

LATINA III
HORACE ENGLISH
ODES BOOKS I-IV, CARMEN SAECULARE, EPODES 1-3

I. 10

Atlas' trenchant grandson, Mercury,
whose wit first civilized new-made man
with the gift of speech and the cult of
the wrestling floor,

5 I sing of you, herald of Jove and all
the gods, proponent of the curving lyre,
crafty to hide in klepto-jest whatever
took your fancy.

10 Apollo threatened you as a child with his
fright'ning voice unless you gave back the cows
you'd magicked away, then laughed to find his
quiver gone too.

15 Rich Priam leaving Ilium evaded
with your guidance the proud Atrides,
Thassalian watch-fires, the camp
that menaced Troy.

20 And you bring in the dutiful souls
to the mansions of joy, direct the tenuous throng
with your golden wand, welcome alike to gods
above, below.

I. 14

O ship, new waves will take you out to sea
once more. Then what to do? Valiantly
make for port. Do you not see that
your gunwales are stripped of oars,

5 and your splintered mast and yards
groan in the driving Southwester, and without
any girding ropes your hull
can hardly survive the mightier

seas? You have no unsplit sails, nor gods

10 to call upon when again beset by misfortune.
Though you're built of Pontic pine,
a daughter of a famous forest,

boastful of line and (ineffectual) name,
the fearful sailor has no faith in the icons
15 upon your stern. Beware lest you become
the laughing-stock of the winds.

Of late my acute disillusion but now
my concern and not inconsiderable love,
avoid the seas that rush betwixt
20 the glistening Cyclades.

I. 20

You'll drink a modest Sabine wine
from tankards – but I myself put it up
in Greek jars when in the theatre
the plaudits were yours,

5 sweet knight Maecenas, so that together
the banks of your native stream
and the joyous echo of Vatican Hill
might return your praise.

You can imbibe Caecuban and wine
10 from Cales' press: but neither Falernian
vines nor Formian slopes shall
replenish my cups.

I. 22

The man of upright life and free from sin
requires no Moorish spears nor bow
and quiver laden with poisoned
arrows, Fuscus,

5 whether his route lies through
the sweltering Syrtes or inhospitable
Caucasus or regions the fabulous
Hydaspes laps.

For as I was wandering free from care

10 singing of Lalage in Sabine
woods, unarmed, beyond my bounds,
there fled a wolf,

a monster such as warlike
Daunia does not rear in her widespread
15 groves of oak nor Juba's land, the barren
nurse of lions.

Put me amid a limp plain where no
tree ressurects in the summer breeze,
a tract oppressed by Jupiter's haze
20 and dingy sky;

put me in uninhabitable
regions beneath the Sun's close car –
and I'll love my Lalage's sweet talk
and sweeter laughter.

I. 23

You avoid me, Chloe, like a fawn
seeking his mother on the pathless
mountain and starting with groudless
fears at the woods and winds:

5 if the coming of spring shivers
the dancing leaves, or some green lizard
twitches a bramble,
his knees and heart quake.

10 Am I a tiger or fierce Gaetolian lion
to hunt you down and maul you?
It is a time to get loose from Mamma
you are ripe for a man.

II.7

Pompey, what fortune gives you back
To the friends and the gods who love you--
Once more you stand in your native land,
With your native sky above you!
5 Ah, side by side, in years agoe,
We've faced tempestuous weather,

And often quaffed
The genial draft
From an amphora together!
10 When honor at Phillippi fell
A pray to brutal passion,
I regret to say that my feet ran away
In swift Iambic fashion;
You were no poet-soldier born,
15 You staid, nor did you wince then--
Mercury came
To my help, which same
Has frequently saved me since then.
But now you're back, let's celebrate
20 In the good old way and classic--
Come, let us lard our skins with nard
And bedew our souls with Massic!
With fillets of green parsley leaves
Our foreheads shall be done up,
25 And with song shall we
Protract our spree
Until the morrow's sun-up.

II.10

It's better to live, Licinius, neither
Always pressing out on the deep nor, trembling
And cautious, hugging overly close to the
Dangerous shoreline.

5 Whoever cherishes the golden mean
Safely avoids the squalor of a hovel
And discreetly keeps away from a palace
That excites envy.

10 Most often it's the huge pine that is shaken
By the wind, and the highest towers that fall
The greatest fall, and the tops of mountains that
Attract the lightning.

15 Hopeful in adversity, apprehensive
In prosperity is the heart that prepares
Well for either fate. Zeus brings the winter, but
Also takes it back.

For even if right now times are bad, they won't
Ever be that way: for Apollo doesn't
Always tense his bow, but sometimes inspires
20 The silent Muses.

When the straits you sail have narrowed, show yourself
To be undaunted and bold — yet also be
Wise and tuck your sails when they're swelled by too strong
A following wind.

II. 18

There's no ivory, there's no
gilded panelling, gleaming here in my house,
no beams of Hymettian
marble rest on pillars quarried in deepest
5 Africa, I've not, as heir
to Attalus, become unwitting owner
of some palace, no noble
ladies trail robes of Spartan purple for me.

But I've honour, and a vein
10 of kindly wit, and though I'm poor the rich man
seeks me out: I don't demand
anything more of the gods, or my powerful

friend, I'm contented enough
blessed with my one and only Sabine Farm.
15 Day treads on the heels of day,
and new moons still continue to wane away.

Yet you contract on the edge
of the grave itself for cut marble, forget
the tomb and raise a palace,
20 pushing hard to extend the shore of Baiae's

roaring seas, not rich enough
in mainland coast. What's the point of tearing down
every neighbouring boundary
edging your fields, leaping over, in your greed,

25 the limits of your tenants? Both the husband

and wife, and their miserable
children, are driven out, and they're left clutching
their household gods to their breast.

30 Yet there's no royal courtyard
that more surely waits for a wealthy owner,
than greedy Orcus' fateful
limits. Why stretch for more? Earth's equally open

35 to the poorest of men and
the sons of kings: and Orcus's ferryman
couldn't be seduced by gold
to row back and return crafty Prometheus.

Proud Tantalus, and Pelops
his son, he holds fast, and whether he's summoned,
or whether he's not, he lends
40 an ear, and frees the poor man, his labours done.

II.20

A poet of dual form, I won't be carried
through the flowing air on weak or mundane wings,
nor will I linger down here on earth,
for any length of time: beyond envy,

5 I'll leave the cities behind. It's not I, born
of poor parents, it's not I, who hear your voice,
beloved Maecenas, I who'll die,
or be encircled by Stygian waters.

10 Even now the rough skin is settling around
my ankles, and now above them I've become
a snow-white swan, and soft feathers are
emerging over my arms and shoulders.

15 Soon, a melodious bird, and more famous
than Icarus, Daedalus' son, I'll visit
Bosphorus' loud shores, Gaetolian
Syrtes, and the Hyperborean plains.

Colchis will know me, so will the Scythians,
who pretend to show no fear of Italian
troops, and the Geloni: Spain will learn

20 from me, the expert, and those who drink Rhone.

No dirges at my insubstantial funeral,
no elegies, and no unseemly grieving:
suppress all the clamour, not for me
the superfluous honour of a tomb.

III. 13

Bandusian spring, more brilliant than glass,
worthy of flowers and classic wine,
tomorrow shall bring you a little goat
whose forehead bumpy with budding

5 horns prognosticates love and war –
in vain: the kid of wanton herds
shall dye with his scarlet blood
your icy streams.

10 The terrible scorching Dog-Days cannot touch
the grateful chill you dispense
to roaming flocks and oxen
fatigued with the ploughshare.

15 You now shall become a famous spring
through my words for your dell in the rocks,
the ilex superimposed and
loquacious streams leaping down.

III. 30

I have achieved a monument more lasting
than bronze, and loftier than the pyramids of kings,
which neither gnawing rain nor blustering wind
may destroy, nor innumerable series of years,
5 nor the passage of ages. I shall not wholly die,
a large part of me will escape Libitina:
while Pontiff and Vestal shall climb the Capitol Hill,
I shall be renewed and flourish in further praise.
Where churning Aufidus resounds, where Daunus
10 poor in water governed his rustic people,
I shall be spoken of as one who was princely
though of humble birth, the first to have brought
Greek song into Latin numbers. Take hard-won pride

15 in your success, Melpomene, and willingly
wreath my hair with Apollo's laurel.

IV. 3

Melpomene, Muse, one whom you
have looked on with favourable eyes at his birth
Ismian toil will never grant
fame as a boxer: while no straining horses

5 will draw him along, triumphant
in a Greek chariot, nor will his acts of war
show him to the high Capitol,
wreathed with the Delian laurel crown, who's crushed

10 the bloated menaces of kings:
but the waters that run beneath fertile Tibur,
and the thick leafage of the groves,
will make him of note in Aeolian song.

15 It's thought that I'm worthy by Rome's
children, the first of cities, to rank there among
the choir of delightful poets,
and already envy's teeth savage me less.

O Pierian girl, you who
command the golden tortoise shell's sweet melodies,
O you, who could, if you wished,
20 lend a swan's singing, too, to the silent fishes,

all of this is a gift of yours:
that I'm pointed out by the passer-by as one
who's a poet of the Roman lyre:
that I'm inspired, and please as I please: is yours.

IV.7

The snow has vanished, already the grass returns to the fields,
and the leaves to the branches:
earth alters its state, and the steadily lessening rivers
slide quietly past their banks:

5 The Grace, and the Nymphs, with both of her sisters, is daring enough,
leading her dancers, naked.

The year, and the hour that snatches the kindly day away, warn you:
don't hope for undying things.

10 Winter gives way to the westerly winds, spring's trampled to ruin
by summer, and in its turn
fruitful autumn pours out its harvest, barely a moment before
lifeless winter is back again.

Yet swift moons are always repairing celestial losses:
while, when we have descended
15 to virtuous Aeneas, to rich Tullus and Ancus, our kings,
we're only dust and shadow.

Who knows whether the gods above will add tomorrow's hours
to the total of today?
All those you devote to a friendly spirit will escape from
20 the grasping hands of your heirs.

When once you're dead, my Torquatus, and Minos pronounces
his splendid judgement on you,
no family, no eloquence, no righteousness even,
can restore you again:

25 Persephone never frees Hippolytus, chaste as he is,
from the shadow of darkness,
nor has Theseus, for his dear Pirithous, the power to
shatter those Lethean chains.

IV.15

Phoebus condemned my verse, when I tried to sing
of war and conquered cities, lest I unfurled
my tiny sail on Tyrrhenian
seas. Caesar, this age has restored rich crops

5 to the fields, and brought back the standards, at last,
to Jupiter, those that we've now recovered
from insolent Parthian pillars,
and closed the gates of Romulus' temple,

10 freed at last from all war, and tightened the rein
on lawlessness, straying beyond just limits,
and has driven out crime, and summoned
the ancient arts again, by which the name

of Rome and Italian power grew great,
and the fame and majesty of our empire,
15 were spread from the sun's lair in the west,
to the regions where it rises at dawn.

With Caesar protecting the state, no civil
disturbance will banish the peace, no violence,
no anger that forges swords, and makes
20 mutual enemies of wretched towns.

The tribes who drink from the depths of the Danube,
will not break the Julian law, the Getae,
nor Seres, nor faithless Persians,
nor those who are born by the Don's wide stream.

25 On working days, and the same on holy days,
among laughter-loving Bacchus' gifts to us,
with our wives and our children we'll pray,
at first, to the gods, in the rites laid down,

then, in the manner of our fathers, bravely,
30 in verse, that's accompanied by Lydian flutes,
we'll sing past leaders, we'll sing of Troy,
Anchises, and the people of Venus.

Carmen Saeculare

O Phoebus, Diana queen of the woodlands,
Bright heavenly glories, both worshipped forever
And cherished forever, now grant what we pray for
At this sacred time,

5 When Sybilline verses have issued their warning
To innocent boys, and the virgins we've chosen,
To sing out their song to the gods, who have shown their
Love for the Seven Hills.

O kindly Sun, in your shining chariot, who
10 Herald the day, then hide it, to be born again
New yet the same, you will never know anything
Mightier than Rome!

O gentle Ilithyia, duly revealing

15 The child at full term, now protect gentle mothers,
Whether you'd rather be known as Lucina,
Or Genitalis.

Goddess, nurture our offspring, bring to fruition
The Senate's decrees concerning the wedlock
Of women who'll bear us more of our children,
20 The laws of marriage,

So the fixed cycle of years, ten times eleven,
Will bring back the singing again, bring back the games
We crowd to three times by daylight, as often,
By beautiful night.

25 And you, the Fates, who are truthful in prophecy,
Link happy destinies, as has once been ordained
And let the certain course of events confirm it,
To those that are past.

Let Earth that is fruitful in crops, and in cattle,
30 Adorn our Ceres with garlands of wheat-ears:
And may Jupiter's life-giving rain and breezes
Ripen the harvest.

Gentle and peaceful Apollo, lay down your arms,
And listen now to the young lads' supplications:
35 Luna, crescent-horned queen of the constellations,
Give ear to the girls.

If Rome is your doing, and if from far Ilium
Came that band of people who reached the Tuscan shore,
Those commanded to change their home and their city,
40 On a lucky course,

Those for whom pious Aeneas, the survivor,
Who passed without injury through the flames of Troy,
Prepared a path to freedom, destined to grant him
Much more than he'd lost:

45 Then, you divinities, show our receptive youth
Virtue, grant peace and quiet to the old, and give
Children and wealth to the people of Romulus,
And every glory.

Whatever a noble descendant of Venus
50 And Anchises, asks, with a white steer's sacrifice,
Let him obtain: a winner in war, merciful
To our fallen foe.

Now the Parthians fear our forces, powerful
On land, and on sea: they fear the Alban axes,
55 Now the once proud Indians, now the Scythians
Beg for an answer.

Now Faith and Peace, Honour, and ancient Modesty,
Dare to return once more, with neglected Virtue,
And blessed Plenty dares to appear again, now,
60 With her flowing horn.

May Phoebus, the augur, decked with the shining bow,
Phoebus who's dear to the Nine Muses, that Phoebus
Who can offer relief to a weary body
With his healing art,

65 May he, if he favours the Palatine altars,
Extend Rome's power, and Latium's good-fortune,
Through the fresh ages, show, always, improvement,
Lustra ever new.

And may Diana, to whom is the Aventine,
70 And Mount Algidus, accept the entreaties
Of the Fifteen, and attend, and lend a fond ear,
To these children's prayers.

We bear to our home the fine hope, and certain,
That such is Jupiter's, and all the gods' purpose:
75 We're taught, we, the chorus, to sing praise of Phoebus,
Praise of Diana.

Epode I – A Tribute to Maecenas

My friend, Maecenas, you'll sail among towering
Bulwarks, Liburnian galleys,
Ready to suffer, yourself, all of the danger
That may be threatening Caesar.
5 What of us to whom life's a joy if you survive,
Otherwise, filled with heaviness?
Shall we, as ordered, pursue ease and idleness,

That, lacking you, cannot be sweet,
Or shall we endure these hardships with the resolve
10 That's shown by resilient men?
We'll endure it, with firm hearts we'll follow you,
Whether over the Alpine ridge
Or on the heights of the savage Caucasus,
Or to the far vales of the West.
15 You ask how I can lighten your hardships by mine,
I, unwarlike, and lacking strength?
If I'm your companion, I'll suffer less fear
That grips us more when we're distant:
As the mother-bird dreads attack from slithering
20 Snakes on her unfledged chicks much more
When she's left them behind, though she offer them
No more help if there at their side.
This and every war I will gladly undertake,
In hopes of winning your favour,
25 Not so that greater numbers of gleaming bullocks
Yoked to the plough can count as mine,
Not so my flocks can exchange Calabrian fields
For Lucanian ones, while it's cool,
Not so I can mention my splendid villa, close
30 To Tusculum's Circean walls.
Your generosity's enriched me already
Enough and more, and I'll not hoard,
Like Chremes, the miser, burying underground,
Nor lose it, a reckless spendthrift.

Epode II – The Delights of the Country

'Blessed is he, who far from the cares of business,
Like one of mankind's ancient race,
Ploughs his paternal acres, with his own bullocks,
And is free of usury's taint,
5 Not roused as a soldier is, by the fierce trumpet,
Nor afraid of the angry sea,
Shunning the Forum, avoiding proud thresholds
Of citizens holding more power.
Instead he's either out tying his full-grown vines
10 To the heights of his poplar trees,
Or watching his wandering herds of lowing cattle
In some secluded deep valley,
Or pruning the useless branches back with his knife,
And grafting superior ones,

15 Or storing thick honey away in clean vessels,
Or perhaps shearing helpless sheep:
Or when crowned with a garland of ripened fruit,
In the fields, Autumn rears its head,
How he takes delight in picking the grafted pears
20 And the grapes that vie with purple,
To honour Priapus, and Father Silvanus
Who'll protect his boundaries.
It's pleasant to lie now beneath some old oak-tree,
Or now on the springy turf,
25 While the streams go gliding, between their steep banks,
And little birds sing in the leaves,
And the fountains murmur, with flowing waters
That invite us to gentle sleep.
Then when Jove the Thunderer's wintry season
30 Brings both rain and snow together,
With a pack of hounds you can drive fierce wild-boars,
Here and there, to waiting barriers,
Or on gleaming poles, stretch the broad nets out,
A snare for the greedy thrushes,
35 Or catch with a noose trembling hares, and migrating
Cranes, the most joyful of prizes.
Among such delights who can't fail to forget,
The sad cares that passion may bring?
And if a chaste wife should be playing her part there,
40 In caring for home and children,
Like a Sabine girl, or the sun-tanned wife, of some
Nimble-footed Apulian,
Piling the sacred hearth high with old firewood
For her weary man's arrival,
45 Penning the frisky flock in the wickerwork fold,
And draining the swollen udders,
Then pouring the year's sweet vintage from the jar,
And preparing a home-grown meal:
Then Lucrine oysters could never delight me more
50 Or a dish of scar or turbot,
Should winter thundering with Eastern waves
Direct them towards our coastline:
Not African fowls, nor Ionian pheasants
Could more happily pass my lips,
55 Than the fruit collected from the most heavily
Loaded branches of the olive,
Or the leaves of the meadow-loving sorrel,
Mallows good for a sick body,

Or a lamb sacrificed at Terminus' feast,
60 Or a kid retrieved from the wolf's jaws.
At such a meal what a pleasure it is to see
Flocks of sheep hurrying homewards,
The listless oxen dragging along an upturned
Ploughshare, yoked to their weary necks,
65 And the crowd of slaves born on a wealthy farm,
Ranged all round the gleaming Lares.'
When Alfius the usurer has uttered all this,
On the verge of a rural life,
He recalls his money, once more, on the Ides,
70 On the Kalends, farms it again!

Epode III – Garlic!

If any man, with impious hand, should ever
Strangle an aged parent,
Make him eat garlic, it's deadlier than hemlock,
O you strong stomachs that cull it!
5 What poison is this that's burning my entrails?
Has viper's blood mixed with these herbs
Betrayed me? Or has Canidia been tampering
With this unfortunate dish?
Medea, intoxicated with her Jason,
10 That most handsome of Argonauts,
Smear'd him all over with this, while he tried to yoke
Those bulls unused to the harness:
She took revenge on her rival with gifts of this,
Before mounting her winged dragon.
15 Never did such a vapour from any dog-star
Settle on parched Apulia:
Nessus' gift burnt Hercules' shoulders with no less
Effective a fiery heat.
If ever, my dear Maecenas, you aspire
20 To repeat the jest, I just pray
That your girl with her hands obstructs your kisses,
And takes the far side of the bed!