



## The Odes of Horace

*Horace , David Ferry (Translator)*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➞

# The Odes of Horace

*Horace , David Ferry (Translator)*

## **The Odes of Horace** Horace , David Ferry (Translator)

The Latin poet Horace is, along with his friend Virgil, the most celebrated and influential of the poets of Emperor Augustus's reign. These marvelously constructed poems, with their unswerving clarity of vision and extraordinary range of tone and emotion, have deeply affected the poetry of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Herbert, Marvell, Dryden, Pope, Samuel Johnson, Wordsworth, Frost, Auden, Larkin, and many others, in English and in other languages. David Carne-Ross has said of this translation that "Ferry has found an English into which Horace's lyrics will pass with no apparent strain". Grateful readers will appreciate the lucidity and inventiveness of these elegant and judicious versions.

## **The Odes of Horace Details**

Date : Published October 1st 1997 by Farrar Straus Giroux (first published -23)

ISBN : 9780374224257

Author : Horace , David Ferry (Translator)

Format : Hardcover 343 pages

Genre : Poetry, Classics, Literature, Ancient, Fiction, Roman

 [Download The Odes of Horace ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Odes of Horace ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Odes of Horace Horace , David Ferry (Translator)**

---

# From Reader Review The Odes of Horace for online ebook

## Monty Milne says

The Latin text faces the English translation and at first I was a touch disappointed, because what I really wanted was Horace in all his glory with just a rather literal translation to jog my dim schoolboy Latin from the lumber room of memory. James Michie's translation is often rather free but it is also very beautiful and I soon became awed and enraptured by his skill and erudition. So it became a double treat to get absorbed in the glories of both texts. I sighed with pleasure on every page. No other Latin poet has become so embedded in western literary consciousness, and no other Latin poet provides such a wealth of apposite quotations for almost every situation that life throws up. The only pity is that I am too afraid of being thought pretentious to quote him at every turn...except occasionally, in congenial company, when I know it will be understood by way of ironic self-parody.

---

## Leopold Benedict says

I still haven't found an approach to Horace despite the admiration that a lot of authors who I admire have for Horace. His poetry is filled with mythological and ancient references that I fail to grasp, even though I would consider myself reasonable well read on ancient matters and with a solid knowledge of Latin. Maybe I will return to him later in time with a greater understanding his poetry.

---

## Roy Lotz says

*"Just as Aristotle defined light operationally as that which passes through transparent objects, so may one define poetry as that which does not pass through translation."*—I had this thought some time ago, and was both pleased and disappointed to find that, not only had it been thought of already, but it was virtually a cliché. Well, cliché or no, it appears to be true. (Gregson Davis, in the introduction, argues that it is only half-true, considering how many poets have seen success in translation; but I'll leave these conundrums to brighter minds.)

Having now, in these past weeks, read both Virgil's *Georgics* and *Eclogues*, as well as this volume by Virgil's contemporary and friend, Horace, I think I need to either learn Latin or transition to English poetry. It has not been a very satisfying experience. Granted: James Michie did a fine job, and there are many pretty lines in this work:

Call him happy  
And lord of his own soul who every evening  
Can say, "Today I have lived.  
Tomorrow Jove may blot the sky with cloud

Or fill it with pure sunshine, yet he cannot  
Devalue what has once been held as precious,  
Or tarnish or melt back  
The gold the visiting hour has left behind."

Nevertheless, I could hardly get a sense of that Horatian genius I'd so often heard about, just as I couldn't detect the elegance of Virgil's language.

Epic poetry perhaps survives translation most intact, since it is as much poetry as tale. But lyric poetry, which is all sentiment and slickness, becomes attenuated and awkward when sung in a foreign tongue. Oh well.

---

### **Ana says**

No wonder politicians love Horace, there's a lot of politics in his poetry. But there's also love, philosophy and ethics. So read this slowly, otherwise the lofty style will seem too self-satisfying and you'll miss the graceful honesty and dry wit.

My one complaint is that Horace gets a little too preachy at times.

---

### **Dmk says**

I read only little from ancient lyric poetry (only one czech volume of translation of the oldest greek poets) so Odes was quite a new field for me and I didn't know what to expect.

I was pleasantly surprised. Odes felt so modern, yet they had that feeling and (most importantly ) quality of great ancient writings.

Some of the poems are hard to read without commentary even for someone who has (or he thinks he has) some knowledge of history of age Horace lived in and greek/roman myth. But what's left is a pure genie. I will surely read this book again, and many poems I have already read multiple times.

Poems varies, they don't get monotonous, and even with faster, more relaxed reading they are beautiful and with more careful reading they unveil more and more pleasure. And some philosophy.

---

### **Andrea says**

I wrote my senior thesis in college on Horace's odes, and I feel that this is a nice edition. The translations are (for the most part) thoughtful, if not always meticulous. The Latin on the facing pages is helpful for an intermediate to advanced student, as it does not contain any notes (or line markings--I had to put mine in myself). Many of the translations are beautiful, some of the best I've seen. Good for someone who would like to read Horace's poems in English. For a more thorough experience with the Latin, I would recommend Daniel Garrison's edition, which contains exhaustive notes.

---

### **Graychin says**

*This is not a review of the James Michie translation but of an old Everyman Library edition I picked up at my local bookshop.*

My senior year of college I made a pretty decent translation of the seventh poem from Book II of the *Odes*, the one beginning *O saepe mecum tempus in ultimum*. I have a copy of it somewhere. But that was more than twenty years ago and unfortunately I can't really read Horace in the original anymore. However, I made my way through an old (1936) Everyman Library edition of the *Odes* and rediscovered some pleasant, familiar territory. A personal favorite is this translation of *Quis multa gracilis* (I,5) by E.C. Cox:

Slim, young and essenced, Pyrrha, who  
On roses couched is courting you?  
Whom charms in your sweet grot  
The bright hair's single knot,  
The choice plain dress? How oft he'll sigh  
"False gods, false faith!" with tears, and eye,  
Poor novice, seas that change  
Storm-lashed to back and strange.

Who now enjoys you, thinks you gold,  
Dreams you will love him, - still, still hold  
No hand but his, nor knows,  
Winds change. Alas! for those  
Who trust your sheen. On temple wall  
My votive tablet proves to all  
That Neptune earned his fee –  
These dripping clothes – from me.

---

## Daniel says

This particular translation left much to be desired. The translator took various liberties, some of them a historical and quite annoying. Not the edition I would recommend if a beginning Classics reader like myself were looking for an accurate translation of Horace.

---

## Phillip says

Of the various translations of Horace's Odes into English, this is the best I have found. The translations stay close to the literal meaning and sequence of the originals, yet are rendered into English poetry. Horace is a frequently complicated, dense poet, so the translations are often rather complicated and dense. A reasonable number of explanatory notes are provided in the back. With the learning of Latin under increasing threat, there is a greater risk than ever before of losing contact with the Latin roots of our cultural heritage. All adults who care about the literary education of their children, godchildren, etc., should invest in this book. At present-giving time it will be a standby for years to come.

---

## Matt says

I was surprised by how much I enjoyed these poems. I've always wanted to be more conversant with ancient poetry and I actually know a guy who knows Ferry, so I took this crisply bound collection off the shelf one sparkling autumn afternoon and plugged in.

This was in the closing weeks of the Presidential election, so there was a lot of angst in the air and in my mind. This book was actually a bit of a refuge. Horace knew about political turmoil- he fought in the battle of Philippi in 42 BC, on Brutus' side in the Civil War. Horace showed rather badly, in fact- he famously lost his nerve, dropped his shield, and scurried away, something which he remarks upon with sarcastic good humor here and there. But he also knew about wanting decent government- he ended up serving as court poet under Augustus and lived quietly on the farm one of his patrons bestowed upon him.

Horace is the one responsible for the old saying "dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori" which translates to "sweet and fitting it is to die for one's country." Which is highly ironic, given his own record on the battlefield. I thought him a chump when I heard that, and when I realized the devastating dis from Wilfred Owen in his own harrowing WWI poem, correctly calling out that sentiment as "the old lie" and that this shmuck was the one who'd uttered it so grandly many years ago. I mean, Come ON.

Then again, who knows how you might react in the heat of battle? Lincoln was known for pardoning soldiers who skedaddled away from the battlefield, saying something to the effect that he couldn't blame a fellow for having cowardly legs. Good on him.

What helped put this into perspective was some essay I found about how Horace indeed sounds slightly ridiculous when makes such a pronouncement, but here's the kicker- he knows it, too! That little twist made up the difference in terms of how I thought about him personally. He is aware of his own bullshit, to a certain degree.

But regardless of all that, there was something almost soothing about spending the last couple of months dipping in and out of his Odes. I loved Ferry's clean, fresh, articulate, almost plainspoken translations. I diddled around for the entirety of my two years of Latin in High School, so it's not like I would have known any better, but I think I saw what Ferry was doing here and there and I liked very much these bracing, lucid, tightly sequential lines.

It helps if you know your Roman mythology and history just a little bit, and I don't really, but it's not a deal-breaker if you just want to read these poems for their own sake. Ferry provides less notes and introduction material than I wanted, which is really the only reason why I gave the edition 4 stars.

There's a reason why literally centuries of poets and literary folk have learned Horace's verses by heart, translated him, honored him, and emulated him. Ferry says in his introduction that part of the fun of reading these poems is in seeing how Horace tacks between different poetic forms, and observing how he manages the trick each time, like an Olympic diver. He can be seductive, wise, stoic, grand, reflective, humble, self-deprecating, self-inflating, reverent and irreverent as he wills. Boy got skill.

Horace's poems really shine when he's just commenting on the everyday events of life, the slow drain of time, making comments on the social foibles of people he knows, reflecting on the inevitability of death, celebrating the transient pleasures of life. There's a sense of balance in these poems, of taking it all in all, that is very refreshing given the fact that I am often a sucker for those humid, drunken, confessional types.

Horace knows the universe has it's own plans, which is to say probably none at all, as far as our puny human intents and purposes are concerned. The gods will do as they do. Therefore, quietus.

Let's just go seize the olives and the wine and lie back in the shade of the trees on the top of the hill, gaze out on the mountains, the sea, and all that hubbub which we call civilization as the hours pass and the sun fades. Pass the laurels, please.

#### To Lydia

Lydia, when you praise your Telephus,  
"His beautiful rosy neck," "his beautiful arms,"  
Your praise of Telephus throws me into confusion,  
My mind is all unsettled, my heart swells up,

The tears in my eyes are the visible evidence  
Of the fire that burns inside me and torments me.  
I suffer this way whether I think the bruise  
That mars your snow-white shoulder is the sign

Of a lover's quarrel brought on by too much wine  
Or the mark on your lip the mark of his savage kiss.  
If you listened to me you wouldn't give your trust  
To one who would so barbarously treat

The lips that Venus imbued with essence of nectar.  
Those lovers are happy and more than happy who  
Are peacefully bound together in amity.  
Love will not part such lovers until death parts them.

#### To Leuconoe

Don't be too eager to ask  
What the gods have in mind for us,  
What will become of you,  
What will become of me,  
What you can read in the cards,  
Or spell out on the Ouija board.  
It's better not to know.  
Either Jupiter says  
This coming winter is not  
After all going to be  
The last winter you have,  
Or else Jupiter says  
This winter that's coming soon,  
Eating away the cliffs  
Along the Tyrrhenian Sea,  
Is going to be the final  
Winter of all. Be mindful.  
Take good care of your household.  
The time we have is short.  
Cut short your hopes for longer.  
Now as I say these words,

Time has already fled  
Backwards away-  
Leuconoe-  
Hold on to the day.

(The last phrase is 'Carpe Diem'- the old injunction, often found on screensavers and office memorabilia- turns out it's not quite the way you first heard it, eh?)

#### To His Slave

I dislike elaborate show, as, for example,  
"Persian" garlands too intricately woven,  
So don't go looking everywhere for somewhere  
Where the last rose blooming anywhere might be.

Don't bother to look for anything less simple  
Than simple myrtle, suitable to the scene:  
The garlanded cupbearer waiting, and garlanded I,  
Here in the shade of the arbor, drinking my wine.

#### To Postumus

How the years go by, alas how the years go by.  
Behaving well can do nothing at all about it.  
Wrinkles will come, old age will come, and death,  
Indomitable. Nothing at all will work.

Offer in pledge three hundred oxen a day,  
Unweeping Pluto will never be appeased.  
Giants he holds in thrall down there for ever  
On the other bank of that dark stream that all

Who eat and drink the good things of the earth  
Must cross at last, whoever they may be,  
Rich man or poor man, whatever, it doesn't matter.  
In vain that you fear what's borne on the sick South Wind.

In vain that you survived the bloody field.  
In vain that you made for port having ridden out  
The terrible storm that time on the Adriatic.  
It doesn't matter at all. However it happens,

Each one of us shall come to see the black  
River Cocytos wandering through the region  
Where Danaus' wicked daughters endlessly suffer  
And Sisyphus for ever labors on.

Each one must leave the earth he loves  
And leave his home and leave his tender wife,



And leave the trees he planted and took good care of.  
Only the cypress grows along those banks.

Your heir will drink the choice Caecuban wine  
You did not know that you were saving for him  
When you locked it up securely in your cellar.  
The wine he spills is priceless, it doesn't matter.

---

### **Bruce says**

I always review a book of poetry in translation with trepidation, realizing that I am reviewing both the poet and the translator, but at least in this case I can read enough Latin to appreciate both (this edition has the Latin on the facing page, which is convenient). This particular translation is by James Michie, and it is magnificent.

Horace is a delightful poet. I enjoy his urbanity, his wittiness, his insouciance, his appreciation of the present, the mundane, the personal. And these characteristics are fully on display in his odes. The forms and meters are endlessly varied, each one fresh, each appropriate to the subject at hand. The only time my admiration faltered was in the last of the four books, where an increasing number of poems were panegyrics to his patrons, and although the poetry was every bit as good, the sycophancy was a bit tedious. But poets, too, must eat and live.

Michie is a skilled poet in his own right, and many of his translations of individual odes are the best I've read. Number V from Book I, for example, is far superior to its many competitors. I've not read other of Michie's poems, either his own or the collections of other classical poets whom he has translated. I'd like to do so.

---

### **Duarte says**

Nos idos de março vou adoptar o feriado da árvore assassina.

---

### **Darran McLaughlin says**

It is amazing how these Odes can speak to a reader across two Millennia. His poetry has qualities that are local and culturally specific, but also qualities that are universal and accessible to readers centuries later. Horace wrote during one of the pinnacles of human civilization at the height of Augustan Rome, a friend of Virgil and contemporary to Ovid. He fought for Brutus in the civil war against Octavian, later to become Augustus Caesar. He venerated Greek culture and poetry and was influenced to live according to the philosophy of Epicurus. Coiner of the expression Carpe Diem he lived a relatively modest life on a farm given to him by a patron and wrote of the consolations of love, nature, wine and friendship, as well as the duties of citizenship. It helps to have a grounding in Greek and Roman mythology and some understanding of the works of Homer and the Trojan war to understand his references and get the most out of it, but there are many poems that don't require this and if you enjoy, for example, the odes of Keats you should be able to

read and enjoy these.

I read the Modern Library edition, translated by James Michie. WH Auden said he does not expect a better translation to be possible. Some people feel Michie is too free in his translations, but I am pleased he took some liberties. Poetry usually suffers in translation, but these actually work as poetry. I would much rather read a translation that takes some liberties but works as poetry than a plodding, faithful, academic translation that eliminates what makes it worth reading.

---

### **Justin Evans says**

Just to be clear, I give Horace all the stars in the internet. I give David Ferry two of them.

Horace's poems are masterpieces of concision, obliquity, delay, and obfuscation. David Ferry's version of Horace is, well, prolix, acute, direct, and transparent. In his introduction he more or less says that his unit of translation is the poem as a whole, which is a perfectly defenseable position. Literal translations are terrible, translations of poems should really themselves be poems. The problem here is that Ferry and I disagree so strongly on what a poem should actually be. His ideal seems to be something that is very slightly metrical, but mostly conversational in tone.

I read his translations of Virgil's Eclogues many years ago and liked it okay, and I suspect his style is much better suited to long poems of that kind: what matters in them is what is being said as much as how it is written. But for Horace's odes, what is being said is almost entirely banal, and it is being said in an extraordinary, beautiful, fascinating way. Ferry loses all of that.

Is there a good, modernist translation of Horace out there, akin to Fagles' Oresteia? I hope to read one before I die.

---

### **VANY says**

Esta tradução é absolutamente aterradora... Quando tens de ler a mesma frase mais de 3 vezes para perceber quem é o sujeito claramente há algum problema....

Contra o Horácio não tenho nada, gostei das temáticas e claramente tem uma obra de qualidade que até gostei bastante de ler. Porém o senhor Pedro Falcão complica a tradução a um expoente ridículo e tornou a leitura, que já por si é complicada, quase incompreensível em n de poemas...

---