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Odes Book IV & Carmen Saeculare Quintus Horatius Flaccus: Translated

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Odes Book IV & Carmen Saeculare

Quintus Horatius Flaccus

Translated by Rachel Fisher

With an original Latin poem composed by the latter

**Honors Senior Project
Spring 2005**



HONORS THESIS

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Introduction

My first encounter with Horace was the first day of my first year of Latin. The words “*Quintus est puer Romanus*” were the first my classmates and I read in our introductory textbook. This Quintus was, of course, Quintus Horatius Flaccus the famous Roman poet, although I did not know that at the time. If I had read the English section on the historical character of boy-Quintus, I would have discovered his illustrious identity much sooner. I, however, like most college students, did not think it necessary to read more than I was assigned, so the poet Horace remained hidden for many months. Though Horace was not apparent, I came to know Quintus quite well. All of Horace’s life stages were represented as I learned to read and write in Latin, and gradually, I discovered that little Quintus Horatius was indeed a great poet and a prominent historical figure. Near the end of our three-textbook series, excerpts of Horace’s poetry filtered into our readings. It was then that I first felt the tug of Horace’s simple, open style. The textbooks gave me a comfortable familiarity with Horace (to the extent that when researching for this project I already knew most of the basic facts about his life), and also a curiosity to read more of his compositions.

I read some of Horace’s poetry in translation on my own time and was surprised at the affect it had on me. His verses were arresting and thought-provoking. Though his themes were written over two thousand years ago, they still hold relevance today. Among them are: love, the mortality of man, politics, and celebrations. He stresses his readers to enjoy the little things, and work hard but not to forget to let off some steam every so often. Poems like his ninth ode in Book One are touching and straight forward:

...Avoid speculation
about the future; count as credit the days
chance deals; youth should not spurn
the dance or sweet desire;

this is your green time, not your white
and morose...¹

There is no one like Horace among the Latin poets who conveys the same earnest candor. Horace does not hold himself distant from his reader and that is the draw of Horace’s poetry. His sincere language is frank, compelling, and has a concise quality that fits the former two very well. Horace’s linguistic simplicity does not subtract from the profundity of his topics. On the contrary, it provides a delightfully complex paradox.

Indeed, Horace is often difficult to read because his speech is *so* condensed. As a result, when translating Horace into English it is necessary to use more words to describe the same subjects so that often his simplicity is lost. To make it understandable in English is to lose some of Horace’s poetic beauty. Other elements of his poetry fall into similar problems. Sometimes Latin grammatical units do not have a direct English equivalent. One such case is the “gerundive”; it is a unit built on a verb stem, but operates as an

¹ Horace, The Complete Odes and Epodes, trans. W.G. Shepherd (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), Carm. I.IX.13-18, p. 78

adjective often carrying the force of “should”, “must”, or “ought”. Therefore a “*rosa olenda*” is a rose oughting-to-be-smelled. The gerundive is very hard to render into English.

Not quite as difficult, but still challenging, is the “ablative absolute”. This construct is part of a sentence, but is a separate unit from the main sentence. Absolutes occur in English, but they are uncommon because the English speaker finds them awkward. For example: “Amanda walked home, backpack trailing in the dirt.” The underlined portion is the absolute statement; while it has relevance to the main sentence “Amanda walked home” it is separate from the previous clause. Many times an absolute in Latin must be melded with the main clause or treated as its own sentence when it is translated into English. Such mutations necessary to render gerundives and absolutes often turn poetry to prose and the poetic ring latent in the original is lost. Charming turns of phrase may lose their shine. It is unfortunate and sadly unavoidable even in the hands of master translators. Another hurdle in translating Horace’ poetry is his use of poetic license. Every so often he employs an archaic word form to fit his meter, like *duellum* for the more common form *bellum* (war), or *spargier* instead of *spargi* (to be sprinkled). It is not beyond him to make up words either; he and our own English-master William Shakespeare have that in common as poets. When one is not expecting such innovations or retrogressive uses it can make the text tricky at first. These, however, are rather easily sorted out with a good lexicon at hand.

Horace’ poetry is also full of references to a vast array of mythology and culture of which Horace assumes his reader has an intimate knowledge. Ode XI is a good example of this.

Burned Phaëthon deters ‘gainst greedy hopes
and winged Pegasus, indignant at
his earth born rider, Bellerophon
offers grim example...¹

It was common knowledge in Horace’ day who Phaëthon, Pegasus, and Bellerophon were. In modern times, one must be well versed in the intricacies of ancient mythology or one would never know that Phaëthon was burned because he could not withstand driving his father, the Sun’s, chariot across the sky. While I knew many of the myths referred to in Horace’ fourth book of Odes, I had to investigate many more. Difficulties in reading Horace are therefore not only in the dense language, grammar hurdles, and archaic and novel word usage, but also in the decided cultural gap between people twenty centuries apart.

Despite the obstacles I and so many other translators throughout history have had to find ways around, it is well worth the journey. Translating Book Four of Horace’ Odes was a wonderful experience. I looked forward to each opportunity I had to translate another piece of this book and now I reflect on it fondly. I hope that you enjoy Horace as much as I have.

¹ Horace, *Odes Book IV & Carmen Saeculare*, trans. Rachel Fisher, (2005), Carm. IV.XI. 25; p. 15.

A Short Biography of Horace

Quintus Horatius Flaccus was, by his own confession, a short, fat man, prematurely gray, hot tempered, but easily placated; Horace says of himself: *Epicuri de grege porcum*,¹ I am a porker of the Epicurean herd. All that is known about his life is reported by the ancient historian Suetonius and by Horace himself. Unfortunately, the information is scanty at best. Suetonius' "Life of Horace", included in his book *Lives of Illustrious Men*, is only two pages long. Horace' own divulgences are sporadic. He mentions his growing-up-years and family very little, and of these latter, only his father makes an appearance in his writing.

What is known about Horace' early years is the following: he was born December 8, 65 B.C. in Venusia, a town in Apulia, Italy². He was the son of a freedman, who, according to Horace, worked as an auctioneer's assistant and owned a small farm. Though his father was by no means wealthy, he managed to have young Horace taught by the best teachers in Rome, providing himself as Horace' escort. Later he sent his son to Athens, Greece for the equivalent of a university education.

It was in Athens that Brutus, the famous conspirator in the murder of Julius Caesar, recruited Horace and other students to his army. Horace became a military tribune, a rank normally reserved for the elected sons of noblemen, but in Brutus' hastily assembled army Horace became one of a handful of commoners to achieve an officer's position. When Brutus was defeated by Octavian (soon to be the emperor Augustus), Horace returned to Italy. There he purchased the office of clerk to the quaestors³ after amnesty was offered to Brutus' former soldiers. The position gave him a little income, and because slaves did the actual clerking, it also provided time for him to write poetry.

His career as a poet began when his friend and fellow poet, Virgil, introduced him to Maecenas, a wealthy patron of the arts and a close friend of Augustus. After publishing his first book of Satires, Maecenas rewarded Horace with a country estate in the Sabine hills. This became a refreshing retreat from busy city life as well as an inspiration to his poetry, much like his boyhood environs in Apulia had been. Horace eventually gained the friendship and patronage of emperor Augustus himself, and was commissioned by him to write the *Carmen Saeculare* or *Centennial Hymn* in celebration of the revived festival.

Horace died November 27, 8 B.C. at 56 years of age, leaving behind a full retinue of poems. He had written two books of Satires, two books of Epistles, four books of Odes, seventeen Epodes, and the *Carmen Saeculare*, 162 poems in all. He was a masterful poet who worked his way up from beginnings he was not ashamed of to an end that no one could be.

¹ H. Epist I.IV.16; I.XX.24-25

² Apulia is located in the heel of Italy.

³ bureaucrats in charge of finance and administration

On Book IV & Carmen Saeculare

It is very likely that the fifteen poems that make up Horace's fourth book of Odes would not exist without their addendum, the *Carmen Saeculare*. After finding success with his Satires and Epodes, Horace published three books of Odes written in the style of Greek lyric. It was an amazing accomplishment. Horace was the first poet in Roman history to write so prolifically in a variety of foreign meters. He captured the ancient Greek rhythms of Alcaeus, Sappho, and Asclepiades, and set Latin words and Roman themes¹ to them. For whatever reason, this ingenious feat was not well received. Horace therefore swore off² lyric poetry forever and went back to the hexameter verses that had been so popular.

His resolve would probably have been permanent had not Caesar Augustus commissioned Horace to write an ode for the Centennial Festival. The celebration was the revival of an ancient practice prescribed by the Sibylline books in 249 B.C. as a three-night-long holiday to be observed every 100 years in honor of Dis Pater and Proserpine, the underworld gods. It was held once more in 146 B.C. and then not again until Augustus devised to revive it in 17 B.C. The emperor altered it slightly to include daytime festivities in addition to the traditional nocturnal ones, and lengthened the cycle to 110 years. The gods celebrated were also expanded from those exclusively belonging to the netherworld to those in the sky, Apollo, Diana, and Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The day was set for the 31st of May 17 B.C., and Horace was appointed to write the official hymn, the *Carmen Saeculare*. In addition to this great complement to Horace's artistic capabilities, Augustus requested him to write odes on the accomplishments of his two step-sons Drusus and Tiberius³.

These three lyrics were enough to draw Horace out of retirement and elicited a fourth book of lyric poetry. Book Four is the shortest of the collection of carmina, but in my opinion the best. It shows a maturity of feeling, artistic flare, and comfortable composure that is the culmination of Horace's lifelong work. These poems are what Horace attributes to his Muse, Melpomene, as her gift to him in the final verse of Book Four's third Ode:

*Totum muneri hoc tui est,
quod monstror digito praetereuntium
Romanae fidicen lyrae;
quod spiro et placeo, si placeo, tuum est.*

Horace is set apart. He has become a true *vates*⁴, an immortal bard.

— Rachel Fisher
May 2005

¹ Most Greek lyric poetry is personal in nature and usually focuses on love. Horace used the meters to discuss love as well, but he speaks more often about other topics.

² There is some written indication of this in Epist. I.I. 10-15.

³ Carm. IV.IV; IV.XIV respectively

⁴ Latin for bard or poet

I

Do you stir up your long neglected
wars again, Venus? Spare me I pray
I pray. I am not the sort I was
under the power of good Cinara¹. Cease

savage mother of sweet passions, 5
to bend my hard fifty years with your
soft commands: go where the
flattering prayers of young men call you.

Your time will be better spent reveling in 10
the house of Paulus Maximus², fly
there on your dark swans
if you seek to burn the proper heart³:

for he is noble and fitting,
not silent on behalf of his anxious
clients, and a boy of an hundred skills, 15
he will advance the standards of your warfare broadly.

And when he is more lavish in
gifts than a generous rival, he will
laugh and set your marble image near
the Alban lake under a citrus-wood roof. 20

There, you will smell the most incense
and delight in the mingled tunes of
the lyre and panpipe and
Berecyntian aulos⁴;

there, twice a day, boys praising 25
your divine will with tender maidens
will beat the ground three times with
white feet in the Salian dance⁵.

Now, neither woman nor boy,

¹ Cinara was Horace's former lover and is mentioned in several of his poems (Epd. I.VII; Epd. I.XIV; Carm. IV.I; Carm. IV.XIII).

² Paulus Maximus was the fiancée of Augustus' cousin Marcia.

³ The Latin is *iecur* the liver; the liver was considered the seat of the emotions.

⁴ A double reeded instrument that often had one mouthpiece and two divergent pipes so that it was shaped like a Y.

⁵ The Salii were 12 priests of Mars Gradivus who would dance through Rome for Mars' festival on March 1st every year.

nor the credulous hope of a soul mate, 30
nor drinking games, nor garlanding
my temples with new flowers pleases me.

But why, alas, Ligurinus, why
do scattered tears trickle down my cheeks?
Why does my eloquent tongue fall into 35
awkward silence between words?

In nightly dreams I hold
you captive at one moment, in another
I follow your swift flight through the Field
of Mars, o cruel boy, and through rolling waters. 40

II

Pindar was one of the most famous and prolific of the Greek lyric poets. Living in the latter half of the 6th c. B.C. and the first part of the 5th, he wrote on a variety of subjects for a total of 17 books of poetry, of which only a few are extant today. Pindar is noted for his complexity and the extreme difficulty of his poetry. His poems seem to rush past with swift connections between subject matters and house a plethora of brief mythological references. He would have indeed been a very formidable poet to emulate.

Whoever studies to rival Pindar, Iulus,
puts his weight on wings waxed by
the work of Daedalus⁶, and will give
his name to the glassy sea.

Like a river running down from a mountain, 5
that rainstorms swell above its known banks,
so does measureless Pindar boil and rush
with deep utterance,

deserving of Apollo's laurels whether
he rolls new words through bold hymns 10
and is carried along by measures
freed from rules;

or sings about gods or kings or the blood
of the gods, through whom⁷ the Centaurs

⁶ Daedalus was a master architect whom, after he built the Labyrinth, king Minos trapped on the island of Crete so that he could not reveal the maze' secrets. To escape, Daedalus fashioned two sets of wings made with wax for his son Icarus and himself. Though Daedalus warned Icarus not to fly too close to the sun lest his wings melt, Icarus flew too high, his wings melted, and he fell to his death. The sea where Icarus fell was named after him.

fell in just death, and the flames of
the awful Chimaera died; 15

whether he speaks about those whom the
victory palm led home, god-like, boxer
or charioteer, and gives a gift more
powerful than a hundred statues, 20

or mourns the youth seized from his
weeping bride and exalts his strengths,
and soul, and golden character to the stars
and grudges the dark grave those precious traits.

A strong breeze lifts the Dircaean swan⁸ 25
as often as he soars, drawn into the heights
of clouds, Antonius. I am after the manner
of a bee from Mt. Matina

laboriously plucking pleasing thyme around
many a grove and the river banks of 30
wet Tibur, little, I mould
songs wrought with toil.

You as poet will celebrate Caesar with
a greater lyre whenever he, adorned with a
merited wreath, shall drag the fierce Sygambri 35
over the sacred hill⁹,

than whom the Fates and good gods have
given nothing better or greater to the earth,
nor will they, though time returns
to the ancient gold¹⁰. 40

You will celebrate the happy days and
the public games of the city in honor of
the vouchsafed return of brave Augustus
and the forum bereft of quarrels.

Then, if I can say something worth 45
hearing, the good part of my voice will

⁷ i.e. Theseus who aided the Lapiths (a people from Thessaly) in their war against the Centaurs, and Bellerophon, who was commissioned by king Iobates of Lycia to eradicate the Chimaera, a fire breathing monster with the head of a lion, the midsection of a goat, and the tail of a snake.

⁸ i.e. Pindar

⁹ the Capitoline hill in Rome, site of the temple of Juppiter Optimus Maximus

¹⁰ The golden age was believed to have been the first age of men wherein all seasons were spring, men lived like gods, and there was peace everywhere.

join in, "O beautiful sun! O praiseworthy man!" Happy, I will sing, for Caesar regained.

And while you take the lead, "Io Triumphe!"
Not once will we say, "Io Triumphe!" 50
And we citizens will all give
incense to the kindly gods.

Ten bulls and as many cows will free
you of your vows. A tender calf, mother
left behind and maturing on abundant 55
herbs will free me of mine,

his forehead resembles the crescent
fires of the new moon on its third rising
he bears this snow-white mark,
all the rest of him is tawny. 60

III

He whom you, Melpomene¹¹, once
have seen with a gentle eye at
birth will not be made a famous
boxer by Isthmian labor¹², nor will he
lead a spirited horse in his Achaian 5
chariot to victory, nor for warlike deeds
will he display a leader's ornament with
Delian crown¹³ because he beat down the
swollen threats of kings: but the waters,
which flow past fertile Tibur and the groves' 10
thick leafy tops, will mould his fame for
Aeolian song¹⁴. The children of Rome,
the queen of cities, think me worthy of
being among the lovely chorus of poets,
and now I am less bitten by envy's 15
tooth. O Muse, you who temper the sweet
noise of your golden tortoiseshell lyre,
o you who could also give the sound
of a swan to mute fish,
if it were pleasing to you, this 20
is the whole of your gift: that
I am pointed out by the fingers of

¹¹ Melpomene is the Muse of tragedy.

¹² i.e. the Isthmian Games, one of four major Grecian games; it was held in the spring every other year on the Isthmus of Corinth.

¹³ i.e. a laurel leaf crown

¹⁴ i.e. Sapphic meter

a young man, felt what a mind and
natural qualities duly nourished under
auspicious roofs could do, what the
fatherly soul of Augustus could do for 25

his Neronian boys. Brave men are born
to the brave and good; the mettle of
their fathers is in young bulls and stallions,
nor do fierce eagles issue forth peaceful 30

doves; but teaching advances innate
strength and correct morals strengthen
the heart; whenever character is lacking,
faults mar the well-born. 35

that which you owe to the Neros, o
Rome, the Metaurus River is witness
to it, and so is conquered Hasdrubal¹⁸
and that beautiful day for Latium, when 40

darkness was put to flight, which first
laughed with victory's kind reward since
Hannibal the Dread careered through Italian
cities like fire through pine trees just as

the East wind careers through Sicilian waves. 45
After this, the Roman people grew with ever
successful labors and shrines destroyed by the
impious attack of the Carthaginians have held

upright gods, and at last terrible Hannibal¹⁹
said: "Like stags, the prey of rapacious
wolves, we aggressively pursue those whom
it is the rarest triumph to elude and escape. 50

"The brave race which from burned Ilium
carried the Sacred Penates²⁰ tossed on Tuscan
seas and children and aged fathers 55
to the Ausonian cities,

¹⁸ Hasdrubal was a great Carthaginian general, the son of the great general Hamilcar Barca and the younger brother of Hannibal. He was defeated at the Metaurus River in 207 B.C. by Gaius Claudius Nero.

¹⁹ Hannibal Barca was the leading Carthaginian general during the 2nd Punic War (218-201 B.C.). He is famous for crossing the Alps and invading Italy, routing the Romans until Scipio Africanus attacked Carthage and defeated him at Zama in 202 B.C.

²⁰ Roman household gods

“Just as an oak sheared of its dark foliage
by harsh double-edged axes in fruitful
Algidus, through loss, through slaughter
it draws strength and spirit from the iron itself. 60

“The Hydra²¹ did not grow stronger from its
cut body against a Hercules²² chafing at
defeat, nor did the Colchians or Cadmean
Thebans produce a greater portent.

“Sink it in the sea, it comes out more beautiful;
grapple with it, and to great praise it will
overthrow the unscathed victor and wage
battles, the gossip mills of wives. 65

“I will not now send proud messengers
to Carthage: it has fallen, it has fallen,
all hope and our name’s good fortune
now that Hasdrubal is slain.” 70

There is nothing that Claudian hands will not
accomplish, which Juppiter defends by
his kindly will, and wise reflections
direct through the sharpness of war. 75

V

Augustus was called away to Gaul in 16 B.C. by the war against the Sygambri and remained there for three years. This absence was not unprecedented. Similar stints of leave took up a large part of the first twenty years of Augustus’ reign.

O you, born from good gods, best guard
of the Romulan race²³, you are now gone
excessively long; having promised a speedy
return to the holy council of the Senate, return!

Return the light to your country, good leader: 5
for your face is the image of spring when it
shines on the people, the day goes more
pleasantly and the sun shines brighter.

²¹ The Hydra was a serpent monster with nine heads and was the subject of Hercules’ 2nd labor. He had to cauterize its necks after decapitating them or two more heads would grow in their place.

²² Hercules was a Greek hero, the son of Zeus by Alcmene. He performed 12 labors to expiate the slaughter of his wife and children during a madness Hera set upon him. His father later granted him immortality.

²³ Romulus was the mythical founder of Rome.

Just as a mother calls her son with vows
and prayers and omens, whom, lingering 10
across the plains of the Carpathian sea, the
South wind keeps from sweet home with

jealous breath longer than one year's time,
nor does she turn her face from the curved
shore: Thus does a stricken country seek 15
Caesar with faithful yearning.

For when he's here, the ox walks safe
in the countryside, and Ceres²⁴ and genial
Prosperity nourish the fields, sailors fly
to and fro over the pacified sea, Faith shrinks 20

from blame, the chaste home is polluted
by no foul deeds, law and custom subdue
stained sin, mothers are praised for bearing husbands'
progeny: punishment dogs the heels of guilt.

Who fears the Parthian²⁵, who the icy Scythian²⁶, 25
who, with Caesar safe, would fear the
children horrid Germany²⁷ brings forth?
Who would worry about war with wild Hiberia²⁸?

Each man lays the day to rest in his own
hills, and marries the vine to spinster trees; 30
hence, happy, he returns to his wines and
summons you as god with his second course;

he honors you with many a prayer and wine
poured out from bowls²⁹, and mingles your divinity
with the Lares³⁰, just as Greece remembers 35
Castor³¹ and great Hercules.

²⁴ the goddess of agriculture

²⁵ Parthia was located in the Middle East and was the only empire other than Rome at the time.

²⁶ Scythia was a country situated between the Carpathian Mts. and the Don River.

²⁷ Romans identified Germany as an undefined area east of the Rhine River and north of the Danube River.

²⁸ Spain

²⁹ i.e. a libation, a drink offering poured for the gods onto the ground before the first sip was taken.

³⁰ The Lares were Roman household gods most likely related to male virility; they are usually depicted as two adolescent boys laughing and dancing. A Roman father would burn a lock of his son's hair before the Lares idol as a coming of age ritual.

³¹ Castor was a Greek hero and one of the twin sons of Zeus by Leda, brother to Pollux (his twin) and to the twin sisters Helen and Clytemnestra; all four were hatched from eggs at birth because Zeus had seduced their mother Leda in the form of a swan.

“O may you grant long festivals to Italy,
good leader!” Dry-lipped we speak this
early in the day, and flushed with wine
when sun is under Ocean. 40

VI

O divinity, whom Niobe’s children³² and
Tityos³³ the ravisher felt as the avenger
of a boastful tongue, so too did Phthian
Achilles, nearly the victor of high Troy

greater than the rest, but a soldier 5
unequal to you though the son of marine
Thetis³⁴, who shook the Dardanian³⁵ towers
with his intimidating spear.

He, like a pine tree stricken by biting 10
iron or a cypress downed by the East
wind, fell prostrate and laid his
head in the Trojan dust.

He, unenclosed by the horse, that feigned
offering to Athena, would not have deceived
the Trojans who foolishly kept holiday, 15
nor the palace of Priam, happy with dancing,

but openly harsh to captives, alas
the crime, alas, he would have burned
infant children in Achaean flames
even the unborn, still in its mother’s womb, 20

had not the father of the gods³⁶, persuaded
by your prayers and pleasing Venus’
granted a city³⁷ for Aeneas’ possession
with stronger omens.

Lyrist, teacher of clear-voiced Thalia³⁸, 25
Phoebus³⁹, you who wash your hair in the

³² Niobe was the mythological mother of 7 sons and 7 daughters who boasted that the number of her children made her greater than the goddess Leto who only had two (Apollo and Diana). Apollo and Diana killed Niobe’s children as punishment.

³³ Tityos was killed by Diana and Apollo for trying to rape their mother Leto.

³⁴ Thetis was a sea nymph, one of the 50 Nereids. She was the goddess-mother of Achilles.

³⁵ i.e. Trojan. Dardanus was an ancient kind of Troy.

³⁶ Zeus/Juppiter

³⁷ Rome

³⁸ the Muse of comedy and light verse

Xanthian stream, beardless Apollo,
protect the beauty of the Daunian Muse.

Phoebus gave me inspiration, skill
in song, and the name of poet. 30
First of maidens, and boys sprung
from illustrious fathers,

charges of the Delian goddess⁴⁰, who
stops the swift lynx and stags with
her bow, preserve the Sapphic meter⁴¹ 35
and the beat of my thumb,

duly singing to Latona's boy,
duly to the Nightshining One⁴² nascent
in her torch, who makes crops thrive
and quickly rolls the hurrying months. 40

As a bride you will say: "When the Centennial
brought 'round its festal lights, I,
well trained in the meter of the bard Horace,
performed the song⁴³ dear to the gods."

VII

The snows have dispersed and now the grasses return to the fields
and leaves to the trees
the earth changes seasons and diminished in their banks, the
rivers glide past;

Gratia with the Nymphs and her twin sisters⁴⁴ dares 5
nude, to lead the dance.
The year and the hour, which snatches the genial day, warn
lest you hope for immortality.

Frosts become gentle with zephyrs⁴⁵, summer crushes spring under foot
and will perish likewise 10
when fruitful Autumn pours forth crops, and soon the shortest
day⁴⁶ returns, numbing cold.

³⁹ an epithet of Apollo

⁴⁰ Diana

⁴¹ Sappho was a 7th-6th c. B.C. Greek lyric poet and woman from the island of Lesbos in the Aegean. She was often described as the 10th Muse by the ancient Greeks and wrote about romantic love between women among a variety of other subjects. Only fragments of her poetry are extant today.

⁴² Diana in her moon persona

⁴³ the Carmen Saeculare

⁴⁴ The Graces were the triplet goddesses of charm, grace, and beauty.

⁴⁵ Zephyr is the name of the West wind, the favorite wind of the Romans.

Yet the swift moons repair their heavenly losses:
 when *we* have fallen
 whither has father Aeneas, whither are divine Tullus⁴⁷ and Ancus⁴⁸ 15
 we are dust and shadow.

Who knows whether the gods above may add tomorrow's time
 to today's sum?
 All that you give to your own dear soul will flee the greedy
 hands of heirs. 20

When once you have died and Minos⁴⁹ has made a stately
 verdict about you,
 neither your family, Torquatus⁵⁰, nor eloquence, nor piety
 will restore you:

for neither does Diana free her chaste Hippolytus⁵¹ from the 25
 infernal darkness,
 nor does Theseus have the power to break the Lethaeon⁵² fetters
 from his dear Pirithous.

VIII

Obligingly I would give goblets and pleasing
 bronzes to my comrades, Censorinus⁵³;
 I would give tripods, the prizes of athletic
 Greeks, nor would *you* bear the worst of gifts,
 that is, if I were rich in works of art 5
 that either Parrhasius⁵⁴ brought forth or Scopas⁵⁵,
 the former from stone, the latter from liquid
 colors, skilled now to limn a man, now a god.
 But this power is not mine, nor is your wealth
 or mind wanting in such luxuries. 10

⁴⁶ i.e. winter

⁴⁷ Tullus Hostilius was the 3rd king of pre-republican Rome; he was responsible for the capture of Alba Longa.

⁴⁸ Marcius Ancus was the 4th king of ancient Rome; he is credited with the further expiation of the city.

⁴⁹ King Minos here fills the role of the Judge of the dead.

⁵⁰ Torquatus is an unknown friend of Horace.

⁵¹ Hippolytus was the son of Theseus by Hippolyte the Amazon and was a favorite of the goddess Diana. Because Hippolytus refused to worship Venus and declared he would remain celibate, Venus struck his stepmother Phaedra with a passion for him. When Hippolytus refused the advances of his stepmother, she committed suicide out of shame and left a note implicating him in her rape. Theseus found the note and banished Hippolytus, using his last wish granted him by his father Poseidon to kill his son.

⁵² Lethe was the mythological river of forgetfulness from which the dead were required to drink.

⁵³ probably Gaius Marcus Censorinus, consul 39 B.C.

⁵⁴ a famous painter circa 5th c. B.C. renowned for his subtlety of outline

⁵⁵ a famous sculptor circa 4th c. B.C.; his work graced the halls of many temples, including a column in the temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

You delight in songs; songs I am able
 to give and declare the value of the gift.
 Neither marble engraved with public records
 through which breath and life return to good
 leaders after death, nor the swift flight 15
 and threats of Hannibal hurled back on himself
 nor the burning of impious Carthage
 point out more clearly the praises of him
 who won his name⁵⁶ from conquered Africa
 than the Calabrian Pierides⁵⁷: nor would you 20
 get a reward if pages were silent about what
 you did well. Who would the son of Ilia
 and Mars be if jealous silence opposed
 the merits of Romulus? The virtue
 and kindness and language of mighty bards 25
 rescue Aeacus from Stygian⁵⁸ waves
 and immortalize him in the Blest Isles⁵⁹.
 The Muse forbids praiseworthy men to die.
 She blesses them with heaven. Thus present
 at the coveted feasts of Jove is unwearied 30
 Hercules, the Tyndaridae⁶⁰ (a clear
 constellation) who seize shaken ships from
 the watery abyss, and Bacchus who,
 with vine wreathed temples, leads vows to good ends.

IX

Of the seven poets⁶¹ mentioned in the opening of ode IX only Homer does not write lyric meters. He is the oldest, dating to the 8th c. B.C. and was the most venerated of all the ancient Greek poets. He contributed The Iliad and The Odyssey to epic Greek literature. Alcaeus was a 7th c. lyric poet whose works are only extant in fragments today. He wrote a variety of themes: love, religious hymns, politics, and drinking songs. Alcaeus was also the inventor of the eponymic Alcaic meter, in which Horace wrote more often than any other lyric stanza. Stesichorus, a lyric poet from the 7th and 6th c. B.C., wrote 26 books of poetry of which only a few fragments survive. He was famous for his grand plots and characters. Anacreon was a 6th c. B.C. lyric poet who wrote love songs and hymns and whose poetry tended to regard themes of pleasure. Simonides, who also wrote lyrics, lived in the latter half of the 6th c. B.C. through the first half of the 5th. He wrote hymns, drinking songs, dirges, and victory songs among his many themes; he was noted especially for his selection of words and his beautiful style.

⁵⁶ Scipio Aemilianus Africanus destroyed Carthage in 146 B.C. at the end of the 3rd Punic war.

⁵⁷ Pierides is the Latin word for the Muses. Calabrian Pierides refers to the poetry of Ennius, a 3rd c. B.C. poet.

⁵⁸ The dead crossed the river Styx to get to the underworld. Here it is a synonym for being forgotten.

⁵⁹ a kind of heaven for the deceased

⁶⁰ Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Leda and Zeus

⁶¹ For Pindar and Sappho see IV.II.intro and note IV.VI.35 respectively

Do not believe that the words which I,
born beside far echoing Aufidus⁶²,
speak to the sound of the lyre through
skills unprecedented, will die:

if Maeonian Homer holds a higher place, 5
yet the Muses of Pindar, Simonides,
warlike Alcaeus, and the grave inspirations
of Stesichorus do not lie hidden

nor did an age destroy what Anacreon 10
once played; the love of the Aeolian girl⁶³
still breathes, and the hot passions entrusted
to her strings live on.

Spartan Helen was not the only one who
loved the coif of an adulterer and
marveled at his gold-decked clothing, 15
regal face, and counterparts.

Nor was Teucer first to aim his arrows
with Cydonian⁶⁴ bow; not just the once
was Ilium troubled; nor did mighty
Idomeneus or Sthenelus alone 20

fight battles worthy of the Muses' speech;
Neither fierce Hector⁶⁵ nor keen Deiphobos⁶⁶
was first to take such heavy blows
for their chaste wives and children.

Many brave men lived before Agamemnon, 25
but all of them, unwept and unknown,
are weighed down by the boundless night
because they lack a sacred bard.

Excellence concealed differs little from
buried sloth. I will not be silent and 30
leave you unadorned upon my pages, Lollius⁶⁷,
nor will I let envious oblivion

⁶² The Aufidus is a river in Apulia, a province located in the heel of Italy and is the place where Horace lived as a child.

⁶³ Sappho. See note IV.VI.35

⁶⁴ i.e. Cretan

⁶⁵ Hector was a prince of Troy and the leader of the Trojan forces. He was killed by Achilles.

⁶⁶ Deiphobos was also a prince of Troy; he was briefly married to Helen after the death of Paris.

⁶⁷ Marcus Lollius, consul 21 B.C., a firm supporter of Augustus

consume so many of your labors with
impunity. You have a prudent mind
in all affairs, and it is upright in
both prosperous times and dubious 35

avenges greedy treachery, abstains
from money, which leads all things to itself,
and consul⁶⁸ of not one year only,
but good and faithful whenever it, a 40

judge, preferred honesty to profit
and rejected gifts from the guilty with
high face, and victorious, displayed its
armor to opposing crowds.

You will not have called a wealthy man
a “blessed” one correctly, more rightly
he assumes the name of blessed who
knows how to use the gifts of the divine 45

wisely, and how to suffer harsh poverty,
and fears dishonor worse than death,
he is not afraid to die for his dear
friends or fatherland. 50

X

O still cruel and powerful with gifts of Venus when unexpected
down⁶⁹ comes to your haughtiness and the hair that flutters now
upon your shoulders has fallen, and that complexion, now
superior to a purple rose in flower, changed, will turn you,
Ligurinus⁷⁰, shaggy in the face. You’ll say, “Alas!” when 5
you see the alteration in the mirror: “Why was the state
of my mind not the same in my boyhood as it is today, or
why do these cheeks not return safe to my mind set now?”

XI

I have a jar full of Alban wine surpassing its
ninth year; there is parsley in the garden,
Phyllus, for weaving into crowns; there is

⁶⁸ Consuls were supreme military and civil magistrates of which traditionally there were two elected per year. Under the Republic consuls gave their names to the year of their consulship, but this changed during the empire. Terms were shortened to only a few months and the consuls were appointed or recommended by the emperor if he did not take the position for himself.

⁶⁹ a beard

⁷⁰ See Carm. IV.I.33

ivy in abundance,

which makes you gleam when tucked into your hair; 5
the house smiles with silver; the altar
wreathed in holy boughs craves to be sprinkled
with a sacrificial lamb;

every hand hurries, hither and thither
the girls run mingled with the rushing boys; 10
flames flicker, whirling dirty smoke
from their center.

So that you know the joys to which you are
invited, let me tell: The Ides, a day
that you should keep, divides April, the month 15
of sea-born Venus⁷¹,

a holy day for me by right and nearly
more sacred than my own dear birth, because
from that day on my friend Maecenas⁷² set
his flowing years in order. 20

Telephus, whom you seek (though he's not of
your rank), the wealthy and lascivious
girl has won, and holds him bound
with pleasant chains.

Burned Phaëthon⁷³ deters 'gainst greedy hopes, 25
and winged Pegasus, indignant⁷⁴ at
his earth-born rider, Bellerophon,
offers grim example

so that you always follow those things worthy
of yourself, and avoid an unequal match 30
by thinking it a crime to hope more than
permitted. Come now, last of my loves —

for I will not love another woman
after this — learn well the measures that

⁷¹ Venus was born when Cronos the Titan castrated his father Uranus. The severed genitals fell into the sea and the goddess of love emerged from the sea foam they created.

⁷² Maecenas was Horace's patron and good friend.

⁷³ Phaëthon was the son of Helios, the sun. When he found out who his father was he went to the palace of the sun and requested a boon. Helios said that he would grant whatever Phaëthon asked; he asked to guide the sun's chariot for a day. However, he was not able to manage his father's horses; they bolted. Zeus killed Phaëthon with a thunderbolt to keep the world from being set on fire.

⁷⁴ Bellerophon offended Pegasus by trying to ride on him to heaven.

you may give back with love-inspiring voice; 35
dark cares are lessened with a song.

XII

Now the Thracian breezes, companions of
the spring who soothe the sea, drive on sails;
now neither are the meadows stiff, nor do
the rivers roar, swollen with winter snow

The unhappy bird⁷⁵ builds her nest, bemoaning 5
Itys tearfully and the eternal shame
of Cecrops' house because she evilly
avenged the foreign lusts of kings.

The guardians of fat sheep sing songs
with panpipe in the tender grass 10
and delight the god⁷⁶, for whom the sheep
and black hills of Arcadia are pleasing.

The seasons bring on thirst Virgil:
but if you, the client of noble youths,
are eager to drink wine pressed at Cales, 15
you will earn your wine with nard⁷⁷.

A little alabaster box of nard will draw forth
a cask, which rests now in Sulpician store-houses
large enough to give new hopes and wash
away the bitterness of cares 20

If you hasten toward these joys,
come swiftly with your wares: I do not
plan to soak you in my cups for nothing:
like a wealthy man in his full house.

Truly, set aside delays and zeal of gain 25
and remembering black funeral fires,
mingle, while permitted, brief folly with your plans:
it is sweet to be silly on occasion.

⁷⁵ Procne, the daughter of Pandion the king of Athens and a descendant of Cecrops, murdered her son Itys. Her husband Tereus had sent for her sister Philomela, claiming that his wife was dead. Tereus raped Philomela then cut out her tongue so that she would not be able to tell anyone what had happened to her. However, Philomela managed to relate her story to her sister Procne through embroidered scenes of the incident. Procne took revenge for the rape of her sister by killing Itys and serving him to Tereus for dinner. When Tereus found out that he had eaten his son he went after the two women. According to the Latin tradition, the gods turned him into a hoopoe bird, Philomela into a nightingale, and Procne into a swallow.

⁷⁶ Pan

⁷⁷ a fragrant perfume made from the sap of trees; the type of tree used is unknown.

XIII

The gods have heard my prayers, Lyce,
they have heard them: you are becoming an
old woman and yet, you want to be seen
as beautiful, shameless, you fool around and drink,

and drunk, solicit sluggish Cupid 5
with your warbled song. But he's camped out
in the lovely cheeks of blooming Chia,
a beautiful girl *trained* to sing.

Rude, he flies past withered oaks and
flees from you, because yellow teeth, 10
wrinkles, and the snow-like hair on your
head disfigure you.

Now neither purple Coan silks⁷⁸ nor bright
gems can restore the years to you, which,
stored away in public calendars, each 15
fleeting day enclosed.

Alas, where is your charm or your complexion
now? Where is that lovely hip sashay? What
have you of that girl who breathed out sharp
desires once, and queen after Cinara, had 20

a face of note and pleasing skills, who
stole me from myself? The Fates
gave brief years to Cinara, but will
preserve Lyce for a long time to come,
a match to the poor old crow in years⁷⁹, 25
so that impetuous young men might gaze,
not without much laughter,
upon your torch crumbled to ashes.

XIV

What pains of senators and people,
by gifts filled with honors, through inscriptions
and unforgetting public records, can
immortalize your virtues for eternity,

⁷⁸ Cos is a Greek island where silk seems to have been invented independently from that in China.

⁷⁹ The Romans believed that crows lived to be 300-400 years old.

o Augustus, greatest of our citizens, 5
 wherever the sun illuminates habitable
 shores? You who lately taught the Vindelici⁸⁰,
 a people free from Latin law,

how capable you are in war. For with your troops
 fierce Drusus threw the swift Breuni⁸¹ down, 10
 and the Genauni, a savage race, and their
 citadels set on the fearsome Alps

with more than one retaliation; next
 the elder of the Neros⁸² engaged in
 a grim battle and drove the monstrous Raeti⁸³ 15
 out under favorable auspices.

Marvelous to see in battle, he
 harassed the hearts of those resolved to die
 as free men with great destruction:
 almost as when the South wind harasses 20

untamed waves while the chorus of the Pleiades⁸⁴
 splits the clouds, thus he was diligent to
 vex the squadrons of his enemies and sent
 his snorting horse through the middle of the fires.

As when the bull-shaped⁸⁵ Aufidus⁸⁶, which flows 25
 past the realms of Apulian Daunus⁸⁷,
 rolls on, it rages and plans terrible
 downpours for the cultivated fields,

so Claudius dashed apart the iron-clad lines
 of the barbarians with an overwhelming attack 30
 and victor without injury he strewed the ground
 by mowing down the first ranks and the last,

he did it with your troops, your plan, your gods.
 For on the very day that suppliant Alexandria⁸⁸

⁸⁰ See Carm. IV.IV.17

⁸¹ The Breuni and Genauni were neighbors of the Vindelici.

⁸² Tiberius Iulius Caesar Augustus, the future emperor; he was the elder of Augustus' two step-sons, the children of his wife Livia by her former husband Tiberius Claudius Nero.

⁸³ The Raeti were an Ilyrian/Celtic tribe located in the Alps, Tyrol, and part of what is now Bavaria and Switzerland. They were conquered by Tiberius and Drusus in 15 B.C.

⁸⁴ the constellation

⁸⁵ The gods thought to live in some rivers were conceptualized in bull form.

⁸⁶ See Carm. IV.IX.2

⁸⁷ Daunus was the mythical king of Apulia.

laid open her ports to you and empty
palace, happy Fortune 35

reproduced the favorable outcome of
the war fifteen years later and granted
both praise and longed-for glory
to your accomplished commands. 40

You, the Cantaber⁸⁹, not previously conquerable,
both Mede⁹⁰ and Indian⁹¹, so too the wandering
Scythian⁹² admires, o present guardian
of Italy and her mistress Rome,

Nile and Ister⁹³, who hide the sources
of their founts, the rapid Tigris, and
monster-teeming Ocean who roars
from distant Britain, 45

the men of Gaul, fearless of funerals,
and the land of harsh Hiberia⁹⁴ yield to you;
you, the Sygambri⁹⁵ delighting in slaughter,
venerate, their weapons laid to rest. 50

XV

I wanted to sing of battles and of
conquered cities, but Phoebus rebuked me
with his lyre lest I set little sails through
epic sea. Your reign, Caesar,

restored rich crops to the fields, and to our
Jove returned the Roman standards⁹⁶ seized
from the haughty doorstep of the Parthians,
and closed Janus Quirinus⁹⁷, free from wars 5

at last, reined in lawlessness wandering
from the upright path, and drove 10

⁸⁸ Augustus took Alexandria, Egypt at the end of the war against Cleopatra and Marc Antony.

⁸⁹ a tribe in N.W. Spain

⁹⁰ Parthian

⁹¹ the peoples east of Parthia

⁹² a tribe N.E. of the Roman empire. See Carm. IV.V.25

⁹³ i.e. the Danube River

⁹⁴ Spain

⁹⁵ a germanic tribe located between the Sieg River and the Ruhr River

⁹⁶ The Parthians captured the Roman battle standards from Crassus at Carrhae in 53 B.C.

⁹⁷ The temple of Janus Quirinus usually kept its doors open, symbolizing the Roman state at war. To close them was unusual and is recorded as having happened only three times in Rome's history.

out faults, and recalled the ancient skills
through which the name of Latium

and the strength and glory of Italy
and the majesty of the empire
extended from the rising of the sun 15
to its Hesperian bed⁹⁸.

While Caesar is guardian of Rome's affairs
neither civic madness nor force will drive
peace away, nor anger, which forges swords
and embroils wretched cities. 20

Neither those who drink deep-seated Danube,
nor the Getae⁹⁹, nor the Seres¹⁰⁰ or treacherous
Parthians, nor those born near the Tanain
River will break the Julian edicts.

And we on festal and on working days, 25
among the gifts of merry Bacchus
with our children and our wives,
first having duly prayed to the gods,

we will sing in the custom of our fathers,
voices mingled with Lydian pipes¹⁰¹, of heroes 30
who died well, of Troy, Anchises¹⁰²,
and descendants of kindly Venus.

Carmen Saeculare

Phoebus, bright ornament of heaven,
and queen Diana of the forests,
o worshipped and ever to be worshipped,
grant the things we pray in the sacred season

when the Sibylline verses¹⁰³ advised 5
gathered girls and chaste boys
to sing a hymn to the gods
whom the seven hills¹⁰⁴ have pleased.

⁹⁸ i.e. the west; Hesperia was a mythical country to the west of the Atlas Mts.

⁹⁹ a Thracian tribe

¹⁰⁰ the Latin name for the Chinese

¹⁰¹ Lydia was a country in W. Asia Minor.

¹⁰² Aeneas' father

¹⁰³ The Sibylline books were a collection of prophesies that were only consulted at the request of the Senate. The verses were written in Greek hexameter.

¹⁰⁴ There are 7 hills in Rome: the Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal.

Kindly Sun, you who bring forth and hide
the day in your shining chariot, born
both altered and the same, may you
see nothing greater than the Roman city. 10

Ilithyia¹⁰⁵, watch over tender mothers
duly bearing children at full term
whether you deem it right to be called
Lucina or Genitalis. 15

Goddess, may you rear our children and
make prosper the decrees of the senate
about matrimony and the marriage law¹⁰⁶
for an abundant new generation, 20

so that a fixed cycle of eleven
decades may bring back songs
and people crowding to the games
for three bright days and pleasing nights.

And you, Fates, truthful in your songs,
let Time, the abiding boundary of events,
keep to that which once was spoken:
unite good destinies to those already past. 25

May the earth, fertile in its crops
and cattle, present Ceres¹⁰⁷ with a
wheat-ear crown; may the healthy rains
and breezes of Jove nourish his offspring. 30

Mild and calm Apollo, weapon laid aside¹⁰⁸,
hear our suppliant boys; hear our girls,
o Luna, two-horned queen
of constellations: 35

if Rome is your workmanship, and Trojan
bands have occupied Etruscan shores¹⁰⁹
(the part ordered to move its Lares¹¹⁰ and its

¹⁰⁵ the goddess of childbirth

¹⁰⁶ Augustus made marriage between a freed person and a freeborn person possible to all but the Senatorial rank. He forbade the remarriage of an adulteress, the marriage of a freeman to a prostitute, and made divorce more difficult to acquire; a declaration of divorce required 7 witnesses.

¹⁰⁷ the goddess of agriculture

¹⁰⁸ The traditional weapon of Apollo is the bow.

¹⁰⁹ Northern Italy

¹¹⁰ See Carm. IV.V.35

city on the auspicious voyage, 40

for whom chaste Aeneas, survivor of
his country, unscathed through burning Troy,
built freedom's road and would give through
that more than he left behind),

o gods, give upright character to our clever 45
youth, to our peaceful elderly give rest,
o gods, give property and progeny and
all glory to our Roman race!

Let the bright blood of Venus and Anchises,
gentle against its fallen enemy, achieve 50
that which it begs of you with white cattle,
let it be superior to the warring foe!

Now on land and sea the Parthian fears
our mighty hands and Alban axes;
the Scythians and Indians, both proud 55
of late, now seek responses.

Now Faith and Peace and Honor and old-fashioned
Decency and neglected Virtue dare
to return, and blessed Abundance with
her full horn appears. 60

Phoebus augur¹¹¹, adorned with flashing bow,
dear to the nine Muses, he who lifts
the body's tired limbs with his
health-giving art,

if he views the Palatine altars
favorably, may he evermore extend 65
happy Latium and the Roman state
into another cycle and a better age.

And she who holds the Aventine¹¹²
and Algidus¹¹³, Diana, may she care 70
for the prayers of the Fifteen Men¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ *augur* is a Latin word for prophet or seer.

¹¹² The Aventine hill in Rome held ancient temples to Diana and Luna.

¹¹³ The Algidus hill was famous for its temples of Diana.

¹¹⁴ The Fifteen Men or *Quindecimviri* were one of four major priestly colleges at Rome. They guarded the Sibylline books and consulted them when the Senate requested it. They were the responsible authorities for the Centennial Festival.

and bend a friendly ear toward children's vows.

We, the chorus trained to sing the praises
of Phoebus and Diana, bring homeward
the good and certain hope that Juppiter
and all the gods have heard our prayers.

75

Proem to Gloaming

Rachel Fisher
In Alcaic Meter

Hesternus ignis dum rubet occidens
pigmentum ab Auris delinitur velut,
languescit aves et volant lux,
nubium et agminibus refusis.

Nunc intuetur bestia uterque homo
omniscientis magnanimi Dei
mirum theatrum nec movent se,
“sunt bona,” mente loquuntur omnes.