

Horace - Ode III, 29 "This Aegean Storm"

Post by "Cassius" of June 12, 2015 at 8:08 AM

I've been looking for a more understandable version of Horace's Ode III,29, where he discusses "fortune" and how to deal with it in Epicurean terms. I now see Peter St. Andre has done a version. Here's a key part and the full translation is at the link:

Joyous and self-possessed is the life of he
Who each day can say: "I have lived — tomorrow
The Father may fill the sky with black storm-clouds
Or purest sunshine,

Yet even so he can't upset what is past:
He can't complete or alter or make undone
Whatever the fleeting hour has once produced."
For haughty Fortune,

Full poem: https://stpeter.im/writings/fire/horace3_29.html

"This Aegean Storm"

(Horace, Odes III.29)

translated by Peter Saint-Andre

Maecenas, descended from Etruscan kings,
Smooth wine not yet opened and blooming roses
And fragrant hair oils have long been ready
For you at my house.
Break free from all hindrances: do not always
Contemplate the humid Tibur, Aefula's
Sloping fields, and the ridge of that parricide
Old Telegonus;
Forsaking loathsome wealth and sky-high power,
Shaking your head at the smoke and wealth and noise
Of decadent Rome, I urge you to leave: for
Change is pleasant,
And a simple dinner at a peasant's small
Hut all lacking in fine purple tapestries
Loosens the troubled brow of the richest man.
For see already:
Andromeda's shining father shows forth his

Secret fire; Procyon and the savage star
Of Leo rage, and the sun brings back the days,
Drought-filled, without rain;
The shepherd with his sluggish flock seeks out shade
And stream and the wild brambles of savage
Silvanus, and the quiet banks lack even
An unsteady breeze.
Yet you worry about the health of the State;
Troubled over the City, you're anxious about
The Seres and Cyrus-ruled Bactra and the
Fractious Scythians.
Wisely the god suppresses the outcome of
Future times in darkest night, and he laughs if
Mortals are disturbed by that which is beyond
Their proper orbit.
Take care to deal clearly with what's before you —
The rest is carried along like a river:
Now gliding calmly within its channel down
To the Tuscan sea,
Now churning gnawed rocks and uprooted tree-trunks
And cattle and homes until the surrounding
Woods and hills resound with noise when the fierce flood
Roils the placid stream.
Joyous and self-possessed is the life of he
Who each day can say: "I have lived — tomorrow
The Father may fill the sky with black storm-clouds
Or purest sunshine,
Yet even so he can't upset what is past:
He can't complete or alter or make undone
Whatever the fleeting hour has once produced."
For haughty Fortune,
So pleased with her cruel affairs and stubbornly
Playing her games, keeps shifting around all her
Dubious honors, smiling now on me and
Now on someone else.
I praise her while she stays. Yet when she spreads her
Her too-swift wings, I give back what she's granted
And wrapped in my strength I seek out poverty,
Honest and bereft.
It's not my way, when the southern gales roar out
Of Africa, to make abject prayers and
Votive offerings to strike a bargain lest
My exotic wares

Should add to the wealth of the rapacious sea;
It's then that the gods and a favoring breeze
Carry me and my two-oared skiff safely through
This Aegean storm.

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