

Bacchus in Horace – the main references

Epodes 9, The Battle of Actium (31 BCE)

Dear Maecenas, when in your noble house, as is
Jove's pleasure, shall I delight
With you in Caesar's triumph, drinking Caecuban
Cellared for festive banquets,
While lyre and flutes sound, mingling their
melodies,
That Dorian, and these Italian?
As lately, when Pompey, driven from the sea,
Had fled, with his ships destroyed,
Having threatened the city with shackles he'd taken
From those faithless slaves, his friends.
A Roman, – you'll not credit it, posterity –
Sadly, ups sticks and arms himself,
For a woman's sake, and though a soldier, deigns
To serve the withered eunuchs,
While the sun looks down on her shameful pavilion,
Among the warlike standards.
At this sight two thousand Gauls, chanting Caesar,
Turned their snorting steeds aside,
And the opposing fleet, when ordered to larboard,
Remained there in the harbour.
Hail, Triumph! Why delay the golden chariots
And the unblemished steers?
Hail, Triumph! In the war with Jugurtha, you never
Returned such a general to us,
Nor was Africanus, whose courage made a tomb
For himself of Carthage, such.
The enemy, beaten at sea and on land,
Changes his scarlet cloak for black.
Against opposing winds, he either heads for Crete,
Famed for her hundred cities,
Or tries for Syrtes, blown by the northerlies,
Or is borne over unknown seas.
Bring more spacious bowls, lad, and pour the Chian,
Lesbian, or Caecuban wine
That's designed to prevent all seasick qualms.
Let's delight in banishing fear and anxiety
For Caesar's affairs, with sweet wine.

Quando repostum Caecubum ad festas dapes
victore laetus Caesare
tecum sub alta – sic Iovi gratum – domo,
beate Maecenas, bibam
sonante mixtum tibiis carmen lyra, 5
hac Dorium, illis barbarum?
ut nuper, actus cum freto Neptunius
dux fugit ustis navibus
minatus urbi vincla, quae detraxerat
servis amicus perfidis. 10
Romanus eheu – posterī negabitīs –
emancipatus feminae
fert vallum et arma miles et spadonibus
servire rugosis potest
interque signa turpe militaria 15
sol adspicit conopium.
at huc frementis verterunt bis mille equos
Galli canentes Caesarem
hostiliumque navium portu latent
puppēs sinistrorsum citae. 20
io Triumphe, tu moraris aureos
currus et intactas boves?
io Triumphe, nec Iugurthino parem
bello reportasti ducem
neque Africanum, cui super Carthaginem 25
virtus sepulcrum condidit.
terra marique victus hostis punico
lugubre mutavit sagum,
aut ille centum nobilem Cretam urbibus
ventis iturus non suis, 30
exercitatas aut petit Syrtis Noto
aut fertur incerto mari.
capaciores adfer huc, puer, scyphos
et Chia vina aut Lesbia,
vel quod fluentem nauseam coerceat 35
metire nobis Caecubum.
curam metumque Caesaris rerum iuvat
dulci Lyaeo solvere.

Odes I, 37 (collection of *Odes I-III* published in 23 BCE, though I, 37 is dated to soon after the Battle of Actium).

Now's the time for drinking deep, and now's the time
to beat the earth with unfettered feet, the time
to set out the gods' sacred couches,
my friends, and prepare a Salian feast.
It would have been wrong, before today, to broach
the Caecuban wines from out the ancient bins,
while a maddened queen was still plotting
the Capitol's and the empire's ruin,
with her crowd of deeply-corrupted creatures
sick with turpitude, she, violent with hope
of all kinds, and intoxicated
by Fortune's favour. But it calmed her frenzy
that scarcely a single ship escaped the flames,
and Caesar reduced the distracted thoughts, bred
by Mareotic wine, to true fear,
pursuing her close as she fled from Rome,
out to capture that deadly monster, bind her,
as the sparrow-hawk follows the gentle dove
or the swift hunter chases the hare,
over the snowy plains of Thessaly.
But she, intending to perish more nobly,
showed no sign of womanish fear at the sword,
nor did she even attempt to win
with her speedy ships to some hidden shore.
And she dared to gaze at her fallen kingdom
with a calm face, and touch the poisonous asp
with courage, so that she might drink down
their dark venom, to the depths of her heart,
growing fiercer still, and resolving to die:
scorning to be taken by hostile galleys,
and, no ordinary woman, yet queen
no longer, be led along in proud triumph.

Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero
pulsanda tellus, nunc Saliaribus
ornare pulvinar deorum
tempus erat dapibus, sodales.
antehac nefas depromere Caecubum 5
cellis avitis, dum Capitolio
regina dementis ruinas
funus et imperio parabat
contaminato cum grege turpium
morbo virorum, quidlibet inpotens 10
sperare fortunaque dulci
ebria. sed minuit furorem
vix una sospes navis ab ignibus
mentemque lymphatam Mareotico
redegit in veros timores 15
Caesar ab Italia volantem
remis adurgens, accipiter velut
mollis columbas aut leporem citus
venator in campis nivalis
Haemoniae, daret ut catenis 20
fatale monstrum: quae generosius
perire quaerens nec muliebriter
expavit ensem nec latentis
classe cita reparavit oras,
ausa et iacentem visere regiam 25
vultu sereno, fortis et asperas
tractare serpentes, ut atrum
corpore conbiberet venenum,
deliberata morte ferocior:
saevis Liburnis scilicet invidens 30
privata deduci superbo
non humilis mulier triumpho.

I saw Bacchus on distant cliffs - believe me,
 O posterity - he was teaching songs there,
 and the Nymphs were learning them, and all
 the goat-footed Satyrs with pointed ears.
Evoe ! My mind fills with fresh fear, my heart
 filled with Bacchus, is troubled, and violently
 rejoices. *Evoe!* Spare me, Liber,
 dreaded for your mighty *thyrsus*, spare me.
 It's right to sing of the wilful Bacchantes,
 the fountain of wine, and the rivers of milk,
 to sing of the honey that's welling,
 and sliding down from the hollow tree-trunks:
 It's right to sing of your bride turned goddess, your
 Ariadne, crowned among stars: the palace
 of Pentheus, shattered in ruins,
 and the ending of Thracian Lycurgus.
 You direct the streams, and the barbarous sea,
 and on distant summits, you drunkenly tie
 the hair of the Bistonian women,
 with harmless knots made of venomous snakes.
 When the impious army of Giants tried
 to climb through the sky to Jupiter's kingdom,
 you hurled back Rhoetus, with the claws
 and teeth of the terrifying lion.
 Though you're said to be more suited to dancing,
 laughter, and games, and not equipped to suffer
 the fighting, nevertheless you shared
 the thick of battle as well as the peace.
 Cerberus saw you, unharmed, and adorned
 with your golden horn, and, stroking you gently,
 with his tail, as you departed, licked
 your ankles and feet with his triple tongue.

Bacchum in remotis carmina rupibus
 vidi docentem, credite posteri,
 Nymphasque discentis et auris
 capripedum Satyrorum acutas. 5
 euhoe, recenti mens trepidat metu
 plenoque Bacchi pectore turbidum
 laetatur, euhoe, parce Liber,
 parce gravi metuende thyrso.
 fas pervicacis est mihi Thyiadas 10
 vinique fontem lactis et uberes
 cantare rivos atque truncis
 lapsa cavis iterare mella,
 fas et beatae coniugis additum
 stellis honorem tectaque Penthei 15
 disiecta non leni ruina
 Thracis et exitium Lycurgi.
 tu flectis amnis, tu mare barbarum,
 tu separatis uvidus in iugis
 nodo coerces viperino 20
 Bistonidum sine fraude crinis.
 tu, cum parentis regna per arduum
 cohors gigantum scanderet inopia,
 Rhoetum retorsisti leonis
 unguibus horribilique mala; 25
 quamquam choreis aptior et iocis
 ludoque dictus non sat idoneus
 pugnae ferebaris; sed idem
 pacis eras mediusque belli.
 te vidit insons Cerberus aureo 30
 cornu decorum leniter atterens
 caudam et recedentis trilingui
 ore pedes tetigitque crura.

Odes III, 25

Where are you taking me, Bacchus,
now I'm full of you? To what caves or groves,
driven,
swiftly, by new inspiration?
In what caverns will I be heard planning to set
illustrious Caesar's lasting
glory among the stars, in the councils of Jove?
I'll sing a recent achievement,
not yet sung by other lips. So does the sleepless
Bacchante, stand in amazement
on a mountain-ridge, gazing at Hebrus, at Thrace,
shining with snow, at Rhodope,
trodden by barbarous feet, even as I like
to wander gazing, at river
banks, and echoing groves. O master of Naiads,
of Bacchae owning the power
to uproot the tallest ash-trees, with their bare hands,
I'll sing nothing trivial, no
humble measure, nothing that dies. O, Lenaeus,
the danger of following a god
is sweet, wreathing my brow with green leaves of
the vine.

Quo me, Bacche, rapis tui
plenum? quae nemora aut quos agor in specus
velox mente nova? quibus
antris egregii Caesaris audiar
aeternum meditans decus 5
stellis inserere et consilio Iovis?
dicam insigne, recens, adhuc
indictum ore alio. non secus in iugis
exsomnia stupet Euhias
Hebrum prospiciens et nive candidam 10
Thracen ac pede barbaro
lustratam Rhodopen, ut mihi devio
ripas et vacuum nemus
mirari libet. o Naiadum potens
Baccharumque valentium 15
proceras manibus vertere fraxinos,
nil parvum aut humili modo,
nil mortale loquar. dulce periculum est,
o Lenaee, sequi deum
cingentem viridi tempora pampino. 20

Epistles I, poem 16, 73-9 (published c. 20 BCE)

The good and wise man will dare to say: 'Pentheus,
Lord of Thebes, what shame can you force me to suffer
And endure?' 'I'll take your goods.' My cattle you mean,
Possessions, couches, silver: do so.' 'I'll chain you, hand
And foot, and imprison you under a cruel jailor.'
'Yet, whenever I wish, the gods will set me free.'
I take it he means, 'I'll die'. Death is the final goal.

vir bonus et sapiens audebit dicere: 'Pentheu,
rector Thebarum, quid me perferre patique
indignum coges?' 'adimam bona.' 'nempe pecus, rem, 75
lectos, argentum: tollas licet.' 'in manicis et
compedibus saevo te sub custode tenebo.'
'ipse deus, simulatque volam, me solvet.' opinor,
hoc sentit 'moriar'. mors ultima linea rerum est.

Odes IV, 15 (13 BCE)

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
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,
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,
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
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.
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,
in verse, that's accompanied by Lydian flutes,
we'll sing past leaders, we'll sing of Troy,
Anchises, and the people of Venus.

Phoebus volentem proelia me loqui
victas et urbis increpuit lyra,
ne parva Tyrrhenum per aequor
vela darem. tua, Caesar, aetas
fruges et agris rettulit uberes 5
et signa nostro restituit Iovi
derepta Parthorum superbis
postibus et vacuum duellis
Ianum Quirini clausit et ordinem
rectum evaganti frena licentiae 10
iniecit emovitque culpas
et veteres revocavit artis,
per quas Latinum nomen et Italiae
crevere vires famaue et imperi
porrecta maiestas ad ortus 15
solis ab Hesperio cubili.
custode rerum Caesare non furor
civilis aut vis exiget otium,
non ira, quae procudit ensis
et miseris inimicat urbis; 20
non qui profundum Danuvium bibunt
edicta rumpent Iulia, non Getae,
non Seres infidique Persae,
non Tanain prope flumen orti;
nosque et profestis lucibus et sacris 25
inter iocosi munera Liberi
cum prole matronisque nostris
rite deos prius adprecanti
virtute functos more patrum duces
Lydis remixto carmine tibiis 30
Troiamque et Anchisen et almae
progeniem Veneris canemus.

Latin text: Klingner, ed. 1959, with translations by A. S. Kline