away  
(To drink the smoky vapours it has lain  
Since the consular reign

Of Tullus). Drink, Maecenas, to your friend  
A thousand cups until burns at the end  
Of night your every lamp. Stay far away,  
Anger and affray!

Dismiss the cares of state: the Dacian band  
Of Cotiso is now defeated and  
The hostile Parthians' separate troops are rife  
With internal strife.

Upon the Spanish coast our enemy  
Is now our subject in captivity;  
The Scythians leave their bows and plan to yield  
And forsake the field.

Be a carefree private man, have little care  
If Romans suffer and, with cheerful air,  
Accept the largesse of the present day.  
Sobriety, away!

## IX

"While I was dear to you,  
And none more favoured hung about your neck  
So bright, I lived in bliss  
Much greater than that of Persia's king."

"While no-one burned more hotly  
And Lydia outranked Chloe, Lydia, I,  
Relishing her great fame,  
Lived more renowned than Roman Ilia."

"Now Thracian Chloe rules me,  
Skilled in sweet measures and the lyre's queen,  
For whom I'll not fear death  
If that the Fates would only spare my dear."

Calaïs, Onytus' son,

Burns me with mutual flame, for whom I would  
Willingly die twice over  
If that the Fates would only spare my boy.”

“What if old loves returns,  
Rejoining lovers with her forceful yoke?  
If fair-haired Chloe’s ditched  
And open lies rejected Lydia’s door?”

“He’s fairer than the stars,  
You are less stable than a brine-tossed cork,  
More stormy than our sea,  
Yet I would live and gladly die with you.”

X

Lyce, were you to drink from Tanais,  
Wed to a stern man, you’d not have me lie  
Outside your cruel doors, a victim of  
Your stormy Northern Winds.

Hear the door creak! Within your beauteous grounds  
The grove moans in the wind and Jupiter  
In cloudless majesty makes solid all  
The snow that’s lying there.

Cast off disdain, which Venus hates, so that  
You don’t lose your control: Penelope,  
Harsh to your sisters you are not, nor are  
You born of Tuscan folk.

Though gifts, prayers, lovers’ pallor tinged with saffron  
Do not move you, nor does your husband’s lust  
For his Thessalian mistress, nonetheless  
Spare all your suppliants,

You over-rigid oak-tree, you whose heart  
Is no less gentle than a snake’s, I’ll not  
Forever brook your threshold nor the rain  
That heaven drops on me.

XI

O Mercury (Amphion has taught you  
Those measures which moved rocks), and, shell, you too,  
Adept with seven strings to resonate,  
Though you were of late

Nor eloquent nor sweet: your company  
Is sought now by rich boards and sanctuary,  
Sing so that Lyde, though recalcitrant,  
May attend your chant;

Like a three-year foal that gambols in the field  
And ranges far and to one's touch won't yield,  
A stranger yet to sex who can't relate  
Yet to a hot mate.

You can draw woods and tigers to your train  
And force all streams their swiftness to detain;  
Even Cerberus, the grim watchman of Hell,  
At your magic fell,

Although a hundred snakes writhe all about  
His frightful head and gory torrents spout  
From his three-tongued mouth and fetid breath  
With the stench of death.

Ixion and Tityus reluctantly  
Smiled, while the Danaids at your melody  
Were won, the urn they worked at standing by,  
For a while quite dry.

Let Lyde hear their sin and punishment,  
Well-known, their vessel, too, whose fundament  
Would ever let the water through, the fate  
That they earned, though late,

Which even Orcus deals out. In their sin  
(What greater evil could they meddle in?)  
They cruelly stabbed the men they were to wed;  
All but one were dead:

One maid deserved the marriage-torch, for she  
Lied to her perjured father gloriously,  
A noble virgin our future eyes  
Forever. "Arise",

She said to her young husband. "Very near  
And at the hands of one you do not fear,  
Is death, my father, and vile sisters, too,  
Must not capture you;

Like lionesses who have seized (ah me!)  
Young colts, they lacerate them separately.  
But I'll not kill you – I'm kinder than they –  
Nor lock you away.

With fierce chains would my father pinion me  
For treating you, poor man, with clemency.  
Let him exile me to the farthest strand  
On Numidan land.

Go whither both your feet and breezes lead,  
While Night and Venus favour you, with speed.  
God bless! Carve on my tomb an elegy  
In honour of me.

## XII

Sad are the maids who spurn love and don't drown  
Their cares in wine and lose heart at the sound  
Of an uncle's lashing tongue.

Winged Cupid takes away your wool-basket,  
Your web, busy Minerva's work, Neobule,  
Once radiant Hebrus bathes

His oil-steeped shoulders in the Tiber's flood,  
A better than is Bellerophon,  
Untrounced in fist or foot,

Trained, too, to hunt and spear the startled stags  
In open fields and quick to find the boar  
Hiding in its dense copse.

## XIII

O crystal-bright Bandusian spring, deserving  
Of wine and flowers, tomorrow I'll present

To you a firstling  
Of my goat-flock,

Young horns foreseeing congress and warfare.  
In vain: for this sprig of the sportive flock  
Shall dye your chill stream  
With its red blood.

The blazing, fierce Dog-Star cannot touch you,  
You offer pleasing cold to the roaming herd  
And the bulls who tire  
Of the ploughshare.

You'll be one of the noble springs, for I  
Shall warble of the oaks within your cave  
Whence babbling waters  
Discharge their streams.

#### XIV

Rome, Caesar, Hercules-like, recently  
Was said to seek death-purchased victory:  
He now rejoins his household gods once more  
From the Spanish shore.

Now let this peerless man's wife, Livia,  
Rejoice with offerings, and Octavia,  
Our lord's sister, and  
The pious band

Of mothers of the maids and sons who go  
Safe home. Young people, who yet nothing know  
Of all the joys of love, now let there be  
No impiety.

This festal day shall banish all my stress;  
I'll fear no strife nor any viciousness  
That leads to death while Caesar's in command  
Of the global land.

Seek perfumes, wreaths, a jar that can recall  
The Marsian War, if there's a jar at all,  
Boy, that the wandering Spartacus in vain  
Attempted to gain.

Tell the clear-voiced Neaera hastily  
To bind her myrrh-steeped locks; but if there be  
A hateful doorkeeper causing delay,  
Don't linger! Away!

My white hair soothes a spirit prone to strife  
And wanton brawling; for in my past life,  
In Plancus' consulship, at youth's hot height  
I'd not brook such slight.

## XV

You, needy Ibycus' wife,  
Put an end to all your wantonness  
And all your filthy arts;  
Now that you've reached an age approaching death

Leave off your sport with maids,  
Don't cast a cloud upon the shining stars.  
What's fitting for Pholoe,  
Chloris, does not fit you: your daughters may

Assail the young men's doors,  
A Bacchanal roused by the beating drum.  
Her love for Nothus makes  
Her gambol like a rash she-goat;

It's fitting that you card  
The wool of famed Luceria; not for you  
The lyre, the dark-red rose  
Nor jars drained to the dregs, you ancient crone!

## XVI

By bronze towers and oak doors and the strict guard  
Of watchdogs Danaë would have been quite  
Secure from lovers who might come by night  
If Jupiter and Venus

Had not laughed at timid Acrisius,  
That maiden's keeper: for they knew the way

Would be both safe and open once the god  
Had been turned into gold.

Gold loves to rush through sentinels and break  
Through rocks, with power greater than a bolt  
Of thunder: due to gain the Argive seer  
Plunged down and fell in ruin;

The Macedonian burst the city's gates  
And overcame his rival kings with gold;  
Likewise are fierce commanders of a fleet  
Snared by such gifts as these.

As money grows so does anxiety  
And lust for more. With reason did I shrink  
From raising up my head too far, Maecenas,  
The glory of the knights.

The more a man denies himself the more  
He garners from the gods: I'm destitute  
And seek those who want nothing and desire  
To fly and leave the rich,

For wealth I spurn more than were I to hide  
Within my barns all sturdy Apulus  
Can plough, a beggar in the very midst  
Of mighty affluence.

My pure streams, my few acres of woodland,  
My sure trust in my crop make me more blessed  
Than fertile Africa's shining lord, though he  
Is not aware of it.

No honey from Calabrian bees have I,  
No Laestrygonian wine lies mellowing  
For me, no fleeces grow in lusciousness  
In some Gallic pasture:

Yet troubling poverty is far away,  
Nor would you stint me if I wanted more.  
With few desires my scanty revenues  
I'll better amplify

Than were I to add Alyattes' realm  
To the Lygdonian plains. Crave much, lack much!  
Blest is the man to whom with cautious hand

The gods give just enough.

## XVII

O Aelius, famed son of old Lamus  
(From whom the Lamiae are named and all  
His descendants since  
The dawn of time),

You're born from him who held the walls, it's said,  
Of Formiae and Liris which immersed  
Marica's shoreline,  
The lord of all.

Tomorrow, from the East, a storm will strew  
That shore with many leaves and vain seaweed,  
Unless the ancient raven,  
Rain-prophet, should

Prove false. Pile up dry wood, while you are able;  
Dismiss your slaves tomorrow, cheer your soul  
With a two-month pig  
And unmixed wine.

## XVIII

Faunus, loved by the flying Nymphs, be kind  
To my state, my sunny fields; behind  
You may the offspring of my flock all be  
In harmony,

If I should sacrifice after a year  
A kid and bowls of wine should give the cheer –  
Love's friends – and the old altar loose bouquets  
Of scent in praise.

The wolf will roam among unworried sheep;  
For you the wood will not its foliage keep;  
The delver treads the loathed ground with his feet  
With triple beat.

## XIX

You say how far is Codrus  
From Inachus, who did not fear to die  
For Argos and you tell  
Of Aeacus's line and war in Troy;

Yet you don't say how much  
We'll pay for Chian wine, who'll heat the water,  
Whose house we'll use and when  
I shall escape Paelignia's chill cold.

Quick, toast the new moon, boy,  
Midnight, Murena's augurship as well:  
The draught is mixed with three  
Or else nine measures, as each one demands.

The frantic bard who loves  
The Muses will demand nine cups; the Grace,  
With her nude sisters, fearful of disputes,  
Shall seek no more than three.

I love to revel madly:  
Why has the Berecyntian flute now ceased  
Its beat? Why is the pipe  
Now hanging idly by the silent lyre?

I hate a niggard; spread  
Your roses; jealous Lycus is to hear  
The mad uproar, and she  
Who lives nearby, old Lycus' ill-matched wife.

Tight locks a-glittering  
And like eve's star, Telephus is sought out  
By ripe Rhode; I burn  
With lingering love for my girl Glycera.

## XX

Touching the whelps of the Nubian lioness  
Is very risky, Pyrrhus. In distress,  
Although a rapist, soon you'll not look at

Any combat,

When through the youthful crowd that's in her way  
She seeks perfect Nearchus: on that day  
The struggle will be great: who'll win what's due?  
The dame or you?

Meanwhile, against your rapid arrows, she  
Sharpens her dreadful teeth; they say that he,  
The judge, with his bare foot has trampled down  
The contest's crown

And cools his shoulders and his perfumed hair  
In the mild breeze, possessing such an air  
As Nireus or he who from Ida's spray  
Was borne away.

## XXI

True jar, born with me in the consulship  
Of Manlius, who bring mirth, mad love, brawls  
And love's complaints  
And gentle sleep –

No matter why you guard this Massic wine –  
Today's your day, descend! Corvinus calls  
His slaves to break out  
A mellower wine.

Although steeped in Socratic lore, he'll not  
Despise you churlishly: for even Cato,  
Old and virtuous,  
Grew warm with wine.

To dull wits you apply sweet torment; you  
Unlock the thoughts and secret purposes  
Of wise men  
With merry Bacchus;

You give hope to the anxious, adding power  
And courage to the poor, who then will fear  
Neither wrath of kings  
Nor soldiers' arms.

Bacchus, Venus, should she choose, the Graces,  
Who're loath to break their bond, and burning lamps  
Will join you till Phoebus  
Disbands the stars.

## XXII

O guard of hill and grove, o goddess-maid,  
Three-formed, who, three times called upon, give aid  
To girls in childbirth, keeping them secure,  
Let this be your

Pine-tree that shades my house so that I might  
Down through the years offer with delight  
The blood of a wild boar who tries to throw  
A sidelong blow.

## XXIII

My rustic Phidyle, if at the new moon  
You raise your hands, appeasing your Lares  
With incense and grain  
And a porker

Your teeming vines won't feel the South Wind's blast,  
Your crop foul blight, your sweet lambs the sick season  
When the autumn yields  
Its fruits to you.

Your victim which on snowy Algidus  
Grazes amid the ilex and the oak  
Or is growing fat  
With Alban grass

Will stain the axes: there's no need to beg  
The gods with many sheep so long as you  
Deck them with myrtle  
And rosemary.

If pure hands touch the altar, though it holds  
No costly beast, the Penates shall be  
Pleased with sacred meal

And crackling salt.

## XXIV

You're richer than the treasures  
Of Araby and wealthy India,  
Your palaces encroaching  
Upon the Tuscan and the Caspian Sea,

But if disastrous Need  
Fixes upon the nails set in your roof,  
You'll not extract your soul  
From terror nor your frame from Death's sure snares.

The Scythians of the Steppes  
Live better as they roam from place to place,  
The stern Getae as well,  
Whose unallotted acres bring forth fruits

And corn for all in common,  
Whose tillage is no longer than a year;  
One's neighbour then takes up  
The letter with conditions like his own.

There, mothers spare orphans,  
Not harming them; no wife will dominate  
Her husband nor will she  
Place confidence in dazzling paramours.

The noble dowry of parents  
Is worthy and chastity that shrinks to cheat  
One's mate with someone else;  
Sin's a disgrace whose penalty is death.

Who would oust foul slaughter  
And civic strife, if he would have inscribed  
"Father of Cities" on  
His statues, let him dare to put a stop

To foul profligacy  
And win eternal fame: alas, the shame,  
With envy we despise  
Virtue and seek it only when it's gone.

What use sad lamentations  
If wrong is not repressed with penalties?  
What use are empty laws  
Without morality? If neither lands

Enclosed by burning heat  
Nor farthest northern regions with their snow  
Turn into ice do not  
Deter the hunter and the skilful sailor

Conquers the stormy waves,  
And poverty, thought base, demands that we  
Do all and suffer all  
And not ever walk on Virtue's path.

Let's send to the Capitol,  
While noisy crowds applaud, or to the sea  
That's nearest us, our gems  
And jewels and our useless gold, the cause

Of our chief misery,  
If truly we repent our crimes. Erase  
The causes of foul greed  
And let our feeble hearts be trained to deal

In sterner matters now.  
The freeborn lad, untrained, does not know how  
To ride and fears to hunt,  
For he is more adroit at playing games,

Whether you bid him try  
The Greek hoop or the dice that law forbids –  
Meanwhile his perjured father  
Defrauds his partner and his friends and hastes

To lay up stores of cash  
For his unworthy heir. Ill-gotten gains  
Grow wild; and yet there's something that is lost  
In every case, the fortune incomplete.

## XXV

Where do you hurry me,  
Filled with your power, Bacchus? To what groves

And caves am I now driven,  
Newly-inspired? What cave will find me

Planning eternal fame  
For peerless Caesar in the stars with Jove?  
I'll sing one great new deed,  
As yet untold by others. Way up high

The sleepless Bacchant gapes,  
Watching the Hebrus and white, snowy Thrace  
And Rhodope, where tread  
Barbarous feet – I love to stray and gaze

Upon the empty groves  
And banks. O master of the Naiads and  
The Bacchae who uproot  
Whole lofty ash-trees with their own bare hands,

I'll sing no trifling strain,  
Nothing that's mortal. Lord of the wine-press,  
Delightful is the peril  
To follow you, brows wreathed with verdant vines.

## XXVI

Till recently I lived to fight and served  
With some renown; but now this wall that guards  
The left side of Venus,  
Sea-born goddess,

Will hold my weapons and lyre now done  
With wars. Here offer shining tapers and  
Levers and axes  
That threaten doors.

Queen-goddess of rich Cyprus and Memphis,  
Free from the snows of Thrace, raise, if just once,  
Your lash and punish  
Haughty Chloë!

## XXVII

Let a shrill lapwing warn all men who sin,  
A pregnant dog, a she-wolf racing in  
Lanuvian fields, a new-whelped fox, maybe;  
Or let them see

A serpent break its journey, frightening  
The ponies, like an arrow on the wing  
Across the road: that man, however, I  
Am panicked by.

I'll, prophet-like, enliven and implore  
The singing raven from the east before  
That bird that prophesies the coming rain  
Shall seek again

The standing marshes. Galatea, be  
Happy wherever you are: remember me.  
Let no cursed woodpecker nor roving crow  
Not let you go!

Orion sinking in great rage you see.  
I know what Hadria's murky gulf can be,  
I also know clear Iapyx' every sin.  
Then let the kin

Of all our foes endure the blind attack  
Of rising Auster and the sea, so black,  
That roars, the shores that quiver from the blow.  
Thus, even so,

Europa yielded to the treacherous bull  
Her white frame, paling at the ocean full  
Of monsters and grave dangers, who of old  
Had been so bold.

Absorbed in flowers, she was recently  
Out in the fields making a crown to be  
For the Nymphs – in the clear night nothing she spied  
But stars and the tide.

As soon as she reached Crete, which was possessed  
Of a hundred towns, her father she addressed:  
"The name of daughter and my loyalty  
Through lunacy

I quit. Where am I now, whence have I been?

One death's too trifling for a maiden's sin.  
Do I repent a wrong or, innocent,  
Have I been sent

An empty phantom that is mocking me,  
Bringing a dream while I can see it flee  
Through the Ivory Gate? Should I sail far away  
Or rather stay

And pluck fresh flowers? Would that bull be sent here  
I'd angrily attack it with my spear  
And break the horns of one loved passionately.  
But as for me –

I brashly left, to my embarrassment  
Delaying Hell. If you hear my lament,  
You gods, may I among fierce lions roam!  
Before there come

Upon my comely cheeks foul atrophy,  
The vital life-blood flowing out of me,  
I'll seek to feed the tigers while I'm yet  
In beauty set.

'O foul Europa,' Father, far away,  
Says. 'Why delay? Your faithful girdle may  
Be used on this ash-tree your neck to snap,  
Or else, mayhap,

If cliffs and sharp rocks please you, rush into  
The fast and furious tempest, unless you  
Would card a mistress' wool – a concubine  
Of royal line! –

And give yourself to some barbarian queen!  
As thus she made complaint, there could be seen  
Venus and Cupid, with his unstrung bow:  
She sniggered low.

When she had laughed her fill, she said, "Eschew  
Your anger and hot passion when to you  
The hated bull gives up its horns that he  
May mangled be.

You do not know you're great Jove's wife. Take care!  
No tears! Now learn with dignity to bear

High fortune; part of the earth shall hold the fame  
Of your great name.”

## XXVIII

What better could I do  
On Neptune’s festal day? Lyde, with speed  
Break out the Caecuban  
And make assault upon wisdom’s stronghold.

You see the day is waning  
And yet, as though swift hours were standing still,  
You hesitate to fetch  
A jar that dates from Bibulus’ consulship.

We’ll sing in turn – I of  
Neptune and the sea-green Nereids,  
You with your curving lyre  
Latona and swift-moving Cynthia’s shafts;

Lastly we’ll sing of her  
Who holds Cnidos and the bright Cyclades  
And with her swans visits  
Paphos; with fitting dirge we’ll toast Night, too.

## XXIX

Maecenas, born of Tuscan kings, a jar  
Of untouched mellow wine with roses, too,  
And balsam so you  
May grace your hair

Has long been at my house: delay no more,  
Leave Tiber, Aefula’s slopes and the heights  
Of Telegonus  
The parricide.

Abandon cloying luxury and that pile  
Bussing the lofty clouds, cease to gape on  
The smoke, wealth and din  
Of opulent Rome.

Often a change is pleasant for the rich;  
A poor man's simple meal, tapestry-less  
And purple-less, smooths  
A careworn brow.

Now Cepheus shows his hidden fires, now  
Procyon and the furious lion rage  
As the sun brings back  
The rays of drought;

The weary shepherd with his listless flock  
Seeks shade and stream and rough Silvanus' woods,  
And the silent bank  
Lacks straying breeze.

You worry for the state, are anxious for  
Rome, fear what the Seres plot, and Bactra, too,  
And the clashing tribes  
Of Tanais.

Wise gods hide in black night the future's outcome  
And laugh if mortals fear beyond what's due.  
Tranquilly resolve  
Today's affairs;

All else flows by just like a river, now  
Peacefully mid-channel to the sea,  
Now tumbling her  
Polished pebbles,

Uprooted tress, flocks, homes rolled altogether  
While hills and nearby woods are clamouring,  
The calm streams stirring  
In wild deluge.

Joyful and master of himself, that man  
Shall thrive if he can say, "I've lived today:  
Tomorrow let Jove  
Bring clouds or sun!

He'll not make null what now is past nor will  
He alter or undo what once was brought  
By the fleeting hour  
Upon us all.

Fortune, exulting in her cruel work,

Stubbornly dallying, shifts kindnesses,  
Now favouring me,  
Now some other.

I praise her while she stays: she shakes her wings  
And I renounce her gifts and practise virtue,  
Seeking Poverty,  
Pure and dowerless.

While my mast groans, struck by African storms.  
I'll not pray wretchedly or vow compacts  
Lest my Cyprian  
Or Tyrian wares

Land in the greedy sea: my two-oared skiff  
Will safely take me through Aegean storms  
By means of the breeze  
And the Twin Stars.”

XXX

Stronger than bronze is this memorial  
And higher than the Pyramids' royal mass –  
No biting rain nor furious North Wind  
Can wreck it nor the countless chain of years  
Nor time's flight. I shall never wholly die –  
A mighty part of me shall flee the Queen  
Of Death: for, ever fresh with glory, I  
Shall grow. While pontiff with his silent Vestal  
Shall climb the Capitol, I shall be known,  
Raised high, where wild Aufidus thunders on  
And parched Daunus once governed peasant folk,  
Because I was the first to suit Greek modes  
To our Italian ones. Melpomene,  
Accept the honour won with pride and earned  
By your own merits; graciously arrange  
Around my locks a crown of Delphic bay.

