

## OVID AMORES

### Epigram

We were five books of Ovid, now but three:  
The author thus preferred it. If you be  
Averse to reading us, nevertheless,  
With two books gone, your punishment is less.

I

I planned cruel wars, the metre pertinent  
To my motif. "Well, that is relevant  
To lesser verse, " said Cupid (so they say) -  
He laughed at me and took one foot away.  
"Harsh boy, who gave you the authority  
Over my poems? The Muses' men are we,  
We're not your bards. If Venus took from her  
The arms of Minerva, who began to stir  
The flames, who would approve the mastery  
Of Ceres in the hilly greenery? 10  
Or let the quivered virgin cultivate  
The fields or with a spear accommodate  
The long-haired Phoebus, while the god of war  
Played the Aonian lyre? You want more??  
Your kingdom is too great. Hither and yon  
You seem to rule: do you rule Helicon  
As well? Does Phoebus actually possess  
His lyre? Upon a clean page with success  
I started but the next exhausted me. 20  
No meter fits my theme, whether it be  
A boy or long-tressed girl," I made protest.  
Directly from his quiver in his quest  
To ruin me he chose a dart, then he  
Vigorously bent his bow against his knee  
And said, "Bard, take this for the song I sing."  
His darts were true, alas. I'm suffering  
With burning love within my vacant heart.  
Let six beats start my work, let it depart  
With five; farewell, war's measures! Muse, entwine  
Venus's myrtle gathered from the brine 30  
About your golden brow – modifying  
My verse with eleven feet, begin to sing!

II

What's this? My bed is hard, the sheets won't lie  
 In place. I spend long hours which deny  
 Me sleep, in constant pain I toss and turn.  
 If love were tempting me, I'd surely burn!  
 Or has he crept inside to injure me  
 With secret art? That must be it, for he  
 Has struck my heart with slender darts, and by  
 Fierce love my conquered heart's beset. Should I  
 Give in or strive to bank the flames? I should  
 Give in. That burden's light when better stood. 10  
 I've seen a torch that's swung about grow bright  
 Yet one that's left immobile lose its light;  
 Oxen that shy away receive more blows  
 When they are first put to the yoke than those  
 Who accept the plough; the fiery steed is bruised  
 By the curb, but better treated is one used  
 To war. Reluctant lovers feel Love's blow  
 More keenly than the ones who surely know  
 They are his slaves. Cupid, I have no doubt  
 That I'm your newest booty: I hold out 20  
 My hands as captive. It's for peace I yearn -  
 No need for war. No glory will you earn  
 In conquering the unarmed. Wreathe your hair  
 With myrtle, taking off into the air,  
 Led by your mother's doves; as is your due  
 Will Mars lend you his chariot: thus you  
 Will hear the people cheer as there you stand  
 As you control the doves with skilful hand.  
 You'll lead your captive lovers, man and maid,  
 And it will be a dazzling parade. 30  
 Your recent prize, with my fresh injury,  
 I'll show my fetters. Conscience here we'll see,  
 Led, hands tied at her back, and shame as well  
 And all the trappings that will Love still dwell.  
 They all will fear you, and the mob will sing  
 Your triumph, their strong voices echoing,  
 Their hands held out. Those comrades Flattery,  
 Error and Passin will that company  
 Then join. With this militia you'll subdue  
 Both men and gods, but if these assets you 40  
 Should lose, you'll be stripped naked. Happily  
 Your mother on Olympus' promontory  
 Will cheer you on, and rose will she strew  
 About your head. In a golden chariot you  
 Will ride with jewels spangling your hair  
 And wings, and, if I know you, you'll take care

To inflame not a few and, as you go,  
 Give many wounds. Even if you wish it so,  
 You arrows will not cease to find their mark;  
 Your neighbours, too, will feel the vigorous spark. 50  
 In such a way Bacchus gained mastery  
 Of India: you used birds, fierce tigers he.  
 I'll be part of your sacred triumph, too -  
 Be gentle, then, with me, I beg of you.  
 See Caesar's great success in war, for those  
 He conquered he kept safe, though they were foes.

### III

Be just, I beg: let her who captured me  
 Of late still love or say why I should be  
 In love forever. Ah, too much I pray  
 You do: let her bow to my love; she may  
 Hear many prayers from me. Accept a man  
 Who's served you many years, a man who can  
 Love purely. If no glorious ancestry  
 Commends me, if the man who fathered me  
 Is a knight, if too few farmers plough my land,  
 My folks are frugal: Phoebus Apollo and 10  
 His nine comrades and the vineyard deity  
 Have made me thus, and Love, who gave you me  
 Undying duty, morals free of ill,  
 Pure candour, noble honour. Never will  
 I woo a thousand – I am not untrue.  
 My one consideration will be you.  
 Let me live with you while the Sisters' thread  
 Allows it and be mourned by you when dead;  
 Give me yourself to grace my poetry -  
 A worthy theme indeed! For you may see 20  
 Horned, frightened Io in them and the maid  
 Who with the adulterous river-bird once played  
 And she who was transported on the sea  
 By the false bull, her hands held desperately  
 About his horns. My poetry everyone  
 Will hear and we'll be joined in unison.

### IV

Your husband will be present when I throw  
 My party: may it be his last one, though.  
 Shall I behold, like any invitee,  
 My darling? He with perfect liberty

Will touch you. Will his legal bride repay  
 His kisses? If he wishes may he lay  
 His arms around your neck? It's no surprise  
 Hippodamia once became the prize  
 Of drunken Centaurs. I'm no demi-horse  
 Living in woods yet scarce have the resource 10  
 To keep my hands off you. But understand  
 What you must do – don't let my words be fanned  
 By the East and tepid South Winds. Come to me  
 Ahead of him, though I can hardly see  
 What this will then achieve, ye nonetheless  
 Do so. He'll take his place, then you must press  
 Your foot against my own but secretly  
 And with a bashful look, then look at me  
 For subtle signals and reciprocate.  
 My silent neighbours will my drift relate 20  
 My hands will speak the words that I will trace  
 In wine. So gently touch your radiant face  
 When prompted by desire. If silently  
 You harbour some complaint about me, see  
 You gently shade your earlobe; should you hear  
 Or feel from me what pleases you, my dear,  
 Rotate your finger-ring; like one in prayer  
 Just touch the table when you wish to share  
 Imagined mishaps for your husband, who  
 Deserves them. When he mixes a drink for you, 30  
 Tell *him* to drink it; with a playful voice  
 Order the boy to bring to you your choice  
 Of tipple; then the cup you give him I  
 Will first take up and where you'll bye and bye  
 Will drink, I'll place my lips; should he bestow  
 On you what hw's already tasted, throw  
 It back at him; and do not let him fling  
 His arms about your neck. Another thing -  
 Don't rest your head against his rugged chest  
 And don't allow his fingers on your breast 40  
 And delicate nipples. Most of all, concede  
 Not one kiss, but if you should yield indeed,  
 I'll shpw myself your lover and I'll say,  
 "Each kiss of yours belongs to me" and lay  
 Claim to you. All of this I'll clearly see  
 But what's beneath the cloth will tender me  
 A secret fear. No footsie must you play  
 Nor twine your legs around his own nor lay  
 Your thigh alongside his. So much I fear,  
 For I have acted shamelessly and here 50

Am plagued by my own image: hastily  
 My darling girl has often done with me  
 The lovely deed beneath the clothes - an act  
 You won't perform; to prove this as a fact  
 Take off the guilty cloth, and constantly  
 Get him to drink (and yet, despite his plan,  
 Don't kiss him): add more wine, if you are able,  
 But furtively. Then if beside the table  
 He sleeps, undone by wine, then will we brew  
 Our plot to seize the moment. Then, when you  
 Rise with the other gusts and start to go,  
 Make sure you mingle with the crowd, and so

60

We'll find each other. Any part of me  
 That you can touch, touch as you may -feel free!  
 This gives us, though, few hours for our love-game;  
 For night will take you from me all the same.  
 He'll shut you in at night; unhappily  
 I'll weep great, swelling tears (so fittingly)  
 And follow you up to your cruel door.  
 He'll give you kisses and perform much more:  
 I get your kisses secretly, but he  
 Will welcome them from you by stern decree.  
 Be loath (you can!) and hold back each caress.  
 Let love be stingy. If I have success  
 In prayers, he will experience no delight  
 From you; at least, though, I may hope the night  
 Will leave you wanting. But whatever may  
 Occur in the coming night, tell me you'll say  
 With honesty tomorrow that you left  
 Your husband in the morning quite bereft.

70

80

V

The afternoon was hot; at rest I lay  
 In bed; the window was half-closed, as the day  
 Shines through the wood as usual at twilight  
 Or when the morning supercedes the night.  
 Such light becomes chaste girls whose modesty  
 Must hide. Behold, Corinna comes to me,  
 Clad in a tunic with her parted hair  
 Covering her white neck just as the fair  
 Sameramis retired to her bed,  
 And Lais, loved of many, so it's said.  
 I took her tunic off which, although slight,  
 Was barely torn, but still she had to fight

10

To cover up. As one averse to be  
 A victor, she was conquered easily  
 By yielding. On her naked frame I saw,  
 A she stood there before me, not one flaw.  
 What arms, what shoulders, too! I laid my hand  
 Upon them! Nipples seeming to demand  
 To be caressed! Slim, slender! Passing fair  
 With ample flanks! What youthful thighs were there! 20  
 Why name them all? For all that met my sight  
 Was fine. I hugged her naked body tight.  
 Who doesn't know the rest? Tired out, we lay.  
 May I spend many an afternoon this way.

## VI

Unworthy doorman with your cruel chain,  
 Open the stubborn door, for I would fain  
 Beg but a little thing: that you allow  
 A tiny crack through which a man somehow  
 May enter sideways. Love has made of me  
 A skeleton over time; now one may see  
 A slimmer me; he shows you how to glide  
 In secret past the sentries and can guide  
 Your innocent feet. I used to fear the night 10  
 And shadowy ghosts, amazed that anyone might  
 Go out past dusk. Venus's progeny  
 And she herself both laughed and said to me,  
 "You will be brave." At once came love: I dread  
 No longer flitting shadows of the dead  
 Or clutching hands; it's you who causes fright  
 In me – you must be flattered for you might  
 Destroy me with your bolt. That you may view  
 A door wet with my tears, I beg of you -  
 Unlock the cruel chain. Your memory 20  
 Is hazy? Do you not remember me  
 Speaking on your behalf when, trembling  
 Before your mistress, stripped for a cudgelling,  
 You stood there? Sinful man, such courtesy  
 Should be returned in kind, it seems to me.  
 So pay me back. You'll get your wish with ease.  
 Look, night approaches. Break the shackles, please,  
 And be relieved of your long slavery:  
 Don't drink its water for eternity.  
 In vain you hear my prayers, you adamant guard:  
 Your door with solid wood is cruelly barred. 30  
 Barred gates make sense in wartime: what are you

Afraid of when there's peace? What will you do  
 To an enemy who bars a lover? See,  
 It's night, so smash the locks. No soldiery  
 Has come with me: I was alone before  
 Remorseless Love resolved to join me. Nor  
 Could I dismiss him: first I'd have to be  
 Separated from my limbs. Love stayed with me,  
 Some wine about my brows, my wreath askew,  
 My hair all wet. Who'd fear such weapons? Who 40  
 Would not approach me? You're so slow: does sleep,  
 Perhaps (may it come to destroy you!), sweep  
 A lover's words up to the winds? But I  
 Remember earlier, when I would try  
 To hide from you, you watched until midnight.  
 Perhaps your girl lies with you. What delight  
 Compared to me! Meantime, cruel chains, come here.  
 Break off the shackles, for night-time is near.  
 Do I mistake or do your hinges bend  
 Upon the creaking doorposts as they send 50  
 Hoarse sounds of beating? No, I must be wrong:  
 A boisterous wind beats at the door. How long  
 A journey has my hope been borne, alas,  
 By a breeze! If you remember, Boreas,  
 Orythria's rape come here and with a blast  
 Blow down the stubborn doors. The city's fast  
 Asleep! Night's brows with glistening dew are wet.  
 Break off the chains, or I myself am set  
 To assail your lofty house with sword and fire  
 (I have a torch with me!). Night and Desire 60  
 And wine possess first-rate ability:  
 Night has no shame, the other three are free  
 Of fear. I've now tried everything: no threat,  
 No prayer of mine has moved you. Harder yet  
 Than your own doors are you. It's just not right  
 That you should guard a fair girl's door: you might,  
 However, guard a prison. Lucifer  
 Now moves is frosty wheels. Poor mortals stir,  
 Roused by the cock, and go to work. Lie there,  
 O garland torn from my unhappy hair, 70  
 Upon the threshold all night long. When she  
 Sees you there in the morning, you will be  
 A witness of my wasted time. And so  
 Farewell, wherever you are, and as I go,  
 Accept the honour, who unbendingly  
 And wickedly deny a lover – me!  
 Doorposts, your solid wood, cruel and fell,

Your doors, your rigid threshold, too, farewell!

VII

Manacle my hands (for it is only right)  
Till all my lunacy has taken flight,  
If you're a friend: that lunacy caused me  
To strike my mistress. Now in misery  
She weeps. I had been able on that day  
To harm my precious parents, even lay  
Hands on the sacred gods. But should it matter?  
Did not the seven-fold-shielded Ajax scatter  
The flock he slew across the wide grassland?  
Did not Orestes venture to demand 10  
To fight the hidden goddesses when he  
Took vengeance on his mother cruelly?  
So could I tear that carefully-coiffed hair?  
And did the outcome render her less fair?  
For she was fair. Atlanta, I might say,  
Was as fair as she when she went forth to slay  
The beasts of Maenalus, equally so  
Ariadne when she saw swift south winds blow  
The perjured Theseus' vows and sail away 20  
And wept. At chaste Minerva's temple lay  
Cassandra who was just as passing fair  
But for the garland placed around her hair.  
Who didn't call me mad or barbarous?  
But she said nothing, being tremulous,  
Dumb-struck. However, by her silence she  
Displayed reproach, compelling me to see  
Her unseen tears. I could have wished that I  
Had lost my arms – I would have profited by  
That loss. I've been insanely violent 30  
And to my cost, and my own punishment  
Comes from it. What have I to do with you,  
Agents of crime and slaughter? It's their due  
My wicked hands endure. If I had hit  
The paltriest Roman and been flogged for it,  
Would I have a greater right in my girl's case?  
Diomedes left behind him great disgrace:  
He was the first to slaughter a goddess;  
I was the second. His sin, though, was less:  
I hurt my true love, he his enemy.  
Go now and celebrate your victory 40  
And offer up to Jupiter a prayer  
And wreath a garland all around your hair.



Your chariot will be followed by a crowd  
 Of your companions who will shout aloud,  
 "How brave to crush a maid!" Let them all see  
 Her there before you, pale in misery,  
 If her scratched cheeks allow it. Better, though,  
 My teeth had left her neck dark-blue to show  
 Her bruises. If I had been swept away  
 By swelling passion and become the prey 50  
 Of my blind wrath, it was enough for me  
 To shout at my fearful girl, threat temperately  
 And merely tear her tunic to the waist  
 (Her girdle would have served to end my haste).  
 But no, I tore her hair unfeelingly  
 And clawed her innocent cheeks. Distractedly  
 She stood with bloodless cheeks, her face quite wan,  
 Just like the marble stones cut out upon  
 Paros's hills. I saw her lifelessly  
 Quiver and tremble like a poplar tree 60  
 Breeze-blown or like the slender reed that's shook  
 By the mild West Wind or the surface of a brook  
 Stirred by the warm South Wind. Long-held inside  
 Herself, her tears at last began to glide  
 As moisture seeps from snow. Then I began

To feel my guiltiness; those tears that ran  
 Along her cheeks were now my blood. But I  
 Thrice tried before her abjectly to lie -  
 Thrice she rejected me, still full of dread.  
 Avenged, your grief will ebb, so go ahead - 70  
 Scratch at my face; don't hesitate, don't spare  
 To use your nails upon my eyes, my hair.  
 However weak one is, the remedy  
 Is indignation; and, lest there should be  
 Sad signs left of my misdeed, take good care  
 To rearrange and put to rights your hair.

## VIII

There is a crone called Dipsas (lend an ear,  
 Who of a procuress would like to hear).  
 Apr name! Shes never when hangover-free  
 Looked on the dawn. She knows the witchery  
 Of Circe; she can drive back to its head  
 A river; she knows how to whirl the thread  
 Upon her magic wheel; she has a flair  
 For herbs; knows how to use the slime a mare

In heat produces; can accumulate  
 At will clouds in the heavens and create 10  
 A sunny day. If you believe it's true,  
 I've seen stars dripping blood, I've seen blood, too,  
 Ooze from the purple Moon; and I surmise  
 She flits at night in avian disguise;  
 That's what they say. A double pupil dwells  
 In both her eyes; and with long-winded spells  
 She splits the dolid earth, and from their graves  
 Calls forth her predecessors; and she craves  
 To debase chaste bedchambers, never lacked  
 A harmful tongue; by chance I did in fact 20  
 Witness her words; and this I heard her say  
 (My double-doors concealed me): "Yesterday,  
 My dear, do you know you infatuated  
 A rich young man? He stays here, captivated.  
 Why would you not? Your beauteous looks surpass  
 All others; but apt training you, alas,  
 Are lacking. I would have the loveliness  
 Your body shows matched with your happiness:  
 I'll not be poor if you are well-to-do.  
 The star of warlike Mars has damaged you; 30  
 He's gone now. Venus suits you perfectly.  
 When she arrives, her services you'll see.  
 A wealthy lover wants you and he cares  
 About your needs; the way he looks compares  
 With yours; if he won't want to buy you, *he*  
 Should then be bought. She blushed! A blush can be  
 Becoming in a pallid face, but should  
 You feign, it profits you: unfeigned's no good.  
 Look down demurely and your beau assess  
 By what he brings. In Tatius' reign I guess 40  
 The scruffy Sabine women did not long-hair  
 For more than just one spouse. It was among  
 Remote folk Mars's warrior work is done,  
 But Venus rules here. Pretty girls have fun.  
 A chaste girl no man fancies; or if she  
 Is not proscribed by her naivety,  
*She* asks instead. Those lines on your forehead  
 Shake off, for with those wrinkles you will shed  
 A load of sins. Penelope with a bow  
 Tested the strength of all the suitors, though 50  
 A horned one was the best. Clandestinely  
 The circling years glide by us rapidly  
 And flummox us. In usage bronze will shine;  
 A garment that has been well made will pine

To be put on; houses without repair  
 Will age; and without exercise the fair  
 Will, too – and only once or twice won't do,  
 And it's more satisfactory if you  
 Purloin from many: if a dog will prey  
 Upon a whole flock he will take away 60  
 Much more. Your bard gives just new poetry.  
 Why so, when from a lover you will see  
 So many poems? On a golden lyre's strings  
 The god of bards, in a golden garment, sings.  
 You should, for a lover's generosity,  
 Rate him as Homer's better. Believe me,  
 Giving's a clever thing. And do not talk  
 Down to a man who's bought his freedom – chalk  
 Upon the feet's no crime. Don't be misled  
 By those ancestral portraits of the dead 70  
 Insolvent lover, take them all away  
 And leave. A man with handsome looks will say,  
 "Sleep with me" though he has no gift. Then press  
 the man before his lover what largesse  
 Hell give. Don't be too greedy while your net  
 You spread, lest they take flight, but make them sweat  
 Once caught. Pretended love cannot impair:  
 Let him believe you love him, but beware  
 Lest he should rate you less. Often deny  
 Him sex; say Isis' mysteries are nigh; 80  
 Invent a headache. But meet him again  
 Quite soon in case he gets used to the pain  
 And love grows torpid. Let your doorway stay  
 Deaf to a pleader but not turn away  
 One who brings gifts; let him whom you receive  
 Hear the murmurs of complaint from him you leave  
 Outside. Be mad at him you hurt as though  
 You were hurt first. Your blame will quickly go  
 When you with blame repay him. Never be  
 Long angry, though, for animosity 90  
 Ensues from long-held anger. Learn the skill  
 Of crocodile tears and make your lovers spill  
 Tears, too. Should you deceive him, do not fear  
 To perjure for the gods give a deaf ear  
 To love-games. Let no page or clever maid,  
 Who know what gifts are fitting, lend you aid.  
 And ask for little – quite a pile will yourself  
 Heap up if many give you just a few.  
 Let sister, mother, nurse help you as well -  
 Your loot through many hands will quickly swell. 100

Lack reasons for a gift? Show him a cake  
 And say, "Today's my birthday." See you take  
 A rival lover – love will not abide  
 If it lacks brawls. And in your bed provide  
 Proof of his marks, a blue-black neck which he  
 Has covered with love-bites. Especially  
 Let him behold the other's gifts but say  
 He's given none – well, scour the Sacred Way.  
 When you acquired much, ask him to lend  
 You money for yet more (you don't intend  
 To pay him back!). Please him with flattery  
 But hide your thoughts, thus causing injury;  
 Sweet honey screens foul poison. If you glean  
 Some knowledge from what over years I've been  
 Acquiring and the winds don't blow away  
 My words, you will, while I'm still living, say  
 Good things about me and request that I,  
 When I have left this earth, untroubled lie -"  
 As she went on and on, my presence there  
 Was by my very shadow laid quite bare;  
 Her sparse white hair I yearned so much to rip,  
 Her wrinkled cheeks, her runny eyes a-drip  
 With drunken tears. Then may your destiny  
 Be that you live in perpetuity  
 Without a home, possessing not one sou;  
 May thirst and endless winters torture you.

110

120

## IX

All lovers are in arms, believe you me,  
 And Cupid oversees the soldiery.  
 The age for love and warfare is the same;  
 Old soldiers and old lovers prove a shame.  
 Field-marshalls seek strong men, as do the fair  
 Young maids. Those men lie in the open air  
 Beside the gates those they serve all night,  
 A mistress or a general. Those who fight  
 Must tread a lengthy road. If she be gone,  
 An eager lover carries on and on  
 To find her, braving mountains, dashing through  
 Inclement rivers, snowdrifts, too,  
 Nor will he blame fierce winds when he's at sea  
 Or see propitious stars. Who else but he  
 Or a soldier would brave chill nights or deep snow  
 Or rain? One's sent to check upon his foe,  
 The other susses out his enemy,

10

His rival. Both lay siege, but differently -  
 The soldier will a mighty city raid,  
 The other will the door of his harsh maid 20  
 Beset. It's often useful to attack  
 A sleepy foe and strike at folk who lack  
 Weapons; for it was this their enemy slew  
 Rhesus' fierce troops and and stole his horses, too.  
 A husband's sleep's a lover's friend, for he  
 Can then apply with her his weaponry.  
 Always a soldier and a wretched beau  
 Must sneakily past bands of sentries go.  
 Venus and Mars involve uncertainty:  
 The conquered rise again, while those you see 30  
 As deathless fall. So you must never call  
 A lover idle; no, for Love is all  
 Ability and know-how. Miserably  
 Achilles smoulders for the girl that he  
 Abducted (Trojans, strike down, while you may,  
 The Grecian walls!) Lord Hector joined the fray,  
 Leaving Andromache's arms; upon his head  
 His spouse had placed the helmet. He who led  
 The Greeks was by Cassandra's wild array  
 Of Maenad's hair was speechless, so they say; 40  
 Mars, too, was caught within the blacksmith's net,  
 In Heaven a tale the most notorious yet:  
 I used to be lethargic: bed and shade  
 Had lulled my mind, but an attractive maid  
 Changed that and bade me earn the salary  
 That soldiers earn in barracks. Now you see  
 A mighty lover full of spriteliness.  
 So be like me – forget your laziness.

X

Like her from Sparta taken across the sea,  
 Who brought to two husbands disharmony,  
 Or Leda who was hoodwinked by a sly,  
 Lewd man disguised as a creature in the sky,  
 And like Amymone who roamed around  
 Parched Argos as for water she was bound:  
 That's you. For you the eagle and the bull I'd dread  
 Or what great Jove would change to in his stead  
 For love. That fear is gone, that error, too.  
 You don't attract me like you used to do. 10  
 You ask me why I've changed my mind? Well, I  
 Can't stand your nagging me for gifts – that's why.

I loved your body and soul while you remained  
 An innocent, but your beauty now is stained  
 By your ill will. Love is a naked lad  
 Without the shabbiness of age: unclad,  
 He's candid. Why, then, make us pay him cash?  
 He has no clothes in which to put his stash.  
 He and his mother are not fit to fight  
 Fierce wars: pacific gods don't have the right 20  
 To have a soldier's pay. Her client's purse  
 A biddable whore will take but also curse  
 Her grasping pimp's control, reluctantly  
 Performing that which you'd do willingly.  
 If you take mindless cattle as a case  
 In point, it surely would be a disgrace  
 If they were better-natured than mankind.  
 A mare won't ask her mate for gifts, you'll find,  
 Nor will a cow. A ewe is never won  
 By presents from a ram. All said and done, 30  
 Only a woman in her spoils delights,  
 Only a woman hires out her nights,  
 Comes for a price and sells what pleases one  
 Or another, setting payment just for fun.  
 When two enjoy their love-play equally  
 Why should a lover buy while she can be  
 The vendor? In our mutual desire  
 Why should you sell your charms while I must hire  
 Those very charms? A witness' perjury  
 For cash is wrong: the judges similarly 40  
 Should not be bribed. When witnesses are paid  
 By the defense and fortunes can be made,  
 That's base. Your family funds through sex to swelling  
 And for a settled price your face to sell  
 Is likewise base. Our thanks for things unbought  
 Are earned but vile transactions rate as nought  
 And should not have our thanks. A buyer's free  
 From all his bonds. You beauties, don't agree  
 On prices for the favours you'll bestow:  
 No good can come from tainted booty, no. 50  
 No Sabine bracelets brought Tarpeia gain  
 Once on her head weapons began to rain.  
 Eriphyle was stabbed by her own son  
 The cause? A necklace. One can beg from one  
 Who's rich, however; pluck from vines which swell:  
 From the fields of Alcinous one may do well.  
 A poor man has his duty, loyalty,  
 Devotion: what one owns should surely be

Gifts for one's girl. My gift's to glorify  
 Deserving maids. Those I desired, I  
 Made famous by my art. Our jewellery  
 And gold will break and all our clothes will be  
 Mangled, but she my poems extol will live  
 Forever. Not that I don't want to give,  
 It's being asked I hate; so curb your need  
 For what I spurn to give, *then* I'll concede.

60

## XI

Adept at grooming girls' untidy hair,  
 Nape's a lady's maid beyond compare,  
 While in my secret love affairs she's been  
 Invaluable as a go-between.  
 Often when my Corinna was in doubt,  
 She'd send her to me, ferreting things out  
 For me. Tomorrow morn without delay  
 Take to her these wax tablets and, I pray,  
 Avoid obstructions. There is in your breast  
 No flint, no iron, nor - older than the rest -  
 Folly; you too have suffered Cupid's bow,  
 I think: you've seen the marks on me. And so,  
 Tell her "he hopes" if she asks about me;  
 Carry those words I've written flatteringly.  
 Time flies! Quick now! When she's not busy, hand  
 The tablets to her; make her understand  
 That she must read them straightaway. Her eyes  
 And brow watch as she reads: where the future lies  
 A silent face may see. Immediately  
 I need a long reply: I hate to see  
 Clear wax that's nearly empty. Make her squeeze  
 Her lines so that the wax extremities  
 Are reached and hold my eyes. Yet why should she  
 Be wearied with a pen? One word should be  
 Sufficient: 'Come!' I would not then delay  
 To wreathe those winning messages with bay  
 And then position them in the very core  
 Of Venus' temple. I'll write furthermore:  
 'To Venus these true servants were by me,  
 Naso, pledged, though base maples formerly.'

10

20

30

## XII

Weep for me! The sad message has come back;  
 It said, 'Today's impossible, alack!'

An omen surely! Just now, wishing to go,  
 Nape upon her threshold stubbed her toe.  
 Next time pick up your feet more cautiously  
 And I will cross that threshold soberly.  
 Leave, wretched wood, your harsh wax tablets, go  
 Away, you and your mistress' answer 'No!';  
 The bees of Corsica made you, I guess,  
 Collected from long hemlock flowers. Oh yes, 10  
 As if you blushed, steeped in deep dye: that hue  
 Is truly bloody. At the crossroads you  
 Should lie, abortive wood, that you may be  
 Crushed by some wheel. I am convinced that he  
 Who from a tree took you for use elsewhere  
 Was evil – some wretch swaying in the air  
 Hung from that tree, which also offered shade  
 To hoarse horned owls and held eggs to be laid  
 By vultures and screech-owls. Insanity  
 To trust our love and messages, to be 20  
 Read by my girl, to these wax tablets! No,  
 Petitions for bail are more apropos,  
 Read by a stern attorney; they should lie  
 Among the daily trivia whereby  
 A miser grieves his losses. I judge you  
 To be two-faced – that's ominous, that 'two'.  
 May you grow rotten through old age's blight  
 And in some filthy place your wax turn white.

### XIII

Leaving her aged spouse, across the sea  
 There comes the golden-tressed divinity  
 Who in a frozen sky revealed the day.  
 Why do you make such haste, Aurora? Stay:  
 In Memnon's glade let the sacrificial rite  
 Be executed. I myself delight  
 To relish my sweet mistress' soft embrace.  
 My sleep is sound, the air cool on my face,  
 Outside a bird is singing full and clear.  
 Cruel to men and girls, why hasten here? 10  
 Suppress your dewy rains. Before you rise  
 A sailor can the better scan the skies  
 To find his stars and not in ignorance stray  
 Across the sea, though when you've brought the day  
 The traveller leaves his bed reluctantly  
 And the soldier arms himself; you're first to see  
 The husbandman encumbered with his hoe,



The first to call each tardy ox to go  
 Beneath the yoke; you rouse boys and convey  
 Them to their masters that their young hands may 20  
 Endure the savage lash; to court you send  
 The debtor, gussied up, whose case may end  
 Through just one word; no barrister you please,  
 And no solicitor, for both of these  
 You force to further suits; when women start  
 To leave their work, you call them to their art  
 Of weaving once again. I'd bear it all,  
 But who would in the early morning call  
 Girls to awake but one who lies alone?  
 How many times have I been heard to moan 30  
 That night must yield to you and stars not take  
 Flight at your face! I prayed the wind might break  
 Your wheel and cause your steed to fall straight through  
 Thick clouds. Cold one, why hurry? Because you  
 Have black son, is your heart black as well?  
 I wish Tithonus would the true tale tell  
 Of you: in Heaven you'd be the basest she.  
 Because he's so 0much older, him you flee -  
 He hates those morning wheels. But had you held  
 A Cephalus in your arms, you would have yelled, 40  
 'You steeds of night, slow down!' Why should I be  
 Chastised because your spouse is dodderly?  
 Did I advise you marry him? Look here,  
 See how much sleep the Moon gave to her dear,  
 And she's your peer in beauty. Jove, lest he might  
 See you too much, turned into two one night-time  
 For his own pleasure. Now my brawls are hushed -  
 For now you've heard them all. Then Luna blushed,  
 But nonetheless she introduced the day  
 No further but in her usual way. 50

#### XIV

I said, "Don't dye your hair": for you have no  
 Hair now to dye. If you'd just let it grow,  
 How elegant it would be! From side to side  
 It stretched right to your bum and spread out wide.  
 You were afraid to adorn such gossamer hair -  
 Like the woven clothe sunburnt Chinese wear  
 Or the thread the slender spider spins below  
 Some abandoned beam (such delicate work!) although  
 It was not black or gold but had the hue  
 Of both, as, in the valleys moist with dew

Of hilly Ida, the lofty cedar, bare  
 Of bark, possesses. Add to this, your hair  
 Was pliable, with five score styles, no less,  
 To work on, and it caused you no distress.  
 No pin, no comb, could tear your hair, and so  
 Your maid stayed whole, avoiding many a blow;  
 This hair-arranging I have often seen  
 And her maidservant's arms have never been  
 Scratched by a pin. At daybreak, while her hair  
 Was still unkempt, I saw her lying there, 20  
 Half-supine on her purple couch: then she  
 Looked like Thracian Bacchant wearily  
 Lying upon the grass. But, though your tresses  
 Were fine and down-like, how many distresses  
 They suffered! To iron and fire they patiently  
 Submitted: thus a woven curve would be  
 Turned to a twisted knot. I'd cry, "To mar  
 Those locks is shameful: they're fine as they are.  
 Harsh lady, spare your hair and let your heart  
 Be kind: your hair must not be ripped apart. 30  
 Your locks themselves advise the pins you wear."  
 Your splendid hair has perished, splendid hair  
 That Bacchus and Apollo would have been  
 Eager to wear: that painting we've all seen  
 Of naked Venus – well, I would compares  
 Her looks to yours. Why protest that your hair,  
 So much abused, is gone? Why do you keep  
 Your glass close to those locks and sadly weep,  
 You silly? Don't look at yourself that way:  
 Forget your former self so that you may 40  
 Cheer up. No mistress' spells of witchery  
 Have harmed you, so no crone of Thessaly  
 Have harmed you. The gods forbend you've caught some pox.  
 No vicious tongue has threatened your thick locks.  
 The loss is your own fault: upon your head  
 You placed the poison. Now, in your hair's stead,  
 Will Germany send you captive scalps to grace  
 That head – a present from a conquered race.  
 When someone likes your hair you'll blush and say,  
 "I'm praised for locks which come from far away 50  
 It's some Kraut girl he praises now, not me,  
 But I recall when the celebrity  
 Was ll my own." Her tears she scarce contains,  
 Alas, and masks the innocent cheeks she stains  
 With blushes. Her old hair lies on her knees,  
 Unworthy of such a place. Be of comfort, please:

Cast frowns away – it's not beyond repair.  
You'll soon be looked upon with your own hair.

XV

O gnawing Envy, why do you call me  
Lazy and call my witty poetry  
The work of an idle pen, and that I don't,  
While with the strength of youth, prefer the wont  
Of my forefathers, labouring to earn  
A prize in dusty war and never learn  
The law with its windy words and prostitute  
My voice in the thankless forum? that pursuit  
Is mortal; I seek immortality -  
To be recited universally. 10  
While Tenedos and Ida yet abide  
And rapid Simois yet meets the tide,  
Homer will live; while grapes with juices swell  
And what is scythed, Callimachus as well  
The world will sing: though he lacks inspiration  
He's strong in art. Sophocles's reputation  
Will not lose force. Always the moon and sun  
Will be Aratus' subjects. While there's one  
Sly slave, harsh father, one enticing whore,  
Foul procuress, Menander lives. What's more 20  
Artless Ennius and lively Accius  
Will evermore remain illustrious.  
Who in the future will not recognize  
Venus, the *Argo* and the golden prize  
Sought out by Captain Jason? At that time  
When Earth's obliterated, the sublime  
Lucretius' works will die, but not before.  
The *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and Aeneas' war  
Will still be read while Rome has sovereignty  
Over the world. Tibullus, you will be 30  
Yet known for elegant verse while Cupid's bow  
And passions live; Gallus, whom all men know  
From West to East, and Lycoris, so renowned  
As well, will live. So poems will yet be found  
While flint and ploughshares wear out finally.  
May kings and their triumphs yield to poetry,  
And the welcoming bank of the gold-carrying  
River Tagus. Let every tawny thing  
Delight the mob. Let Phoebus, though, supply  
Me with Castalian water, and may I 40  
Have cold-abhorring myrtle round my headache

And be by many anxious lovers read.  
 Envy feeds on the living: she's at rest  
 After they're dead, when everyone is blest  
 With honours that are worthy of them: so  
 When finally into those flames I go  
 And am consumed, I'll know that a large piece  
 Of me will still exist and never cease.

## BOOK II

### I

Thee elegies, too, have been composed by me,  
 Paelignian Naso, bard of levity.  
 Love ordered them; grave folk, give them a pass:  
 Love poems are not for you. Let a warm lass,  
 Engaged to marry, and a lad who's greenery  
 In love read me, and let some youth who's been  
 Struck by that bow as I have been and see  
 The flames of love and say, long wonderingly,  
 'How did that poet learn to document  
 My troubles?' I recall that I once spent 10  
 Time on celestial wars and on Gyges,  
 The hundred-headed (that's enough of these!),  
 Earth's fell revenge and that enormous heap  
 Of Pelion on Ossa: and the sweep  
 Of clouds and Jupiter's thunderbolt that he  
 Might heave it through the heavens accurately.  
 My girlfriend shut the door: then I omitted  
 Jove and the bolt, for he no longer fitted  
 My genius. Beg pardon, Jove: no more  
 Did I approve your weapons: a closed door 20  
 Involves a greater bolt. My elegies,  
 Charming and light, I've now resumed, for these  
 Comprise my weapons. Gentle words will thaw  
 A cruel door, and poetry can draw  
 The blood and moon, recall those steeds, so white,  
 Of the sun and cause the snakes to cease their fight  
 And turn streams to their source; through poetry  
 Doors yield, for she can claim a victory  
 Over their solid locks. What was my need  
 To sing of swift Achilles? What, indeed, 30  
 Were the two sons of Atreus to me?  
 And he who roamed so many years as he  
 Had fought at Troy? Or weeping Hector, flung  
 Out of his chariot? Bu a girl who's sung

For her good looks is a poet's prize. My pay  
From her is great: famed heroes, keep away.  
I do not want your thanks. Fair ladies, see  
y poems over which bright Love has sovereignty.

## 11

Your mistress, Bagoas, is sore that you  
Keep watch on her, so I would like a few  
Apt words - then take a break. Just yesterday  
I saw her where the portico's display  
Of Danaus can be seen. She's cute, so I  
Sent her a note and asked her for a reply;  
'I mustn't', she timidly wrote. I asked, 'Why's that?'  
It was your jealousy, she answered flat.  
Watchman, don't relish hate: those we despise  
We wish were dead. Her husband is not wise 10  
Either: why toil to watch when, if you don't,  
Nothing is lost? Let him pursue his wont  
And, since she please many, passionately  
Think that she's chaste. The furtive liberty  
You give her she'll give back. You'd wish to hear  
Of her intrigue? She's in your debt! You fear  
The truth? Dissemble! When a note she'll scan,  
Think that it's from her mother. When a man  
Shows up, you'll know him better presently. 20  
She'll go to see a female friend, whom she  
Pretends is sick. Let her, for in your mind  
She *is*. If she is late, don't let the grind  
Of long delay drain you, for you may snore,  
Head on your knees. And do not hanker for  
The news at Isis' shrine; don't fear that she  
Will visit theatres. One will constantly  
Reap gains from knowledge, for silence entails  
Such little toil; he pleases her and sails  
About the house and doesn't feel the lash;  
the others lie about like so much trash. 30  
Invent pretexts to mask reality;  
What both men have decided, so will she.  
Her spouse frown but the darling girl will do  
Just what sh wants to, but meanwhile, with you,  
She dreams up arguments and weeps false tears  
And calls you names. The charges that she hears  
From you she will demolish, so impeach  
Her falsely and then you esteem will reach  
New heights as will your savings - you'll be free,

If you do this, in no time. Do you see 40  
 Those chained informers? Well, the traitorous  
 Deserve a filthy prison. Tantalus  
 Sought water while *in* water and essayed  
 To grasp escaping fruit – the price he paid  
 For a garrulous tongue. While overzealously  
 Protecting Juno, his own destiny  
 Ion cut short. I've seen a man enchained  
 In cruel fetters, having been arraigned  
 Because he'd mentioned his adultery  
 To the husband -quite a lesser penalty 50  
 Than he deserved for such an evil tongue  
 Brought injury to two – the husband stung  
 With grief, the girl defamed. Believe you me,  
 No husband takes delight in felony,  
 Nor anyone, though he should hear of it:  
 If he's blasé, you'll hurt him not one whit;  
 If he's in love, you'll cause him misery.  
 Blame's hard to prove though clear for all to see:  
 Her judge decides the verdict. Though he spies  
 The evidence, he'll still believe her lies 60  
 Seeing her tears, he'll weep himself and say,  
 "That garrulous fellow will the penalty pay."  
 Why fight the odds? His is the victory,  
 You feel the blow, she sits upon his knee.  
 I'm not for felony nor do I yearn  
 To mingle poisonous herbs nor do I burn  
 For a sword but just to love you harmlessly:  
 And what is easier than such a plea?

### III

You serve your mistress – neither mad nor man,  
 Poor thing, and Venus' games you never can  
 Enjoy. Who has performed the butchery  
 Of lopping off lads' testicles should be  
 Thus treated too. If love had been a part  
 Of your old life, you'd serve a lover's heart  
 More willingly. You were not born to ride  
 Or carry weapons, for you cannot guide  
 A spear upon its path. It's only mentioned  
 Who do those things: such hopes abandon, then. 10  
*Your* standards are your mistress's. So serve  
 That mistress and her thanks you'll then deserve.  
 What use are you without her? She is fair  
 And ripe for sexual sport. A lack of care

Her beauty does not justify. Though you  
 Irk her, she could deceive you, and when two  
 Desire something, something will be done.  
 And so I beg of you that she be won,  
 For it is fitting: therefore hear my prayer  
 While in my service you have time to spare. 20

#### IV

I'd not defend my own mendacity  
 Nor fight to favour my malignity.  
 So, if it brings some profit, I confess,  
 Madly admitting all my wickedness.  
 I hate what I desire. To bear the thing  
 One ought to put aside is harrowing.  
 I cannot school myself. I'm borne away,  
 A storm-tossed bark. I cannot surely say  
 One girl will satisfy me. The reasons why  
 I love are countless. If I should espy 10  
 A girl with modest, downcast eyes, then she  
 Inflames me, ambushed by her chastity;  
 Should she be bold, I'm caught by her finesse  
 In expectation of her friskiness  
 In bed. If she is harsh and imitates  
 A rigid Sabine, she dissimulates,  
 I'll think. She's learned? Her profundity  
 Will please me. Homespun? Her simplicity  
 Will please me also. Should a girl opine  
 Callimachus' verse is rougher far than mine, 20  
 She likes me: then I'll like her instantly.  
 Even if one should hate my poetry,  
 I'll long to clasp her. If one walks with grace  
 I'll like that movement. Should another face  
 Me harshly, at a lover's touch she'll be  
 Softer. If she should sing admirably,  
 I'll long to kiss her as she warbles. One  
 With plaintive notes will make her fingers run  
 Across her lyre: what man could not adore  
 Such talent? Yet another pleases for 30  
 Her gestures as she dances sinuously:  
 I love them all, and so forget about me,  
 But in her presence place Hippolytus  
 And instantly he'll be a Priapus.  
 You're like an ancient heroine, so tall  
 That on your bed you may stretch out and sprawl,

Another's short – you both entice me so:  
 My prayers are answered by both high and low.  
 Say she's uncultured: well, culture may be  
 Acquired. She's finely dressed? Her quality 40  
 Is thus revealed. A girl with golden hair  
 Attracts me, as does one whose hue is fair,  
 Even a dark-tressed girl. A neck snow-white  
 May hide dark hair – Leda was such a sight.  
 Fair Dawn had black hair. I to every tale  
 Adapt myself. I by the young and hale  
 Am tempted and by the mature: of these  
 One's beauty and one's other qualities  
 Tempt me. Of Rome's girls, when all's said and done,  
 I have an appetite for every one. 50

V

No love's so vital (Cupid, keep away!)  
 That I for death would resolutely pray.  
 When I recall, though, all your sins, then I,  
 O you who spoiled my life, desire to die!  
 No intercepted tablets show to me  
 Your deeds, your presents given secretly  
 Don't censure you. I wish my dispute could  
 Lose me the case! Why is my cause so good?  
 Fortunate is the man who valorously  
 Defends his love while a 'not guilty' plea 10  
 Comes from his mistress' lips. He's merciless  
 And yet too sensitive to his distress  
 Who yearns to trounce in bloody victory  
 His girl. I've sadly watched, when you thought me  
 Asleep, you sin while soused in wine, despite  
 My own sobriety: within my sight  
 Your brows spoke volumes, and your nodding too.  
 Your eyes weren't mum, while on the table yourself  
 Wrote letters, and your words I recognized -  
 They meant specific things, although disguised. 20  
 The table now lacked many a youthful guest  
 And I beheld much kissing, lips compressed  
 To lips (her tongue, it seemed so very plain,  
 Was active, too): such kisses weren't germane  
 To sisterly regard: no, they displayed  
 The actions of a passionate man and maid,  
 The sort that Phoebus never, you'd suppose,  
 Ws given by Diana - rather those



That Venus often gave to Mars. I said  
 Loudly, "What are you doing there? Why spread 30  
 My joys around? I claim authority  
 Over my girl. That which belongs to me  
 Is yours as well. Why should there be a third  
 In our relationship?" All this she heard,  
 The burden of my grief. In shame a blush  
 Showed on her face, as a young girl will flush  
 With her intended, as Aurora's hue  
 Above us, as with your charmed horses you  
 Appear, o Moon, as Libyan women stain  
 Assyrian ivory that it may remain 40  
 Unyellowed, and she never looked so fair:  
 The grief became her, and I, then and there,  
 Hungered to tear that hair, done up so well,  
 And slap her tender cheeks. My strong arms fell,  
 However, when I saw her face, for she  
 Became her own defense. I, recently  
 A savage beast, and begged of her to treat  
 Me with more kisses that would be as sweet  
 As those she gave before. Then laughing, she  
 With all her heart obliged me beautifully 50  
 With kisses that were able to repel  
 Jove's angry three-pronged bolt. I was in hell  
 That others might enjoy such bliss, for they  
 Were so much better than I tried to say.  
 And something new was there, it seemed to me.  
 It irked that that there was too much ecstasy,  
 Our tongues so intertwined. Not this one thing  
 Concerned me: no, what has me worrying  
 Is something that's been added – something more.  
 How could she learn what she'd not known before 60  
 Except in bed? Some teacher, then, has earned  
 A splendid prize from what she now has learned.

## VI

Her parrot, mimic from the Indian strand,  
 Is dead; attend her grave, you avian band,  
 And beat yr wings against your breasts and tear  
 You tender cheeks; in place of human hair,  
 Claw at your feathers, chant a lengthy song.  
 Philomela, your complaint was finished long  
 Ago against king Tereus; turn your grief elsewhere  
 And focus it upon a bird that's rare.  
 A mighty but an ancient cause of woe

Is Itys. All you birds who swiftly go 10  
 Across the air and you especially,  
 Her friend the dove, express your misery.  
 They were great pals and, right up to the end,  
 Each to the other was a loyal friend.  
 Just like Pylades to Orestes, she,  
 Parrot, while she could, kept you company.  
 But your devotion, your unusual hue,  
 Your clever voice that told the world that you  
 Could mimic anything, the joy you brought  
 To my Corinna – all has come to nought. 20  
 Unhappy glory of the avian race,  
 You're dead indeed. You surely could disgrace  
 The fragile emerald, your Punic beak  
 Spotted with saffron. You would ever speak  
 More voices than all other beasts of the air.  
 You lisped back words as well. You've had your share  
 Of envy. You have not waged wars but been  
 A garrulous lover of all things serene.  
 Quails fight among themselves, and that perhaps  
 Is why they often reach old age. Just scraps 30  
 of food you eat, for you would rather speak -  
 That's why you rarely opened wide your beak:  
 Nuts were your food and poppy-seeds would make  
 You sleep and with plain water you would slake  
 Your thirst. The gluttonous vulture, swooping kite  
 And jackdaw that possesses the foresight  
 To augur rain, the raven, enemy  
 Of armed Minerva, destined yet to see  
 Nine generations, live. The parrot, though,  
 Which apes the human voice, must quickly go 40  
 To Hades, that fine gift from far away  
 The best must be the greedy robber's prey.  
 The worst proliferate. For Thersites  
 Saw Protesilaus' mournful obsequies,  
 And while his brothers lived on, Hector died.  
 Why speak of all the supplications sighed  
 By my meek girl, for they were swept away  
 By storms across the sea. The seventh day  
 Arrived, although the last that you would see,  
 Fate's distaff bare. But incredulity 50  
 Greeted your listless tongue, for as you died,  
 That very tongue "Farewell, Corinna!" cried.  
 Black holm-oak blooms within a grave below  
 The Elysian hill and grass will ever grow  
 In that moist earth. That setting, so it's said,

Where ominous birds are all prohibited,  
 If yo believe my words, has been assigned  
 Only for pious birds: there, one may find  
 Innocuous swans pasturing here and therefore  
 And the phoenix, that immortal bird so rare; 60  
 The peacock show its feathers, while the dove  
 Cuddles there with her mate in wifely love.  
 The parrot, welcomed by this flock of birds,  
 Translates the chirping into his own words.  
 His bones lie underneath a massive mound,  
 Yet just some little fitting lines are found:  
 I PLEASED MY MISTRESS, BUT NOW HERE I REST.  
 OF ALL THE CHIRPING BIRDS I SPOKE THE BEST.

## VII

So should some new charge always be my fate?  
 Though I may win, it's fighting that I hate.  
 Should I attend the marble theatre, you  
 Will pick out one of many women who  
 say is grieving you, and should a fair  
 Maid watch me with a silent aspect, there  
 You see a hidden sign. Should I commend  
 A girl, my luckless hair you try to rend,  
 If I find fault with her, you always think  
 I'm feigning. If my colour's rosy pink, 10  
 You'll say I'm cold towards you. Should it be  
 Pallid, another girl's distressing me.  
 I wish I knew my fault. Those who deserve  
 Their punishment will meet it with reserve.  
 You charge me rashly, trusting what in fact  
 Is just not true, preventing the impact  
 Of all your wrath. That long-eared ass you see  
 Constantly beaten walks unhurriedly.  
 Skillful Cypassis, who adorns your head  
 Of hair, is charged to have defiled your bed 20  
 With me (another crime!). Imagine me,  
 If I *have* sinned, as one whose intimacy  
 Was not with such a common lass. For who  
 With a freeborn background would prefer to do  
 The act of love and clasp a back that's red  
 With blows? Besides, she titivates your head  
 Of hair and serves you well. Your maid I'd woo,  
 Your loyal maid? And have her tell to you  
 I spurned her? I, by Venus and her son,  
 Am innocent of what you say I've done.

## VIII

Expert hair-stylist, who can style one's tresses  
A thousand different ways, only goddesses  
Should be your care, Cypassis. Innocent  
You're not in our snatched tryst. More pertinent  
To me than to your mistress. Who has stumbled  
On our affair? It's clear that we've been rumbled -  
Hos did Corinna know? Did I turn red?  
Did something that I inadvertently said  
Give us away? Wherefore did I maintain  
That one who sleeps with a maid is barely sane? 10  
Achilles loved Briseis; a priestess  
Attracted a Mycenaean king, no less,  
And both those men were greater far than I:  
If both these maids were fit for kings, then why  
Should I believe that it were base for me  
To love you? She looked at me angrily,  
You blushed all over. But I used my head,  
If you remember, and I coolly said  
That Venus knew my loyalty (decree,  
O goddess, that across the Carpathian Sea 20  
My pure mind's perjury be borne away  
By warm south winds), so, for my sang-froid, pay  
Me back and sleep with me today, swart maid.  
Why shake your head, pretending to be afraid  
Of some new matter? Such ingratitude!  
One good thing from your mistress has ensued  
For you. If you deny this foolishly,  
Before you do, I will confess what we  
Have done together and admit my crimes,  
Where I was with you and how many times. 30  
Cypassis, all of this to her I'll tell -  
How many ways, and what each was as well.

## IX

My anger at you I cannot portray  
Enough, young Cupid. O the lazy way  
You irk my heart! Why do you punish me  
Who never left your ranks and yet must be  
A wounded soldier? Why does your torch burn,  
Your arrows each my friends? Netter to earn  
Esteem by conquering those who fight. Look here -  
When Telephus was wounded by a spear,

Achilles healed him. Animals that flee  
 The hunter stalks and captures, but then he 10  
 Seeks others. Your arms we, your convertites,  
 Have felt, but with an enemy who fights'  
 You're slow to act. What happiness is there  
 In wounding naked bones? Well, I'm stripped bare  
 By Love. So many lads, and lasses too,  
 Lack Love. Go, seek a triumph there and you  
 You'll gain esteem (Rome even now would be  
 Full of straw huts and if her vitality  
 Had not been sprung upon all of mankind).  
 The soldier, now war-weary, is assigned 20  
 A country home, old ships are docked in a quay,  
 Racehorses put to pasture when they're free  
 Of racing, while the veteran his sword  
 Puts down and gets his staff as his reward:  
 T, too, through many trysts have earned release:  
 It's time I was allowed to live in peace.

X

Should God say, 'Give up love', I would say no:  
 A girl's a nuisance, but a sweet one, though.  
 When I am weary and my armour dead,  
 I'm by some mental whirlwind onward led.  
 Just as a hard-mouthed steed in frantic fight  
 Rears off his master who is holding tight  
 In vain the foaming reins, just as, about  
 To touch the shore, a ship is hurled back out  
 By winds, so I by an inconstant blow  
 From Cupid am often borne back, and lo! 10  
 Bright Love with his familiar weaponry  
 Is back. So pierce me, boy: here you see me  
 A willing, naked target; in your bow  
 Lies all your strength and power: it's as though  
 Your arrows shoot themselves. They all know me  
 Better than their own quiver. Sad is he  
 Who sleeps all night and calls that sleep a prize  
 Beyond all others. Fool, for in my eyes  
 It apes cold death for death will give you leave  
 To rest forever. Let my girl deceive 20  
 Her man (for hope will cause great joy in me);  
 Nay, let her mix both brawls and flattery:  
 Thus I'll enjoy her, yet I'll be kicked out  
 As often. Through Cupid Mars is in doubt  
 Though Cupid, his stepson, will always be

The causer of his wars. Inconstancy  
 Is Cupid's stock-in-trade – he's more unsteady  
 Than are his wings, and he is ever ready  
 To give or stifle joy. If you hear me,  
 Cupid and your fair mother, grant my plea - 30  
 Establish in my unforsaken heart  
 Your reign: now be subjected to each dart,  
 You all-too-fickle crowd of girls: and thus,  
 Cupid, you'll be revered by all of us.

## XI

Graecinus, I recall that you told me  
 No man could love two women equally.  
 I am deceived, unarmed as well, through you,  
 Because, behold! Disgracefully I do.  
 They both are fair and cultured, and I pass  
 On saying which one is the cleverer lass.  
 They're equally attractive and my pleasure  
 Is in the two of them in equal measure.  
 Just like a ship by adverse breezes tossed,  
 I stray and, loving both of them, am lost. 10  
 Venus, my endless griefs why do you double?  
 Can't you fins one to keep me out of trouble?  
 Why add stars to the sky, leaves to the trees,  
 Why add more water to the deep-blue seas?  
 Yet it is better than to loveless be:  
 So let my foes be cursed with misery,  
 My Fate let *them* lie in an empty bed,  
 Their limbs in unrestrictive fashion spread.  
 May fierce Love rouse me from my lethargy  
 And may my bed hold someone else but me. 20  
 Let her spoil me: if one is not sufficient,  
 Then add another one. I am proficient,  
 Agile and strong and powerful, though light.  
 Passion will to my body add some bite.  
 I've never failed a girl: lasciviously  
 I've spent the night and, full of energy,  
 Was ready in the morning. He is blessed  
 Who, while in Venus' lists, goes to his rest.  
 So may I die that way. A soldier, too,  
 Should meet his death when he is run straight through 30  
 With spears and gains renown eternally;  
 So let the greedy seek prosperity  
 And, on a weary voyage, find that they  
 Are shipwrecked and must for their avarice pay

By drinking brine; myself, though, when I die  
 May I be caught by Venus so that I  
 Am taken in the act. When I'm interred  
 May someone weeping for my death be heard  
 To comment to his friends, 'He died as he  
 Has lived his life on earth – appropriately.'

40

## XI

That ship that from the Pelian pine was made  
 Was first to teach the sea-ways as she strayed  
 Amid the waves to bring the golden fleece  
 Among the sharp and perilous rocks to Greece.  
 To bar long sea-quests, would the *Argo* had drunk  
 Funereal brine and in the sea had sunk!  
 Corinna flees our bed and happy home  
 And plans across deceptive seas to roam  
 For you I dread all winds – the frigid North,  
 The South, the East, the West – as you go forth. 10  
 There'll be no cities there, no woods for you  
 To gaze at, only one vast hostile blue.  
 There are no fragile sea-shells far from land,  
 No pretty stones: they're on the thirsty strand.  
 Fair girls, walk on it (there, all will be well;  
 Beyond lies danger). So let others tell  
 You of the raging winds which fiercely fight  
 Against each other and the waves that bight  
 Both Scylla and Charybdis, the series 20  
 Of sharp Ceraunian rocks and the Syrtes,  
 The greater and the lesser. So believe  
 What people say: no tempest can deceive  
 You then. One looks back at the shore too late  
 As, cables loosed, the keel at a hurried rate  
 Glides to the open sea. Then anxiously  
 The sailor shakes at the hostility  
 Brought by the winds – it feels like death to him.  
 But if Triton should shake up, on a whim,  
 The beaten waves, your colour would drain away.  
 To fecund Leda's noble stars you'd pray 30  
 And say, 'He's happy who would linger yet  
 In his own land.' For it's a safer bet  
 To stay in bed and read your books and play  
 The Thracian lyre. But if the things I say  
 Are cast away by swift storms, nonetheless  
 Let Galatea look with kindness  
 Upon your ship. Nereus, you and your kindness

Will toss my girl about - a grievous sin.  
 Go, think of me, and let the winds not fail  
 When you return back home, and may your sail 40  
 Meet with a stronger breeze. May Nereus swell  
 The ocean to our shores; the wind as well  
 I pray will blow this way and drive the sea  
 Hither. As to yourself, your prayer must be  
 That the West Wind only should be of avail  
 And you must lend aid to the swelling sail.  
 The first to see your vessel from the shore,  
 I'll say. 'She's bringing her whom I adore!'  
 I'll hug you tight and kiss you desperately,  
 And for your safe return a bests shall be 50  
 Slaughtered. A couch we'll make out of the sand,  
 Some reeds will be our board. Ten, glass in hand,  
 You'll tell me many things - how you were near  
 Capsized and, in your hast, you didn't fear  
 The hateful nights and winds that headlong blow.  
 I will believe all that you say, although  
 It may be false: why should my hopes not be  
 Thus flattered? In his splendid majesty  
 Up in the sky may Lucifer, shining bright,  
 As soon as may be bring that glorious sight.

## XII

Go, wreath my brows in triumph: victory  
 Is mine! Behold, Corinna's back with me.  
 Her spouse, her guard, her door kept us apart  
 Lest they could not contain her by their art.  
 It is a special victory for it  
 Has yielded me a bloodless benefit -  
 No shallow wells, no narrow ditch to cross,  
 Merely a captured girlfriend. For Troy's loss  
 After ten years, how much acclaim was due  
 Agamemnon out of that great retinue 10  
 Of soldiers? I gained all my glory, none  
 Partaking of it, for the day I won,  
 As the commander, private, cavalry,  
 The standard-bearer and the infantry,  
 No luck involved. Triumph, attend me here:  
 You are all mine. Nor is there any fear  
 Of new wars. If Helen had not been snatched,  
 Europe and Asia would in peace be matched.  
 The Lapiths and the Centaurs, disgracefully  
 Made drunk by a woman, turned to enmity 20



And fought. A woman in Latinus' reign  
Drove Trojans to new wars; and, yet again,  
Women in Rome, still in her infancy,  
Gave to their fathers savage weaponry.  
I've seen bulls fighting over a snow-white  
Heifer who, as she gazed upon that sight,  
Inflamed them. Me too Cupid's bade to be  
A soldier but without the butchery.

XIII

Rashly she she her body's unborn weight,  
And now Corina lies in a fearful state,  
Worn out. She did a deed unknown to me:  
I should be angry but anxiety  
Has killed my wrath. Of me she has conceived -  
I think, though many times I have believed  
What others doubt. Isis, who haunts the land  
Of Paraetionium and Canopus's strand  
Near genial fields, Mamphis, palmy Pharon.  
And where the speedy river Nile runs on 10  
IN abroad channel to open sea  
Through seven harbours, hear my desperate plea  
By your *sistrum*, by pure Anubis (may  
Your sacred rites be cherished every day  
By holy Osiris, may the slow snake guide  
In circles round your altar, at your side  
Horned Apis), bless us here, redeeming two  
By first redeeming only me, for your  
Will save my girl, she me. On certain days  
She worshipped you, while Gallic priests your bays  
Moistened. To girls in labour you would lend  
Your pity while their bodies would distend  
With tardy growth. Be kind and hear my plea:  
She's worthy of your generosity.  
I dressed in white, shall bring incense and place  
It on your smoking shrine; before your face  
I'll lay my votive gifts, and then I'll write  
NASO HAS SAVED CORINNA. If it's right  
To give advice to one in terror wrought,  
It is enough this battle to have fought.

XIV

What joy is there for girls to be battle-free  
And shun joining ranks with their weaponry,

If they by their own weapons suffer so  
 And, all unwittingly, are their own foe?  
 Whoever first taught girls infanticide  
 Should by her very weaponry have died.  
 To ward off belly-lines, would you be bold  
 In the arena? If mothers of old  
 Had acted thus, humanity would have died  
 And she would need another to provide 10  
 A second generation in a world  
 Empty once more with stones that would be hurled  
 To fashion us. Priam's great treasury  
 Who would have crushed if the goddess of the sea  
 Had spurned bearing her body's lawful weight?  
 If Ilia's choice had been to liquidate  
 The twins within her swollen belly, we  
 Would not be subjects of Rome's mastery.  
 If pregnant Venus had denied the birth  
 Of Aeneas, there would have been a dearth 20  
 Of Caesars. You, a beauty yet unborn,  
 Would not be here on earth had you been torn  
 Out of your mother's womb. I, who would be  
 Better dead by making love, would not now see  
 This world if I'd been aborted. While they still  
 Increase, why do you steal the grapes and fill  
 Your hands with unripe apples cruelly?  
 Allow all things to grow quite naturally.  
 Delaying is a trifling price to pay  
 To be alive. Why do you delve, I pray, 30  
 Inside yourself and evil poisons give  
 To one who is not destined now to live?  
 Medea shed her children's blood, and we  
 Blame Itys' mother for the butchery  
 She wrought upon him – retribution paid,  
 Each to her spouse, but who was it who made  
 You maim yourself? No tigress in her lair  
 In Armenia and no lioness would dare  
 To their young. Not with impunity  
 Do young girls do this, for this butchery 40  
 Can kill them too. They die and then, their hair  
 Unloosed, they're taken to the pyre and there  
 Folk cry out, 'She deserves it.' But I pray  
 That breezes will blow all my words away.  
 This is her only sin: o gods, relent  
 And let the second bring her punishment.

XV

Ring, who'll enhance my fair girl's hand and show  
 Only the giver's love for her, now go,  
 A pleasing gift. May she immediately  
 Slip you around your finger joyfully.  
 Fit her as you fit me. Encompassing  
 Her finger aptly. O you lucky ring  
 To have her touch you: I am envious!  
 I'd love to learn the art of Proteus  
 Or Circe and be you: lady, when I'd  
 Desire to touch your breasts and reach inside 10  
 Your tunic, from your finger's narrow hold  
 I'd slip and cleverly creep into that fold.  
 To seal our secret letters, lest wax stuck  
 To the gem, I first would have a lover's luck  
 To be touched by my fair girl's moist lips, lest  
 The sealing makes me painfully distressed.  
 If you would store me somewhere, I'll deny  
 To go and cling tight to your finger. I  
 Shall not disgrace you so that you won't keep  
 Me on your finger. Wear me when you steep 20  
 Your body in the shower. My cock will swell  
 At your nude frame, though being a ring as well.  
 In vain! Go, little gift: my loyalty  
 Let her believe, receiving you from me.

## XVI

I'm at Sulmo. A region that embraces  
 A third of Paelignian country and it graces  
 The land with healthy waters. Though the earth  
 Is fissured by the sun at each new birth  
 Of seasons and the Dog-Star violently  
 Then flashes, the Paelignian territory  
 Is washed by limpid rills; the grass is green  
 And fertile; in abundance grain is seen,  
 And even more grape-vines, while here and there 10  
 Are olive trees, and through the meadows where  
 Streams run is grassy turf that lies above  
 The moist ground. Yet I am not with my love,  
 Or, rather, she who *stirs* my love is far  
 From here, though love is here. Were I a star  
 Between the Twins, I would not wish the sky  
 To part us two. May they restlessly lie  
 In rocky ground who built in every land  
 Long roads: they should have made men understand

Their girls should travel with them. Should I pass  
 Across the frozen, windy Alps, my lass 20  
 Beside me, I would travel comfortably;  
 With her I'd brave the Syrtes on the Sea  
 Of Libya and the hostile winds; I'd face,  
 Beneath the maiden's crotch, that monster race  
 That barks and Malea's bays; I would not dread  
 Her who sucks ships down to the ocean's bed,  
 But should the windy powers of the sea  
 Conquer and take away the gods who'd be  
 Our saviours, put your snowy arms around  
 My neck and, though indeed we will be drowned, 30  
 The burden will be sweet. (Hero's young beau,  
 Leander, often swam to her, although  
 He would have crossed the strait successfully  
 One final time, but it was hard to see)  
 Although wit vine-rich fields I am beset,  
 Although the meadows are with rivers wet  
 And farmers irrigate the fields, although  
 Upon the trees' leaves frigid breezes blow,  
 Without you I'd not think to glorify  
 The healthy features of this place, where I 40  
 Was born: I'd rather praise the Scythian land,  
 The country of the fierce Cilicians and  
 The rainy land of Britain or where stood  
 Prometheus on the rocks blushed with his blood.  
 The elm-tree and the vine are lovingly  
 Connected: why am I so frequently  
 Separated from my mistress? You averred  
 You's always be with me: you gave your word  
 And swore by me and by your eyes, which are  
 My stars: but young girls' words are carried far, 50  
 Lighter than falling leaves, as we may see,  
 By wind and waves. If you still care for me,  
 Abandoned now, to your promises add deeds,  
 Supply your little chariot with steeds  
 And whip their manes. Steep mountains, please subside  
 And let your valleys safe passage provide.

## XVII

Who thinks that being slave to a girl is base  
 Convicts me. May I be yet in disgrace,  
 While Venus scorches me more moderately.  
 Since I'm to be a fair girl's prize, my plea  
 Is for a gentle one! She's arrogant

Who's beautiful: Corinna's violent  
 Due to her looks. Why does she know (alas!)  
 Herself so well? Surely it is her glass  
 That shows her haughtiness, unless she's caught  
 Sight of her features when she's not yet brought  
 Her make-up to them. If your face supplies  
 Your power (a face born to engage my eyes!),  
 Don't scorn me in comparison: one may  
 Equate both great and lesser things. They say  
 Calypso loved a mortal and detained  
 The man against his will; it is maintained  
 A sea-nymph with King Peleus shared a bed,  
 And Numa with Egeria and, it's said,  
 Vulcan coupled with Venus, although he  
 Came from his anvil limping dreadfully.  
 My elegiac verses, too, are lame  
 And yet the epic line fits, all the same,  
 Its shorter mate. Light of my life, take me  
 On any terms you like, for you should be  
 Your bed-mate's arbiter. I'll bring no slight  
 To you nor have my absence cause delight  
 In you. Instead of riches I possess  
 Songs that bring cheer and many girls confess  
 A wish for fame through me. One known to me  
 Reports that she's Corinna: what would she  
 Not give to make that true? The Eurotas  
 And paper-bearing Po could never pass  
 Between the same banks. No maid else will fit  
 My verse: you are the one cause of my wit.

10

20

30

## XVIII

Achilles' wrath you're celebrating for  
 The first time as you write of the Trojan War,  
 Macer, while I in lazy dalliance dwell,  
 Sweet Love forbidding nobler themes to swell.  
 I've often told my girl. 'We're through. Leave me':  
 Yet she'll be on my lap summarily.  
 I've often aid to her, 'I am ashamed:  
 Near tears, 'Afraid to love?' she has exclaimed,  
 And, hanging on my neck, she tortured me  
 With countless kisses. That's her victory:  
 From epic wars I am called back once more  
 To sing my own domestic wars. Before,  
 However, tragedy under my pen  
 Has flourished and it suited me back then,

10

But Love laughed at my painted buskins and  
 My cloak and the sceptre taken in my hand  
 So quickly. My girls' unfair potency  
 Turned me aside and over tragedy  
 Love triumphed. So I treat of what's agreed  
 Upon: sweet love (by my own rules indeed 20  
 I'm urged!) or else the notes Ulysses read  
 From his Penelope or the tears you shed,  
 Abandoned Phyllis. or the letters sent  
 To Paris, Macareus, the malcontent  
 Jason, Theseus and Theseus' progeny,  
 Hippolytus what Dido wretchedly  
 Proclaimed, her drawn sword ready in her hand,  
 And lyric Sappho. Back from many a land  
 Sabinus quickly brings across the seas  
 Some poetry. The seal of Ulysses 30  
 The fair Penelope identified;  
 To wretched Dido Aeneas replied:  
 Phaedra's read her own stepson's words; if you,  
 Phyllis, yet live, you have a letter, too.  
 Jason's brusque letter reached Hypsipyle,  
 While Sappho's lyre was given in amity  
 To Phoebus. Macer, while you glorify  
 Battles, you too do not completely shy  
 Away from golden Love: Paris we see  
 And Helen (that well-known iniquity) 40  
 And Laodamia, faithful yet, although  
 Her lord is dead; if you I truly know,  
 You speak of such as these more willingly  
 Than war and in *my* camp you wish to be.

## XIX

If for yourself your girl you would not guard,  
 You fool, do it for me – that makes me hard!  
 What's valid is not pleasing, what's taboo  
 Burns us: who loves, when one allows him to,  
 Is cold. So let us lovers equally  
 Both hope and fear: not a rare rebuff be  
 A cause for prayer. For she who'll never deign  
 To cheat's no use. The love that brings no pain  
 I hate. Clever Corinna saw in me  
 This fault and thus discerned the agency 10  
 Through which to snare me. Often she would say  
 She had a headache, sending me away  
 While I would dawdle. Often she'd invent

A crime, though I was wholly innocent.  
 Then once she had upset me, she rekindled  
 The flames of love that tepidly had dwindled;  
 She was my friend again. Such flattery,  
 Such sweet words and such kisses she gave me.  
 I pray you, who lately enticed me so,  
 Often fear traps, often, when asked ,say no, 20  
 And let me lie before your door, prostrate,  
 The long and frosty night to tolerate.  
 Love that's too rich and obvious converts  
 To boredom and, like too-sweet food, it hurts  
 The gut. Had Danaë never been detained  
 In her bronze tower, she would have remained  
 Unfertilized by Jupiter. While lo,  
 Now sporting horns, was guarded by Juno,  
 Jove liked her better. If you choose to make  
 Things easier for yourself, then you should take 30  
 Leaves from the trees and from great rivers drink  
 Their waters. Should one's girlfriend ever think  
 To reign a long time, she must foil her beau  
 (I'll be oppressed by my own precepts, though!)  
 Indulgence hurts me every time: I flee  
 Her when she follows, when she feel from me,  
 I follow. You, though, overly assured  
 Of your fair lass, make sure your door's secured  
 At dusk, check frequent furtive knocks, discover  
 Why dogs are barking and what notes her lover 40  
 Gives to her clever maid and the replies  
 She gets and why in bed she often lies  
 Alone. Sometimes let this anxiety  
 Gnaw at you – matter for my trickery.  
 He merely steals sand from an empty beach  
 Who loves an idiot's wife. Now hear me preach:  
 If you don't guard the girl, she soon won't be  
 Mine anymore. A multiplicitty  
 Of things I for a long time have endured.  
 I've often hoped, if I could be assured 50  
 That you would guard her well, I would by now  
 Deceive you, but you're lazy and allow  
 What no spouse should. That love is not for me  
 That's offered freely. Will I never be  
 Subjected to be banished from her sight  
 And be uncriticized night after night?  
 Will I not fear? Will I not wrack my bed  
 With sighing? So that I may wish you dead,  
 Will you do nothing? What is there for me

With a pimp-husband? His iniquity  
Destroys my joy. Find someone else: if I  
Must be your rival, that you must deny.

60

### BOOK III

#### I

This is a very old and unfelled wood:  
You'd think a spirit dwells where it's long stood.  
A rocky hollow and a sacred spring,  
On every side of which birds sweetly sing,  
Stand in the centre. Walking in its shade,  
I sought to find the work Erato bade  
Me write. Elegy, her fragrant tresses bound,  
Arrived and I imagined that I found  
Her feet uneven. She was full of grace,  
Her shift diaphanous, a lover's face, 10  
Her beauty's cause those feet's inequity.  
Then, with great strides, came stormy Tragedy.  
Her robe trailed down and unkempt was her hair;  
She waved a regal sceptre here and there,  
Her Lydian buskins strapped around her feet;  
Thus she began, "Will you ever complete  
Your love poems, lazy bard? Your faults are told  
By wine-soaked meetings, the crossroads unfold  
Them, too. One will point out an approaching bard  
Often and say, "Love makes this fellow hard." 20  
You're not aware but you are laughed about  
Throughout the city while you're trotting out  
The dirty things you've done immodestly.  
It's time you wrote verse with more gravity.  
Give up and start a greater work: you cramp  
Your with with your material: decamp  
And sing heroic deeds. "This field," you'll say,  
"Jibes with your wit." Your Muse has been at play  
With what sweet girls adore. Your verse makes plain  
A young man's genius. Let me obtain 30  
More glory at your hands. Your energy  
Will conform with my precepts." And then she,  
While in her bright boots she was standing there,  
Shook three or four times her dishevelled hair.  
The other Muse, if I remember right,  
Gave me a sidelong glance, her smile so bright  
(Unless I'm wrong, a myrtle wand she bore).  
"Proud Tragedy, she said to her, "wherefore



Do you bombard me with this gravity?  
 Or can you never handle levity? 40  
 And yet unequal lines you've also deigned  
 To use, for thus against me you've campaigned.  
 I'd not compare your high-flown songs with mine:  
 Your regal palace always will outshine  
 My humble home. Like Cupid, I am light:  
 I am no stronger than the verse I write.  
 Venus would be unblemished without me:  
 I am her friend and intermediary.  
 The door your hard boots can't break down I will  
 Unlock by my own flattering words. But still, 50  
 I've merited more than you since I've withstood  
 Many more things than your presumption could.  
 Corinna learned to cheat her guard through me  
 And how to work upon his loyalty  
 And, loosely clad, slip from her bed in flight  
 And quietly move in the middle of the night.  
 At harsh doors I was often hnnng, while I  
 Was happy to be read by passersby.  
 Until the mean guard left, I've lurked between  
 A maid's breasts. What about the times I've been 60  
 Sent as a birthday gift for her, and she  
 Has torn me quite apart and violently  
 Drenched me? I was the first to vivify  
 Your thoughts: and if she seeks you now, it's I  
 You needs must thank." "I beg you, for I fear  
 That neither of you my meek words will hear,"  
 I said. "By one of you I have been dressed  
 With a sceptre and high buskins: she expressed  
 Herself in high-flown words. Doubtless repute  
 The other gave my love poems. Come, then, suit 70  
 One long line with a shorter. Tragedy,  
 Give me more time: your work's eternal. She  
 Seeks something briefer." Tragedy agreed  
 Top pardon me. Ten , tender Loves, with speed  
 Continue while there's time: for you will find  
 A greater work is coming up behind.

## II

'I'm not reflecting on a thoroughbred's speed:  
 Your favourite, though, I'm hoping will succeed.  
 I've come to sit and talk with you in case  
 You're not aware I'm ravished by your face.  
 You watch the race, I you: so let's both stare

At what we want and keep our focus there.  
 Happy the charioteer you back! What's he  
 To you, then? How I wish that I could be  
 Shot from the starting-gate bravely to ride: 10  
 Now would I ply the rein, and whip each side  
 Of those that led me onward as I grazed  
 The turning-post. If then on me you gazed,  
 I'd lag and drop my reins. How very near  
 Was Pelops pierced by a Pisaeon spear  
 While he looked at Hippodamia's face.  
 Yet he lived on, saved my mistress' grace.  
 Let us, then, both be victors similarly.  
 Why do you shrink away? The seats decree  
 That we sit close: this gives us latitude. 20  
 And you upon the right, I wish that you'd  
 Keep off my girl. Whoever you may be,  
 And, you behind, remove your bony knee  
 From off her back. But you, your dress hangs low:  
 So raise it, or I will. It is my foe  
 To cover such fine legs, preventing me  
 From seeing them – indeed, my enemy!  
 Such legs had Atalanta as she flew  
 Away from Milanion who hankered to  
 Hold them. A painting of Diana shows 30  
 Such legs as she, her tunic girded, goes  
 After wild beasts, wilder herself. Unseen  
 They still inflame me. What, then, should we glean  
 From this? You augment fire and the sea  
 With flames and water. Thus it seems to me  
 The rest that's hidden underneath may please  
 As well. Will you raise up a gentle breeze  
 Made by my fan? Or does the heat's concern  
 Reside inside my head because I burn  
 With love? A speck of dust landed upon 40  
 Her tunic as I spoke: foul dust, begone  
 From that fair body! The procession's here:  
 Attend! Be silent! Now it's time to cheer.  
 The first in line is winged Victory:  
 Come, make my love victorious, deity!  
 Applaud Neptune, you lovers of the foam:  
 I've no time for the sea; the earth's my home.  
 Soldiers, clap Mars, though Conflict I despise:  
 It's peace I love for love within it lies.  
 Let Phoebus show to us his augury  
 And Phoebe her hunting ability, 50  
 Minerva, too, her craft. The next in line

Are Ceres and Bacchus, the god of wine:  
 Husbandmen, save them, while you folk who fight  
 In sport make Pollux happy and, each knight,  
 Do just the same to Castor, too. I hail  
 Sweet Venus and her archer-boy. Avail  
 My project, goddess – cause my new sweetheart  
 To be affected by your Cupid's dart.  
 She nodded favourably. Grant me what she  
 Has promised for I swear that you will be 60  
 The greater goddess (if I am allowed  
 To speak of Venus thus). I, by that crowd  
 Of witnesses and this procession, vow  
 That I will seek you for my love for now  
 And evermore. Your legs are swinging free,  
 So put your feet upon these bars – you'll be  
 More comfy there, I think. For the big race  
 The course is cleared and from the starting-place  
 The praetor's sent the chariots. I see  
 The one you're keen on: may the victory 70  
 Fall on the one you like. That very one  
 The horses seem to know. But what's he done?  
 He's going wide! He's overtaken! Dope,  
 You've brought to nothing my girlfriend's best hope!  
 I beg you, pull your left rein vigorously!  
 Folks, call them back – we've backed a nobody!  
 Jiggle your toga – that'll give the cue.  
 They've called the back. Be careful, though, that you  
 Don't spoil your hair that way. Just hide below  
 My own. The gates are down again, and lo! 80  
 A motley mass of steeds flies out. Now race  
 To the front and surge straight through that empty space.  
 Fulfil my prayers and hers. They're now complete!  
 He won the palm; and now must I compete  
 To win her for my own." It seemed the prize  
 Was there within her sharp and laughing eyes.  
 "Well, that is quite sufficient now for me;  
 Let me go where I'll find tranquillity."

### III

You think the gods exist? The oath she swore  
 Is gone, though she's as beautiful as before,  
 Her hair as flowing as when she was still  
 Unperjured and had done the gods ill.  
 Her snowy skin, suffused with a rosy cast,  
 Is shining now as it did in the past,

Her foot petite as ever. She is tall  
 And graceful and this hasn't changes at all.  
 Her eyes are still a-glow as stars – those eyes  
 Through which she often told me treacherous lies. 10  
 Perhaps the gods permit young girls to swear  
 False oaths, for godliness dwells in the fair.  
 She by her eyes and mine not long ago  
 Has sworn, but it was mine that felt the woe.  
 Gods, tell me, f she with impunity  
 Swore by you, why the loss has burdened *me*  
 (And yet Andromache you doomed to die  
 Because her mother told a boastful lie  
 About her beauty). You have little force  
 As witnesses: she's laughing herself hoarse, 20  
 Unpunished, as she mocks us hideously.  
 Enough! Am I to, then, her perjury  
 Redeem and be her victim, so misled?  
 Either a god merits no human dread  
 And stirs too credulous hearts, or, if there be  
 A god at all, his partiality  
 Is for young girls: he gives them umpteen rights,  
 While Mars girds on his fatal sword and fights  
 With us. Unconquered Pallas is our foe,  
 Spear poised, while Phoebus with his pliant bow 30  
 Seeks us, while Jove on high prepares to hurl  
 His bolt at us. The gods won't hurt a girl  
 Who's fair; though slighted by her sex, what's more,  
 They fear those who've no fear of *them*. Wherefore  
 Should we revere them? We men without doubt  
 Should have more spirit. Jupiter strikes outshine  
 At groves and castles yet declines to throw  
 His bolt at perjured girls. So many, though,  
 Deserve it. Semele burned heartbrokenly.  
 By her own making came her penalty 40  
 (If she'd withdrawn from Zeus he'd not have played  
 Bacchus's mother's role). Why have I made  
 Complaint and harassed Heaven? The gods have eyes  
 And hearts as well. If I dwelt in the skies,  
 I'd let a woman freely slander me  
 And swear that girls have promised truthfully:  
 I'd not be a sour god. Be gentler, though,  
 With what gods give or leave my sight and go!

#### IV

Harsh man, you guard your young wife pointlessly:

Her virtue is her true defense, for she  
 Who's chaste but fearless is chaste nonetheless;  
 She who is not permitted to transgress  
 Transgresses anyway. Her body's barred,  
 And yet to bar a sinful mind is hard.  
 You can't guard her no matter how hard you've tried;  
 All are kept out but she remains inside  
 To cuckold you. License to sin will breed  
 Languor. Do not arouse a sinful deed 10  
 By vetoing it. I saw just recently  
 A tight-reined horse fighting impatiently  
 Against the bit, and, like a lightning-flash,  
 Was galloping. But when it felt the lash  
 Ease off, the reins slack on its flowing mane,  
 It stopped. To gain what's barred we always strain.  
 For water that has been prohibited  
 The sick man yearns. Argus upon his head  
 And head had five-score eyes, yet often they  
 Missed one intrigue. The virgin Danaë, 20  
 Kept in a room of stone and iron made,  
 Became a mother, while Penelope stayed  
 At home without a guard, yet virtuous  
 Among so many suitors. What's to us  
 Prohibited we crave the more: and so  
 We turn to theft, and when they are told "No",  
 Few love what's been denied. A man not drawn  
 To her good looks but how her man will fawn  
 Upon her. They think she is fine since he  
 Has chosen her. That lass in custody 30  
 Becomes not virtuous but a costly jade:  
 Not through her looks a greater price is paid  
 But fear. You may object but tabooed bliss  
 Pleases. We're fulfilled only by that miss  
 Who says "I fear", although it is not right

To guard a freeborn woman' let the fright  
 Of this affect a foreign lass. Maybe,  
 Because your guard said, "I showed loyalty  
 To you", you wish to praise him for the part  
 He played. A husband's an oaf if he takes to heart 40  
 Adulterous theft and scarcely know the ways  
 Of Rome. Our founding twins in early years  
 Were out of wedlock born. Why, then, do you  
 Want a fair girl who must be virtuous, too?  
 Indulge your mistress, if you would be wise,  
 And shun stern looks and don't put on the guise

Of prudishness. Cherish the friends that she  
 Has given you (and many there will be).  
 Great credit, then, for just a minimum  
 Of effort will be yours, and there will come 50  
 Young bucks into your house and every day  
 They'll bring her gifts for which you didn't pay.

V

["Sleep comforted my weariness one night;  
 Then came to me a terrifying sight;  
 Beneath a sunlit hall there stood a throng  
 Of oaks which had great flocks of birds among  
 Their branches; water trickled placidly  
 Upon the field they occupied. A tree  
 I sought from summer's heat, but even so  
 That heat was stifling there as well, when lo!  
 Right there I saw a gleaming heifer pass 10  
 Among the various flowers in search of grass,  
 Whiter than recent snow that's yet to be  
 Turned into water, whiter than milk was she,  
 Which, foaming still, will leave the ewe quite dry.  
 Her happy mate, a bull, was lying by  
 Her side while on the grass he slowly fed,  
 But then I saw him bow his horny head  
 Upon the earth, by sleepiness oppressed.  
 A light-winged crow plunged to the earth to rest  
 Upon the green ground, three times with its beak 20  
 It pecked the heifer's breast as if in pique,  
 Thus tearing with its mouth some tufts of white.  
 Long did it linger, then flew out of sight,  
 Leaving a black stain on the heifer. Long  
 She tarried, then she went to graze among  
 Some bull she saw feed far off, for she sought  
 More fertile ground to forage. Is there aught  
 Of substance here? What do they signify,  
 You who interpret nightly dreams? Thus I  
 Then spoke. He weighed his words most carefully  
 And said, "The heat you tried beneath the tree 30  
 To shun but could not is the love that yourself  
 Possess; the cow's your girl; the colour, too,  
 Is apt. You are the heifer's mate, the crow  
 That used its piercing beak to ravage so  
 Is an old procuress who warped your lass;  
 The heifer's waiting long upon the grassland  
 Says that an empty bed will be your lot

And you'll be left to shiver. The dark spot  
 Upon her breast denotes the heart's not free  
 Of contemplating an adultery." 40  
 My cheeks turned cold and pale; before my sight  
 There was the prospect of abyssal night.]

## VI

You reedy, muddy river, you see me  
 In haste to see my girl: accordingly  
 Be still a while. There are no bridges here,  
 No skiff which one conveniently may steer  
 Across. I once would cross you, I recall,  
 When the water barely touched my heels at all.  
 Now mountain snows fill you as on you rush  
 And all your muddy waters swirl and gush.  
 Why do I hasten with no time to sleep,  
 Thus linking day to night, if I must keep 10  
 On this side? Perseus's wings with which he sped  
 To take away the dread Medusa's head  
 I need – that chariot, too, that first translated  
 Grain down to a land as yet uncultivated.  
 I speak of prodigies, ancient bards' lies  
 Which never have or never will arise.  
 You, who your roomy banks now overflow,  
 Contain yourself within your banks and go  
 Forward forever. You would not recover  
 The shame if it were known you barred a lover. 20  
 Rivers are sensitive and should avail  
 All lovers: Inachus, they say, all pale  
 Went to his Melia: though the sea was cold,  
 He grew warm. Troy's siege was not ten years old  
 When Neaera charmed you, Xanthus. What's to say  
 Of Alpheus who was forced to flee away  
 To many lands because he passionately  
 Was burning for a maid of Arcady?  
 Xanthus' fiancée, Creusa, so they say,  
 Peneus, among the Ththiotians, hid away. 30  
 Asopus was adored once by Phoebe,  
 Mars' daughter, who was preordained to be

A mother of five. Now, Achelous, where went  
 Your horns? I ask. "Hercules, you'll lament,  
 In rage broke them. The whole Aetolian land  
 Nor Calydon rated what his mighty hand  
 Had done, but Deianeira surely did.

Rich Nile with its seven ports, who so well hid  
 Its source, could not with all its watery mass  
 Tamp down the passion he felt for a lass, 40  
 Asopus' child, Evanthe, so they hold,  
 That he might clasp Tyro. Europus told  
 His waters to recede, and they obeyed.  
 Nor will I miss out Anio who made  
 The fruitful fields of Tiber moist in a whirlwind  
 Across its hollow rocks: he loved a girl  
 Called Ilia, though she was a sight to see  
 With both her cheeks and tresses scratched, for she  
 Mars' and her uncle's misdeeds would lament  
 As, naked, through the wilderness she went. 50  
 He was and fell for her and hoarsely cried,  
 "Why anxiously wear out my riverside,  
 Ilia? Why this rumpled look? And why  
 Wander alone with no white braid to tie  
 And bind your hair? And why do you your eyes,  
 In fact, with rawness with your mournful cries?  
 His heart's of flint who can, cold-blooded, see  
 A tender, tear-stained face. Accordingly,  
 Fear not: my halls await you; my streams, too,  
 Will cherish you, so have no fear, for you 60  
 Shall reign midst countless nymphs. So hear my plea -  
 Do not discredit me, Troy's progeny;  
 Much greater than I vowed shall be your prize."  
 Upon the ground she cast her modest eyes,  
 Her breast moist with warm tears. Three times she tried  
 To flee from him, three times she stopped beside  
 His yawning waves, afraid to run, then she  
 Began to tear her tresses angrily  
 And, trembling, cried, "When I was still a maid,  
 Would that my bones had been amassed and laid 70  
 Upon my father's tomb! An acolyte  
 Of Vesta, why do people now invite  
 Me to be wed while the solemnity  
 Of the Trojan fire has been forbidden me?  
 Why do I linger while men point and say,  
 'Adulterer!?' O chastity, away,  
 That I no longer have." She held her dress  
 Before her swollen eyes in her distressed  
 And leapt into the rapid waves. They say  
 The river held her breasts and gave her sway 80  
 Over his marriage-bed. You loved a maid,  
 We may believe, but every wood and glade  
 Hid your offences. While T spoke, you grew,



Your channel deeper. What have I to do  
 With you, mad river? Why do you delay  
 Your romps and rudely bar me on my way?  
 What if you were august, of worthy fame  
 Throughout the world? But you possess no name,  
 You're formed of tributaries, even your springs  
 And home are doubtful. You have certain things 90  
 A spring has – water from snowfalls and rain  
 Which from the sluggish winter you attain;  
 You're muddy, then: when summer comes around,  
 However, you're a dry and dusty ground.  
 Who then could drink from you as he passed through?  
 Who said with grateful voice, "I wish that you  
 Would live forever"? Cattle you distress,  
 Fields even more, as onward you progress:  
 Perhaps this bothers others as for me,  
 I have my own concerns: dementedly 100  
 I tell of rivers' loves: I feel such shame  
 That I bandy about each noble name -  
 I see your puny waves and all the while  
 Achelous, Inachus, even the Nile  
 I mention. Muddy torrent, may you see  
 Hot suns and arid winters endlessly.

## VII

Is she not ladylike, is she not fair,  
 Often the object of my fervent prayer?  
 Yet I did nothing for her: languidly  
 I lay with her, a liability!  
 We wanted it; my tired manhood, though,  
 Would not avail. She lay there, white as snow,  
 Hung on my neck and kissed me sexily  
 And, thigh to thigh, sweet nothings spoke to me,  
 Called me her master and, moreover, said 10  
 What women often say in a love-bed.  
 My limbs, tough, as by hemlock touched, were cold  
 And would not do whet they by me were told  
 To do. I was a useless weight, a sham;  
 It seems unclear to me whether I am  
 A body or a shade. Senility,  
 If I should reach it, will not certainly  
 Do me much good when youth is lacking, too.  
 My years abash me: what am I to do?  
 Though I am young, I'm far from a success  
 In love. She leaves my bed like a priestess 20

Attending to her rites, or as one may  
 Leave her dear brother. Golden-haired Chlide  
 I slept with twice and and Pitho, passing fair,  
 And Libas, both three times – no problem there!  
 In one short night Corinna, I recall,  
 Begged me to service her, nine times in all.  
 Am I obsessed with drugs from Thessaly?  
 Are spells and noxious herbs infecting me?  
 Has a witch with crimson wax my name spelled out  
 And pierced my liver? For there is no doubt 30  
 Corn withers with a spell, as fountains do;  
 Through spells vines drop their grapes; their acorns, too,  
 Oaks shed and apples need no human hand  
 To leave their boughs. Who is there to demand  
 Magic to quit its work? I will maybe  
 Yield to its power. Add ignominy  
 To this: it hurt, the second cause of my  
 Undoing. What a pretty girl did I  
 Both see and touch! But I pleased her no more  
 By how I touched her than the dress she wore. 40  
 Nestor would at her touch be young again,  
 Tithonus stronger than all of his men.  
 In her I found a woman, but in me  
 She did not find a man. What can there be  
 For me to pray for now? It's my belief  
 That the immortal gods are feeling grief  
 For giving what I have shamefully  
 Misused. I did desire it certainly:  
 They gave it to me; I desired to kiss  
 Her lips: I did; to be close to her: this 50  
 Was granted, too. What good's all this to me,  
 A king without a sceptre? Oh, to be  
 Able to use my wealth! Thus Tantalus,  
 Immersed in water, still is ravenous  
 For drink, and he is not allowed to take  
 The fruit he sees. Whoever at daybreak  
 Leaves his sweet girl in bed and instantly  
 Goes off to worship? But you'll say, maybe,  
 The ardent kisses that she could bestow  
 Upon her lover weren't enough, although 60  
 Stout oaks, deaf rocks, hard adamant she could stir  
 To life: and certainly all living men by her  
 Were roused, but I was neither of these things -  
 Not living, not a man. If Phemius sings  
 To deaf ears what's the point? And what delight  
 Can Thamyras have in paintings, robbed of sight?

Yet in my mind there dwells such ecstasy,  
 So many sex positions come to me!  
 Yet like one prematurely dead I lay,  
 More lifeless than a rose of yesterday. 70  
 Yet now my limbs are vigorous. Crying out  
 For action and another sexual bout.  
 You should be so ashamed, worst part of me.  
 You have before with your fake guarantee  
 Deceived me and unarmed me while great shame  
 And tragic loss I bore. Yet, all the same,  
 She gently tried to rouse me with her hand  
 But, realizing that I could not stand,  
 My manhood limply drooping down its head,  
 Ignoring her, "Why toy with me?" she said. 80  
 "If you were disinclined to sleep with me,  
 Who sent you here? This is insanity!  
 Did some Aeaean witch mess with your head  
 Or are you coming from another's bed?"  
 And in a loose shift left me instantly  
 (Her pretty, naked feet enchanted me!).  
 Lest the maids should suspect her of chastity,  
 She sprinkled water there abundantly.

## VIII

Who now admires a writer's artistry  
 Or thinks there's talent still in poetry?  
 Once wit was rated higher than gold: these days  
 Poverty's thought deserving of no praise.  
 My darling loves my poetry, although  
 Where books are kept, myself I may not go.  
 Though talented, I mooch about, and see!  
 A wealthy noble knight's preferred to me,  
 His riches gained on battlegrounds. That man  
 Can you embrace, sweet one? O sweet one, can 10  
 You lie beside him? That you may be fed  
 This knowledge, he once wore upon his head  
 A helmet, with a sword against his thigh  
 Where you, it seems, are often wont to lie.  
 His left hand, for which new-earned gold's not fit,  
 Carried a shield: just put your own to it -  
 It once was bloody. Can you touch that part  
 That caused another's death? Where is your heart,  
 Your tenderness? Do you see those scars, attained  
 In some old fracas? All he has obtained 20  
 Shows on his body. P'raps he'll tel to you

How many throats he's perforated, too.  
 Such telling hands as these can you delight  
 To touch, you greedy girl? The acolyte  
 Am I of Phoebus and the Muses: here  
 I sing what won't be heard by either ear  
 Of yours. Well, if you're wise, you'll get *au fait*  
 With rugged soldiery and the frightening fray,  
 Not what we sluggards know. Not poetry  
 But spears should busy you. Night's ecstasy 30  
 Could have been Homer's if of war he'd told.  
 Thinking was more powerful than gold,  
 Jupiter himself, so to corrupt a lass,  
 Became a shower of gold. At an impasse  
 Sans money, a harsh father he had met,  
 Herself opposed, bronze doors, a minaret  
 Of iron, too. But when with gifts he went,  
 She opened up, agreeing to relent.  
 In Saturn's day all cash was underground -  
 No silver, bronze, no gold, no iron was found. 40  
 But better things he gave – corn that one grew  
 Without a plough, apples and honey, too,  
 In oaks. The land no ploughshares cultivated,  
 No boundary was ever designated.  
 No sailors ploughed the seas: the shore was then  
 The limit of man's scope. You race of men,  
 You suffer from your ingenuity,  
 Whose overkill has caused you injury.  
 Why fortify your city's walls? Why sow  
 Discord in battle-lines? Why must you go 50  
 To sea? You liked the land – at least it's dry.  
 Why do you want a third realm in the sky?  
 You would possess the sky as much as you  
 Are able: Romulus had temples, too,  
 And Bacchus, Hercules and, recently,  
 Caesar. Instead of corn our harvestry  
 Is solid gold: a soldier may amass  
 Wealth born of blood, but yet the poorer class  
 Is banned from the Senate House while honours flow  
 From cash: to a stern equestrian they go, 60  
 To a strict judge. Well, let them have it all  
 And heed the battle's and the Forum's call,  
 Working with peace and war, but let their greed  
 Not make them crave my girl (for that indeed  
 Would be sufficient), and may we allow  
 A poor man to possess *something*. But now,  
 Though she be prudish as the Sabine race,

In a rich man's hands a girl must know her place -  
 Bondage! The doorman keeps me out, while she  
 Quakes at her husband; both of them should be 70  
 Compliant if I come with presents. Would  
 Some god, then, come along who understood  
 Us lovers and turn to nothing vengefully  
 All of their ill-acquired prosperity.

## IX

If both their mothers showed their reddened eyes  
 At Memnon's and Achilles' sad demise,  
 If goddesses are touched by tragedy,  
 Then weep and tear your tresses, Elegy:  
 Your name's so fitting now: your glorious fame,  
 Your bard, Tibullus, in the funeral flame  
 Lies dead. See Cupid's upturned quiver and  
 His broken bow and now unlighted brand.  
 His wings are drooping in his misery,  
 He beats his naked breast furiously, 10  
 While tears bedew his long hair in full flow,  
 His sobbing loud. They say that even so,  
 Tibullus, he left your house to mourn his brother  
 Aeneas, and no less did Cupid's mother  
 Shed tears for dead Tibullus than when she  
 Once sorrowed for her lover's death when he  
 Had his groin pierced by a boar. We bards, it's said,  
 Are the gods' favourites: some say a godhead  
 Resides in us. Grim death, it's obvious,  
 Defiles all things and lays on all of us 20  
 Its hidden hands. How could his parents be  
 A help to Orpheus when with melody  
 He tamed and number wilds beasts? Phoebus, they say,  
 Mourned his son Linus with a reluctant lay  
 Upon his lyre. Homer has constantly  
 Stirred bards with inspiration, and yet he  
 Was mortal. Only poems the greedy pyre  
 Escapes, for they alone will not expire -  
 The tardy web rewoven guilefully  
 Each night, the saga of Troy's tragedy. 30  
 Thus Nemesis and Delia will live long  
 Your last and first immortalized in song.  
 What good are rites, Egyptian *sistra*? Why  
 Sleep in an empty bed. Pardon me, if I  
 Think that there are no gods when honest men  
 Are snatched by cruel fate. Be pious, then:

You'll die so; hold rites: you'll from shrine to dust  
 Be dragged by grim-faced death. Therefore have trust  
 In honest poems. Tibullus you may see  
 As there he lies, a meagre moiety 40  
 In that small urn. Do you, then, lie there dead,  
 Consumed by flames that fear not to be fed  
 On you, o sacred bard? The flames that could  
 Be so abominable surely would  
 Burn holy temples. Venus turned away  
 Her face and could not choose but weep, some say.  
 Better, though, than if deep in Phaeacian ground  
 He had been vilely buried, unrenowned.  
 His mother could close his moist eyes as he fled  
 From us and oversee the rites of the dead. 50  
 His sister joined her in her grief, her hair  
 Straggling and torn. His two loves, too, were there,  
 With kisses, and refused to quit the pyre.  
 "I was most happy when you were on fire  
 For me," said Delia as she finally  
 Departed. Nemesis said, "Why grieve for me?  
 With failing hand he held me as he died."  
 If anything of us should yet abide  
 Besides a name and a shade, Elysium  
 Will hold Tibullus. Thither, then, will come, 60  
 In vy wreathed, Catullus, Calvus, too,  
 And, if the charge is bogus against you  
 Of slighting Caesar, Gallus, you'll be there.  
 Who of your blood and soul have little care -  
 These are his friends, if there's aught in a shade;  
 Learned Tibullus many friends has made.  
 I pray your bones with peace be safely blest,  
 And earth upon your ashes lightly rest.

X

Ceres's annual festival is here:  
 Upon her empty bed there lies my dear.  
 Golden-tressed Ceres, with your gossamer hair  
 Festooned with ears of corn, why do you spare  
 Us two our joys? All nations, o goddess,  
 Call you unstinting. We are grudged no less  
 Than any other goddess. Way back then  
 No corn was parched by shaggy husbandmen,  
 No 'threshing-floor' existed. The acorn,  
 However, by the oak-tree then was borne, 10  
 That early prophet, and on this we'd feed

As well as tender herbs. In fields a seed  
 Would Ceres teach us how to grow, and she  
 Would scythe the corn to fill the granary.  
 She tamed the bulls and taught them then to cleave  
 With ploughs the primal earth. Who will believe  
 She'd joy at lovers' tears and wish to be  
 Worshipped by torments and the misery  
 Of an empty bed? She is not coy, although  
 She loves the wild fields. Nor is she a foe  
 Of love. Bear witness, Crete: mendacity  
 Is not a universal quality  
 In Crete: for she is very proud her land  
 Bore Jupiter, that god who has command  
 Over the iron globe. Believe her claim:  
 The child she suckled there will say the same.  
 I think her known faults Ceres will aver.  
 Beneath Mt. Ida Iasus by her  
 Was seen to slay wild shaggy beasts, when flame  
 Licked at her tender vitals. Thence came shame  
 Along with love. Shame conquered love. You'd see  
 The furrows parched and a mere moiety  
 Of crops survive. When he'd tilled all around  
 His fields and with his plough broken up the ground  
 And scattered all his seedlings equally,  
 The farmers' hopes were cheated wretchedly.  
 Ceres was lingering in the woods; around  
 Her long hair could no corn-wreaths now be found.  
 Now Crete alone was fruitful: everything  
 Was harvested where she was dallying.  
 Green Ida grew white with wheat; the boar would feed  
 On corn there; and King Midas felt the need  
 To live as long and made a fervent pleasing  
 That Ceres' love would live eternally.  
 Those wretched, lonely nights you night have borne,  
 O golden goddess, have become a thorn  
 In my own side. Why should I feel so blue  
 When your own daughter is restored to you,  
 Eclipsed by only Juno. For this day  
 Should be observed by wine, with roundelay,  
 With making love. For it is apropos  
 Our masters should be celebrated so.

20

30

40

50

## XI

I've long borne much: she has defeated me  
 With wrongs; foul love, I'm weary – let me be!

I've fled my chains. The shame I never felt  
 Before I feel now; vicious blows I've dealt  
 To love. I am a cuckold finally.  
 Hold on, endure: one day that misery  
 Will profit you: a bitter draught can aid  
 The weary. Was it for this that I stayed,  
 So often shut out, on the stony ground?  
 Was it for this I was a servant bound 10  
 To him you were embracing as I lay  
 Before your door? I saw at break of day  
 Your lover coming out exhaustedly.  
 Much better was it being seen by me  
 Than was the opposite. May such disgrace  
 Come to all of my enemies face-to-face.  
 Have I not stuck by you tenaciously,  
 Your guard, your man, your pal? It was through me  
 You've been so popular. The love we two  
 Once shared brought many paramours to you. 20  
 Why mention all your empty lies, wherefore  
 The oaths you broke, why mention, furthermore,  
 The secret signs you gave in the company  
 Of your young men, your arrant trickery  
 With billet-doux? The news once came to me  
 That she was sick: I dashed off crazily,  
 Headlong. But when I got there... Sick, my eye!  
 For she was entertaining some young guy,  
 A rival. Other griefs I've kept inside:  
 Find someone else who's ready to abide 30  
 All that. My vessel, slow and garlanded  
 With votive wreaths, can hear the waves which sped  
 Across the ocean. Cease your flattery  
 And words that at one time could injure me:  
 I'm not so foolish now. Both love and hate  
 Pull at my heartstrings as I vacillate;  
 Love wins, I think. Of hate I'll take my fill,  
 If I can; if not, I'll love against my will.  
 The bull, too, hates the yoke. Your sins I flee,  
 Your beauty brings me back. Your devilry 40  
 I hate, I love your body. Without you  
 I cannot carry on, but – with you, too.  
 I don't know what I want. I wish you'd be  
 Less beautiful or have less malignity.  
 Such beauty does not fit your misdeeds. Hate  
 Your deeds deserve, your fair looks generate  
 Love. But your beauty always will outdo  
 Your wrongs. So by our love I beg of you,



And by the often-perjured gods, spare me,  
 And by your face, like some divinity,  
 Your eyes which captured mine; day after day  
 You'll be my own; thus it's for you to say  
 if it's your preference that I should be  
 A lover who will love reluctantly  
 Or willingly. So let me loose your sail  
 And let the winds that bear me on avail  
 My craft and let me love under duress  
 Or willingly, and yet love, nonetheless.

50

## XII

When did you sing your dark omens to me,  
 A paramour of great fidelity,  
 You evil birds? What is this murky fate,  
 What gods provoke me? She was of late  
 Deemed only mine, her only beau, I fear  
 Has many other men. Have I come near  
 The truth? Has she indeed acquired renown  
 Through my own verse? It's true – all over town  
 My wit's made her a slut. My fault! For why  
 Did I proclaim her beauty? It was I  
 Who made her sell herself. Through me her trade  
 Is now conducted, through me they invade  
 Her house. Are my poems useful? Certainly  
 They have been harmful: men now envy me.  
 Though I could write of Thebes, the Trojan War,  
 The deeds of Caesar, yet my verse is forbidden  
 Only Corinna. Would that my verse had vexed  
 The Muses and Phoebus had shunned the text  
 I'd started. Since to hear what poets say  
 Is customary. I would wish away  
 The gravity in my verse. It's we who sing  
 Of Scylla, from her father pilfering  
 His treasured hair and pressing to her thighs  
 Wild dogs. I dispatched feet into the skies  
 To act as wings and in Medusa's hair  
 Placed snakes, and it is talked of everywhere  
 That Perseus on the wingèd Pegasus  
 Had great success. I stretched out Tityrus  
 Across vast acres; to the viperous  
 Canine that myth had titled Cerberus  
 I gave three mouths and also fifty score  
 Of arms to Enceladon and, furthermore,  
 I wrote of Circe as she cast her spell

10

20

30

Of men she'd seized; of the Aeolian winds as well  
 That Odysseus kept in his wine-skins I wrote,  
 And traitor Tantalus with burning throat  
 Mid-river; of Niobe turned to stone,  
 Callisto to a she-bear; and I've shown  
 Philomela mourning Itys; Jove to gold  
 Or birds transforms himself or, as I've told, 40  
 A bull, Europa on his back, as he  
 Cuts through the water. Need you hear from me  
 Of Proteus; seedlings that became the folk  
 Of Thebes; the bulls that breathed out flames and smoke;  
 Your sisters, charioteer, who copiously  
 Wept amber tears; goddesses of the sea  
 Who once were ships; the god who turned away  
 From Atreus' foul feast; rocks under the sway  
 Of Orpheus' lyre? A bard's authority  
 Is universal and to history 50  
 Needs not conform: you should have known, therefore,  
 That she whom I pretended to adore  
 Was praised with a lying tongue; my words you thought  
 Were true, so in a painful state I'm caught.

### XIII

My wife was born in fruitful Falisci,  
 Conquered by you, Camillus; and so we  
 Visited it when priests were readying  
 The feast of Juno and organizing  
 The games and the sacrificial heifer, so  
 We took the chance right there to get to know  
 The rites, despite the difficult climb. An old  
 And thickly-wooded grove stands there. Behold:  
 Surely a god's abode! An altar's there,  
 Built long ago and with a rustic care. 10  
 When pipes sound out the signal for the rite,  
 The annual procession to the site  
 Set out along the covered streets. They led  
 The heifer which in nearby fields had fed.  
 The crowd cheered. There were calves whose horns had then  
 Not grown, and porkers taken from the pen;  
 The stud on whose hard head curved horns had grown  
 Was there as well; it was the goat alone  
 The goddess hated, for a goat, they say,  
 Deep in the woods had given her away 20  
 And barred her flight. Even now young boys pursue  
 A goat with spears, the prize awarded to

The one who was the first to land a blow.  
 Young men and trembling girls who, as they go  
 Ahead of the goddess, sweep here and there  
 The roads with their long robes. The young girls' hair  
 Is stuck with gold and gems, their feet of gold  
 Screened by a splendid cloak. Just as of old,  
 In Greek mode, in their snow-white robes they bear  
 The sacred urns entrusted to their care 30  
 Upon their necks. The crowd is mum as she.  
 All-gold, follows the priestly company.  
 The rite is Greek: with Agamemnon dead,  
 Halesus his ancestral treasury fled;  
 Roaming from land to land and sea to sea,  
 He built a high-walled city joyously.  
 Thus came Faliscan rites of the goddess.  
 May they both me and their own people bless.

#### XIV

Your sins I wink at since you're fair; for me  
 To know of them is no necessity  
 I don't tell you, "Be chaste", but will you try  
 Pretending? She who's able to deny  
 She sins sins not. To make a revelation  
 Of sins alone will mar one's reputation.  
 Your sins that once were hidden by the night  
 It's crazy to own up to in daylight.  
 The things that you have done in secrecy  
 Why would you promulgate so publicly? 10  
 Whores with an unknown john will first secure  
 The gate so that their privacy may be sure.  
 You vaunt your sins, acquiring infamy.  
 Be purer or at least pretend to be  
 And I will think you chaste although indeed  
 You're not. So carry on, and yet take heed  
 To disclaim what you've done; speak modestly  
 In public. there's a place for devilry:  
 Go there and sin and - farewell, degradation!  
 But when you leave, let all your dissipation 20  
 Be absent; let your peccadilloes hide  
 Beneath your sheets. When there, though, fling aside  
 Your tunic and lie with him clingingly,  
 And in your rosy mouth let his tongue be  
 Enveloped, and a thousand ways devise  
 Of making love; keep mouthing little cries  
 Of ecstasy; the bed you lie upon

Make shake with passion. When your clothes you don  
 Don, too, a look that fears iniquity,  
 And let your foul deed by your chastity 30  
 Thus be denied. Pull the wool over the eyes  
 Of all, especially me. I'd not be wise -  
 Allow my ill-advised credulity.  
 Why do I these love-notes so often see?  
 Your bed all rumped? And why is your hair,  
 More than in slumber, tumbled here and there?  
 And I see love-bites in your neck. I see  
 Your sin in all but actuality.  
 If you with not the slightest hesitation  
 Are now prepared to spare your reputation, 40  
 Spare me. I'm dying and my mind is going  
 When you confess your sins: my blood is flowing  
 In icy drops. I love, yet pointlessly  
 I hate, for I *must* love. I yearn to be  
 A corpse – yet with you lying by my side,  
 I'll not root out what you're prepared to hide,  
 No questions asked. Thus your deceit shall be  
 My gift. But if you're caught red-handedly,  
 Insist that I did not perceive the deed  
 And to those very words my eyes will cede. 50  
 It's an easy triumph to defeat  
 One who's a willing loser: just repeat,  
 "I didn't do it." Just two words! Although  
 Your cause is bogus, you'll win even so.

## XV

Seek an new poet, Venus, for graze  
 The final turning-point to sing my lays.  
 No shame they've brought me, a Paelignian.  
 For what it's worth, I'm an equestrian,  
 An ancient rank, not from the battleground  
 Awarded. My birthplace is glory-bound  
 Through me, as Mantua and Verona came  
 Through Virgil and Catullus to great fame.  
 With honoured arms it gained its liberty,  
 When Rome was alarmed by allied infantry. 10  
 A foreigner in watery Sulmo,  
 A few small acres wide, may say, "Although  
 You're small, you've borne a great celebrity.  
 Kind Venus, and your kindly progeny,  
 The golden standards from my battle-line  
 Remove: the hornèd Bacchus, god of wine,

has with his thyrsus struck me with a blow  
Much heavier, instructing me to go  
Across a wider area as I  
Spur on my noble steeds. Therefore, goodbye,  
My peaceful, genial elegies, begone:  
After my death my poetry will live on.

20



