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Horace Ode 1.9

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Translation of Horace Ode 1.9

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Abstract: I originally translated Horace's Ode 1.9 for a perfect translation exercise in Professor Ellen Oliensis's "Lyric and Society" class. The poem has been a favorite of mine since I first read it because of its beautiful imagery and the way in which it melds several different scenes effectively into one piece. Particularly the first two stanzas struck me in their stark contrast of natural and human realms as did the last two stanzas which portray a sort of elusive intimacy that is completely different in setting and tone from the rest of the poem. My goals in translating were to remain close to the Latin, emphasizing details that stood out to me in Horace's word choice, and to generally maintain the tone of each segment.

References and Lexical Acknowledgments:


Vides ut alta stet nive candidum
Soracte, nec iam sustineant onus
silvae laborantes, geluque
flumina constiterint acuto.

Dissolve frigus ligna super foco
large reponens atque benignius
deprome quadrimum Sabina,
o Thaliarche, merum diota.

Permitte divis cetera, qui simul
stravere ventos aequore fervido
deproeliantis, nec cupressi
nec veteres agitantur orni.

Quid sit futurum cras fugae quaerere, et
quem Fors dierum cumque dabit lucro
appone, nec dulcis amores
sperne puer neque tu choreas,
donec virenti canities abest
morosa. Nunc et Campus et areae
lenesque sub noctem susurri
composita repetantur hora,
nunc et latentis proditor intimo
gratus puellae risus ab angulo
pignusque dereptum lacertis
aut digito male pertinaci.

You see how Soracte stands tall, brilliant with thick
snow cover — how the straining forests no longer
support their burden and the rivers
have congealed with sharp ice.

Melt away the cold, replenishing dry branches
amply upon the hearth, and more generously
let flow the four-winter wine, o Thaliarchus,
from its two-eared Sabine jug.

Entrust all else to the gods, for as soon as
they have smoothed over the gales that battle
on a seething ocean’s face, neither cypresses
nor ancient ash trees are disturbed.

Chase away speculation on tomorrow’s outcome, and
tally the profits of whatever days Chance grants you;
reject neither sweet lovers
nor dances, for you are a boy
still in bloom, and the mulish grays of old age stay
away for now. Now let the Campus and the plazas
and delicate whispers beneath the nightfall
be revisited at the agreed upon time—
now too the captivating giggle of a hiding girl
echoing from an intimate corner, betraying her,
and the love token snatched from an arm
or from a finger feebly resisting.