

HORACE ODES

BOOK IV

I

Venus, long-stayed conflicts
You would renew. Be merciful, I pray:
I'm not as I was
Under the reign of gentle Cinara.

Fierce mother of sweet Cupids,
Don't after fifty years attempt to sway
One deaf to your soft orders:
Go where young men and your persuasive prayers

On wings of purple swans
Rush off, carouse with Paulus Maximus
Within his house if you
Deserve to kindle a becoming heart.

For he is fair and noble,
A fluent counsel for his anxious clients,
A youth of myriad skills
Who'll bear your army's standards far and wide;

Prevailing over the gifts
Of some effusive rival he will laugh;
Beside the Alban Lakes
He'll place a marble bust beneath a roof

Of citron wood. You'll breathe
Much incense there and at the mingled strains
Of Bercyntian lyre
And flute and your own pipe will take delight.

There twice each day will lads
And tender maids salute your majesty,
Beating with snowy feet
The earth three times just like the Salii.

Nor maids nor boys nor hope
Of mutual love nor drinking-contests nor

One's temples bound with wreaths
Of dewy flowers please me anymore.

But, Ligurinus, why
Do tears run down my cheeks? Why does
My once-persuasive tongue
In unfit silence falter during speech?

In visions of the night
I hold you fast or follow you in flight
Across the Campus' grass
Or chase you, harsh one, through the whirling waves.

II

Iulus, who strives to rival Pindar's fame
Will trust in wings waxed with the artistry
Of Daedalus, then doomed to give his name
To a crystal sea.

Just like a mountain-stream does Pindar crash,
Fed by the rainstorms on each well-known side,
With his deep-timbred voice, seething and rash,
A massive tide,

Worthy of Phoebus' bays, should his verse beat
A rhythm in bold dithyrambic lines
With fresh new words, hurried along by feet
Freed from confines,

Or treat of gods and kings, the progeny
Of gods, who all the Centaurs duly slew –
And rightly so – and killed the dastardly
Chimaera, too,

Or sings of those who won the Elean prize,
Boxers and horsemen, giving them more fame
Than a hundred statues, praising to the skies
Their glorious name,

Or mourns a youth snatched from his tearful wife,
Extolling to the stars his bravery,
Strength and great virtue, noting his lost life
Begrudgingly.

II

A great breeze lifts the swan of Dirce high,
Antonius, as often as you see
Him reach the highest clouds above, while I,
Just like the bee

That gathers pleasant thyme early and late
Around abundant Tiber and her trees,
A humble bard, industriously create
Such poems as these.

You'll sing, a poet using loftier airs,
Of our lord Caesar when he leads the way
Ahead of the wild Sygambri while he wears
The fitting bay

Up Sacred Hill; none better Destiny
Or gods on us bestowed or shall bestow
Even if to the Golden Age through history
You backward go.

Both festal days and public games shall be
Your theme, to honour what we hankered for –
Brave Caesar's back and we've a forum free
Of all furore.

Full-strength, I'll swell the praise if anything
I say is fitting. Then most happily
On his return, "O glorious day!" I'll sing,
"Exemplary!"

"Hail, god of Triumph!" we repeatedly
Shall shout as you proceed with worthy praise;
All Rome shall offer each kind deity
Incensed bouquets.

Your gift of ten bulls and as many cows
Shall please; mine is a tender calf upon
The ample pasture who'll fulfil my vows,
His mother gone,

That apes the moon's third rising with its brow,

A crescent curving – where it bears a mark,
This calf is seen to be as white as snow,
Elsewhere, though, dark.

III

Melpomene, the man
You favoured at his birth will not compete,
A famous boxer or, at
The Isthmian Games, and no impetuous steed

Shall in a Grecian car
Draw him to victory nor shall his deeds
In war bring him bay-wreathed
To the Capitol for crushing haughty kings;

The fertile Tiber's streams
And the dense leafage of the groves shall make
Him famous for his songs,
Composed with metres of Aeolia.

The children of the queen
Of cities, Rome, deem me a worthy part
Of poetry's sweet band,
And Envy's tooth already gnaws me less.

Pierian maid who play
Upon the golden shell, who, if you would,
Could to mute fishes lend
The music of the swan – this is your gift

That I am pointed out
By passersby as minstrel of the lyre
Of Rome: that I'm inspired
And please, if please I do, all comes from you.

IV

Like the lightning-bearing bird, to whom
King Jove allowed to rule the roving flock
For his loyalty
To Ganymede –

Once youth and native strength took him away
From his nest, untried in toil, but then spring gales,
With storms now gone, taught him
Some new struggles

Despite his fear; now eagerly he swoops
On sheep-folds, now his love for spoil and fight
Drives him to attack
Desperate snakes;

Or like a new-weaned lion, whom a doe
In its rich pastures spies, now doomed to die
Underneath its tooth
As yet untried:

Thus in the Rhaetian Alps the Vindelici
Saw Drusus fighting; (I have not sought out
The age-old custom
Of Amazons

Wielding the battle-axe in their right hands –
We must not know all) but a young man's sense
Crushed long-successful
Hordes far and wide;

They felt the head and heart nurtured beneath
Auspicious roofs and Caesar's fatherly
Devotion to the
Youthful Neros.

The strong and good breed sturdy youths; the steers
And steeds inherit merits from their sires;
Timid doves aren't born
Of fierce eagles

Yet training augments inborn worth, the heart
Grows strong through righteous ways; when merit fails,
The innately good
Yet stoop to sin.

To what Rome owes the Neros the Metaurus
Bears witness, as does conquered Hasdrubal
And that fierce day when
Our sorrow fled –

The first to smile at our blessed victory
Since the foul African rode through our towns
Like a pine fire or
The East Wind through

Sicily's waves. Then Roman youth grew strong
With prosperous labour, with our shrines, laid waste
By Carthage, restored
To the gods once more.

False Hannibal then yelled: "Like stags, the prey
Of wolves, we dog in vain those we would trounce
By bewilderment
And evasion.

The race, strong after Troy's defeat, brought back
Through fierce seas to our towns our sacred shrines,
Our aged fathers
And our children,

As an oak, shorn by hard axes on dark-leaved
Algidus, gains, by loss and slaughter. Life
From that very steel
And strength as well.

Against stout Hercules the Hydra, hewn,
Did not grow stronger; Echionian Thebes
Nor Colchis produced
A greater beast.

When drowned, it grows more fair; fight it – it throws
A new foe with great strength and wages wars
That wives may tell of
In future days.

I'll no more send proud envoys back to Carthage:
All hope; the fortune of our name was dead
With the destruction
Of Hasdrubal."

There's nought the Claudian will not achieve,
Whom Jove defends with kindly strength; wise counsel
Safely guides him through
The risks of war.

V

Sprung from blest gods, best guardian of the race
Of Romulus, you're too long gone: come back,
For you have pledged a swift return to be
On the Senate's sacred council.

Great leader, give your light once more to us
When, spring-like, you beam on your people, then
The day runs better than it did before
And brighter shines the sun,

Like her who calls her son who's harassed by
The South Wind's envious gales which blow across
Carpathian seas and cannot soon set out
For his beloved home –

She prays with vows, with omens and with prayers,
Forever gazing at the curving shore – :
In the same way, moved by its loyal love,
Your country yearns for you.

For then the ox roams freely through the fields,
Ceres and kindly Wealth produce rich crops,
While sailors course across a placid sea
And loyalty shrinks from blame,

No stain pollutes the modest home, the law
And custom extirpate all spotted faults,
Children are praised, being in their parents' image
And Vengeance dogs all sin.

Who'd fear the Parthian, cold Scythia,
The rough-hewn German horde while Caesar lives
Unharm'd? Who'd be perturbed to fight a war
With fierce Hiberia?

Each man on his own hillside spends the day
And adds vines to his trees; he then returns
To drink his wine and after he has fed
Invokes you as a god;

With many a prayer and unmixed wine in bowls,
He worships you and to his household gods
Joins you, as Greece is mindful of Castor

And mighty Hercules.

“Great leader, grant Hesperia many days
Of leisure!” Thus, dry-lipped, as day begins,
We pray; thus, flushed with wine, we also pray
After the sun has sunk.

VI

O god, who punished Niobe’s offspring
For boasts and Tityos for embezzlements,
Achilles, too, when well-nigh conquering
Troy’s battlements,

Greater than others but to you no peer,
Although the son of Thetis-of-the-Sea
Who shook Troy’s towers, fighting with his spear
Ferociously.

He, like a pine-tree struck with biting steel
Or like a cypress by an east wind downed,
Fell prostrate and his neck was forced to feel
The Trojan ground.

He’d not have used that horse, feigned offering
To Minerva nor Troy’s ill-timed holiday
Nor duped the court of Priam revelling
In dances gay;

But he with cruelty – alas, the sin! –
And Grecian flames would have delivered doom
To speechless children, even those yet in
Their mother’s womb,

Had Jove not been won over by your pleas
And those of winsome Venus and agreed
That Aeneas with better auspices
Should meet Rome’s need.

Phoebus, who taught Thalia melody,
Who in the river Xanthus cleansed your hair,
Support the Daunian Muse’s majesty,
You who take care

Of streets. He gave to me such stimulus,
Poetic skill, the name of poet, too.
Fine maids and lads who have illustrious
Fathers, you who

Are Diana's wards, she who with arrows stays
Both stags and fleeing lynxes, keep, I pray,
The Sapphic metre as my finger sways;
Meanwhile you may

Sing of Latona's son befittingly
And Moon's bright torch which hurries time along,
You bringer of our crops' prosperity.
Your wedding-song

Will make you say, "Trained in the metres penned
By Horace, to the gods I sing with praise
A welcome hymn when time was pleased to send
The festal days."

VII

The snow has fled, already grass returns
To the plains, leaves to the trees;
The earth is changing and the banks contain
Rivers with lessening floods;

Grace, with the Nymphs and her twin sisters, leads,
Her robes all shed, her bands.
The year, the hour that snatches joy away
Won't grant us endless days.

Cold yields to zephyrs, spring is trampled down
By summer, who herself
Must die; the fruitful autumn brings her crops;
Soon lifeless winter's here.

Swift moons, though, renovate the heavens' loss;
When we descend to where
Aeneas, wealthy Tullus and Ancus dwell,
We are but dust and gloom.

Who knows if our todays will be increased
Tomorrow by the gods?

All things that you hold precious shall escape
Your heir's rapacious hands.

Once you are dead, once Minos has pronounced
His august judgment, you
Won't be restored, Torquatus, by your kin,
Your eloquence or your worth.

Diana does not free from Lethe's gloom
The chaste Hippolytus
And Theseus cannot break the Lethæan chains
From his dear Pirithous.

VIII

Freely would I give bowls and welcome bronze
To my friends, Censorinus, tripods, too,
Prizes of manly Greeks, nor would you have
The worst of these if I possessed the skills
Of Scopas or Parrhasius, the one
With marble and the other liquid hues
To honour men or gods. I've no such gift
Nor does your spirit or condition crave
Such toys. You joy in songs – these I can give
And name the worth of such a prize. Marble
Pronouncing public records so that life
Is breathed in worthy leaders after death
And Hannibal's swift retreats and threats redounding
Upon himself and the conflagration of
Foul Carthage do not show more lucidly
The praise of him who gained great recognition
By conquering Africa than do the Muses
Of Calabria, nor would you reap reward
If parchment left your deeds unchronicled.
Where would the child of Mars and Ilia be
If jealous silence blocked Romulus's path
To merit? Powers of the gifted bards
And their approval found for Aeacus,
Snatched from the Stygian waves, a hallowed home
Upon The Blessed Isles. The Muses won't let
A worthy hero perish for she gives
A heavenly boon. Thus is Jove's envied board
Shared by the tireless Hercules, and thus
The sons of Tyndareus, those gleaming stars,

Snatched storm-tossed ships out of the ocean's depths,
And Bacchus, temples wreathed with green vine-sprays,
Brings happy outcome to the laity.

IX

Don't think those words won't die which I, born near
Far-sounding Aufidus, sung to the lyre
With arts unrevealed
Before today,

Though Homer holds first place and Pindar's Muse
Or Ceos', of Alcaeus or august
Stesichorus
Are not unknown;

Anacreon's sportive songs were not destroyed
By time; the passion for the Aeolian maid,
Sung to the lyre,
Still lives and breathes.

Not Helen alone was love-struck, gaping at
Paris' trim locks, his gold-bespangled robes
And his princely pomp
And followers,

Nor was Teucer the first to speed his darts
From a Cretan bow; Troy fell, too, more than once;
Not Idomeneus
Nor Sthenelus

Alone fought battles worthy of the Muse;
Fierce Hector, keen Deiphobus as well
Were not the first to
Bear heavy blows

For their kin. Many brave men have lived before
Agamemnon, yet, unwept, unknown, they lie
In that endless night
For want of song

From sacred bards. Virtue, in death, differs
Hardly from cowardice. You will not stay
Unsung by me nor

Will I forget

To sing your many exploits, Lollius.
You're skilled in business and you are well-poised
Both in the good times
And in the bad.

You punish greedy fraud, abstaining from
Worship of money, consul more than once
But as often as
You fairly judged,

Preferring virtue to expediency,
Spurning with scorn the bribes of guilty men,
Opposing your foes
Virtuously.

He who owns little is a happy man,
You'd say: he gains that name who wisely knows
How to use the gifts
The gods provide

And how to bear harsh poverty and fears
Dishonour more than death, prepared to die
For his cherished friends
And fatherland.

X

O still ferocious one, possessed of all the gifts that Venus grants,
When unexpected down arrives upon your youthful pride, and when
Your locks, which now are flowing down your shoulders, are shorn from your head,
And when the bloom which now outdoes the blossom of the crimson rose
Is altered, Ligurinus, and transfers itself into a shaggy face,
"Alas," you'll say, whenever in your glass you see your altered self,
"Why did I, when a boy, not have the purpose that I have today,
Or why do not my cheeks safely return back to my present temperament?"

XI

An over-nine-years jar of Alban wine
Is in my cellar; my garden, what's more,

Contains some parsley that may garlands twine
And a great store

Of ivy that will deck your bound-back hair,
Phyllis; my house is silver-hued; I am
Anxious my wreathed altar accept there
An offered lamb;

The house is bustling, and all about
Young lads and maidens rush; up to the sky
Around the smoke the flames roll in a rout
As they rise high.

That you may know the joys awaiting you,
Please celebrate the Ides – the day we see
That cleaves Venus's April clean in two,
A day for me

That's festal, almost honoured even more
Than my own birthday, for it is from there
My friend Maecenas reckons his years' store.
Your own dear care –

Above your station – Telephus, a maid,
Both rich and wanton, keeps for her own joy
And has a pleasing manacle now laid
About the boy.

Scorched Phaëthon warns great expectancy,
Swift Pegasus showed his earth-born rider – for
He bore Bellerophon reluctantly –
His fatal flaw,

That you may follow worth and deem it wrong
To wish to sin and choose a disparate mate
And want more than is right. Now, come along,
The ultimate

Of those I've loved (I'll burn for none again);
Learn verses so that you may sing each lay
With your sweet voice. Depressing care will then
Lessen this way.

Spring's friends, the Thracian breezes, swell the sails
Of ships at last, the fields no longer stand,
A frozen waste; the streams no longer roar,
Swollen with winter snow.

Ill-fated birds build nests and sadly moan
For Itys – timeless shame on Cecrops' house
For taking vengeance too implacably
On kings' barbaric lusts.

The fat sheeps' guardians pipe out their songs
And thus delight the god to whom the flock
And the black hillocks of Arcadia
Are most agreeable.

The seasons, Virgil, have brought thirst; but if
You yearn to quaff a wine pressed at Cales,
You, client of fine youths, must earn your cup
By bringing me spikenard.

A tiny shell of it shall wheedle out
That cup Sulpicius keeps in his storehouse –
It promises to grant us all fresh hope
And clean out bitter care.

If eager for such joy, come hither soon
With cash: if you come empty-handed, I
Shan't steep you in my cups as though my house
Were wealthy and well-stocked.

No, don't delay and banish lust for gain;
Consider Death's dark fires while you may
And mix brief folly with good sense; sometimes
It's sweet to be jocund.

XIII

Lyce, the gods have heard my prayers – they have!
You're getting old, though, wishing to seem fair,
You're making merry
And drinking hard;

With quavering song you'd rouse, against his will,

Cupid. He scans Chia's delightful cheeks –
She's fresh and lovely,
Skilled in the harp.

He flies disdainfully past withered oaks,
Ignoring you, whose yellow teeth and hair
Turned white and wrinkles
Uglify you.

Your purple Coan robes and precious stones
Won't bring back days that speeding time has locked
Within the archives
Known to us all.

Where is your charm, your bloom, your sexy gait?
What's left of her who breathed love, she who stole
Me from myself, who
Was happy since

Cinara left, well-known for winning ways?
To Cinara, though, the Fates gave a brief life,
But they were resolved
To keep you long

To match the ancient crow so that young men,
Still wanton, might with many a laugh look at
Your torch now fallen
Into ashes.

XIV

What shall the Senate and the people do
With diverse gifts to laud for evermore
Your worth with legends and chronicles,

Augustus, mighty prince wherever dwell
Our folk; the Vindelici, free from our laws
Till now, late have learnt
Your martial power.

Keen Drusus' troops put down the fierce Germans,
The swift Breunni and the strongholds set on
The tremendous Alps
With more than like

Requital; soon, as well, the elder Nero
Waged deadly war and, with blessed auspices,
He subjugated
The fierce Rhaetii,

A splendid soldier wreaking havoc on
Hearts bent on killing freemen, resolute
Almost as Auster
Lashing the waves

While the Pleiads cleave the clouds, eager to harry
The forces of the foe and through the midst
Of martial flame drive
His snorting steed.

This bull-formed Aufidus rolls on
Straight past Apulian Daunus who in rage
Threatens dreadful floods
On well-tilled fields,

As Aufidus swept through the mail-clad band
Of savages, destroying front and rear,
Victor without loss,
Strewing the ground,

Providing troops, plan and the favouring gods.
For on that day her ports and empty court
Alexandria
Opened for you,

Fortune gave to the war a happy end
Fifteen years later, bringing praise and fame
For those deeds inspired
By your commands.

The never-before-subdued Cantabrian,
Medes, Indians, roving Scythians gape at you,
Great guardian of Rome
And Italy.

The Nile, who hides the sources of her springs,
The Hister, rapid Tigris and the Ocean,
Full of sea-monsters,
That roars around

And Gaul, not fearing death, and the harsh land
Of Hiberia respect you; the Sygambri
Stand in awe of you,
Arms laid aside.

XV

Phoebus stopped me, when I wished to sing of war
And cities won, from spreading my small sails
On the Tuscan Sea;
He struck his lyre.

Caesar, you brought back plenteous crops to farms
And Jupiter's standards stripped from proud Parthia,
Closing our shrine, empty
Of war, checking

Roving license with your righteous laws,
Banishing crime, restoring ancient ways
Whence the Latin name
And Italy's strength

Grow great and our dominion's majesty
And fame spread from the sun's couch in the west
To his arising.
While Caesar guards

The state, nor civil rage nor violence
Nor wrath that forges swords and creates foes
In hapless cities
Shall banish peace.

Those who drink Danube deep shan't violate
The Julian Laws, nor the Seres, faithless Persians,
Nor Getae nor those
Round Tanais.

On common days and sacred, with the gifts
Of merry Bacchus with our progeny
And wives, rightfully
We'll praise the gods;

After our fathers' wont, in measures joined
With Lydian flutes we'll sing of Anchises,

Troy and the offspring
Of kind Venus.