

HORACE

ODES

With the Latin Text

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Introduction by Gregson Davis,

DUKE UNIVERSITY



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NEW YORK

Diana, queen of forests, and Apollo,
O honoured and for ever to be honoured
Twin glories of the firmament, accord us
All we beseech today—

Day of devotion, when the Sibyl's verses
Enjoin the chaste, the chosen youths and maidens
To chant their hymns of worship to the patron
Gods of our seven hills.

Kind sun, bright charioteer, bringer and hider
Of light, newborn each morning yet each morning
Unaltered, may thou never view a city
Greater on earth than Rome.

Moon, gentle midwife, punctual in thy office,
Lucina, Ilithyia, Genitalis—
Be called whichever title is most pleasing—
Care for our mothers' health,

Goddess, make strong our youth and bless the Senate's
Decrees rewarding parenthood and marriage,
That from the new laws Rome may reap a lavish
Harvest of boys and girls,

So that the destined cycle of eleven
Decades may bring again great throngs to witness
The games and singing: three bright days and three long
Nights of the people's joy.

And you, O Fates, who have proved truthful prophets,
Your promise stands—and may Time's sacred landmarks
Guard it immovably: add to our glorious
History fresh renown.

May Mother Earth, fruitful in crops and cattle,
Crown Ceres' forehead with a wreath of wheat-ears,
And dews and rains and breezes, God's good agents,
Nourish whatever grows.

Sun-god, put by thy bow and deign to listen
Mildly and gently to the boys' entreaties.
Moon, crescent sovereign of the constellations,
Answer the virgins' prayers.

Rome is your handiwork; in your safe-keeping
The Trojan band reached an Etruscan haven,
That remnant which, at your command, abandoned
City and hearth to make

The auspicious voyage, those for whom pure-hearted
Aeneas, the last pillar of royal manhood
Left standing in burnt Troy, paved paths to greater
Fame than they left behind.

By these sure tokens make our young quick pupils
Of virtue, give the aged peace and quiet,
Rain on the race of Romulus wealth, offspring,
Honours of every kind;

And when, tonight, with blood of milk-white oxen
The glorious son of Venus and Anchises
Invokes you, grant his prayers. Long may Augustus
Conquer but spare the foe.

Now Parthia fears the fist of Rome, the fasces
Potent on land and sea; now the once haughty
Ambassadors from the Caspian and the Indus
Sue for a soft reply.

Now Faith and Peace and Honour and old-fashioned
Conscience and unremembered Virtue venture
To walk again, and with them blessed Plenty,
Pouring her brimming horn.

Apollo, augur, bright-bowed archer, well-loved
Music-master of the nine Muses, healer

Whose skill in medicine can ease the body's
Ills and infirmities,

By thy affection for the Palatine altars
Prolong, we pray, the Roman State and Latium's
Prosperity into future cycles, nobler
Eras, for evermore;

Diana, keeper of the sacred hilltops
Of Aventine and Algidus, be gracious
To the prayers of the Fifteen Guardians, to the children
Bend an attentive ear.

That Jove and all the gods approve these wishes
We, the trained chorus, singers of the praises
Of Phoebus and Diana, carry homewards
Happy, unshaken hope.