

BOOK II, ODE 14

Ah, Postumus, fleet-footed are the years!
 And what is Piety's imploring glance
 To Age and Death, the dauntless charioteers?

My friend, think not to buy deliverance
 With smoking centuries of hecatombs.
 It shall not profit thine inheritance.

King of the City of Unnumbered Homes,
 Who doth the monster and the brute compel,
 Where the blind darkness ever gropes and roams,

By that black, languorous stream that winds in Hell,
 Whereon the noble and the knave must face
 A common passage—wither, who can tell!—

Great Pluto, Postumus, implores thy grace!....
 Silence....Didst think those eyes, which are two stars,
 Would suffer for thy sake one tear's embrace?

Although thou locked thy portals unto Mars,
 Nor e'er bestrode,—uncurbed by bit or rein,
 Old Hadria's white horses,—'scaped the scars

Of the sword-edged sirocco, 'tis in vain.
 Fate bids that journey to Cocytus' stream,
 And Danaus' ill-famed race behold again,

And Sisyphus, damned unto toil supreme.
 Fate sunders wife and husband, wedded brass
 And miser; all and each, as in a dream.

How treacherous the treasures we amass!
 One only hath remembrance of our care,
 The hated cypress-tree. And so we pass.

Riving an hundred locks, and laying bare
 In its ripe age rich Caecuban divine,
 Purer than pontiffs quaff, a lordlier heir
 Shall paint the pavement with thy titled wine!