

TRISTIA III

I

“Sent to your city, fearful I draw near,
An exile’s book; lend me a kindly hand,
Sweet reader, in my weariness. Don’t fear
That I may cause you shame: I’m quite without
A single verse that teaches love. The fate
Of my poor master drives him to forego
All hidden jests. He damns and hates, too late,
The ill-starred work he started long ago!
See what I bring: there’s nought but sadness here,
The verse befits its state. My limping lines 10
Are either lame by nature or the sheer
Length of the journey. No cedar-oil shines,
No pumice smoothes me, for I would not be
More well-dressed than my master. If I’m blotted
With blurred erasures, it is just that he
Stained me with tears. If you by chance have spotted
Some foreign words, the land in which he writes
Is foreign too. Say, readers, if you would,
Where I should go, an alien, where the sites 20
That I should seek.” I spoke as best I could,
A timid stutter, and just one I met
To show me. “On you may the gods bestow
What they denied our poet – that you’re let
To live in peace where you may come and go
In your own land. I’ll follow – lead the way,
Although I journeyed over land and sea
In weariness and from so far away.”
He marked my words and “Here,” he said to me,
“Is Caesar’s forum; here’s the sacred road
And Vesta’s shrine, the guardian of the flame 30
And Pallas, and old Numa’s small abode
Was here.” Then, turning to the right, we came
To the Palatine Gate. “here is Stator,” he stated.
“Here Roma was founded.” Gazing at each sight
I clearly saw some posterns decorated
With gleaming and a house which might
Contain a god. “Jove’s house?” I said. A band
Of oak now put this notion in my head,
And when I learned its master, “That’s the grand
Jupiter’s temple – I’m not wrong,” I said. 40
Why does the wreath enshroud the door and why
Do its dark tresses ring the lordly hair?

The house deserves triumphs that never die,
 I'm sure, and it has always been the care
 Of the Leucadian god. Or else maybe
 That it is gay? Or makes gay everything?
 Is it a token of that harmony
 You gave the world? The constant burgeoning,
 No withering leaves to pull out, parallels
 Its constant glory? Well, here you may see 50
 The reason for that laurel, for it tells
 That it once rescued Roman citizenry.
 Great father, add one more to those thus freed
 Who lives obscurely very far from here,
 Judging his penance worthy, though no deed
 Occasioned it – an error did. I fear,
 Alas, the place, I fear the man of power,
 My text trembles with dread. And do you see
 Each page, bloodless and pale, my metres cower?
 Palace, someday, I pray for amity 60
 With my begetter and that you are seen
 Housing the same lords!" Then with even gait
 He took me to the temple, white, serene,
 Of the bearded god, where the Belids alternate
 With foreign columns and, with naked blade,
 The alien father, and the works both new
 And old, for those who wish to read displayed.
 I sought my brothers, except for those who
 Their parent would desire had not beheld
 The light of day, and as I searched in vain 70
 The guardian of that holy place expelled
 Me from the building. I sought once again
 Another temple, near the theatre, nor
 Was I accepted there. And Liberty
 Would not allow me to approach the door
 Which was the first to form a library.
 Our wretched father's progeny is heir
 To his own fate: we bear the exile he
 Endures. Caesar perhaps in time will spare
 Us both at least *some* of his gravity, 80
 Persuaded over time. You gods, I pray,
 Or rather Caesar (I should not request
 The mob), the mightiest god of all, to pay
 Heed to my prayer! Meanwhile, since I may rest
 In not one public place, in privacy
 Let me be hid. Romans, extend your hand,
 If it is right, to this my poetry
 So frightened by the shame of being banned.

II

To visit even Scythia I was fated,
The land beneath the Bear; O Leto's son,
Pierides, wise throng, you mitigated
Your mouthpiece not one whit; that AI have done
No true wrong in my trivialities
Does not avail me, nor that my own Muse
Is merrier than my life; of menaces
Of every kind I've suffered many a bruise.
The Black Sea's constant cold keeps me in thrall;
Once shunning business, for a life of ease 10
Prepared, unfit to answer labour's call,
Fragile, I now endure extremities.
Surviving far trips and a portless sea,
My spirit bucked these troubles and bestowed
Strength on my frame, so ills that scarce can be
Endured I bear. While over sea and road
I was propelled, these miseries deceived
My sick heart and my cares; the journey done,
With no more toil, While I have been received
Into my land of penance, there's but one 20
Activity for me and that is weeping:
A flood no less than what from snow we see
In springtime wets my cheeks, and there comes creeping
Rome, home, the haunts I miss, that part of me
That in that Rome I've left behind. O woe!
How often have I knocked upon the door
Of my own sepulchre, but at each blow
It stayed securely closed. Not one downpour
That often threatened never ravaged me,
And yet so many swords I've dodged. O you, 30
You gods, of whom I've tasted cruelty
Too many times applied to me, you who
Are sharers in the anger of one god,
Please stimulate my laggard fate, I pray,
That it may change, and do not give the nod
That from my ruin's door I'm turned away.

III

Perhaps you wonder why this letter's penned
 By someone else's hand: I was unwell,
 Sick in an unknown world's remotest end,
 Uncertain of revival. Could you tell
 My mind while lying in a dreadful land,
 Sauromatae and Getae everywhere?
 I hate the climate and I cannot stand
 The water hereabouts, nor can I bear
 The place itself. No house, no food is fit
 For invalids, no doctor to relieve 10
 One's malady is here, no friend to sit
 Besides one's bed and comfort or deceive
 Slow hours with chat. Exhausted, I lie here
 So far away and to my sickly mind
 Comes all I lack but when it ventures near,
 It's you I think of mostly, while you wind
 About half of my heart and more, to you
 I talk, your name alone I speak each day,
 Each night; when I spoke madly, your name, too,
 Was present on my feverish lips, they say. 20
 If I expired now, my tongue lodged firm
 Against my palate, past recovery
 By drops of wine, if someone should affirm
 Your presence, I would rise, my energy
 Caused by the hope of you. Unsure of life
 Am I; are you perhaps heedless of me?
 I know you're not. It's clear, my dearest wife,
 That, reft of me, there's nought but misery
 For you. If fate has brought me to my end,
 So soon to die, it is a small request, 30
 Great gods, that for a dying man you bend
 And authorize that I be laid to rest
 In Rome. Would that exile had been deferred
 Until my death or that death had frustrated
 My flight! When healthy, I would have preferred
 To die; an exile's death instead was fated
 For me. On foreign shores, then, shall I die,
 The very region thereby deepening
 My fate. On no well-loved couch shall I lie,
 No-one to mourn me as I'm weakening; 40
 My spouse's teardrops shall not stain my cheek
 And add brief moments to my soul; I'll say
 No parting words, nor with a final shriek
 Shall some friend on my fluttering eyelids lay
 His hand. With no rites, no blessed sepulchre
 I shall be buried in an alien land

Unwept. The news will set your heart astir,
 You'll beat your loyal breast with trembling hand.
 In vain you'll stretch your arms towards this shore,
 Wailing your wretched husband's empty name. 50
 Don't tear your hair, your cheeks, for once before
 I was snatched from you, love. When exile came,
 Imagine I had perished straightaway –
 An earlier and a harder death for me.
 Rejoice if you can (though I doubt you may,
 My dearest wife) that all my misery
 Leaves with my death. But you can mollify
 My ills by bearing them with stalwart heart,
 Long-trained to do so. Would our souls could die
 With our bodies so that not a single part 60
 Of me the greedy pyre might bypass.
 For if there flits a soul that's deathless and
 We may believe ancient Pythagoras,
 A Roman soul roams in Sarmatian land,
 Ever a stranger. But take back again
 My bones in one small urn: thus will I be
 No exile even when in death's domain.
 No-one forbids that: King Creon's decree
 Was flouted by Electra when she laid
 To rest her Theban brother. With ground nard 70
 And leaves mix them, then lay them in some glade
 Close to the city; thus it won't be hard
 For hasty travellers to read this verse
 (You'll carve it in the marble, clear to see):
 HERE NASO LIES, A BARD WONT TO REHEARSE
 LOVE-POEMS, BETRAYED BY INGENUITY.
 YOU LOVERS, AS YOU PASS, GRUDGE NOT A PRAYER
 THAT SOFT MAY LIE THE BONES OF PUBLIUS.
 So much for the inscription: my books bear
 A monument that's more illustrious 80
 And durable. Though they caused injury,
 I'm sure they'll give a sterling reputation
 And long life to their author. Constantly,
 However, may you at my inhumation
 Give rites to the deceased and garlands wet
 With tears. Although the fire will change my frame
 To ash, your God-fearing attention yet
 Will rouse the gloomy flicker all the same.
 I'd write more but my tongue's too tired and dry
 To dictate. This last thing I'll ever tell 90
 To you, perhaps, read! (it does not apply
 To that poor man who's sending it): "Farewell".

IV

Forever loved, acquainted, though, indeed
 In cruel times, when luck deserted me,
 If one taught by experience you'd heed,
 Live for yourself: avoid celebrity.
 Shun glory when you can: from high above
 There falls a harsh bolt from its sanctuary.
 The strong alone can help but rather prove
 More prone to causing harm; the yardarm, see,
 When lowered, is not touched by winter's squalls,
 Broad sails are more assailable than narrow, 10
 A cork can float, a heavy weight, though, falls
 Through water, with the nets, straight as an arrow.
 If I, who warn you, had been warned before,
 I would perchance be home where I belong.
 While I lived with you, a light zephyr bore
 My boat as through calm seas I sped along.
 Fall on flat ground (though that's a rare event)
 And you can rise; but when Elpenor took
 A dive from that high roof, to Hell he went
 Where he next met his king. Daedalus shook 20
 His wings in safety; but the mighty sea
 Is named for Icarus who hovered low,
 While Daedalus flew high, we must agree
 (For both had alien wings). This much I know –
 Who hides well lives well; know your proper station.
 Dolon would not have caused his father pain
 Without possessing an infatuation
 For the horses of Achilles, or, again,
 Merops would not have seen his son alight,
 His daughters turned to trees if he had been 30
 Phaëthon's father. Fear excessive height,
 The sails of your ambition pray draw in.
 For you deserve to finish your life's race
 Without a stumble and to draw a fate
 Fairer than mine. Your gentle, pious grace
 And indestructible devotion rate
 My prayers. I saw a mien that mirrored mine,
 I think, as you bewailed me. Your tears rained
 Upon my face, those teardrops which align
 With your fine words. Both tears and words I drained. 40
 And still you champion your banished friend

With zeal and heighten woes that scarce can be
 Lightened in any way. Right to the end
 Unenvied be, in anonymity
 Live on in years of comfort and embrace
 The fellowship of like companions, and
 Love Naso's name (alone spared exile's face
 So far – the rest of me's in Thracian land).
 A land beneath the Erymanthian Bear
 Retains me, shrivelled with frigidity. 50
 The Bosphorus, the Don are north of there,
 The Scythian swamps and a locality
 Scarce known (there are some names). Beyond's a land
 So cold no-one can live in it. How near
 The margin of the world have I been banned!
 My country's far away, my wife so dear
 And all things else that made life sweet for me.
 Yet even so these things are here, but I
 Cannot touch them: my mind alone can see
 Them all. My home, my city seem to fly 60
 Before my eyes, places, what happened where,
 An image of my wife as though she's here.
 She heightens but relieves my every care:
 The former by her absence, yet what cheer
 She offers by her love and by the way
 She staunchly bears the burden that's been set
 Upon her! You, my comrades, also stay
 Fast in my heart. I wish I may be let
 To use your names, but cautious fear rules out
 Such duty, and that you would wish to be 70
 Included in a poem of mine I doubt.
 You did before – a pleasing dignity
 It was to have my verse pronounce each name.
 There's danger now, so I'll greet each of you
 Within my heart, so you may put no blame
 Of fear on me. My verse gives not one clue
 That may expose you. Let him love me yet
 Who loved in secret. Though I'm far away
 You're always with me, on this you can bet.
 Reduce my burden however you may. 80
 Do not refuse an outcast loyalty.
 Good fortune and prosperity alike
 Attend you! May you never ask of me,
 In thrall of such a fate as mine, the like.

My friendly dealings with you were so meagre
 That you could easily deny that they
 Had been; your friendship might have been less eager
 If helpful winds had sped me on my way.
 I fell and people fled my fall in fright
 And friendship turned its back but you made bold
 To touch the corpse that Jove's fire set alight
 And traverse my lamented home's threshold.
 A recent friend, you gave what two or three
 Old friends at most have in my wretchedness
 Accorded me. I could not help but see
 Your baffled face, more pale in its distress
 Than mine and wet with tears. I saw them fall
 With every word and with my mouth the first
 And with my ears the latter drank it all,
 Your arms about my neck, the sobbing burst
 Of tears mixed with your kisses. I have been
 Defended, even absent, by your might –
 You know *carus* for your real name is seen –
 Many clear marks of your affection light
 Upon me never to be eradicated.
 Gods grant you'll have the power to defend
 Your own and may they be alleviated
 In better times. But now, if you should bend
 My ear (I think you do) and ask of me
 How I am faring in my sorry state,
 There is a little hope that I can see
 (Don't take it from me) – our god may abate
 His firm resolve. Whether I hope in vain
 Or not, attest what I desire, I pray:
 Apply your eloquence that you may gain
 My confidence that you may win the day.
 The greater is a man, the more his spleen
 Is able to be eased; a noble mind
 Has kindly impulses: it may be seen
 That when the mighty lion kills the hart
 It is enough: the fight, the foe being dead,
 Is over, but the wolf, the wicked bear
 Toy with the dying; this, too, can be said
 Of all ignoble beasts. What man is there
 In Troy greater than Achilles? Priam's pain
 He could not bear; Alexander's clemency
 Is proved by Porus and the funeral train
 Of Darius. There's no necessity

To speak of anger turned to moderation –
 Once Juno's foe and then her son-in-law
 Was Hercules. There must be *some* salvation
 For me because my retribution saw
 No bloodshed. I had no desire to kill
 Augustus, thereby wrecking everything: 50
 I've spoken nothing, I have not let spill
 Unholy words through too much wassailing:
 I guiltless saw a crime and must atone
 For having eyes. Not wholly innocent,
 Partly I must a simple error own.
 I have some hope, then, that he will consent
 To ease my punishment and change the place
 Of exile. May such news to me be brought
 By Lucifer, who shows the sun's bright face,
 Drawn onwards by his winged chariot. 60

VI

Dear friend, you do not wish to hide the bond
 Of our concord or, if you wanted to,
 You can't. Of no-one else was I more fond
 While it was possible, closer to you
 Than anyone in Rome. That amity
 Was seen by all and thus more recognized,
 Almost, than you and I: your honesty
 With your dear friends – all this is realized
 By him you love. Nothing was hid from me,
 You trusted me with much and I told you 10
 All of my secrets confidentially,
 Except the one which crushed me. If that, too,
 You'd heard, from a saved pal you'd benefit,
 By your advice, friend, rescued. But I guess
 My fate was urging punishment, for it
 Bars every road that leads to happiness.
 But whether caution might have kept this woe
 At bay or fate's secure from any action,
 Yet you, companion from so long ago,
 Of my desire almost the largest fraction,
 Remember me and if you have, through favour, 20
 Been given powers, use them, I entreat,
 For me, that our distressed god's wrath may waver

And melt, and I a lesser penance meet
 In some other location – there's no crime
 In me – the source of my iniquity
 Was a mistake. I'd spend no little time
 (If it were safe!) to tell what destiny
 Caused me to see a dreadful deed; my mind
 In dread shrinks from that time as though it were 30
 From its own wounds; the memories of it find
 Renewed chagrin. Whatever can confer
 Such shame on me should be by darkest night
 Concealed. I erred – that's all I will profess –
 But sought no prize for it. It's only right
 To call my misdemeanour foolishness,
 If you desire its proper soubriquet.
 If this is not the case, then seek for me
 A place more distant still; I should not stay
 So near to Rome for such mendacity. 40

VII

Go, letter, faithful servant, quickly scrawled,
 And greet Perilla. You will find her sat
 With her delightful mother or else sprawled
 With her dear Muses and her books. Whereat,
 Whatever she is doing she will quit
 And promptly ask you why you've come and how
 I am. You'll say I live but not one bit
 Desiring to, and that my woes even now,
 After so long, aren't lessened; but, although
 It stings, I have returned to writing verse
 And organize my words that they might flow 10
 In elegiacs. Ask "Do you rehearse
 Our communal pursuit, sung poetry
 (though not your father's mode)? Nature gave you,
 With life itself, rare wit and modesty.
 I was the first to bring these virtues to
 The streams of Pegasus in case the source
 Of fertile waters waste away and die;
 The first to see it in the early course
 Of a maiden's tender years; her guide was I 20
 And comrade, like a father. If, therefore,
 This fire still abides within your breast,

There's just one poet who could garner more
 Acclaim and she's from Lesbos. I fear lest
 My fortune now will slow me down, my heart
 Rendered inactive by my woes. While I
 Was able, to myself I'd read your art
 And mine to you. I'd often give you my
 Advice and judgment. I would listen to
 Your recent work or censure idleness 30
 To turn you crimson. It may be that you
 Have thought of my painful unhappiness
 Caused by my penance. Lay aside dismay;
 But let no man or woman learn through me
 Of love. Accomplished lady, take away
 The roots of sloth, return to poetry.
 Your lovely face the course of years will mar,
 Crow's-feet upon your aged brow appear,
 The hand of ruinous old age will scar
 Your beauty, with her noiseless step. "Look here," 40
 Someone will say, "She once was ravishing,"
 And you will grieve and say, "The mirror lies."
 You have some wealth, though much more meriting:
 Should you gigantic riches visualize,
 Fortune at random gives and takes away,
 A man who rivalled Croesus suddenly
 Becomes an Irus. Briefly, we display
 Nothing that isn't mortal but what we
 Hold in our heart and soul. Behold! although
 I've lost you, country, home, and everything 50
 That can be taken has been, even so
 My mind is my companion and can bring
 Me pleasure: Caesar cannot touch my mind
 With statutes. Run me through, yet, even dead,
 My credit will live on, and you will find,
 As long as Rome remains, I will be read,
 While she looks down upon her conquered sphere,
 And may you too be happier from your skill
 Than I was and avoid the funeral bier
 That's destined in whatever way you will. 60

VIII

IN Triptolemus's car would I could be,

The man who cast upon the ground new grain
 To make it grow. Would it were granted me
 To ply upon Medea's snakes the rein
 When she was fleeing Corinth's bastion;
 Would I had wings like Daedalus or you,
 Perseus, so that, with my swift flight upon
 The yielding air I'd get a sudden view
 Of my sweet Rome, loyal friends, the residence
 That I have left behind and, principally, 10
 The face of my sweet wife. You lack all sense!
 Why with your childish prayers yearn pointlessly
 For what will never be? If you must plead,
 Worship Augustus' godhead; supplicate
 The man whose power you have felt. Your need
 For wings and swift cars he can give and, straight
 When Rome is granted, you'll be in the air.
 Were I to pray for this (for nothing more
 Could I request), I'm terrified my prayer
 May be immoderate. For what's in store? 20
 When he has been appeased, I still must pray
 For this with anxious mind. Meanwhile, something
 Smaller (though large for me) is that I may
 Go somewhere else than here. There is nothing –
 Land, climate, water, air – that pleases me.
 I'm ever weak! Whether my sickly frame
 Mirrors a sick mind or my malady
 Springs from this region, ever since I came
 To Pontus, lack of sleep has been my due,
 My bones are scarcely covered by my skin, 30
 I do not relish food; the autumn hue
 On leaves when winter's early frost comes in
 Covers my limbs. No strength can bring relief
 And fretful pain is constant, and my mind
 Reflects my body – both are sick with grief,
 A double hurt. The clinging shape I find
 Of my misfortune, clearly to be scanned:
 I see this place, men's ways, their dress and hear
 Their language and recall my standing and
 What it once was – the thought of death gives cheer, 40
 And Caesar's wrath I censure: why did he
 Not run me through? But since he's shown his hate
 In gentle fashion, let my exile be
 Disburdened further: let me relocate.

IX

So here too Grecian cities are descried
 (Who'd credit it?) beside barbarity;
 Miletian settlers came and now reside
 Among the Getae. From antiquity,
 However, (older than itself) its name
 It has acquired for the assassination
 Of Absyrtus. For wicked Medea came
 By ship, which, under the administration
 Of grim Minerva, had been fabricated,
 Fleeing her father on an untried sea, 10
 Plying the oar herself, it has been stated.
 From far the watch on a declivity
 Said, "Here a stranger comes from Colchis – I
 Recall the sails." Agog was Jason's crew,
 The cable loosed, the anchor lifted high
 By busy hands. The Colchian maiden, who
 Had (and still would) embodied deep disgrace,
 Was conscious of her guilt; audacity
 Still lived within her, but upon her face
 The pallor of dismay was plain to see. 20
 She saw the sails approaching and cried out,
 "I'm caught. My father must be kept at bay
 By some device." While she looked all about
 And weighed her options, her eyes chanced to stray
 Upon her brother. "That's the thing!" she cried.
 "His death will save my life." Immediately
 A rigid sword into his innocent side
 She plunged before he'd feared such jeopardy.
 And then she tore him limb from limb and strew
 Them far and wide through meadows, to be found 30
 In many places. That her father knew
 Her action, high above on rocky ground
 She placed his ghost-white hands and gory head.
 And thus it was her father found delay
 By fresh affliction, being thereby led
 To further hindrance on his grievous way
 By picking up the lifeless parts. And thus
 The place was labelled Tomis, it is stated,
 A place in which the limbs of Absyrtus
 Were by his very sister lacerated. 40

X

If someone still remembers banished me,
 My name extant without me there in Rome,
 Then know that I live in barbarity,
 Set down where stars don't ever touch the foam.
 Sauromatae surround me (vicious race),
 The Bessi, Getae, names which do not fit
 My talent! While the warm winds brush my face,
 The interposing Hister save us: it
 Keeps us from wars. And when the winter shows
 His grimy face and earth is rendered white 10
 By marble ice, when Boreas's snows
 Prevent life under Arctos, then the bite
 Caused by the shivering pole, it's very plain,
 Torments these folk. Unless the constant snows
 Are turned to liquid by the sun and rain,
 They're rendered hard by Boreas's blows.
 They stay: a second fall then comes along
 And sojourns two whole years in many spots;
 Once roused, the west wind's power is so strong
 It blows buildings away and makes mere blots 20
 Of lofty towers. Men keep the vicious cold
 Away with fastened trousers and by fleeces,
 And of their entire frame one may behold
 Only their faces. Often one hears pieces
 Of people's hair tinkling with icicles;
 Wine stands exposed, keeping the flagon's mould,
 And draughts of wine aren't drunk, but particles.
 Why tell of rivers frozen stiff with cold
 While brittle water from the lake is mined?
 The very Hister, wider than the Nile, 30
 Which breeds papyrus, with the deep entwined
 Through many mouths, will turn to stiff ice, while
 Its dark-blue waves are hardened by the blasts,
 And creeps towards the sea beneath that load.
 Now feet traverse what once conveyed ships' masts
 And horses' hooves now pound that stiffened road.
 On the new bridge above the gliding sea
 Sarmatian oxen pull their foreign ploughs.
 I scarcely can expect you'll credit me
 But since a lie gains nothing trust my vows: 30
 I saw this huge sea ice-bound, where a shell

Stood in it motionless. And yet to see
 Is not sufficient, so, that I may tell
 The truth, I kicked the surface and (trust me)
 It stayed beneath my unwet foot. If you
 Had done the same as I, then your decease,
 Leander, would not have been set down to
 Those narrow waters. At such times as these
 The curving dolphins can't effect a spring
 Into the air – winter's austerity 40
 Prevents. In spite of the bellowing
 And beating wings of Boreas, there'll be
 No flow in that beleaguered flood; restrained
 By cold the ships shall stand upon the sea,
 No oar shall cleave them. Fish I saw contained
 By ice, though there were even some of these
 That lived. Whether the great North Wind congeals
 The sea or teeming river, nonetheless
 At once the Hister, being levelled, feels 50
 The force of freezing Aquilo's prowess
 And on swift horses comes the foreign foe,
 Strong cavalrymen and archers, to despoil
 The neighbouring land; some turn their tails, and so,
 With no-one left to watch over their soil,
 Their wealth is plundered, cattle, ploughs that grind,
 Their meagre assets, all the property
 The needy farmers owned; arms bound behind,
 Some folk are led away, turning to see
 Their farms and homes (in vain!): others expire
 From poisoned arrows. What they cannot lead 60
 Or haul away they lose, then hostile fire
 Destroys their innocent huts. If they succeed
 In gaining peace, they still dread war, and so
 The earth's not ploughed. This region either spies
 Or, if it does not, shudders at a foe.
 The earth meanwhile in stark neglect still lies.
 No sweet grape under leafy shade is here,
 No brimming must in deep vats, apples too
 Are absent (so Acontius's dear
 May get no love-note from him). Here will you 70
 See fields bereft of leaves and trees: ah me,
 No happy man should come here! That is why,
 Though the wide world's as broad as it can be,
 Hither, as penalty for my crime, came I.

XI

You wicked man, whoever you may be,
 Who always challenge me and mock my pain,
 Thirsting for bloodshed, your nativity
 Was out among the crags, where you would drain
 The milk of beasts; your breast is flinty-hard.
 Where further can your anger go? D'you see
 Any unhappiness from which I'm barred?
 A land that's barbarous is facing me,
 Unfriendly Pontus, Boreas and his bear.
 I have no common tongue with this wild race; 10
 Anxiety and fear are everywhere.
 And just as ravening bears a deer will chase
 And catch, or as a lamb is quivering,
 By mountain bears surrounded, similarly,
 Cut off by warlike tribes, I'm panicking,
 Oppressed almost on every side of me.
 Is it but slight that of my darling wife,
 Rome and my loved ones I have been bereaved:
 If merely Caesar's anger changed my life,
 Is Caesar's wrath too small to have received? 20
 Yet one still paws anew my open gashes
 And fluently reviles me. Fluency
 Prevails with easy targets and it smashes
 What is already crushed. It's bravery
 To wipe out walls and fortresses: but they
 Who ruin ruin give to cowardice
 New depths. I'm not what I once was. Why, pray,
 Harass a shade? There is no point to this –
 Stoning my tomb and ashes. When he slew
 Was Hector living. Not the same was he 30
 When bound to Haemon's steeds. I, likewise, who
 Was known to you in former days, now see,
 I live no more, am just a ghost. So why
 Assail a wraith with bitter words, fierce man?
 Please spare my shade! Imagine, then, that I
 Did all of this, think them more trespass than
 Mistake: be satisfied, looking on me –
 A fugitive, I pay a heavy cost
 With exile. Hangmen might feel sympathy
 For me, but there's one judge who thinks I've lost 40
 Too little. Grim Busiris was not crueller,
 Or he who roasted on a laggard spit

The artificial bull and to the ruler
 Of Sicily, they say, donated it,
 Praising his work of art thus: "Here you see,
 O king, much gain, more than lies in your sight,
 Worthy not only by its symmetry.
 The bull may here be opened on the right,
 Where you may toss your victims, shut them in
 And slowly roast them. They will roar, and that 50
 Will imitate a real bull's bellowing din.
 For this invention, pray give, tit for tat,
 A comparable gift." The king replied,
 However, "Torture-expert, dedicate
 The work in person." Quickly thrust inside,
 By his own flames he bore a cruel fate
 And roared a two-fold roar. What's Sicily
 To me among the Scythian Getae?
 So...back to you, whoever you may be.
 That you may drink the blood for which you cry 60
 And sate your greedy heart with all your might,
 I have endured so much by land and sea
 That even you, when hearing of my flight,
 Would grieve, I think. If you compared with me
 Ulysses, then the wrath of Neptune's less
 Than Jupiter's. Therefore, do not renew
 Your charges and from my deep wounds repress
 Your ruthless hands, whoever you are; may you,
 That by forgetfulness my ill repute
 May dwindle, let a scar cover my deed. 70
 The fate of humans may abase or shoot
 To power the selfsame men; therefore, take heed,
 Beware of changing fortunes. Since you show
 The greatest interest in all I do
 (I never thought this possible), then know
 There's no cause of anxiety for you.
 My fortune's wretched; Caesar's anger tows
 All woes along. To make it clearer still,
 And that what I write here you don't suppose
 All lies, I pray you'll feel an equal ill. 80

XII

The west winds ease the cold, our winter bides,

It seems, at year's end longer than of old,
 And he who ill bore Helle now divides
 The hours that we spend so they unfold
 In equal parts. Now violets that spring
 Unsown are plucked by merry girls and boys;
 The fields with myriad flowers are blossoming,
 And birds with unschooled throats sing out the noise
 Of spring; the swallow, so she may eschew
 The charge of evil mother, builds a nest 10
 Beneath the rafters for her wee issue;
 And grass, by Ceres' furrows long suppressed,
 Comes forth, its soft tips sprouting through the ground.
 Where there's a vine, through shoots a bud will thrust
 (Though vines far from the Getae's shores are found);
 Where trees, a branch will bud (you, likewise, must
 Search far from here for trees). In Rome one sees
 Folks taking leisure now, the noisy brawl
 Of wrangling law turned to festivities,
 Horses, light arms, the speedy hoop, the ball. 20
 Our well-oiled youths now dip their weary frame
 In Virgo's streams. Th stage is vigorous,
 Its factions all ablaze with passionate flames –
 Three theatres for three for a roar for us!
 Four times (no, countless times) content is he
 Who takes his pleasure in forbidden Rome!
 Snow melted by spring's sun must surfeit me
 And water not dug from the icy foam.
 The sea's not hard with ice nor, as before,
 Does a herdsman traverse with his creaking plough 30
 The Hister. Yet upon the Pontic shore
 A friendly prow will stand. For vessels now
 Will try to reach us. I will eagerly
 Approach a sailor, greet him and ask why
 The man has travelled here, who he might be
 And whence. Unless he comes from lands nearby,
 Ploughing a neighbour sea, it would be strange.
 A sailor come from Italy is rare,
 Those who to this unharboured shoreline range
 Rare also, but if he should be aware 40
 Of Greek or Latin (sweeter, sure, this last
 Would be – it's feasible that from the strait
 And from Propontic waters with a fast
 South wind behind him one could navigate
 Hither. He can, whoever he may be,
 Truly relay some rumour and become
 A part of a report. I pray that he

About Augustus' triumphs be not mum
 Or prayers to Latium's leader, and that you,
 Defiant Germany, in rue have set 50
 Your head beneath his foot. The person who
 Tells this to me (a thing which I'll regret
 Not witnessing myself) immediately
 Shall be an honourable guest within my home.
 Alas, shall Naso's residence now be
 In Scythia forever, far from Rome?
 Am I now given for my retribution
 Its own location? May the gods consent
 That Caesar grant someday a substitution,
 With this a temporary punishment. 60

XIII

My natal god to no avail is here –
 What kind of profit was there in that date?
 Why add to exile yet another year
 Of sorrow, harsh one? You should terminate
 Them all. You care for me? You have some shame?
 Then don't hound me beyond my native land.
 When first you to an ill-starred infant came,
 You should have tried to take your final stand
 And, leaving me, you should have said "Farewell"
 In sorrow, like my friends. For what is here 10
 For you in Pontus? Surely you as well
 Were not sent to this frigid, extreme sphere
 By Caesar's wrath? Do you perhaps foresee
 Your customary honour – robe of white,
 A smoking altar with the greenery
 Of chaplets and, in holy firelight,
 The snap of frankincense, my offering
 Of birthday cakes, my kindly, pious prayers?
 Your presence here can no enjoyment bring
 To me, such is the state of my affairs, 20
 My hours. A funeral altar's right for me,
 With cypress wreathed and, for the funeral pyre,
 A ready flame. I have no wish to see
 My scattering of incense on the fire
 (It harvests nothing from the gods), I speak
 No words of goodly omen when my state

Is such a parlous one. If I must seek
 Something, however, on this natal date,
 I importune you not to reappear
 In such a land s o long as I remain 30
 In what is falsely called the 'Euxine', here,
 Almost the most remote of all terrain.

XIV

Honoured ally, protector of wise men,
 What are you doing, who was always there
 To back my art? When I was safe back then
 You praised me. Are you now still taking care
 That I'm not wholly gone? Do you support
 My work (with the exception of my 'Art',
 Which injured his creator)? I exhort
 You to do so, that I may be part
 Of Rome – do what you can, o guardian
 Of new bards. I, and not my books, was sent 10
 Into exile; it's quite unfair to ban
 Them too. A father suffers punishment
 Often through exile, but his progeny
 May live in Rome. This handiwork of mine,
 Like Pallas, had no mother, only me –
 My family, my issue. I consign
 Them all to you. The more bereft, the more
 A burden to their keeper they will be!
 Three caught my sickness. The remaining store
 Make sure that you look after openly. 20
 The fifteen-volume *Metamorphoses*
 Were snatched right at their master's expiration.
 If I'd not perished earlier, then these
 Would have received, by re-examination,
 More fame. They're read unchanged, if one reads me
 At all. This little something now append
 To my books, from my remote locality.
 The reader (if there is one) ought to lend
 His judgment to the time and to the place
 Where it was written. If he were to know 30
 That it was written in exile's disgrace
 And in a barbarous land, then he would show
 A generous mind: indeed he'll wonder how

I bear to write at all in such distress.
 My miseries have quashed my powers now,
 Whose fount even before lacked fruitfulness,
 Whose stream was small. But it has flown away,
 Such as it is, with none to keep it spry;
 Arid with long neglect it cannot stay.
 There is no plethora of books nearby, 40
 Such as might stimulate and nourish me,
 Instead the clang of arms and twang of bows.
 There is no-one in this vicinity,
 Should I recite my poems, whom I suppose
 A learned hearer; there's no spot I know
 Where I may hide myself. A fortress-guard
 And bolted gate keep out the Getan foe.
 Some word, name, place I often find it hard
 To call to mind, and there's no-one about
 Who can enlighten me. I often find 50
 That when I try to get a sentence out –
 I own up shamefully! – it slips my mind:
 I've unlearned speech. On every side almost
 I'm battered by the native tongue of Thrace
 And Scythia. I think that I may boast
 That I can write in Getan. You may trace,
 I swear, some Pontic words, I fear to state,
 Mixed with my Latin verse. Here is my plea –
 Use your indulgence and exonerate
 My book, which suffers by my destiny. 60

