

CATULLUS

I

This sweet book, smoothed with pumice-stone, brand-new –
Whom shall I give it to? Cornelius, you!
You thought my trifles worth a read back then,
When you, the first of all Italian men,
Wrote in three volumes our whole history,
A work of intellect and industry.
For what it's worth, please take it. May it stay,
O virgin Muse, and last beyond our day.

II

O sparrow, who's my lady love's delight,
With whom she plays, holds in her lap, who'll bite
Her proffered finger sharply, when I too
With bright desire would play with something you
Take pleasure in that you may lesser grieve
And soothe your heavy passion, I believe,
I would, as she, enjoy your company
And mitigate my wretched misery.

III

Desires, Passions, lovelorn men, all weep:
My girl's sweet joy now sleeps his endless sleep.

She loved him better than her very eyes,
For, honey-sweet, that bird could recognize
His mistress and his mother equally.
He wouldn't wander from her lap, though he
Hopped to and fro, forever chirruping
To her alone. But now he's travelling
That darkling path whence none returns. On you
I lay a curse, dark, evil Orcus, who
Devour all fair things. You took from me
A lovely sparrow! Such profligacy!
Poor sparrow! It is you who must be blamed
My sweetheart's eyes with weeping are inflamed.

IV

That boat you see, friends, claims it used to be
The fastest ever – no bark on the sea
Could rival it by oar-blades or by sail.
It braved the Adriatic's every gale
And all the islands of the Cyclades,
Famed Rhodes, Thracian Propontis' threatening seas,
Fierce Pontus' shoreline where this boat-to-be
Began existence as a burgeoning tree,
On a Cytorian incline whispering
Many a time to leaves a-rustling.
Amastrian box-tree in that region, you
Knew all this well, the boat says, and still do.
From birth, she says, upon your peak she stood
And in your sea she dipped her oars of wood,
Then bore her master through many wild seas,

Whether from left or right she braved each breeze.
Which sail the wind assailed she did not care;
The maritime gods never heard one prayer
When she arrived from foreign seas at last
To this clear lake. All this was in the past, 20
However. Castor, Pollux, aged now,
She hides away and offers you her vow.

V

Lesbia, let's live and love and estimate
Old greybeards' gossip at a paltry rate.
Suns set and rise, we have the briefest light
And then we sleep through one perpetual night.
Kiss me a thousand times, a hundred more,
A second thousand, then one more five score.
Then, many thousands later, lest we know
The sum, we will into confusion throw
Our calculations. Let no foe espy
The number and give us the evil eye. 10

VI

If not for her boorish simplicity,
You'd hunger, Flavius, to speak to me
About your girl – you just could not stay mum.
But I am sure that you're in love with some
Unhealthy creature and you're full of shame.
Your bedroom's wreaths and Syrian scents proclaim,
Though you are silent, that you don't repose

Alone. The pillow, creased on both sides, shows
That, too, as does the squeaking, quivering
And wandering bed. No point in smothering
The details of your sexual action. You'd
Not show your knackered thighs if something rude
Was not occurring there. What you've to say,
Whether it's good or bad, tell me, I pray.
For to the heavens I must now rehearse
You and your love in my vivacious verse.

10

VII

How many kisses you require to know,
Lesbia, will be enough and more than so:
As many as upon the Libyan strand
In serpe-rich Cyrene grains of sand
Are seen between Jove's sweltering-hot shrine
And aged Battus' tomb and stars that shine
On quiet nights and watch the secrecy
Of love affairs. That much for you and me,
Mad for your love, suffices – and to spare.
With numbers such as those we may beware
Of busybodies who can't count that high
And thus my not give us the evil eye.

VIII

Catullus, stop this nonsense, realize
You're done for. Once the sun up in the skies
Shone brightly for you when you would pursue

Interminably her more loved by you
Than any other girl. We had such fun,
Desired by both of us, and then the sun
Shone truly on you. Now she's changed: don't show
Weakness to her – when she flees, do not go
After her, do not live in misery.
Be firm, persevere, have tenacity. 10
Goodbye, sweetheart. I show my colours now –
You do not want me and, therefore, I vow
Not to pursue you. But you'll grieve, unsought.
What does life hold now for you, who are fraught
With woe? Who'll call on you? Who'll flatter you
About your looks? Whom will you love, and who
Will folk say is your beau? Whom will you kiss
With love-bites? Hold on, man, enough of this.

IX

Veranius, of all my friends most dear
By millions, have you arrived back here,
Home to your loving brothers and your old
Dear mother? Yes! Such joyful news I'm told!
I'll visit you, now safely back, and then
I'll hear your tale of places, deeds of men
And tribes – such is your wont – and I shall take
You by the neck and kisses I shall make
On your sweet face an eyes. I'm at the peak
Of joy. What greater pleasure could I seek? 10

X

Out of the forum, while I'd time to spare,
By my friend Varus I was brought to where
His girlfriend was – I reckoned on the spot
She was a lady of the night, though not
At all unlovely. When we had arrived
We chatted on – of how Bithynia thrived
And how I may have profited thereby.
I answered her (and this was not a lie)
The natives, praetors, cohort could not see
An increase in their income, notably
Because their cocksman praetor doesn't care
A fig for the cohort. "But over there,"
You said, "the local product, litter-men –
You surely must have bought a few." Well, then,
To seem especially lucky to the lass,
I said, "Things did not come to such a pass
That I could not acquire a band of eight
Upstanding men." In fact, truth to relate,
I had not one man either here or there
To tote the broken leg of some old chair.
Whorelike, she said, "Lend me one. I'd be gone
To Serapis." I said to her, "Hold on,
My saying that I had those men just now –
Cinna, my friend, *he* had them! Anyhow
what does it matter whether it's I or he?
I use them, though I have none. Honestly,
You're dull and irksome, making it too hard
Ever to let a man let down his guard."

10

20

Furius and Aurelius, both my friends,
Whether I travel to the very ends
Of India where resounds the eastern sea
Far and resonantly,

To Caspian- or sensuous Arab-land,
The Sagae or the archer-Parthian strand
Or where the river Nile's seven estuaries
Colour all the seas,

Or roam the lofty Alps or go to see
The sites that house great Caesar's statuary
Or Gaul's horrendous Rhine or to explore
Beyond far Britain's shore,

10

Whatever it is the will of the gods will bring,
Prepare to venture now on anything
And tell my girlfriend this (though brief, the news
Is hardly what she'd choose

To hear). Let her romp with her randy men
And kiss and clasp all thirty (well, times ten!),
Of whom she loves none truly, though she'll break
Their bollocks till they ache,

20

Nor look back on my love, as previously –
She killed it, like a flower upon the lea
Which, having thrived upon the margins, now

Is murdered by the plough.

XII

Asinus, it's not very nice to make
Such use of your left hand. Napkins you take
From heedless diners. Do you think that's clever?
It's not, fool: it's as mean and low as ever
One sees. You think not? Believe Pollio,
Your brother, then, who'd wish so far to go
As pay a talent that your thefts might be
Undone. A lad chock-full of wit is he.
Expect from me three hundred lines of verse
Or give me back my napkin. Which is worse?
The napkin's loss in value's not severe
But of my comrade it's a souvenir.
Fabullus and Veranius sent to me
Napkins from Spain, of finest quality,
Woven in Saetabis, and I must do
Honour to them as I do to those two.

10

XIII

Fabullus, in a few days you will dine
In style *chez moi*, god willing, if the wine,
Good food, wit, laughter and the company
Of pretty girls you'll bring. Believe you me,
If you do that, my witty friend, you'll dine
In style; I must confess this purse of mine
Is full of cobwebs. You will have, in lieu,

Pure love or something sweeter. I'll give you
Unguent that all the Loves and Cupids gave
My girlfriend. Now, Fabullus, you will crave 10
The gods, when you have had a whiff of those,
To make of your entire frame one nose!

XIV

Did I not love you more than my own eyes,
My darling Calvus, I would then despise
You like Vatinius does for this that you
Sent to me as a gift. What did I do
Or say to earn such dreadful poetry
To kill me? May the gods send misery
To the client who sent such foul stuff to you.
But if, as I suspect, this present, new
And rare, has come from that grammarian
Sulla, I am not an unhappy man – 10
No, that's just fine because it's not in vain
That you have laboured. Great gods, a profane
And wretched book! You sent it me, you'll say,
That I might die right then. O splendid day!
The Saturnalia! You cannot fight
This rap, old man. Tomorrow, at first light,
I'll scurry to the libraries' stacks and then
I'll gather all who held a poisonous pen –
Aquini, Caesii, Suffenus. I'll
Requite you for this suffering. Meanwhile 20
Farewell! Back whence you came unluckily!
Our age's plague with your foul poetry!

XV

My love and loved ones I commend to you,
Aurelius, and a modest favour, too,
I ask – if you have craved something stain-free
At all, please guard my boyfriend – modestly.
I don't mean from the mob (I have no fear
Of them, who on our thoroughfares go here
And there on their own business). No it's you
That I am wary of - your penis, too,
That's dangerous to lads both good and ill.
Well, give it free range where and how you will, 10
But asking you to spare just this one lad
I think is only fair. But if a bad
And senseless mind drives you to perfidy
And makes you fill his head with treachery,
Well then, I pity you your wretched fate,
For as the city gazes your back-gate
And legs will be spread out and into you
Radishes will be stuck – and mullets, too.

XVI

I'll fuck you in the ass, Aurelius,
You queer, and you, too, poofy Furius!
You think that I'm immodest since my verse
Is racy. Pious bards should be no worse
Than is their poetry. Their verses need
Not be so chaste, however, for, indeed,

They have both charm and wit, even if they
Are racy and lack modesty and may
Incite lust, not in boys but hairy men
Who cannot move their stiff thighs. Alright then, 10
Since kisses flourish in my poetry
Do you think I lack masculinity?

XVII

Cologna, wanting a long bridge to frisk
Upon, prepared to dance but for the risk
This wretched span with spindly legs affords,
Standing upon reconstituted boards
(It may well fall into the swamp below),
May you have that fine bridge you wanted so
On which the rites of Salisubsalus
Would hold. But in return hilarious
Laughter you must provide – I wish to send
A fellow-citizen end-over-end 10
Headlong down from it into the mud. But see
The lake's at its greatest profundity,
And blackest, where he is. The man's so dense,
Without a two-year-old child's commonsense,
Asleep in Daddy's dandling arms. Now he
Married a young, young maid, whose delicacy
Is like a tender kid's – she needs more care
Than do the blackest wine-grapes anywhere.
He doesn't give a toss, though, won't restrain
Her from her playing but gives her free rein. 20
To meet the situation he'll not rise –

As, felled by a Ligurian axe, a poplar lies
In a ditch, his feelings are as if the lass
Were just not there. He's such a stupid ass –
Sees nothing, nothing hears. He's not aware
Of who he is, or *whether*! That's my care –
To toss him from your bridge, to see if he,
This dull old fart, can from his lethargy
Be roused, his spineless mind left in the goo
As a mule leaves in the depth his iron shoe.

30

XXI

Father of appetites, Aurelius,
Not only of the ones now here with us
But all the ones that were, are or will be,
You wish to screw my love. Not secretly:
You're with him, joke with him, cling to him, while
You try out every trick. In vain: for I'll
Strike you, before you snare him, and then screw
You first. I would be mum if only you
Had a full belly. But what makes me sad
Is that hunger and thirst will plague my lad.
So stop it while you're still unscathed, my friend,
Or else I'll have you buggered in the end.

10

XXII

Varus, Suffenus, whom you know so well,
Has wit and perfect manners, quite the swell.
The same man writes so much more poetry

Than any other bard. I think that he
Has some ten thousand lines or more, each one
Penned out in full, not, as is often done,
Written on scraps: fine paper, ties of red,
New rolls, new bosses, too, all ruled with lead
And smoothed with pumice. When you read these reams,
The smart and well-bred man I spoke of seems, 10
At second viewing, as nothing other than
Someone who digs in ditches or a man
Who tends goats. He's so changed and so absurd!
How to account for this? He we just heard
At table treating us to drollery
Or showing even more dexterity
Is clumsier than the clumsiest country bore
When touching poetry, though never more
Happy when writing it. He's rapturous,
Self-satisfied. We're all deluded thus, 20
However. A Suffenus we may find
In one thing or another. Every mind
Is somewhat fooled. Some section of the pack
We cannot see suspended on our back.

XXIII

Furius, you have no servant, have no coffer –
No bug, no spider, no fire is on offer –
Yet have a father and stepmother, too,
Whose teeth would bite even on flint. Well, you
Are, with your father, living a fine life
Together with your father's stringy wife.

No wonder: you're all well, it must be said,
With fine digestion and nothing to dread –
Fires, your home collapsing, none who'll do
You mischief, nobody to poison you, 10
Nor other risks. Your bodies, though, possess
A dryness drier than a bone, no less
(Or even more) in hunger, heat and cold.
How could you not be well, truth to be told?
You do not sweat and you're saliva-free –
No phlegm, no foully running nose. And see
An extra cleanliness – in one year's span
You shit but ten times, your arse cleaner than
A salt-cellar, and one discovers, if
One rubs or squeezes it, it is more stiff 20
Than pebbles or horse-beans. One can't get stains
Upon one's fingers thus. These splendid gains
Don't brush off, Furius, don't think that they
Are insignificant, and do not pray
For five score sesterces, as is your wont.
Your blessedness is quite enough, so don't.

XXIV

O little flower of the Juventii,
Both those that have been through antiquity
And future ones as well as those we know,
I would have much preferred you to bestow
The riches of Midas upon that man
Who has no slave or cashbox rather than
Accept his love. "How so? The man's urbane,"

You'll say, I grant he is but then again
He has no slave or cashbox, though he be
Urbane. Discount this as exceedingly
As you may please: I tell you, all the same,
He has no slave or cashbox to his name.

10

XXV

Softer than rabbit's fur, Thallus, you queer,
Or than the down of goose or tip of ear
Or cobweb or an old man's drooping thing,
And yet, as well, Thallus, more ravening
Than a sweeping storm when swelling waves are shown
By the divine mother, that cloak I own
That you have pounced on – give it back, daft man,
Saetaban napkins and Bithynian
Tablets as well, that you keep openly
As if they were heirlooms. Give them to me!
Open your claws! Or else each downy hip
And pretty, tender hand shall feel the whip,
Uglily branded, and you find that you
Toss all about (something you rarely do)
Just like a small boat in the mighty sea
As winds rage round about it violently.

10

XXVI

Furius, your little house does not face east,
West, north or south but fifteen grand at least
(Well, fifteen two, in fact) in rent. Uh oh,

A horrible and pestilential blow!

XXVII

Hey, serving-boy, bring me some extra dry
Vintage Falernian, as ordered by
Postumia, revel-mistress, who's more tight
Than is the tightest grape. Go where you might,
Water, wine's foe. Go, seek a sober man.
This is the pure, the pure Thyonian.

XXVIII

You subalterns of Piso, needy men,
With light and handy gear, how are you, then,
Fabullus and Veranius, you two
Fine fellows? Surely it's enough that you
Have for so long endured hunger and cold
With that scapegrace. Do your accounts not hold
Some little gain at least, as mine have done?
I served that praetor and I entered one
Small gain = "O Memmius, you buggered me
With your whole rod firmly and gradually
As I lay on my back." You were, I guess,
In such a case yourselves, for with no less
A cock you, too, were stuffed. Go, then, pursue
Some powerful friends! May curses follow you
From goddesses and gods! You're a disgrace
To those two men, the founders of our race.

XXIX

Who can see this and suffer it were he
Not full of shame and great voracity,
A gambler, too, that what that long-haired land,
Transalpine Gaul, and Britain had in hand
At one time now Mamurra has? This sight
You'll see and suffer, Roman catamite?
Shall he, a man of bold effrontery,
Saunter through every bedroom, as though he
Were a white dove or Adonis? So, this sight
You'll see and suffer, Roman catamite? 10
You're full of shame and great voracity,
And you're a gambler. Was it for this pile
Of riches that to that most western isle
You went, unique commander? So that you
With that great prick of yours could gallop through
Some twenty million sesterces? Tell me,
What else but wilful liberality
Is what you've done? Have you cleaned out too few?
Your patrimony first you smashed, then you 20
Went through the booty the Pontic campaign
Provided, then the gains that came from Spain,
Where the gold-bearing Tagus flows. Now, too,
One fears for Gaul and Britain. Why do you
Indulge this creep? What other things can he
Do but exhaust a wealthy legacy?
The city's wealthiest man, a son- and dad-
In-law, have you thereby lost all you had?

XXX

Your loving friends endure your treachery
Of negligence. Will you not pity me –
Your little pal – Suffenus? You're severe
To dupe and fool me. Men's sins are not dear
In the gods' eyes. You leave me to my woe.
What must men do? To whom are they to go
For loyalty? You forced me to concede
My soul and made me fall in love (indeed
You did!) as though my every single day
Would turn out fine. But then you backed away - 10
Into the winds and airy clouds you threw
All you had said and done. Even if you
Forget, the gods do not, nor Loyalty –
Thus you may rue what you have done to me.

XXXI

Gem of peninsulas – islands as well –
My Sirmio, all which in Ocean's swell
And stagnant pools each water god conveys.
How truly happy am I when I gaze
On you. I hardly can believe I've passed
Bithynia and Thynia, at last
To see you well. What's a more pleasant thing
Than being free of troubles, settling
One's mind, then from a painful odyssey
Returning to one's dwelling wearily 10
And sleeping in a bed you longed for so?

Alone, that's worth such pains. Fair Sirmio,
Hail, share your master's joy and, Lydian lake,
Laugh! Make as much laughter as you can make!

XXXII

My Ipsithilla, darling girl, bid me
Come to your house at noon. If you agree,
Say, too, that you will let nobody hide
Your threshold's sign, and don't you go outside
But stay in and get ready for a screw –
No, nine of them non-stop! If this you'd do,
Bid me come pronto. Having had my fill
Of lunch, I'm lying on my back and feel
That soon through both my tunic and my cloak
Some part of my anatomy will poke.

10

XXXIII

Best clothes-thief at the baths, Vibennius,
And you, his son, a man most lecherous
(The one has got a dirtier right hand, though
His son's ass is more greedy). Off you go,
To exile in some dismal land. The one
Is known through all the world for theft, the son
Is powerless to sell his hairy bum
On any market for the smallest sum.

XXXIV

Our untouched lads' and maidens' loyalty
Is to Diana. Let this company
Sing her. Great goddess, o Latonian,
And child of the almighty Olympian,
Jove, you were of your mother born beside
The olive-tree of Delos to preside
Over the mountains and the woods so lush,
The roaring rivers and the hidden brush.
Lucina you were named that you might be
An aid to women in the misery
Of childbirth. You're called Trivia – Luna, too,
Whose borrowed light you show. O goddess, you
Metre out the year upon each monthly track
And every farmer's rustic home you pack
With fine fruits. Well, however you'd be addressed –
Whatever name you choose – thereby be blessed,
And Romulus's race, as formerly,
Take into your protection favourably.

10

XXXV

Inform the gentle bard Caecilius
My friend to seek Verona, papyrus,
Leaving New Comum and the Larian shore.
This friend has thoughts he'd like him to explore.
If he is wise, he'll gobble up the track,
Though a fair girl will beg him to come back
A thousand times. "Stay," she will say and hold
Her arms about his neck. Truth to be told,
She madly dotes, for since her scrutiny

Of his unfinished poem on Cybele, 10
Her very core has burned. Girl, you have more
Talent than Sappho ever had. Therefore
I pardon you. Caecilius' poetry
On the Great Mother's started splendidly.

XXXVI

Volusius' annals, shitty poetry,
Please pay the vow of my sweetheart, for she
To all the Holy Loves swore that, if I
Returned to her, desisting letting fly
My savage satires, she would take the shit
The world's worst poet wrote. Committing it
To Vulcan's flames with some unhappy tree.
The naughty girl thought that this vow would be
Such fun. O sea-born one, whose shrines are found
In holy Ida and the open ground 10
Of Chutris, and Ancona and the land
Of Amathus and reedy Cnidos and
Golgo, also Durrachium-by-the-Sea,
The inn of Hadria, do let it be
Entered and paid for, if it does not grate
Upon the senses. Now accept your fate -
The fire! You're full of buffoonery,
Volusius' Annals, shitty poetry.

XXXVII

Salacious inn, and those who drink with me,

From the behatted Brothers' sanctuary
 Ninth pillar, do you think that you alone
 Have cocks, that only you may plunge your bone
 In every girl and think the others are
 Just goats? Or since you sit there at the bar,
 One or two hundred rash and foolish men,
 Do you think I can't bugger there and then
 Two hundred? Think away: I'm going to scrawl
 Huge penises upon this inn's front wall. 10
 My girl, who's left me, though I loved her more
 Than any other has been loved before,
 For whom I fought great fights, has settled there.
 You men of high prosperity all bear
 Great love for her, and, though it's a disgrace,
 Those lechers in the byways, rude and base –
 Chief long-haired fop, Egnatius especially,
 Rabbity Celtiberia's progeny,
 A bushy-bearded gent whose dentifrice,
 Used every day, consists of Spanish piss. 20

XXXVIII

O Cornificius, your loving friend
 Catullus isn't well, Heaven forbend!
 He suffers and it's getting worse each day,
 Each hour. Have you had something to say
 Of comfort – quite the easiest thing to do,
 Requiring little? I'm incensed with you.
 Does my dear friend behave like that with me?
 Just offer me a little sympathy –

Whatever you can spare – and show me, please,
Tears sadder than those of Simonides.

XXXIX

Egnatius has white teeth and constantly
He beams. At court a lawyer's oratory
Arouses tears – he beams. When people mourn
A pious only son while, all forlorn,
The mother weeps, he beams. No matter where
He is or what he's doing, he'll be there –
Beaming! This sickness, in my estimation,
Is not polite and lacks sophistication.
Dear sir, let me advise you. If you were
A Roman, Sabine or one from Tibur, 10
A fat Etruscan or stout Umbrian,
Or a dark-skinned, toothy Lanuvian,
A Gaul like me or anyone else who
Is fussy with his teeth, it wouldn't do
Always to beam. Nothing's more out of place
Than humour out of place. Now look, *your* race
Is Spanish and in Spain the rule is this:
Each morning to employ last evening's piss
To scour one's teeth and gums. The more that they
Seem clean, the more piss one has drunk, they'll say. 20

XL

What is this passion, quite delirious,
That's sent you headlong, wretched Ravidus,

Into my iambs? And what god was that,
So ill-invoked, who plans a pointless spat?
Or is it that you'd be talk of the town?
What do you want? Would you acquire renown
At any price? You will – cuckolding me
Will earn for you a lengthy penalty.

XLI

That shagged-out Ameana asks of me
A cool ten grand – a foul-nosed bitch is she,
The girl of the bankrupt of Formiae.
Now, you who care for her, her kinsmen, hie
To friends and doctors: she's out of her head!
Don't ask her glass what of her should be said.

XLII

Hendecasyllables, come, every one.
That filthy bitch thinks she's having fun
With me and won't return my verse. It's past
Belief. I'll hound her every move and blast
Her with demands. "Who is she?" you will say.
It's she you look at with her brash sashay
And bawdy laugh like some comedienne
And sounding like a Gallic pup. Well then,
Surround her, badger her. "You dirty whore,
Give back my verse, my verse I say once more!"
You just don't care? You filthy piece of shit,
You – something worse if I could think of it.

But that won't work. If nothing else will do,
Let's from those brazen, dog-like features screw
A blush. Yell louder still: "You filthy whore,
Give back my verse, my verse I say once more!"
No good – she's adamant. Well, change your plan
And see if you make better progress than
You did before: "Return that poetry,
O lady of the highest modesty."

20

XLIII

Hello, girl – you don't have the smallest nose
In all the world, trim ankles, dark eyes. Those
Fingers of yours are short, your mouth's not dry,
O girl of the bankrupt of Formiae.
Your speaking voice does not possess the air
Of class. And does the province think you're fair
And match you with my Lesbia? O see
How ludicrous is our society!

XLIV

My farm, whether Sabine or Tiburtine
(Those who don't love annoying me incline
Themselves to claim the latter, those who do
Say you are Sabine) – well, then, whether you
Are Sabine or Tiburtine, thoroughly
At your abode in the locality
Between Rome and the countryside, I had
A happy time, recovering from a bad

Cough, which I got not undeservedly
While seeking sumptuous feasts. I long to be 10
Invited as a guest of Sestius
But read his speech accusing Antius,
Who sought a diplomatic settlement,
Whose tone was poisonous and pestilent.
My frigid cold and frequent cough shook me,
As I fled to your breast, incessantly.
With rest and nettles I revived. And thus,
Because in no way are you rancorous
For my mistake, much thanks! If I should read
His dreadful works again, I'll never plead 20
To stop a cold and cough from maddening,
Not me, but Sestius for summoning
Me as a boon-companion *chez lui*
When I have just read such atrocity.

XLV

Holding his darling Acme on his knee,
Septimius said, "I love you desperately,
Sweet Acme, and I always will love you
Just as the most distracted lovers do.
If I do not love you, then let me face,
Alone, a ravening lion in some place
Like Libya or India, a land
Of burning sun." Then Love, on the right hand
And then the left, sneezed his acknowledgment.
But Acme said, while dreamily she bent 10
Her head and those red lips kissed her sweet boy

Upon his love-drunk eyes, "My lovely joy,
Septimius, as we may serve this same
One master every day, a greater flame,
And keener, burns in my soft marrow." Then
Love sneezed upon the right and then again
The left in his approval. Happily
These lovers' love continued mutually.
Septimius, that poor, love-maddened man,
Desires his lovely Acme rather than
A Syrian or a Briton: Acme, too,
Will revel in her lover, ever true.
Two happier people has one ever seen?
What more auspicious love has there yet been?

20

XLVI

Now spring brings warmth back, forcing chill to fly,
And now the fury of the mid-March sky
Is still: the West Wind's breezes mellowly
Now blow. The Phrygian land is history,
And warm Nicaea. O that I might go
To Asia's splendid cities. I am so
Aflutter to be off. Goodbye, my sweet
Companions. We together left our home –
Now diverse paths will lead us as we roam.

10

XLVII

Socraton and Porcus, you who snitch
For Piso, you who have a burning itch

For thieving, does that uncut Priapus
Prefer you to my buddies Fabullus
And Veraniolus? You dine sumptuously
With grand, expensive banquets endlessly
While at street-corners my friends set up station
That they might angle for an invitation.

XLVIII

Juventius, your honeyed eyes I'd kiss,
If I were sanctioned such eternal bliss,
Three thousand times and never think that I'd
Be till eternity quite satisfied,
Not even if the harvest we would gain
Were thicker than the ripening ears of grain.

XLIX

Most learned of the race of Romulus,
Both past and present, Marcus Tullius
(And future), take these hearty thanks from me,
The worst of all who practise poetry,
The worst indeed and of that self-same grade
As you when working in the legal trade.

L

Licinius, we had great fun last night
With my notebooks – we'd planned risqué delight:

Each scribbled little verses while we played
With various metric forms. Such sport we made
Over our wine! I came back home on fire
With gaiety and humour – no desire
For food had I and sleep was far away;
I tossed and turned as on my bed I lay
In boundless ecstasy, longing to see
Daylight that I might seek your company
And talk with you. My limbs were still half-dead
As wearily I lay there on my bed
When I composed a poem for you, which may
Give you some evidence of my dismay.
Do not be rash, I beg you, dearest friend,
And do not spurn my prayers lest, in the end
Nemesis demands from you some penalty:
She's violent – beware such injury!

10

LI

That man is godlike in my thinking or,
If it is right to say, superior
To the gods, who sits before you and can view
Your face and hear that charming laugh that you
Possess. Of all my senses I'm bereft,
For since I've looked on you nothing is left,
My Lesbica. My tongue can't move, and through
My limbs a subtle flame runs. My ears, too,
Resound with ringing, and a two-fold night
Quenches my eyes. This torpor is a blight,

10

Catullus: you indulge this idleness
And revel too much in its wantonness.
In former times this idleness has brought
Both kings and rich communities to nought.

LII

What's wrong, Catullus? Just have done with it
And die. When scabby Nonnius can sit
In a curule chair and be a magistrate
And that Vatinius can fabricate
While in his consulship, there's nothing fit.
What's wrong, Catullus? Just have done with it.

LIII

Just now I laughed at someone in the mob –
Calvus, my friend, had done a splendid job
Outlining all the charges he had brought
Against Vatinius. This man was caught
Up in appreciation. Hands up high,
He shouted, "What an eloquent little guy!"

LIV

Otho's small head and, peasant Erius,
Your half-washed legs and Libo's effortless
And subtle farts I wish you'd hate (or some
Of them), you and Sufficius who's come
Back to his youth. You leader of all men,

My innocent verse will irk you once again.

LV

If it won't cause offence to you, I pray,
Where is the dark spot where you hide away?
In the Circus, and the lesser Campus, too,
In all the bookstores I looked out for you,
And at high Jupiter's sacred shrine. My friend,
In Pompey's portico I'd apprehend
The women, who looked back quite innocently.
Still would I badger them. "Bad girls, give me
Camerius." Exposing both her breasts,
One said, "Here in my rosy tits he rests."
This is a Herculean task for me;
My friend, you hide yourself disdainfully.
Just tell me where you'll be. Tell me, be bold
And show yourself. Do milky breasts now hold
You? If you stay your tongue, you'll throw away
All of the joys of love. Venus is gay
When chat abounds. If I may still have some
Division of your love, well, then, stay mum.

10

LVI

O Cato, what a very silly thing,
Worth your attention, then your cackling.
Laugh, Cato, just as much as you love me.
O what preposterous absurdity!
Just now I found a young boy getting laid

With a girl. Well, with my rigid cock I made
An attack upon him in lieu of a spear
(Dione, may this please your listening ear).

LVII

Mamurra and Caesar, poofers both, agree
So well together. That can hardly be
Surprising. There are filthy stains, the one
So like the other – one a Formian
And one a Roman – both so deeply merged
Inside them that they never can be purged.
Diseased twins! Semi-skilled, they love to be
Upon one bed, each in adultery
As greedy as his twin. Rivals, they share
Young girls. Yes, they are quite a perfect pair!

10

LVIII

My Lesbia I loved more passionately,
O Caelius, than my whole family
And myself, too. In the crossroads and in
The streets she now sucks off great Remus' kin.

LVIIIb

Though like the Cretan sentinel I'd be
Cast all in bronze, though I should loftily
Soar through the air like flying Pegasus,
Or be Ladas or wing-footed Perseus

Or else be Rhesus' swift and snow-white pair,
Helped by the speedy breezes of the air
And feather-footed birds, harnessed for me,
Camerius, yet all the same I'd be
Bone-weary and, with frequent faintness, too,
Worn down, my friend, in my pursuit of you.

10

LIX

Bononian Rufa, wife of Menenius,
Is sucking on the cock of Rufulus.
You've often seen her in some burial-ground
Grasping some funeral meat that she has found
Upon the pyre. There was a loaf of bread
That rolled out of the fire and off she fled
To salvage it. A beating then she had
From the undertakers' half-shaved serving-lad.

LX

Did a Libyan mountain-lioness bear you
Or barking Scylla in the sea? You're too
Monstrous and harsh that you can so dismiss
A desperate suppliant's plea, you cruel miss.

LXI

Urania's progeny, you who hold sway
On the Heliconian hill and bear away
And offer to the groom his tender maid,

O Hymenaeus! Let your brows be laid
With flowers of the fragrant marjoram.
Put on your marriage-veil and hither come
In rapture, wearing on your snow-white feet
The yellow shoe. Shake the pine-torch and beat
The ground when you awake on that great day
And resonantly many a nuptial lay 10
Sing out. Today's the wedding of those two,
Manlius and Vinia, the maiden who
Is as fair as Ida's Venus when she came
To the Phrygian judge, a maiden of good name
And omen. She is like the flowering
Myrtle from Asia which, as their plaything,
The Hamadryads feed with dew. Now flee
Thespis' Aonian caves Aganippe,
The nymph, sprays with cold water from above
And bind the bridegroom's passionate heart with love 20
As clinging ivy winds around a tree,
And call the mistress, who longs eagerly
For him, to her new residence. Come, too,
You virgin maidens (for awaiting you
Is your own day). Come, sing out tunefully
The wedding hymn so that more readily
The lord of splendid Venus, summoned here
To the office that is his may now appear,
For he's the coupler of all love that's true.
For lovers who are loved in turn, say who 30
Else should we seek or what divinity
Shall we more honour? For his progeny
The aged father calls on you for aid,

And it's for you the garments of each maid
 Are loosened and the bridegroom, in his fear,
 Is holding out for you a listening ear.
 From her mother's lap you take the blooming aid
 And in the eager youth's hands she is laid.
 Without you Venus can take no delight
 In what virtuous fame may underwrite 40
 But can if you approve. What god would dare
 To match himself with you? No wife would bear
 A child, no parent on his progeny
 Could count, but all is well if you agree.
 There is no land, lacking your sanctities,
 That could provide guards for its boundaries --
 It could if you approve. What god would dare
 To match himself with you? Look over there!
 Open the gates! The bride is coming. See,
 The torches are all shining splendidly, 50
 Shaking their tresses. Now her noble shame
 Delays her -she would heed it. All the same,
 She weeps that she must go to him. Yet still
 Your tears, Aurunculeia, for there will
 Not be a fairer woman who has spied
 Bright day approaching from the ocean's tide
 Than you. You're like a hyacinth that stands
 In a rich man's vivid garden. Our commands
 Obey, o bride – come forth, for you delay;
 The day is dawning, so come forth, I pray, 60
 If you are willing. Hear our words and see
 The torches shake their tresses sparkingly.
 Come forth! Your spouse won't seek some paramour,

Dishonouring you, and thus abandon your
Soft bosom. No, but like a pliant vine
Looping its neighbouring trees, he will entwine
His arms about you. But the day is waning.
Come forth, o bride! What joys will he be gaining,
Your lord, in fleeting night and in full day!
The day is waning. Come, o bride, I pray.

70

Boys, raise the torches! For the veil I see
Approaching. Then sing 'Hymen' tunefully!
Let not the merry, bawdy jokes be mum
And let the bridegroom's favourite servant come
And scatter nuts among the company
Of slaves, now that his master's amity
Has left him, as he hears. Now, favourite, do
This service, for your time is past and you
Have dallied long enough with nuts. For it
Is time to serve Talasius. Favourite,

80

Go scatter nuts. You scorned each country-wife
Just recently, but now under the knife
Your cheeks must go. O scented groom, they say
That you don't really want to put away
Your fun with him. But, all the same, do so.
The things a single man's allowed we know –
A husband does not have such liberty.
You, too, o bride, make sure that you will be
Obliging to his claims lest he should go
To someone else. Your husband's dwelling - lo!
How fine and rich it is for you. Agree
To serve him until grey senility,
Shaking his trembling head, nods his assent.

90

So over the threshold give your consent
That you will move your golden feet. Come through
The polished door. The groom's awaiting you –
See! – on the Tyrian couch most eagerly.
Within his heart there burns as passionately
As burns in yours a deeper flame. So now
Let go the maid's smooth arm, lad, and allow 100
The bride to come into her husband's bed.
You honest women, who are all well-wed
To ancient husbands, set her there. Inside,
Bridegroom! For now you may, because your bride
Is in the chamber, flowery face aglow,
Just like a poppy or a daisy, though –
Gods help me! – husband, you are no less fair:
Venus does not neglect you. But beware,
The day is waning. You've not long delayed;
You're coming. My kind Venus lend you aid – 110
Your passions you do not keep locked inside
Your heart; your honest love you do not hide.
Who'd count the number of your joys, which are
So many. let him number every star
And every African dust-mote. Sport at will
And bring forth children, son, for it is ill
So old a name should lack its progeny,
Which should come from the same stock. I would see
A young Torquatus sweetly chuckling
At Daddy with his lips half-opening 120
As on his mother's lap he stretches out
His baby arms. Let no-one ever doubt
He's his. Those who don't know the family tree,

Let them, too, know. His mother's chastity
Should shine out from his face. And may the fame
Through his good mother be like that which came
From his most excellent mother Penelope
To Telemachus and still remains. Now we
Have played enough. Maids, close the gates. But you,
You honest bride and groom, live well, and do 130
Your healthy youth a favour and delight
Yourselves in sexual joy both day and night.

LXII

Young men:

Young men, it's evening. Rise! Up in the sky
The long-expected light is drawing nigh.
It's time to leave the groaning board and rise.
Now 'Hymen' will be sung. Before your eyes
The maid will come.

Young women:

Young women, do you see
The youths? Get up and greet them. Certainly
The night-star shows his Oetan fires. That's right:
They sprang up nimbly: something worth the fight
They'll sing.

Young men:

Comrades, we have no easy prize
Set out for us. The maidens memorize 10
Their parts and they don't do it fruitlessly:

For what they have is worth their memory;
No wonder, for their concentration's deep.
Our thoughts and ears we separately keep.
Then fairly we'll be beaten. Carefulness
Is loved by victory. Let's be no less
Mindful than they are. Now they will begin
To speak. We must reply.

Young women:

What fire moves in

The sky that's full of more severity,
Hesperus, than you? O such audacity 20
To take her daughter from the close embrace
Of her mother, as she clings there, and to place
The chaste maid with the youth who is on fire
For her! When cities fall what is more dire
That foes may do than this?

Young men:

O Hesperus,

What fire more welcome shines above for us?
Your fame seals wedding-vows, which, though agreed
By grooms and parents, yet may not proceed
Until we see that flame up in sky?
What means more than this gift from those on high, 30
This blessed hour?

Young women:

O comrades, Hesperus

Has taken from our company one of us.

Young men:

For when you come, the guard's always awake.

Thieves hide at night but them you overtake

When you return at dawn, o Hesperus,

Though now under the name of Eous.

Maids love to upbraid you, although they feign,

For secretly they want whom they complain

About.

Young women:

Just as a flower that we may see

Within a garden springs up secretly,

40

Unknown to cattle and unploughed and stroked

By showers, many a boy and many a maid

Desire it, but when it starts to fade,

Plucked by a soft hand, they no longer do,

Thus will a maid, untouched be precious to

Her own; when that once-chaste flower shows the stain

Upon her body, she will not remain

Lovely to boys or dear to the company

Of girls.

Young men:

As an unwedded vine may be

50

Within a bare field, never standing tall

And not producing mellow grapes at all

And bending down its tender form, its root

Pulled downward, almost meets its topmost shoot,

By men and beasts untended; should it be

In wedlock allied, though, to the elm-tree
Many men and beasts would tend that vine, just so
A maiden, while she's untouched will yet go
Untended as she ages. But when she,
When the time is ripe, is wed in unity, 60
She's dearer to her spouse and less a blight
To her own father. Maiden, do not fight
With such a husband for it is not fair,
Since you were given into this man's care
By your own father, and you must obey
Your parents. Your virginity, I say,
Is not yours only – just one third have you,
Your parents have the rest. Don't fight with two!
For they have given their powers to the gent
Who is your bridegroom – and his settlement. 70

LXIII

Attis, fast sailing over the deep sea,
Came to the Phrygian woodland eagerly
And swiftly, entering the forest-crowned,
Dark haunts of the goddess, while all around
His confused mind a goading madness grew.
With a sharp flint he cast his testicles to
The ground. Once he had felt his manhood gone
Forever, the fresh blood now trickling on
The ground, with snow-white hands the tambourine
He seized – the tambourine which serves the scene, 10
Mother Cybele, of your mysteries. Then he
To his companions started ecstatically

To sing, soft fingers jiggling the skin,
 The hollow ox-skin: "Gallic priests, begin!
 Off to the mountain woods of Cybele!
 Come, all you wandering sheep, in unity,
 Who serve Dindymus' lady! You all sought
 An exile's home and listened as I taught
 My rule and led you, suffering fierce sea,
 Swift brine; in total animosity 20
 To love, you sacrificed your manhoods. Bring
 Your lady cheer with your swift wandering.
 Come, no delay! Together go with me
 To Cybebe's Phrygian woodland home and see
 The cymbals clash, the drums re-echoing,
 The flautist making his curved reed to sing
 With a deep note. The ivied Maenads shout
 Ecstatically and toss their heads about,
 Keeping their sacred rites, where frequently
 The goddess's meandering company 30
 Scurry about. It's seemly and it's right
 To hasten our wild dances on this site."
 As s/he sang to her comrades, suddenly
 The converts ululated tremulously.
 The hollow cymbals clashed and the light drum
 Re-echoed as the chorus sped to come
 To leafy Ida. Attis, gasping, led
 Them to the shady groves as on he sped,
 Beating the drum, as heifers spurn the weight
 Of yokes while yet unbroken. With fast gait 40
 The priests dog their swift leader. Wearily
 They reach Cybebe and, with lethargy

Overcome, forgoing food, they take their rest,
Their eyes with deep sleep droopingly oppressed
And their delirious madness thrust away
By tender slumber. But at break of day
When the golden Sun with flashing eyes traversed
Clear sky, firm land and wild sea and dispersed
Night's gloom with his fresh steeds as on they sped,
Then Sleep woke Attis and rapidly fled. 50

The goddess Pasithea took him to
Her fluttering bosom while Attis went through
His deeds within his mind now he was free
Through Sleep from rabid madness and could see
Clearly what he had lost and in what place
He was; his surging mind caused him to race
Back to the waves and, seeing the mighty sea,
He wept and said: "You who created me,
Who bore me, native land, as runaway
Slaves leave their masters, I – o wretched day! – 60

Left you and went to Ida's woods to dwell
Among the snows and frozen lairs of fell
Wild beasts. Where do I think, native land,
You are? I long to gaze on you and stand
Within your borders while my mind is free,
Though briefly, from this wild insanity.
Shall I be borne to those far woods? Shall I
Far from possessions, friends and parents lie?
Be stranger to the market? Never come
Back to the wrestling-ground, gymnasium, 70
Race-course? O what human have I not been?
I've been a boy, woman and, in between,

A young man and a youth. I must complain –
 O my sad heart! -again and yet again,
 Wretch that I am. O I have been the prize
 Of the oiled wrestlers, in all men's eyes
 The flower of the gymnasium, my door
 Frequently visited, the threshold's floor
 Still warm, my house with garlands wreathed, when I
 Arose at dawn. What name should I go by? 80
 The gods' handmaid? The slave of Cybele?
 Or a mere part of myself shall I be?
 A barren man? A Maenad? Shall I go
 To icy, verdant Ida, steeped in snow?
 In Phrygia's heights with the wood-haunting doe,
 The forest-ranging boar? Now, full of woe,
 I rue my deed. When this new message he,
 With rosy lips, gave the gods, Cybele
 Unyoked her lions and to the left-hand
 Foe of the flock she sent out her command: 90
 "Go, fierce one, and let madness hunt him so
 That to my forest-haunts insanity's blow
 May bring him. He desires to be too free
 And wishes to avoid my sovereignty.
 Come now and lash your back with your own tail
 And feel the blows. Let bellowing prevail
 All round and wildly shake your mane of red
 Upon your brawny neck." That's what she said
 Grimly, the yoke unbending with her hand.
 The monster's courage grew at her command 100
 And fast roused him to fury. Roaringly
 He sped away, breaking the shrubbery

As on he went, and to the gleaming strand
He came, where tender Attis on the sand
Beside the marble sea he saw. A rush
He made at him, and into the wild brush
In panic Attis fled. He was to be
A handmaid ever more there. Cybele,
Great goddess and lady of Dindymus,
May all your fury be removed from us
And all our house. Others in lunacy
Harass, drive others to insanity.

110

LXIV

Pine-trees of old, born upon Pelion's peak,
Swam through Neptune's clear waterways to seek
(They say) the waves of Phasis and the land
Of Aeëtes, when a selected band
Of youths, the flower of Argive fortitude,
On their swift ship had courage to intrude
Upon the salt seas and to take away
The Colchian golden fleece. The blue waves they
Swept with their fir-wood oar-blades: the goddess
Who, high above the towns, keeps each fortress,
Made the swift bark which with light breeze would flit
And bound the piney curved keel under it.
That ship was first to test the untried sea,
Oars churning it to foam. This prodigy
The sea-Nymphs wondered at, and it was then,
And only then, those Nymphs were seen by men,
Their bodies naked – yes, their nipples, too –

10

As, rising from the foam, they came in view.
 Then Peleus burned for Thetis, it is said,
 And Thetis did not think it wrong to wed 20
 A mortal. Jupiter himself then knew
 They must be joined. Hail, god-born heroes who
 Sprang from the happiest age! You'll be addressed
 Often in my song and, Peleus, greatly blessed
 By happy marriage-torches, chiefly you,
 Who safeguard all of Thessaly, you who
 Received from Lord Jove his own love. Tell me,
 Did fairest Thetis, Nereus' progeny,
 Clasp you? Was Tethys, too, harmonious
 To this compact? And did Oceanus, 30
 Who circles all the world with sea, agree
 That you and their granddaughter should then be
 United? When that longed-for day at last
 Arrived, the whole of Thessaly amassed,
 Crowding the house. The palace was a throng
 Of joyful company. They brought along
 Their gifts, each face aglow with happiness.
 Cieros was now deserted and, no less,
 Phthiotic Tempe, every parapet
 Of Larissa, Crannon's houses, too. They met 40
 At Pharsalus and filled its homes. Now none
 Remained to till the lands, the necks upon
 The steers grew soft. The low vines were no more
 Uncluttered by curved rakes; no oxen tore
 The soil with driving share; no pruner's hook
 Thinned out the trees' shade while a rough rust took
 The abandoned ploughs. And yet as far as spread

Peleus's wealthy palace, there were shed
 Glittering gold and silver lights. A gleam
 Came from the ivory thrones; an equal beam 50
 Came from the tables' cups. The residence
 Rejoiced in all the gorgeous radiance
 Of regal gems. The royal marriage-bed's laid
 Within the centre for the goddess, made
 Of polished Indian tusk. Over the bed
 The purple with its rosy stain is spread,
 Trimmed with the shapes of ancients, cleverly
 Depicting heroes' deeds of bravery.
 There Ariadne, where the waters beat
 On Dia's shore, sees Theseus and his fleet 60
 As he sails quickly off; the insanity
 Of love she suffers and what she can see
 Cannot *believe* she sees. For now her eyes,
 Opened by treacherous sleep, herself she spies
 Left wretched on the lonely sand, while he,
 Unmindful youth, plies oars upon the sea
 And flees, leaving those vows that were in vain
 To the gusty storm. She looks out to the main,
 Does Minos' daughter, on the shoreline spread
 With weeds, so far away – her eyes were red 70
 With weeping – like the marble effigy
 Of a Bacchant, tempest-tossed with misery
 Caused by great tides of passion. With her hand
 She throws aside the delicate headband
 From her fair head, her breast now unconcealed
 By her light cloak; her smooth girdle revealed
 Her milk-white bosom, and, as everything

Fell from her frame, the waves were frolicking
 Before her feet. By then she had no care
 For her headband or cloak which floated there. 80
 No, Theseus, all her thoughts, her soul, her mind
 (Now lost) hung on you. Venus made her blind
 With mad and ceaseless grief, poor maid, and sewed
 Her breast with thorny cares, as Theseus rowed
 From Piraeus's winding shores, reaching
 The Gortynian palace of the lawless king –
 He, driven by a cruel blight, they say,
 Decided for his murdered son to pay
 A price. The Athenians used to offer up
 To the Minotaur some chosen youths to sup 90
 Upon and choice unmarried maids. Now, when
 The narrow walls by this were troubled, then
 Theseus for his dear Athens chose to give
 Himself up rather than the alternative –
 Sending doomed men to Crete. So, travelling
 In a light craft, slight breezes following,
 He reached proud Minos' splendid residence.
 Her eager eyes the regal maid cast thence
 At Theseus, while sweet scents from her chaste bed,
 Where her mother softly cuddled her, were spread, 100
 Like Eurotas's myrtles or the hues
 Of flowers, so diverse, that spring imbues.
 She did not turn her burning eyes away
 From him until within her heart there lay
 The fire she had caught and, all aflame,
 She glowed deep down within. Cupid, for shame!
 You stir up cruel madness recklessly

And mix the joys of men with misery.
 And you who over Golgi are the queen
 And hold sway in Idalium, so green, 110
 What swells did you cause in the burning core
 Of Ariadne, often sighing for
 The fair-haired stranger! What great fears did she
 Bear in her fainting heart! How frequently
 Did she grow paler than the gleam of gold
 When Theseus showed his eagerness to hold
 A contest with the savage beast to gain
 Death or a prize for valour! Though in vain
 Vowed to the gods, those gifts were sweet which she
 Offered with silent lip. Just like a tree 120
 Shaking its boughs on Taurus' topmost height –
 An oak or sweating pine-tree – cannot fight
 A vehement storm that twists it with its blast
 And tears it up. Afar it has been cast,
 Wrenched from its roots and breaking all that stood
 Before it. Now it lies prone in the wood,
 So Theseus laid the savage monster low
 As vainly to the empty breezes' blow
 It tossed its horns. Then, unharmed, he went back,
 Much praised, and, as he wandered, traced his track 130
 With the fine thread lest the untangling
 Form of the maze and its meandering
 Should baffle him. Why should I deviate,
 However, from my first theme and relate
 How she retreated from her father's view,
 Her sister's embrace, and her mother's, too,
 Who for her daughter grieved in misery

That over all Theseus' sweet love had she
Preferred: or how she sailed the foaming deep
To Dia and, after her eyes in sleep 140
Were bound, her careless husband sailed away
And left her? Hot and mad with love, they say,
She from her deepest heart would shrilly cry;
At one time would she sadly climb up high
Into the rugged mountains and would strain
Her eyes upon the vast seas; then again
She ran to meet the rippling brine as she
Lifted the delicate covering of her knee
And sadly with her last laments she cried
With chilly sobs that trickled down the side 150
Of her wet face: "So, Theseus, is it thus
That you – perfidious, perfidious! –
Took me far from my father's residence
And left me on this lonely shore and hence
Departed, quite unheeding the intent
Of the gods. Alas, are you so negligent
As to commit perjury and take that curse
Back home? Can nothing cause you to reverse
Your cruel plan? Have you no clemency
That ruthlessly you will not pity me? 160
These weren't the vows you gave me with your lure,
These weren't the hopes you bade me have. No, sure,
You vowed a joyful match, longed-for accord,
Which Heaven's winds in vain scattered abroad.
Henceforth let no maid trust the guarantee
A man may make or trust whatever he
May say. If they desire a thing and ache

To have it, they don't fear to swear or make
 Promises. But once their greed is satisfied,
 They do not fear the words with which they lied. 170
 When in the very whirl of death you tossed,
 I opted that my brother should be lost
 And I would rescue you – all this you know.
 Is it for this, then, that you wish to throw
 Me to wild beasts and birds as carrion,
 Unburied, with no earth to sprinkle on
 My corpse? Under some desert promontory
 What lioness gave birth to you? What sea
 Conceived you, spewed up from the waves? From what
 Syrtis, what ravening Scylla were you got? 180
 What waste Charybdis? Who would give such meed
 For sweet life? If you had no mind indeed
 To marry me, since you felt fearfulness
 Of your stern father's bidding, nonetheless
 You could have brought me to your home, for me
 Sweetly to serve you in pure amity,
 Washing your snow-white feet, the coverlet
 Of purple spreading on your bed. And yet
 Why should I cry in vain, distraught with woe,
 To the senseless airs that are endowed with no 190
 Feeling and can't hear or send back to me
 The message I relate? And meanwhile he
 Is tossed almost mid-sea. None may be scanned
 But I upon the waste and weedy strand.
 Thus, at my final hour, virulent
 Fortune won't let the protests that I sent
 Be heard. Almighty Jove, would Gnosian sand

Had not allowed Athenian ships to land
 Upon them; would that false man had not bound
 His ships upon that isle across the sound 200
 Nor, hiding harsh plans with a fair outside.
 Would that foul man have travelled to reside
 As guest within our house! Where shall I go?
 What hope should I trust in, abandoned so?
 The peaks of Ida should I seek? The sea,
 However, is so fierce dividing me
 From you with its broad flood. Should I rely
 On succour from my father? What, whom I
 Left willingly, following a young man
 Smirched with my brother's blood? Perhaps I can 210
 Take cheers from Theseus' faithful love? What, he
 Who plies his pliant oars across the sea
 And leaves me? This bare island, furthermore,
 Boasts not one house – there's nothing but the shore.
 There's no escape – the sea is all around,
 No means of flight, no hope, there's not one sound.
 All's waste, all threatens death. Nevertheless,
 My eyes shan't languish in death's sluggishness,
 My weary body shall not fail before
 I ask the gods to even up the score 220
 With honourable vengeance as I call
 Upon their heavenly faith before I fall.
 Eumenides, who bring vengeful despair
 On men, your foreheads bound with dusky hair
 And breathing out your anger, come to me,
 Hear my complaints which I, in misery,
 Must now pour forth in my unhappiness,

Blinded with raging frenzy, powerless,
 Burning. Since my woes come from deep inside
 My heart, do not allow my grief to slide 230
 Away and come to nothing. Just as he
 Could be so harsh as to abandon me,
 Goddesses, let such harshness enter in
 His heart to crush both him and all his kin.”
 With these sad words she claimed determinedly
 That they bring vengeance for his cruelty.
 The divine lord gave a sovereign nod, which made
 The earth and stormy ocean shake and swayed
 The twinkling stars. But Theseus, rendered blind
 With his dark thoughts, from his forgetful mind 240
 Let slip the biddings he had constantly
 Held firm and for his grieving father he
 Did not erect the sign of welcoming
 To show that he would soon be entering
 The port of Athens. For Aegeus one day,
 Trusting his son to wind and waves, they say,
 As he sailed from the walls of the goddess,
 Embraced, then charged the youth: “My life I less
 Cherish than you, my son, whom I am pressed
 To send out into danger, now I’m blessed 250
 To look at you, restored to me once more
 Now that I’ve reached the end of old age, for
 My fate and your hot pluck against my will
 Have taken you away from me, who still
 Require the sight of my dear son. I’ll part
 From you not gladly, with no cheerful heart.
 To bear the tokens of prosperity

I'll not let you – first from the heart of me
 I'll pour all my complaints, while sullying
 My old grey hairs with earth and showering 260
 Them, too, with dust, and on the roving mast
 I'll hang dyed sheets that to you may be passed
 The burning in my heart, my tale of pain,
 Made clear upon a canvas with its stain
 Of Spanish blue. But if the goddess who
 In pure Itonus dwells and pledges to
 Defend our city grants that your right hand
 Be strewn with bull's blood, see that my command
 Live in your memory and in your heart.
 Don't let time blur it and, when our hills start 270
 To fill your sight, then let the yardarms lay
 Their sad garb down so that a white sail may
 Be hoisted by the twisted ropes, that I
 May see it and rejoice that you are nigh,
 Brought back by happy fate." Initially
 Theseus retained these orders constantly
 Within his mind but, as clouds in the skies
 Are blown from snowy mountain peaks, likewise
 They left him. But upon the tower's height
 His father, gazing out to catch a sight 280
 Of Theseus, wept in longing endlessly
 On seeing the bellying sail that flew. Then he
 Leapt headlong down from off the rocky height,
 Believing Theseus slain by some cruel plight.
 When bold Theseus entered his house, now dim
 With grief for Aegeus, such grief shattered him
 As he had, by his own forgetfulness,

Caused Minos' daughter. She, in her distress,
Gazed, weeping, at the receding ship, her heart
Revolving countless cares. In another part 290
Flew youthful Bacchus with his company
Of Satyrs and Nysa-born Sileni:
He sought you, Ariadne, all aflame
With love for you. While here and there they came,
With frenzied minds, crying tumultuously
"Evoe!" , heads a-shaking furiously.
Here, some of them waved vine-leaved wands, while here
Some tossed about the limbs of a mangled steer,
Here some with writhing , crawling beasts were wound,
While others obscure rites carried around, 300
Hidden in caskets, rites which the profane
Desire to listen to but all in vain,
Here some beat timbrels with raised hands, while here
Others bronze cymbals clashed, which rang out clear.
Many blew horns which droned on raucously
While the barbarian pipes shrilled dreadfully.
With these the tapestry which clothed the bed
And covered it was amply garlanded.
Now when the Thessalian maidens had with these
Taken their fill, to the divinities 310
They then gave place. Now, just as Zephyrus
At dawn, with ruffling calamitous,
Impels the waves upon the quiet sea,
While Dawn herself her daily odyssey
Makes to the gates of the travelling Sun, while, slow
At first, the waves, which gentle breezes blow,
Move forward, lightly plashing with the sound

Of laughter, more and more was gaining ground
 With growing wind and, floating far, shine bright
 As they reflect Aurora's crimson light, 320
 They left the palace gates hither and yon.
 And after, from the top of Pelion,
 Came Chiron carrying woodland gifts as he
 Led all the rest. For all the flowers we see
 Upon the plains that bear them, everything
 That Thessaly's region's mighty mountains bring
 To birth, the flowers on river-banks, all these
 Are shown by warm Favonius' fruitful breeze -
 In mingled wreaths he brought them, and, content
 With this sweet scent, the house in merriment 330
 Laughed. Peneüs is there immediately,
 Leaving lush Tempe, with her greenery
 Around her that Thessalian maidens could
 With their terpsichory dance in that wood.
 He was not empty-handed for he bore
 Some tall beech-trees which by the roots he tore
 And lofty, upright bays and a plane-tree
 That nodded down and, waving regally,
 The sister of flame-eaten Phaëthon
 And the tall cypress. These hither and yon 340
 He wove around their home that, soft and green,
 The covered vestibule might then be seen.
 Prometheus – clever man – came next and he
 Still bore the faint scars of his penalty,
 Which, hanging from a precipice, he paid,
 Shackled in flinty chains. Next Lord Jove made
 His own appearance with his loving mate

And children, leaving Heaven desolate
Except, Phoebus, for you and Hecate
Who in the mountainous vicinity 350
Of Idris dwells, your sister: she, like you,
Hates Peleus and has no desire to view
His marriage-vows with Thetis. Then, once they
Sat in the snow-white couches, an array
Of food was placed upon the brimming plates.
Meanwhile, their bodies quivering, the frail Fates
Began their prescient chants, each trembling frame
Dressed in white, red-edged robes as in they came,
Their white hair covered in a red headband
While wrapping the soft wool with their left hand 360
Upon the distaff. Lightly they unfurled
And shaped the threads with their right hand and twirled
The spindle on the rounded whorl. They bit
The threads to make an even job of it.
Wool-ends stuck to their dry lips, which before
Stood out from the smooth yarn, and a shining store
Of soft fleece was before their feet, and laid
In osier baskets. Then that fleece they flayed,
Inspired, uttering words of destiny
So clearly, which in future would not be 370
Accused of perfidy. With derring-do
You enhance your uncommon fame, you who
Guard Thessaly, dear son of Ops – now take
The honest oracle the sisters make
Known to you in that joyful light of day.
Run, spindles, that the threads may make their way
To prophecies. Now will come eventide

With what this bridegroom yearns for now your bride,
 Blessed by a happy star, arrives to shed
 Soul-quenching love within your heart, to bed 380
 With you in languorous slumber and to lay
 Soft arms beneath your strong neck. To this day
 This house has harboured no such love, no bond
 That ever coupled paramours as fond
 As these. To you a son who holds no fear,
 Achilles, will be born. For not the rear
 Of him his foes shall see, but his stout breast –
 He'll often in the wide-ranging contest
 Be victor, bettering the hind who flies
 With flame-fleet steps. No man shall gain the prize 390
 In war against him – Phrygian streams shall run
 With Trojan blood and Pelops's grandson
 Shall raze the Trojan walls in long warfare.
 Loosing their hoary and dishevelled hair,
 At their sons' funerals often shall mothers name
 The hero's splendid deeds and glorious fame,
 Weakly tearing their lean breasts. He'll mow
 With hostile sword the Trojans just as though,
 Out in the yellow fields and blinding heat,
 He crops and scythes the thickly-growing wheat. 400
 To his great deeds Scamander's stream will be
 A witness as it cleaves the rapid sea
 Of Hellespont, which, narrowed by the heap
 Of slain, will warm the waters of the deep.
 And finally the booty, duly paid
 For his death, will be a witness when the maid,
 Slaughtered Polyxena, so snowy-white,

Lies in the round tomb, heaped to lofty height,
Because as soon as Fortune gives the power
To the weary Greeks to loose the Trojan tower 410
That Neptune forged, the towering tomb shall flow
With her blood. Then Polyxena, as though
She were a victim to the two-edged steel,
Shall, now a headless trunk, bow down and kneel.
Come then, unite yours hearts in happiness
And let the husband welcome the goddess
In joyful bonds. Now let the eager spouse
Receive his bride and when into the house
The nurse comes back again at break of day.
The riband that she wore just yesterday 420
She'll not be able to place once again
Around her neck. Her anxious mother then,
Sad that her harsh child does not lie beside
Her spouse, nevertheless hopes that the bride
Will bear a joyful brood. In days of yore
The Fates foretold such satisfaction for
Peleus. For the divines, when piety
Was not yet spurned, to mortal company
Appeared in bodily form, for they would call
On heroes' pious homes. The Father of all 430
The gods would often come down and appear
In his bright temple when, year after year,
The holy days arrived and there'd be slain
Before his eyes a hundred bulls. Again,
Bacchus would often on the topmost peak
Of Parnassus wander, driving on his clique
Of Thyades who, with their flying hair,

Cried out “Evoe!” and, from everywhere
About the town, the Delphians eagerly
Rushed and received the god exuberantly 440
With smoking shrines. Often, in lethal war,
Mars or the Lady of Triton or
Rhamnusia’s virgin came down and sustained
The soldiers’ pluck, but once the earth was stained
With hideous crime and in their greediness
Men banished justice and bloodthirstiness,
Provoked fraternal strife, and nevermore
Would sons grieve parents’ deaths and fathers for
Their young sons’ deaths now yearned so that they may
Enjoy a younger bride, while mothers lay 450
With their ingenuous sons blasphemously,
Thus daring to commit iniquity
Against their household gods. Foul fury blent
Both right and wrong and turned the reverent
Will of the gods from us. They did not deign,
Therefore, from that time on to come again
And visit mortals nor could see their way
To tolerate the limpid light of day.

LXV

Though I’m worn out with constant misery,
Though sorrow, Hortalus, enforces me
To shun the learned maids – no, not a word
Of their sweet births can my heart utter, stirred
Itself with waves of grief, since recently
The creeping wave upon that Lethean sea

Lapped at my brother's death-pale foot (he lies,
 Torn from my sight, beneath the Trojan skies
 On Rhoeteum's shore) – brother, who are more dear
 Than life, I'll no more speak to you nor hear 10
 You tell me of your life nor ever see
 You now, although I'll love you constantly
 And sing sad strains, as the Daulian nightingale
 Perches beneath thick branches to bewail
 The loss of Itylus – yet, Hortalus,
 Translated verses of Callimachus,
 Though bowed with grief, I send you lest perhaps
 You think your words have caused in me a lapse
 Of mind and to the winds are cast away,
 Like the secret apple from her fiancé 20
 Falls from the virtuous bosom of a maid,
 Which she – though she's forgotten it – had laid
 In the folds of her soft gown, then starts when she
 Perceives her mother coming. Rapidly
 It downward rolls and runs and her sad face
 Reveals the conscious blush of her disgrace.

LXVI

Conon – who has discovered every light
 In the great globe and knows them at their height
 And depth and how the rapid sun's hot blaze
 Is dimmed and how the stars in certain days
 Recede, how sweet love summons Hecate
 Out of the air and sends her secretly
 To Latmus' rocky cave – once looked upon

A lock of Berenice – me! – that shone
So clearly up in Heaven. She vowed me
To many of the goddesses as she 10
Stretched out her smooth arms. At that time the king,
Blest with a recent bride, was plundering
Assyria, still sporting the sweet clues
Of our night-battles which caused me to lose
My maidenhead. Is Venus hated by
New-married maids? And do they falsely cry
Tears shed within their bowers plenteously
And mock their parent's joys? May the gods help me,
Those tears aren't true. I learnt this from my queen
When she was sorrowing that war's grim scene 20
Was what her new groom sought. Was your cold bed
Not what, bereft, you mourned for but, instead,
Your darling brother? How your sad heart's core
Was gnawed by sorrow! Rational no more,
Your anxious spirit failed throughout your breast.
And yet from girlhood I knew you were blest
With pluck. Has it fled from your memory
That you were royally wed by bravery
That none could top? Ah, when you let him leave,
By Jupiter, how sadly did you grieve! 30
How often did you wipe your eyes! And who
Among the gods could make this change in you?
Or is it that no lover can abide
To be away from her beloved's side
For long? To all the gods for the welfare
Of your sweet spouse you vowed me then and there,
The blood of bulls as well, as long as he

Returned. He added Asia rapidly
 To Egypt's bounds. For this I'm given as due
 To the host of Heaven with a gift that's new 40
 To pay for former vows. Unwillingly,
 My queen, I leave your head – this warranty
 I give by you and by your very head.
 If one thus vainly swears, let him be fed
 His just deserts. But who can claim that he
 Is just as strong as steel? Calamity
 Came even to that mountain which could boast
 Of being quite the greatest on the coast
 Where Thia's bright son roamed, when the Medes created
 A new sea and their young men navigated 50
 Through Athos. What should locks of hair, though, do
 When such things yield to steel? I beg of you,
 O Jupiter, destroy the Chalybean race
 As well as him who first began to trace
 Veins underground and forge hard weaponry!
 My sister tresses mourned my misery,
 Cut just before me, when Zephyrus flew,
 Arsinoë's horse with beating wings, and through
 The shady air took me and settled me
 On Venus' holy lap. Accordingly 60
 The Grecian queen, Lady of Zephyrus,
 Who sojourns on the shores of Canopus,
 Sent her own man among the shifting light
 Of Heaven, that the golden circlet might
 Be transported from Ariadne's brow
 And fixed in Heaven as I as well might now
 Shine out, the pledged spoil from the sunny head

Of Berenice. Thus, while tears I shed,
 The goddess to the gods; abode took me
 That up among the ancient stars I'd be 70
 A new one. With fierce Leo and the Maid
 And Lycaonian Callisto I'm laid;
 Facing the West, slow Boötes I lead,
 Who in deep Ocean plunges late indeed.
 Though I'm pressed close by the gods' tracks at night,
 Yet gleaming Tethys resurrects her light
 (At this point may I speak, Rhamnusian maid? -
 To tell the truth I shall not be afraid;
 Although the stars may pull me all apart
 With angry words, the secrets of my heart 80
 I'll not withhold). At the goddess's act
 I don't so much rejoice as I am racked
 That on my lady's head I'll not be set
 Henceforth. In days of old, a virgin yet,
 She used all kinds of perfume with delight
 And I drank thousands, too. When welcome light
 Unites you, maidens, from the torch, don't dare
 Yield to your loving husbands, do not bare
 Your breasts before the jar offers to me
 Sweet gifts – *your* jar, who honours unity 90
 In chaste wedlock. But she whom shameful lust
 Takes in adultery, let the light dust
 Drink up her worthless gifts unrecognized –
 Nothing I ask from those who are not prized.
 No, rather, brides, may concord always dwell
 Within your homes, and endless Love as well.
 And you, my queen, when at the constellation

You gaze and undertake propitiation
Of Venus with your festal lamps, let me,
Your handmaid, not lack perfume – let me be
Rather enriched with bounteous gifts. O why
Do all the stars remain here? Let them die!
I would be royal hair again, and so,
Please let Orion next to Aquarius glow!

100

LXVII

Catullus:

Dear to a sweet spouse and a father, hail,
House-door! And may Lord Jupiter not fail
To bless and help you! Balbus graciously
Assisted you when, as an old man, he
Lived in the house, they say. They also say,
However, that since then up to this day
You serve his son ill now the old man's dead
And laid out, and you have become instead
A wedded house's door. Tell us why you
Have now deserted your allegiance to
Your master.

10

Door:

May I please Caecilius,
Who owns me now – there's no blameworthiness
Attached to me, though folks say otherwise.
The door's to blame in everybody's eyes.
But none can say that I've done wrong, yet when
A sin has been unearthed, they cry out then:

“Door, you’re at fault.”

Catullus:

It’s not enough to say
A single word. Speak so that anyone may
Both feel and see it.

Door:

How do I do that?
None ask or care to know.

Catullus:

I tell you flat – 20
I wish to know. Don’t scruple to tell me.

Door:

First, then, she had lost her virginity
When she came here. I say, her maidenhead
Was taken in another person’s bed
Than his she wed. The dagger at his thighs
Drooped like a soft beet nor could ever rise
Up to mid-tunic. People say that rather
His bed was violated by his father,
A crime that shamed the tragic home. Maybe
His wicked mind with blind impurity 30
Was all a-flame or else he did the deed
Because his son was sterile. There was need
To find something that had more energy
To loose her girdle of virginity.

Catullus:

A very loving father who, you say,
Pissed in the lap of his own son?

Door:

Hey, hey,

Not only does Brixia know this well,
She who dwells close to Cycna's citadel,
Through which gold Milla softly runs, dear mother
Of my Verona, but she broadcasts other
Tales of Cornelius' infidelity,
With whom she sinned with foul adultery,
And of Postumius.

40

Catullus:

Here one will say:

"You know this, door, who cannot be away
From this threshold nor hear folk speak while you,
Fixed to this beam, have nothing else to do
But close or open?"

Door:

Look, time after time

I've hear her softly tell her every crime,
Alone with her maids, and mention all those folk
By name whom I told you of. When she spoke,
She thought, no doubt, I had no tongue or ear.
She added one I'll not tell of for fear
He'll arch his ruddy brows. A lanky chap,
He once was troubled by a great mishap,
For with a large lawsuit he was beguiled,
Credited falsely with the birth of a child.

50

LXVIII

You're bitterly oppressed and send to me
This missive, penned in tears, that you may be
Raised up by me out of the foaming deep

And brought back from potential endless sleep.

Pure Venus will not let you rest as you

Lie lonely in your widowed, bed, nor do

The Muses charm you with sweet poetry

From ancient writers as you anxiously

Keep vigil. This is pleasing, for your friend

You call me, while you're hoping that I'll send

10

You verse and Love. But, Manlius, lest you

Don't know my grief and think that I won't do

The duty of a friend, I must relate

That I'm oppressed, too, by the waves of fate.

So you'll not seek from one in misery

The gifts of happiness. When first to me

Was given the white toga and my bloom

Of youth was giving jocund springtime room,

20

I wrote blithe poems enough; the goddess – she

Who blends cares with sweet bitterness – knows me.

My brother's death, though, took all eagerness

To work from me. In my unhappiness

In losing you, I've lost all joy; with you

Within your grave my house is buried, too,

And all my joy which, when you lived, you fed

Has died. All thoughts and pleasures now have fled

My heart. So, when you write it's a disgrace

That your Catullus should be at his place

30

Of birth when one of better class should lie

Deserted in his bed and have to try

To warm his cold limbs, I must answer "No,

It's rather a catastrophe," and so,

You will forgive me if I don't obey

With favours which my grief has cast away –
I cannot do it. Nor can I provide
A wealth of authors because I reside
In Rome – I spend my life there, I come here
With one small box of many more, I fear.
Therefore, I would not have you judge my mind
As niggardly or that I am unkind
Because I have no superfluity
Of both those things which you require of me.

40

I can't be mum, goddesses – I must tell
How Allius helped me and how very well,
Lest thoughtless time hide his kind eagerness
In blind night. So let thousands more possess
This tale of you so that these sheets, when old,
May say this and, when he in death lies cold,
His fame may grow. O let the spider who
Weaves her thin web above our heads not do
This over Allius' neglected name.
You know how wily Amathusia came
And handed me such woe, how she scorched me.

50

When I was burning as ferociously
As the Trinacrian rock or, at Thermopylae,
Malis's spring, when, ever weeping, I
Dwindled, my cheeks showing my misery
In floods, as high up on a promontory
A bright stream leaps from a mossy rock headlong,
Rolls down the valley and travels among
The busy crowds, a pleasant remedy
For sweaty folk, for dense torridity
Causes the burning fields to split apart,

60

Or as a favouring breeze can bring new heart

To shipwrecked sailors in a coal-black sea,

Besought by prayers to Pollux, equally

To Castor, in this way did Allius yield

His aid to me. He opened a fenced field

70

That had a broad path, and he gave to me

And Lesbia a house that we might be

Lovers together. She sailed to the door,

My white goddess, and halted at the floor

Of its warm threshold, shoes a -twinkling,

As once Laodamia, smouldering

With passion for her husband, went away

To her Protesilaus' house to stay –

A house begun in vain because no-one

Had caused a victim's sacred blood to run,

80

Appeasing all the gods. Rhamnusian maid,

Never may I approve a plan that's laid

Without the gods' will. How excessively

Does the starved altar crave the piety

Of sacrifices! Laodamia knew

This from her husband's death, required to

Leave her new spouse before a winter came,

And then another – thus they had no flame

Through lengthy nights, and thus she lost the heart

To go on living with her spouse apart

90

From her. The Fates knew in a short time she

Would not endure once, as a soldier, he

Went to Troy's walls. The rape of Helen made

The Argive chieftains summon men to raid

That city – Troy (o horror!). common grave

Of Europe, and of Asia, too, who gave
To all men and their deeds of bravery
A bitter end. Troy took away from me
My precious brother. Brother, I mourn you;
Within your grave my house is buried, too, 100

And all my joy which, when you lived, you fed
Has died. All thoughts and pleasures now have fled
My heart. Among unknown graves, and not by
The relics of your nearest kin, you lie.

In foul, ill-omened Troy, in foreign clay,
They laid you. All the youth of Greece, they say,
At that time thither sped from every state,
Leaving their homes, so that they might frustrate
Paris's plan to comfortably loll

In sweet content by his abducted moll. 110

Thus, fair Laodamia, grim Fate stole
Your spouse from you, sweeter than life and soul:

This whirling love bore you into that pit –
Deep as that which (so the Greeks say of it),
Near Pheneus in Cyllene, drains away
The swamp and dries the rich soil which, they say,
Amphitryon's son dug out long, long before
While cutting it away from the hill's core,
And Stymphalus's monsters he then gored

With a well-aimed dart (although a lesser lord 120

Had bid him do it), so that just one more
Might be allowed to pass through Heaven's door;
Thus Hebe might be wed because of this.

Yet deeper was your love than this abyss –
Thus, though unbroken you were taught to bear

The yoke. For this child in his mother's care,
Lateborn, his old grandfather's love, for he
At last appeared, heir to a family
Of substance with his name authenticated –
A kinsman's wicked joy was thus abated 130

And mocked and from that hoary head the kite
Was driven away. Never was such delight
Got even by the dove who with her beak
Will bite her snowy mate that she might sneak
Kisses and does it all more wantonly
Than any woman, even though she be
Immeasurably amorous. And yet,
Once with your fair-haired spouse the match was set,
Alone you capped their passions. My bright light
Showed just as much, or little less, delight 140

In my embrace, while often Cupid flew
Around her in his vest of saffron hue
And shining fair. Though she's not satisfied
With me alone, her few faults I 'll abide
(For she is pure) lest, as jealous fools do,
I start to bore. For often Juno, too,
The greatest goddess, for her husband's sin
Bit down upon her wrath and kept it in,
Hearing of all his loves. Yet it's not fit
To compare men with gods – away with it, 150

That anxious father's hateful stress. For she
Did not come hither in the company
Of her father to a house whose sweet bouquet
Was of Assyrian scents. No, as we lay
Upon the bed throughout that wondrous night

She gave to me sweet gifts of great delight
Straight from her husband's breast. If I alone
Receive what she marks with a whiter stone
It is enough. This gift -all that I could –
Of verse I send to you for all the good 160
You've done me, Allius, so that your name
Will not corrode with rust and lose its fame.
The gods will add so many gifts to this,
Which pious men were given by Themis
Of old. May you be happy both, and may
The house where we had sport back in the day
Be happy, too, and he who gave us land,
The spring of all good fortune for us, and
She - dearer than myself – especially:
Her life alone makes living sweet for me. 170

LXIX

You have no need to wonder, Rufus, why
No girl would wish to place her tender thigh
Beneath you, tempted by a lovely dress
Or some bight jewel though she be. I guess
You're hurt by that grim tale that each armpit
Of yours conceals a smelly goat. That's it
That they all fear. No wonder – horrid beast,
No bedmate for a pretty girl. At least
Kill that offensive brute so that you may
No longer muse why women run away. 10

LXX

My girl says she'd wed no-one else but me,
Not even if Jove asked her. Thus says she:
What a girl says to her eager lover oughta
Be penned upon the wind or running water.

LXXI

If anyone deserved a goaty smell
Or gout, your rival does you very well:
Though he keeps busy with you, woman, still
He's got them both and ends up doubly ill.
When he has sex with her, you're well paid out:
The odour floors *her*, *he's* half-dead with gout.

LXXII

You said I was your one friend previously,
Not even rating Jupiter with me,
Lesbia. I loved you just like anyone
Who loves his girl but also as each son
And son-in-law is loved by Dad. But now
I know you better and therefore I vow,
Though I am more aflame, you in my sight
Are much less estimable, much more slight.
How so? A love finds that such faithlessness
Makes him love more but makes his friendship less.

10

LXXIII

Stop craving thanks or thinking gratitude

Is possible - a useless attitude!
Nothing earns thanks. A kindly act is naught –
Rather it's boring and with mischief fraught.
Thus no-one troubles me more bitterly
Than he who claims he has but one friend – me!

LXXIV

Gellius heard his uncle used to twit
Those who used luxury or talked of it.
To shun this he seduced his uncle's spouse,
Thus rendering him as quiet as a mouse.
That's what he sought: should he invade the bum
Even of his uncle, Uncle will be mum.

LXXV

Lesbia, you have so reduced my mind
By your misdeeds – indeed it has, I find,
Been marred by its devotion – that it now
Can neither wish you well, though you somehow
Became the best of women, nor scorn you,
Should you do all the bad things you could do.

LXXVI

If thoughts of kindnesses that he has done
Can please a man, who thinks that to someone
He has been loyal, with his sanctity
Intact, and has not used the majesty

Of Heaven to deceive, then there are due
So many joys and lengthy life for you,
Catullus, that this thankless love affair
Has brought to you. Whatever kindly care
In word or deed there is has all been said
And done by you. Now everything is dead 10
That I entrusted to a faithless heart,
So why torment me further? Why not start
To settle your mind, draw back and cease to be
Upset in spite of every deity?
It's hard to lay aside a long-held passion
At but one stroke. It's hard, but in some fashion
Or other you must. It's your only way –
Even if you cannot, do it anyway!
O gods, if you can pity, if you've brought
Aid to the dying, look upon me, fraught 20
With cares. If I've been pure, then take from me
This deadly plague. Alas what lethargy
Creeps in my bones, taking all happiness
Out of my heart. I don't, I must confess,
Want her to love me back or to submit
To chastity (she could not rise to it!).
I would be well and lose this misery.
Gods, grant me this gift for my piety.

LXXVII

Rufus, I trusted you purposelessly
(And with a great and ruinous penalty).
You burned into my vitals, stole my heart

And all my happiness you tore apart.
You are a cruel poison, killing me,
The deadly torment of my amity.

LXXVIII

Two brothers Gallus has – a charming son
One has, a charming wife the other one.
Stout man! A Cupid! He gets that fine lad
To bed that splendid lass. Gallus is mad –
He has a wife himself! Does he not see?
To teach his kin such infidelity!

LXXVIIIb

What bugs me now is that your nasty spit
Has pissed on a pure girl's lips. You'll rue it:
You will be known by all posterity,
Old Rumour spreading your identity.

LXXIX

That Lesbius is pretty. Why not? He
Is liked by Lesbia more ardently
Than you, Catullus, with your kin and all.
But let this pretty boy set up his stall
And sell us all if he can find but three
Contacts who'll for him stand as surety.

LXXX

Your ruddy lips become whiter than snow
When, Gellius, you get up at cockcrow
Or the eighth hour in the lengthy day
Disturbs your soft siesta. Why? I'd say
"It's said that you consume the big yoo-hoo
Of somebody. Is that a fact?" It's true
Alright. Poor Victor's ruptured thighs appear
To prove it – plus your lips that show his smear.

LXXXI

Juventius, is there not a cute man
Somewhere you'd start to fancy other than
Your friend in moribund Pisaurum who
Looks sicklier than a golden-hued statue?
You love him, daring to choose him instead
Of me. God knows what you two do in bed!

LXXXII

Quintus, if you would have me owe my eyes
To you or aught that I would dearer prize,
If such there be, then please do not remove
From me that which I far more dearer love
Than I can love my eyes or, furthermore,
Than anything that I could treasure more.

LXXXIII

Lesbia much berates me in the sight
Of her spouse -the fool in this takes great delight.
Ass, you know nothing. If she forgot me
And stayed mute, from love's pangs she would be free.
But as it is, this snapping slandering
Means that she both remembers and – a thing
Much more material – she's mad as hell:
That is, she burns and so she talks as well.

LXXXIV

When he would pronounce 'opportunity'
Arrius would utter 'hoppportunity',
When 'ambush' hambush', and with his great stress
On 'hambush' he thought that with splendiddness
He'd spoken – doubtless did his mother, too,
His freedman uncle and grandparents who
Were on his mother's side. So then when he
Was sent to Syria, our ears were free –
Now quietly and lightly would we hear
Those syllables, nor did we ever fear
To hear those words again when suddenly
The shocking, dreadful news arrived. Once he
Had settled in that place, the Ionian
Was henceforth spoken as 'Hionian'.

10

LXXV

I hate! I love! How's that? You ask maybe.
Who knows? I feel it, though. The agony!

LXXXVI

Many think Quintia beautiful – to me
She's fair, tall, straight – yes, I allow these three.
But 'beautiful'? Of elegance she's none,
In that tall frame no grain of salt, not one.
Now Lesbia's beauty's everything, for she
Has filched it from all women totally.

LXXXVII

My Lesbia, no woman can say true
That she's been loved as much as I've loved you.
All promises of lovers' faithfulness
Set by my love for you were ever less.

LXXXVIII

He itches for his ma, and sister too,
That fellow, Gellius. What does he do
All night quite naked? What's he doing there?
He plays his uncle's part in an affair
With that man's wife. Such guilt's incurred by this!
More, Gellius, than faraway Tethys
Or Ocean, father of the Nymphs, can purge.
There's no more guilt whatever he can urge
Upon himself, not even if, bent low,
He should perform auto-fellatio.

LXXXIX

Gellius is thin. Well may he be, for he
Has a mother with a lusty quality
And kind and has a charming sister, too,
A pleasant uncle, many women who
Are well-known to him. Why should he desist
To be so? Even if he should resist
Touching what is *verboden*, nonetheless
So many reasons for it you may guess.

XC

Let there be born from that foul union
Of Gellius' mother and himself a son,
A wizard will study prophecy
(That Persian art), for that's the progeny
A mother and a son should have, if you
Think the unnatural religion to be true
That Persia has, so that the child may be
A worshipper of all the gods whom he
Will laud with proper hymns, while at the same
Time melting the fat membrane in the fame.

10

XCI

Gellius, I'd hoped that you'd be loyal to me
In my love-shaken state of misery,
Not on the grounds I knew you, thought you true
Or that baseness and sin were far from you.
No, it's because she who's consuming me

With her great love's not of your family.
Though we were friends I thought it was not ground
Enough for you, and yet you thought it sound
Enough: you revel in such villainy
As might contain some hint of infamy.

XCII

Lesbia's always speaking ill of me
And talks of me. Bring down calamity
Upon me if she doesn't love me. By
What token? I am just the same, for I
Am deprecating her perpetually,
But if I don't love her, demolish me.

XCIII

Caesar, I don't wish you to take delight
In me nor know if you are dark or light.

XCIV

A cock has sex. It does? Yes, certainly.
The pot finds its herbs – that's the homily.

XCV

The *Zmyrna* of my friend Cinna at last,
After nine harvest seasons and the blast
Of nine successive winters, we may see

In print. Meanwhile Hortensius's poetry
Spanned half a million verses in one year.
Zmyrna will travel far and will appear
By Satrachus's deep streams. Each century
Will age while reading *Zmyrna* endlessly.
The Annals which Volusius published, though,
Will die where they were born, by the river Po
And often clothe a score of mackerel.
Let this small token of my friend do well
In pleasing me; but let Antimachus,
That bore, content the vulgar populus.

10

XCVI

If the mute grave can claim some gaiety
Or sweetness, Calvus, from our misery –
That grief with which we cause to live again
Old loves and weep for long-lost friendships – then
Quintilla, lost too soon, feels less distress
In death than in your love true happiness.

XCVII

I thought it mattered not a modicum,
By God, whether I sniffed the mouth or bum
Of Aemilius. No, either one will do –
His bum, though, is the better of the two
And smarter, for it's toothless. His mouth, though,
Has half-a-yard-long teeth and gums that so
Resemble some old cart-frame; opening,

It's like, in summertime, a she-mule's thing
When she is pissing. He has fucked a lot
Of women, thinks he's charming, yet he's not
Set to the grinding-mill and to the ass.
Well, if he should be touched by any lass,
Would we not think that she is able to
Apply her tongue to sick hangman's wazoo?

10

XCVIII

Foul Victius, if any others do,
You earn what fools and gossips say of you.
With that tongue, if you had the chance, you'd lick
The arsehole and the clogs of some rustic.
If you wish to destroy us utterly,
Open your mouth – you'll do it easily.

XCIX

Honeyed Juventius, I stole from you,
While you were playing, a little kiss and ooh!
It was ambrosia-sweet, but not scot-free –
For over an hour I hung in agony.
With my excuses I could not through all
My tears deflect in any way your gall.
At once you washed your lips so thoroughly
And finger-wiped them dry. Apparently
No virus from my mouth could after this
Remain, as though a she-wolf's dirty piss
Resembled my saliva. Furthermore,

10

Your wretched beau was subject to a score
Of angry words and racked in every way.
Thus that ambrosial kiss just will not stay
Ambrosial but even be more sour
Than sour hellebore – consequently
You'll ever get another kiss from me.

C

Aufilenus is adored by Caelius
Quite madly; the same goes for Quintius
About his sister Aufilena. See
The proverb's sweet fraternity!
Whom should I then refer? Well, Caelius, you!
For that our love was tried by fire is true.
A mad flame scorched my vitals. Caelius,
May you in your affair be prosperous!

CI

Through many lands and over many seas,
Brother, I come to these sad obsequies
To give your death's last gift and fruitlessly
Speak to your silent ashes, since from me
Fortune has taken you, so cruelly torn
Away from me and leaving me forlorn.
Meanwhile accept these offerings which of yore
Our fathers gave - a grievous tribute – for
Your rites. So many tears my eyes imbrue
And moisten them. For ever, then, adieu.

CII

If ever a staunch friend, whose loyalty
Was firm, told his pal something secretly,
I'm consecrate to the formalities,
Cornelius – a true Hippocrates!

CIII

Give me back, Silo, those ten sesterces
And then be just as violent as you please,
Or if the money makes you so content,
Don't be a pimp *as well as violent*.

CIV

Could I speak ill of her whom I love so
That she is dearer than my eyes? Oh no.
I never could have managed such a thing,
Or, if I could, I'd not be ruining
Myself with love. But you and Tappo see
That you'll not shrink from any enormity.

CV

Cock tries to reach the Muses with some song.
From off their hill they pitchfork him headlong.

CVI

You see an auctioneer in company
With a pretty boy? You'll think he seeks a fee.

CVII

If some unhopèd-for thing you eagerly
Long for occurs, it pleases utterly.
Dearer than gold, then, is my happiness
That you are back with me, whose eagerness
For this – yet never hoping – was so great.
O whiter mark the Fates now dedicate
To me. Who could be happier, tell me,
Than I? No greater fortune could there be?

CVIII

If your soiled, grey old age, Cominius,
Should be determined by the populus
To be snuffed out, I'm sure primarily
Your tongue, to all good folk an enemy,
Would be extracted and with all due speed
Would be thrown out to sate the vultures' greed,
And after that your eyes would be torn out
For ravens to consume, I have no doubt.
The dogs would eat your guts, the residue
The wolves, and that would be the end of you.

CIX

You promise we'll be happy evermore,
My darling. May the girl that I adore,
O gods, speak truly. May her promise be
Straight from her heart, delivered honestly,
So that throughout our lives we may extend
Our lot and be each other's closest friend.

CX

Kind girlfriends, Aufilena, are always
Well praised and make sure that the business pays.
You broke your promise, for you lied to me:
You take but don't give – that's dire trickery.
Complying's fair, not promising a man
Shows chastity but taking all you can
And cheating?? You're more greedy than a tart
Who practises a foul streetwalker's art.

CXI

To live content with just one man must be
A glory of the highest quality
For brides, o Aufilena. Better yet
To go to bed with any you can get
Rather than that a woman should conceive
Her cousins from her uncle, I believe.

CXII

Naso, you're big, but no big number here

Of men will screw you. Yes, you're big – and queer!

CXIII

Cinna, in Pompey's consulship two men
Dated Maecilia, now once again
He's consul, there are two still, but add three
Zeros – so fruitful is adultery.

CXIV

Cock has rich land in Firmum, so they say,
Which holds a wealth of things, and so he may
Fowl, fish, game, pasture, reap, but all in vain,
He squanders it. He's rich, I say again,
Though lacking all. Let's praise his property
As long as he himself's in penury.

CXV

Cock's got some thirty acres of grassland,
Forty to plough – the rest at his command
Is salt. How could he in prosperity
Not outstrip Croesus with such property?
Grassland, vast woods, lakes, pasture, which expand
To Earth's end and the Ocean. This is grand
Alright, but he's the grandest – not a man!
He's Cock, a menacing barbarian!

CXVI

I've often wondered in my eagerness
How I could send you some Callimachus
To win your love and that you might not try
To shower me with hostile darts. Now I
Have realized I laboured pointlessly,
Gellius, my prayers ignored. Consequently,
Against those missiles my cloak will suffice –
You shall be pierced by mine and pay the price.

