

## TRISTIA I

My little book, to Rome your odyssey  
You'll make – I don't begrudge that you must go  
Alone (your master's not allowed, you see).  
Be plain and simple, for that's better so  
For exiles: sadness suits these times; don't mar  
Your face with purple blueberries, don't let  
Your title page be daubed with cinnabar,  
Nor let your paper be with cedar wet,  
On your black brow no horn of ivory.  
Let happy books be blessed with such array: 10  
You must remember my poor destiny.  
Your twin brows, neither, should be smoothed away  
With fragile pumice, so you may be seen  
With shaggy hair. Don't be ashamed of smears,  
For he who sees them will assume they've been  
Created by the author's very tears.  
Go, book, greet pleasant spots with what I write  
(I'll use what 'feet' I can when you arrive)  
And if, in that great throng, some person might  
Remember me and query how I thrive, 20  
You'll say that, though not happily, I live,  
My life the bounty of the deity.  
Then – mum! The man who asks that you may give  
More news must read you. Careful that you be  
Not indiscreet! The reader will recall,  
Once minded, my misdeeds and I'll be smitten  
With public censure. Do not ever fall  
Into the trap of self-defence, though bitten  
By vicious words. For I deserve no plea.  
You'll find someone who at my banishment 30  
Will sigh and read my poems with cheeks not free  
Of tears and, lest someone with ill intent  
Should hear, pray silently my chastening  
Be mitigated by the gentleness  
Of Caesar. He who prays the gods may bring  
Comfort to those who suffer – may they bless  
That man with joy, I beg. O grant this prayer,  
And may our emperor eliminate  
His anger that I then may die right there  
In my own Rome. Although you consummate 40  
My wishes, yet you may incur some blame  
And be thought less than any eulogy

Of my ability. Deed and time-frame  
 A judge must probe. You'll have security  
 If "time" is probed. It is a tranquil mind  
 Which breeds one's poetry. With sudden ills  
 My days are cloudy. Poets needs must find  
 Leisure and privacy; seas, winter's chills  
 And winds assail me. I have constant dread  
 While writing, in my anguish every day 50  
 Expecting that a sword will strike me dead,  
 Slitting my throat. An honest judge will say  
 My work amazes him: whatever I  
 May write, of any quality, he'll read  
 Indulgently. Let Homer suffer my  
 Adversities – his genius will recede  
 Through such great ills. Take no account of fame,  
 Don't shame to be unloved. Fortune to me  
 Is not so kind that I would heed acclaim.  
 While I was safe, love of celebrity 60  
 Possessed me and I yearned to gain repute.  
 Let it suffice now that I don't resent  
 The poetry I write and the pursuit  
 Which injured me – my wit spawned banishment.  
 Go in my place and gaze on Rome (*you* may!).  
 Would that the gods could turn you into me!  
 Though in great Rome a foreigner you stray,  
 Don't think you're new to the community.  
 You will be known, though you possess no name,  
 By your own style: you may dissimulate 70  
 Yet you are clearly mine. My words won't maim  
 You if you enter covertly. Of late  
 They're less in favour. Should someone deny  
 To read what's mine and cast it from his lap,  
 Say, "Read the title. I am not the guy  
 Who is love's tutor. That work took the rap,  
 And rightly too." Perhaps you expect me  
 To send you to the lofty Palatine  
 And Caesar's palace. May an amnesty  
 From holy places and their gods decline 80  
 Upon me. It was from that citadel  
 The bolt fell on my head. There you will see  
 The gentlest of gods, I know it well,  
 But I fear those who caused me injury.  
 The smallest sound of feathers terrifies  
 The dove that by a hawk's claws has been scraped;  
 The lamb from the enclosure where it lies  
 Will not stray far if once it has escaped

A fierce wolf's jaws. If living, Phaëthon  
 Would shun the sky and never venture near 90  
 The steeds that fool craved. I myself must own  
 Jove's arms which I've experienced, I fear:  
 And when it thunders, hostile fires seem  
 To seek me. A Greek sailor with the luck  
 To have fled Cethereus Rock now turns his beam  
 From the Euboean Sea. My bark, once struck  
 By heavy gales, thinks of that place with dread  
 Where it was smashed. So, book, look cautiously  
 Around so by the mob you may be read.  
 Icarus named the Icarian Sea 100  
 While with his fragile wings he went too high.  
 But in my circumstance it's hard to tell  
 Whether to use the wind or else to ply  
 My oars: both time and place will serve you well  
 In answering that. If he's at liberty,  
 If all's serene, his anger now dispersed,  
 If while you fear in your uncertainty  
 Someone will give him you, approach. Less cursed  
 Than is your lord, and on a lucky day.  
 You'll reach him and allay my ills. But he – 110  
 None else – who caused them may take them away,  
 Achilles-like. While keen to help, yet see  
 You do no harm – my fear is greater than  
 My hope – don't let his simmering wrath once more  
 Be galvanized, provoking from that man  
 A second penance! But, once through the door  
 Of Caesar's sanctum, once his home you touch,  
 His rounded bookshelves, you will find place there  
 Your brothers, all in rows, produced with such  
 Exertions as were you! This space they share 120  
 With all the rest, whose titles openly  
 They show, their names upon their front, although  
 In hiding there are some that you will see,  
 Three volumes which, as no-one does not know,  
 Teach about love. Avoid them or, if you  
 Have got the nerve, call them Telegonus  
 Or Oedipus. If you'd afford the due  
 Of honour to your sire, be scrupulous  
 In shunning these. On changing forms are there  
 Full fifteen books, snatched from my obsequy. 130  
 Tell them the features of my fortune share  
 Their fate, for it's turned out quite differently,  
 Distressing now, though blithe in earlier days.  
 I have more schooling, should you ask of me,

But fear to be the reason for delays.  
If you took on all my anxiety,  
You'd be a heavy burden to the man  
Who carries you. Be quick, long is the way.  
I'll still live at the world's outlying span,  
Distant from my own land by many a day.

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TRISTIA I.ii

O gods of sea and sky – what's left but prayer? –  
Don't smash the structure of my storm-tossed bark,  
And mighty Caesar's wrath, please, do not dare  
To second. Often will a deity hark  
To one vexed by another. Mulciber  
Fought Troy, Apollo was her friend, Venus  
Was her ally, Athene hated her.  
Turnus's friend, Juno, had animus  
For Aeneas. Yet did Venus keep him free  
From harm. Fierce Neptune dogged sly Ulysses  
Often. Minerva snatched his liberty  
From her own father. Although far from these  
Am I, who shall avert some spiritual power  
From an angry god who thwarts me? Pointless, though,  
I'm wasting useless words. A weighty shower  
Of water dissipates them as they go  
Between my very lips. And what I say  
The dreadful South Wind tosses, and my prayer  
Won't reach its destination. So away  
My sails and prayers the self-same breezes bear,  
Lest I be harmed in just one way. Poor me,  
The mountains of saltwater now ascend!  
You'd think they'll touch the very galaxy!  
The seas give way – such valleys now descend!  
You'd think they'll touch black Tartarus's sphere.  
Wherever I look, there's nought but sea and air –  
There swelling waters, perilous storm-clouds here,  
Loud-roaring winds thunder between the pair.  
The seas don't know which master to obey –  
Now Eurus blasts from scarlet Orient,  
Now Zephyrus comes at closing of the day,  
Now, in his rage, from the dry North is sent  
Chill Boreas, and now, with brow unkind,

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The South Wind joins the war. Uncertainty  
 Besets the helmsman for he cannot find  
 What goal to aim for nor what he should flee.  
 Conflicting woes his very skill confuse;  
 I'm surely dead, no hope of safety now,  
 And as I speak these words, the floods suffuse  
 My face, and as I vainly mouth my vow 40  
 That mouth the water's killing draught shall drain.  
 And yet my exile is the only woe  
 My loyal wife bewails, that single pain  
 She knows of and laments. She does not know  
 That I am tossed upon the mighty sea,  
 Assailed by winds with death so very nigh.  
 I thank the gods she did not board with me  
 Lest I, poor wretch, a two-fold death should die!  
 But though I pass, this threat she will evade,  
 Thus I will half-survive. Oh, such a flash 50  
 Shoots from the clouds! Oh what a clamour's made  
 Up in the ether! No less dread a crash  
 Falls on these planks than on an enemy's wall  
 A catapult can make; this wave I see  
 (The tenth, it seems) will overtop them all.  
 I don't fear death but this variety  
 Of death is wretched. Only take away  
 The wreck, and death will be a boon. To fall  
 By fate or else by steel, that you may lay  
 Me in the solid ground is what I'd call 60  
*Something* at least – to speak to family  
 And contemplate a grave and not provide  
 A meal for fish. Imagine this to be  
 A fitting death, yet I will not have died  
 Alone. Why punish innocents? O ye  
 Who rule the skies, and ocean gods, unsay  
 Your threats and, in my wretchedness, let me  
 To my allotted home so far away  
 Convey the life that Caesar's wrath, so kind,  
 Has granted. If you want a discipline 70  
 That's fitting, yet in my own judge's mind  
 I merit less than death. Had Caesar been  
 Anxious to send me to the streams of Hell,  
 Your aid was not required. His mastery  
 Over my life do not begrudge. He well  
 May take back what he gave. Now certainly  
 I have not wronged you – be content, therefore,  
 I pray, with my distress! But though you're keen  
 To save a wretch, my life of heretofore

Is now not safe. The sea may be serene, 80  
 The winds auspicious, myself safe, yet I  
 Will be no less an exile. Not for thirst  
 For endless riches do I broad seas ply  
 Nor do I aim for Athens, who once nursed  
 My scholar days nor am I keen to sight  
 The towns of Asia nor that famous spot  
 Called Alexandria nor to delight  
 In you, o jesting Nile. Sarmatia's what  
 My sails are seeking out – who could believe  
 That's why I ant auspicious winds to blow? 90  
 Unlucky Pontus' wild shores must receive  
 My person: and my flight, I fear, is slow.  
 That I may see the Tomitans who dwell  
 So far from Rome, I crave a shorter trip  
 With prayers. If you should love me, curb the swell  
 Of these huge waves and favour this our ship.  
 If you should hate me, point me at the place  
 That he had named – part of my punishment  
 Lies there. Then, swift winds, drive me on apace.  
 What am I doing here? Caesar's intent 100  
 You mock – why do I seek my Italy?  
 Why keep from me the land that he assigned?  
 Let the domains of Pontus look on me –  
 These orders I deserve. No-one will find  
 That I the accusations vindicate –  
 I think them right and fair. But if gods see  
 Our every wrong, you know there's no innate  
 Corruption in my guilt. So certainly,  
 If you know this, if I was carried away  
 By this misdeed, not evil, merely dense, 110  
 If, as the very humblest person may,  
 I have acclaimed that august residence,  
 And if Augustus' public declaration  
 Suffices me and under his command  
 I've written of a happy generation  
 And to both him and all the pious band  
 Of Caesars I have offered up incense,  
 If such has been my spirit, then spare me,  
 Ye gods, if not, let me be carried hence  
 By these high waves. These heavy clouds I see – 120  
 Are they beginning now to evanesce?  
 The sea is now subdued, it seems to me,  
 It's breaking up. Or have they tricked me? Yes,  
 It's not by accident, you, who've been bidden  
 So you may ascertain my surety,

You from whom there's no thing that may be hidden,  
Have come at last to offer aid to me.

TRISTIA I.iii

When I recall that dire and dreadful night,  
Which was decreed my final night in Rome;  
When I think what delights now lack my sight,  
Then from my eyes sad, mournful teardrops come.  
Now it was day – and Caesar had declared  
Far from my native land I was to go.  
I had no will – no time! – to be prepared:  
My heart had long been paralyzed with woe.  
What slaves to choose? What comrade? What to wear?  
Possessions? Nothing seemed to interest me. 10  
As one felled by a bolt of Jupiter  
Who scarce knows he's alive, such apathy  
Was mine. But that same grief now puts an end  
To dullness and my senses are restored.  
I have a final word with each sad friend –  
There are but few, which one time were a horde.  
My wife and I shed tears, she clasps me tight,  
Her cheeks unworthy of their rushing spate.  
Our child in Libya dwells, far from my sight,  
As yet to be acquainted with my fate. 20  
Wherever one looks, groans and sobs arise.  
It seems to be a strident funeral!  
Men, women, children, all mourn my demise.  
The household's tears echo off every wall.  
If one may use large instances for small,  
Thus Troy looked when defeated in the fight.  
And now a silence settles over all,  
The high moon steers the horses of the night.  
Both her, and then the Capitol, I eye  
(Adjoining us, but now no use to me!). 30  
“Deities, who occupy these homes, “ I sigh,  
“You temples which I never more shall see,  
You gods of high Rome whom I must desert,  
Farewell both now and for all time to come.  
Too late the shield for one already hurt!  
But yet absolve this flight from odium.  
Tell that god-man what error cast its spell

On me. Let him not take it for a sin.  
 And what you know let my judge know as well.  
 A god appeased, I am not abject then." 40  
 This prayer I offered up, my wife yet more.  
 With gulps encumbering each sad cry and groan,  
 With hair unkempt and prostrate on the floor,  
 She, trembling, touched where late the smoke had flown.  
 Her rush of words beset our genii,  
 For her lamented husband all in vain.  
 A respite now the swift night did deny,  
 And on his axis turned the Northern Wain.  
 No use. Sweet patriot-love detained me. Aye,  
 But, this night over, I was banished hence. 50  
 "No need for haste," I'd say to scurriers-by.  
 Where are you rushing to so fast? And whence?  
 Ah, sure there was," I'd lie, "without a doubt,  
 A lucky hour suited for my fleeing."  
 Thrice through the door I went, thrice turned about,  
 My tardy foot with my desire agreeing.  
 Farewell I often said, but then much more,  
 Gave final kisses as though truly leaving.  
 The same instructions I repeated o'er,  
 My loved ones eyeing but myself deceiving. 60  
 "But hold!" I said. "Scythia's your destination,  
 Rome's gone. There's justice in each extra minute.  
 From sweet wife sundered till life's termination,  
 You've lost your home and each loyal servant in it.  
 I love each of my comrades like a brother,  
 My faithful heart like Theseus's of old.  
 I'll hold them while I can. Perchance no other  
 Occasion will appear. Each hour's like gold."  
 I halt my broken speech at once, and I  
 Clasp all those near at hand close to my breast. 70  
 We weep, whilst, clear above, high in the sky,  
 There rises Lucifer, foe to my rest.  
 I'm torn away – it seems a part of me  
 Is severed too, leaving me lacking quite.  
 Now rise the wailings of my coterie,  
 Who beat their naked breasts - a doleful sight.  
 Then, clinging close, the lady of my heart,  
 In tears, pronounced these wistful words to me:  
 "You shan't be wrenched away: we'll both depart.  
 I'll follow – we'll exiled together be." 80  
 I start my trek, called to a distant shore,  
 A wretched cargo under fugitive sail,  
 Banned by the anger of an emperor –



Imperial duty bids me not to fail.  
 As in the past, this duty tested me –  
 Slave-like, in pain I held my hands up high.  
 I left - a living corpse I seemed to be,  
 Unshaved, unkempt, a wretched sight was I.  
 When darkness came, my wife, they say, with care  
 Quite mad, half-dead, still lay there on the floor, 90  
 And when she rose, with quite neglected hair,  
 Dust-mingled, her sweet limbs were warm no more.  
 Herself, our desolate gods, she both would mourn  
 And commonly repeat her husband's name,  
 As she had seen upon a pyre borne  
 Our daughter's corpse, or mine, consumed by flame.  
 She longed to die, to have all senses taken,  
 Then, for my sake, she wished to stay alive.  
 So let her live, though doomed to be forsaken;  
 So let her live, and, self-supported, thrive. 100

#### TRISTIA I.iv

Callisto's guardian's dipped into the ocean,  
 His star disturbs the waters of the sea,  
 But I, unwilling, cleave, in forward motion,  
 The Ionian Sea, compelled by fear to be  
 Audacious. O! the strong winds amplify  
 The waves, alas, and from the depths the sand,  
 A seething mass, is scooped and, mountain-high,  
 The very waters escalate and land  
 On prow and stern alike and thrash around  
 The painted gods. The planks resound, the ropes 10  
 Are lashed by shrieking winds, a moaning sound  
 The very keel emits for my lost hopes.  
 The master by his pallor shows cold fear –  
 Lost, he no longer plies his mastery  
 And, like an inefficient charioteer  
 Loosening his stubborn horse's bridle, he,  
*Our* rider, now has given the ship her head –  
 It's not his will, no, it's the impetus  
 Of the waves, and I'll be carried soon instead  
 To shores I should not near if Aeolus 20  
 Does not reform his winds. Now far away  
 Upon my left's Illyria, and here

I see forbidden Italy. I pray  
The breeze will not attempt to venture near  
Barred lands, yielding instead, along with me,  
To that great god. While I speak in dismay  
And crave that I be driven back, the sea  
Beats hard against the ship. Spare me, I pray,  
You ocean gods. No more! Let it be said  
That I have angered Jove. Rescue from death  
My wear soul if one already dead  
Is able to be said still to have breath.

TRISTIA I.v

Recalled before all other friends, you who  
Have made my fate your own, my true ally,  
A gentle counsellor who pulled me through,  
O brave one, when I glumly wished to die,  
Struck with that thunderbolt, you clearly see  
It's *you* whom through these clues I now address;  
You know how well you've served me; this shall be  
Fixed ever in my heart – my gratefulness  
For saving me shan't fade; my soul shall soar  
Into the vacant air, my bones consigned  
Unto a heated funeral pyre before  
Your kindness shall vanish from my mind,  
Your goodness fade. May the gods favour you  
And grant that you'll have need of nobody,  
Unlike myself. If friendly breezes blew  
Upon me now, perhaps that loyalty  
Would be unknown. Indeed Theseus's aid  
Pirithous would have with less eagerness  
Experienced if he'd not that voyage made  
To Hades while alive. You must confess,  
Mournful Orestes, Phocian Pylades  
Was showing you his heartfelt amity  
When you went mad. Again, Hyrtacides  
Would not have tasted immortality  
Had not Euryalus fallen to the foe,  
The Rutuli. As fire tests tawny gold,  
Our loyalty, in times of stressful woe.  
Is analyzed. As Fortune will unfold  
Us kin her fond embrace, thus everything

Attends our uncurbed riches. Yet they flee 30  
 As soon as we hear peals of thundering –  
 No-one now knows that man who recently  
 Was blessed with countless friends. These things, implied  
 By former cases, I know to be true  
 Through my own woes. Two friends, or three, abide  
 (At most) – the rest are Fortune's retinue,  
 Not mine. The succour all the more, you few,  
 My grievous state and give safe anchor space  
 To my shipwreck. Don't falsely overdo  
 Your fear, in case our god protest such grace! 40  
 Even among his foes such loyalty  
 Does Caesar praise; he loves the attribute  
 In friends, in foes approves it. As for me,  
 My case is better – I had no dispute  
 Against him. By simplicity I gained  
 This exile. Watch, for my sad situation,  
 I beg you, then, in case there be attained  
 Of Caesar's anger some attenuation.  
 He who desires to know all of my pains  
 Seeks more than is allowed. As many woes 50  
 I've borne as there are stars, as there are grains  
 In arid particles. Many of those  
 Can't be believed, nor won't, though I withstood  
 Them truly. Part of them should die with me –  
 I would they could be hidden. If I could  
 Have brass-like lungs and speak unflaggingly,  
 With countless tongues and mouths, I could not all  
 Embrace – this theme's beyond my faculty,  
 Yopu learned poets, upon you I call  
 To write of *my* travails, *my* odyssey 60  
 And not the Ithacan's. More woes have come  
 My way than his. He roamed a whole decade  
 But hardly far – between Dulichium  
 And Troy. Myself a lengthy voyage made  
 Between whole constellations to the bays  
 Of the Getae and Sarmatians. Him a band  
 Of faithful friends attended in those days:  
*My* friends, when I was exiled to this land,  
 Deserted me. Victorious, content,  
 He sought his homeland: from my native Rome  
 A vanquished exile I have now been sent.  
 Dulichium is not where I call home,  
 Nor Ithaca, nor Samos, from whose strands  
 To be expelled is no great penalty.  
 From her seven hills Rome looks on all earth's lands,

The hub of empire and divinity.  
 He had a solid frame, to toil inured,  
 My strength's not great, befitting noble roots.  
 The constant sweat of warfare he endured:  
 I am accustomed to softer pursuits.  
 A god crushed me, none eased my misery:  
 Minerva saved him. Neptune's power is less  
 Than Jove's – and yet the ruler of the sea  
 Hotly oppressed him: *Jove* brought *me* distress.  
 The greater part of all his labours, note,  
 Was merely fiction, there's no make believe  
 In mine. At last, besides, he came afloat  
 Back to his household, able to achieve  
 The fields he long had longed for: but for me  
 My native lands must ever be unseen  
 Unless that ireful divinity  
 Whom I have injured mitigates his spleen.

TRISTIA I.vi

Lyde was not loved more than Clarian  
 Antimachus, nor more the learned Coan  
 Philetas idolized his Bittis than  
 I love you – you who to my soul, my own,  
 Cleave fast, deserving one less wretched, yet  
 No better, as a husband. On you, dear,  
 As on a pillar, is my downfall set.  
 It's thanks to you that I'm still breathing here.  
 Through you I'm not despoiled and stripped quite bare  
 By those who charged the timbers of my wreck. 10  
 Just as a hungry wolf that needs to tear  
 At living tissue lacerates the neck  
 Of an unguarded sheep or, looking round  
 To spy a carcass that's not been interred,  
 A famished vulture, one there can be found,  
 No friend to the sore fate I have incurred,  
 Who would have seized my goods if had not you  
 Foiled him. With bold friends you turned him aside  
 (I can't thank them enough) – a witness true,  
 Yet wretched too, am I. O would that I'd 20  
 Some weight with what I know! Andromache  
 Could not outrival you in righteousness

Nor yet could that Laodamia, she  
 Who at her husband's death preferred no less  
 Than joining him. Had Homer written of you,  
 You would be just beneath Penelope  
 In fame: whether you are indebted to  
 Yourself for this, being schooled in loyalty  
 By none, thus honoured on your natal day,  
 Or our First Lady, whom you've adulated 30  
 Throughout your life, has shown to you the way  
 To be a perfect wife and educated  
 You over time to be like her, if great  
 May be compared with small. My poetry  
 Has not that power, my lips can't emulate  
 Your merits! – if I once had energy,  
 My endless woes crushed them! – you should have been  
 Prime heroine among my poems, since you're  
 Blameless. What strength of mine, though, may be seen  
 Will see to it you live for evermore. 40

TRISTIA I.vii

If you possess a portrait of my face,  
 Remove the Bacchic laurel from my hair.  
 Propitious symbols such as that should grace  
 Blessed poets: my own temples should not bear  
 Such things. Pretend this is not sent to you  
 (But feel it!), dear friend, moving hither and yon  
 With me clasped in your hand and carrying, too,  
 The face of one you love portrayed upon  
 The tawny gold – indeed that's all you see  
 For I am exiled. When you cast your eyes 10  
 Upon it, you may say, "How far from me  
 Is my friend Naso!" How it gratifies,  
 Your love! More poems, though, are more striking yet:  
 Read them, however poor: men's transformations  
 They treat of: but misfortune have they met  
 And broken off – their master's deportation's  
 The cause> I threw them, at my exodus,  
 Upon the fire, as many another thing.  
 Althaea burned her son, they say, and thus  
 Turned out to be hopeless at mothering, 20  
 A better sister – to the rapid fire,  
 Likewise, I cast my undeserving verses,  
 My very guts, to burn upon that pyre  
 And die like me. Was I invoking curses

Upon the accusing Muses? Or maybe  
 They were half-grown and still rough-hewn. But they  
 Exist, not lost to all eternity,  
 Several copies made, I think. I pray  
 They may live on and my industrious leisure  
 May please and give the reader thoughts of me, 30  
 And yet no-one can read this work with pleasure  
 Not knowing that last touch of artistry  
 Is missing. On the anvil still it lay  
 When taken from me, and the final file  
 Was looked for still. So pardon me, I pray,  
 Don't praise. As long as you don't hate, me, I'll  
 Be praised indeed. Accept these verses, too,  
 If you should think them worthy to be placed  
 At the forefront of this book of mine: "You who  
 These rolls reft of the man who penned them taste, 40  
 At least let copies of these verses go  
 To your own city, Rome, and all the more  
 Shall you esteem them as it's not Naso  
 Who published them but rather from the core  
 Of his own funeral pyre were they won.  
 Therefore, whatever oversights there be  
 In this rough poem, corrections would have been done  
 If only it had been permitted me."

TRISTIA I.viii

Deep rivers from their source shall from the sea  
 Flow back, the sun shall turn his steeds around,  
 The earth bear stars, sky cultivated be,  
 Water in fire and flames in water found,  
 All nature's laws reversed, no place at all  
 Upon the earth shall keep its lawful track  
 And everything that I was wont to call  
 Impossible now makes me take that back.  
 There's nothing now that may not be believed.  
 All this I prophecy, for he I thought 10  
 Would aid me in my wretchedness deceived  
 Me. Were you by forgetfulness so caught  
 Of me, you traitor, or too cowardly  
 To approach a troubled man, have consolation,  
 O harsh one, some support, some loyalty  
 To bear his body to the conflagration?  
 Does friendship's name, revered and sacred, lie,

A cheapened thing, beneath your feet? To visit  
 A prostrate friend and converse with him – why,  
 A thing like that is no great problem, is it? 20  
 You could at my misfortune shed a tear  
 Or with a few words simulate distress,  
 At the very least say something in my ear  
 (For even strangers hardly offer less)  
 Or copy public speech, the people's voice,  
 To look upon my face, never again  
 To be descried, while you still have a choice,  
 On that last day, and in a similar vein  
 Return their "farewell". Others with no bond  
 To me did so and let fall tears of woe. 30  
 So what if of each other we weren't fond,  
 If of a love which started long ago  
 There was no valid reason? What if you  
 Had not known all my blithe and serious moods?  
 Or I yours? What, too, if you only knew  
 Me when in Rome, when you in multitudes  
 Of places were my friend? Was all in vain?  
 All blown by ocean winds? All swept away  
 To Lethe's streams? You were not born, it's plain,  
 In that great city where I may not stay. 40  
 No, you were born on Pontus' rocky shore  
 Or Scythia's or Sarmatia's cruel heights.  
 Your heart is filled with veins of flint, what's more,  
 Inside your rigid soul the iron bites.  
 She who once gave full dugs for you to suck  
 With soft gums was a tiger: otherwise  
 You would not think so alien my ill luck  
 As now you do, nor would I criticize  
 Your callousness. But since those early days  
 Don't fit the present, may I not retain 50  
 The memory of that sin and likewise praise  
 Your help as at the present I complain.

TRISTIA I. ix

May you attain life's limit faultlessly  
 Who read this work of mine in friendly vein.  
 And may my prayers for you have potency –  
 The ones used for my own self could not gain  
 The harsh gods' pity. While you're safe, you'll own  
 A host of friends, but they will all defect

When times are cloudy. Doves have always flown  
 To white abodes, and birds do not select  
 An unclean tower. Ants seek granaries  
 But never empty ones: when there's just debt, 10  
 No friend comes near. As shade accompanies  
 Those crossing the sun's rays, but when beset  
 By clouds, the sun retreats. The fickle crowd  
 Will follow Fortune's lights, but when by night  
 They're dimmed, they vanish. It must be allowed  
 That this is true with reference to my plight.  
 While I stood straight, my house, although well-known,  
 Not courting favours, had a sufficiency  
 Of folk. But at the cast of the first stone,  
 They turned their backs and fled judiciously 20  
 In fear of overthrow. It's no mere guess  
 That they fear savage thunder, by whose fire  
 All things nearby are blasted. Nevertheless  
 Caesar approves a friend whose state is dire  
 Yet who endures, hostile though he may be:  
 He won't get angry – no-one's more controlled –  
 When one continues in adversity  
 To keep on loving what he loved of old.  
 They say that at the tale of Orestes' friend  
 Thoas himself applauded Pylades, 30  
 While Patroclus, unswerving to the end  
 To Achilles, Hector praised. The God of Hades  
 Grieved when the loyal Theseus went below,  
 Accompanying his chum, and when you knew  
 Of Nisus' and Euryalus' fealty, so,  
 Turnus, your cheeks were wet. The wretched, too,  
 Know loyalty. Even an enemy  
 Approve of it. How few are moved by all  
 These words of mine. My state, my destiny  
 Should put no limit on these tears that fall. 40  
 And yet my heart, though paralyzed with woe,  
 For your promotion's filled with happiness.  
 I saw it coming, dear one, long ago  
 While still the breezes bore your bark with less  
 Velocity. If there had been a prize  
 For character or for a life that's free  
 Of blemishes, there's none in all men's eyes  
 More worthy than you. If celebrity  
 Is gained by liberal arts, your eloquence  
 Makes every cause a good one. Once I stated 50  
 To you yourself when moved by this, "From hence  
 By a stage of substance, friend, are you awaited,



With all your gifts.” No thunder that was heard  
 Upon the left, no liver of a sheep  
 Had told me this, the piping of no bird  
 Nor yet its wing. This augury I keep  
 Within the bounds of reason. This how  
 I gained my knowledge. Thus, since this is so,  
 With all my heart I compliment you now  
 That your accomplishments do not lie low 60  
 (I compliment myself as well). Would mine  
 Were buried in deepest obscurity!  
 Better by far light had refused to shine  
 Upon them! Serious arts have proved  
 Of benefit to you, my eloquent friend,  
 My frivolous arts have caused me much torment.  
 Well do you know my life. You comprehend  
 That they and their creator’s temperament  
 Are poles apart. You know the poem is old,  
 A youth’s amusement, but those jests, although 70  
 Not praiseworthy, are still but jests. I hold  
 That these misdeeds of mine, though, ever so  
 Well pled, they could never be justified,  
 May be excused. As far as they may be  
 Excused, excuse. Let loyalty abide.  
 Keep on, just as you set out happily.

#### TRISTIA I.x

I have, and pray I always may, the care  
 Of golden-haired Minerva (and indeed  
 Her helmet’s painted on my ship). If there  
 Is need for sails, she runs with ample speed  
 And little breeze, if oars, they function too.  
 She is content not only to prevail  
 Over her fellow-barks, but she’ll outdo  
 All others even if they had set sail  
 Days earlier. She the far-leaping sea  
 And tide upholds and is not prone to leak, 10  
 Engulfed with savage waves. First known to me  
 In Cenchreae, while I my exile seek  
 In fear, she is my leader and my friend  
 While cruel blasts have struck us on our way,  
 Through many an escapade true to the end  
 Thanks to Athene’s power. Now, I pray,  
 To Pontus’ wide gates may she carry me

In safety, seeking Getae's watery edge.  
 She brought me to Aeolian Helle's sea,  
 A lengthy journey for her narrow wedge. 20  
 Turning to left and veering now away  
 From Troy, I entered, Imbria, your shore.  
 Then a light zephyr took me to the bay  
 Of Zerynthia, then my weary vessel bore  
 Me on to Samothrace. A little leap  
 Will reach Tempyra: that's as far, however,  
 As she would take her boss across the deep:  
 Thereafter to Bistonia I'd endeavour  
 To walk. She through the Hellespont would skim  
 To seek the country of the Dardani 30  
 Which from the first has borne the name of him  
 Who founded her and, with his deity  
 Who loves the country, Lampsacus, straight through  
 The strait of Helle vilely borne away,  
 Between Abydos and Sestos, and you,  
 Cyzicos, clinging closely to the bay  
 Of the Propontis, exalted creation  
 Of Aeneus and Byzantium's coastline  
 Where stands the port of Pontus, mighty station  
 Between two seas. Gods, hear this prayer of mine: 40  
 May she win through, may strong winds drive my ship  
 Straight past those boulders, shifting and dark-blue,  
 And the Thynian bay, that she might make the trip  
 Under Anchialus' narrow walls, straight through  
 Apollo's city, then Mesembria's port  
 And Odesos, Dionysopolis  
 And where the exiles from Alcathous' fort,  
 They say, once set up residence. From this  
 May she come to Miletus' colony  
 In safety, whither I have been consigned 50  
 By a god's wrath. Should this turn out to be  
 The case, why then a lamb must be assigned  
 To worthy Minerva as an offering.  
 A larger beast my low funds can't supply.  
 Now to our twofold way your power bring  
 Propitiously, you two Tyndaridae,  
 Castor and Pollux, loved well by this isle,  
 For through the circumscribed Symplegades  
 One craft prepares to go, a fearful trial,  
 The other, meanwhile, starts to cleave the seas 60  
 That bear the name of the Bistonian nation.  
 Make sure, although the places we pursue  
 Are different, that the winds give approbation

Not just to one but to the other, too.

TRISTIA I.xi

Each letter which you've read in this whole book  
Was penned by me while on my troubled trip.  
Either, while in December's cold I shook,  
The Adriatic saw me on my ship  
At work; or, past that place with double seas,  
The Isthmus, when I boarded in my fleeing  
A second bark, the Aegean Cyclades  
Wondered, I think, as I wrote verse while being  
Assailed by roaring waves. It strikes me dumb  
That in such turmoil of both mind and sea 10  
My powers did not fail. "Delirium"  
Or "trance" be labelled this activity,  
Such pains have soothed *my* pain. So often flung  
In peril by the stormy Kids, again,  
So often by the threatening waters stung  
(Upraised by Sterope), autumnal rain  
By Auster brought upon the Hyades,  
Day by the guardian of the Atlantian Bear  
Made dark, so often, too, part of those seas  
Had overlapped the side and were right there 20  
Within the ship. However, I turned out  
My poems, such as they were, with trembling quill.  
And now the hawsers let out such a shout,  
Made taut by Aquilo, now, like a hill,  
The curving billows swell. The helmsman too  
Held up his hands to heaven some aid to find,  
Forgetting his own skill. Whatever I view  
The threat of death is there. My wavering mind  
Is full of fear, and in my fear I pray.  
When I reach land, the port shall frighten me! 30  
More fear stands there than in the watery fray.  
I'm haunted by snares of both men and sea:  
Both sword and waves create a double dread:  
The former looks for blood, it seems to me,  
The latter fame for rendering me dead.  
The left coast's wild, well used to robbery,  
War, bloodshed, murder. Though the sea is churned  
With winter's flood, nevertheless my heart  
Is agitated more. Thus have I earned  
More leniency, kind reader, on your part 40

If, as they are, these poems are lesser than  
Your hopes. I do not, as in times gone by,  
Compose them in my garden; dear divan,  
You do not now support me. Tossed am I  
On stormy, wintry seas, my paper sprayed  
With dark-blue drops. The agitated sea  
Makes war against me, now resentful made  
Because I had the bald temerity  
To write while it was raining down pell-mell  
Its cruel threats on me. Well, let the squall  
Overwhelm the man! But let it ring its knell  
When likewise to my poems an end I call.

