

Horace Ode 1.11: White Thoughts on a Winter Day
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The proverbial phrase, *carpe diem*, occurs in the culminating line of Ode 1.11. Yet despite the notoriety of the phrase, the poem contains a number of problems that have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way. What is the relation between the speaker and the addressee? Are they lovers or is it a courtship poem? What exactly has she been trying to find out from the astrologers? And why is she called Leuconoe, an opaque name unique in Horace and barely attested in Greek? Finally what role does the setting play? We learn that a violent wintry storm is raging outside, but its description seems strangely inverted with the winter wearing out the sea against the pumice cliffs rather than the sea eroding the rocks.

Scholars and commentators have offered piecemeal answers to these questions, but I believe that a careful rereading of the poem can provide solutions that add up, illuminate, and reinforce one another and thereby give a coherent interpretation to this iconic expression of Horatian wisdom.