

TRISTIA V

I

Kind friend, add this book to the other four
I sent from Getae, finding it to be
Just like its author's fortunes: its whole store
Holds nothing merry. I'm in misery:
It too is sad, the theme which it contains
Matching. Unhurt and blithe, the verse I wrote
Was blithe and youthful (that I did so pains
Me now, I fear). I fell, and now I send
You news myself of my downfall, for I
Provide the theme I wrote of. As, they say, 10
Caystrian swans, as on the bank they die,
Weakly announce their death, I, far away
Upon Sarmatian shores, now guarantee
My funeral won't be hushed. If you delight
In wanton verse, there's no authority
For reading it. Such verses Gallus might
Be apter for, or that alluring bard
Propertius, or Tibullus, who could pen
Seductive poetry. I take it hard
That I was numbered once among those men. 20
Why did my Muse have fun? The price I've paid:
For Cupid's playfellow is far away
In Scythia and, what is more, I've made
Men turn to public poetry and pay
Attention to my name. If asked why I
Sing tragic themes – I've had a tragic life.
No art or wit inspires them, and why?
Because they all spring from my stress and strife.
How small a part of all my misery
Dwells in my verse? He who can count his woes 30
Is happy! All the forest's greenery,
The Tiber's yellow sands, the grass that grows
Upon the Campus Martius – I've gone through
As many woes, for which the one relief
Is dallying with my muse. You ask, "Have you
A limit to your poetry of grief?"
It is the limit of my life's extent,
Containing founts of misery. I state
My fate's words, not my own. If your intent
Is to restore my wife and reinstate 40

Me in my Rome, I would be gratified
 And be again just what I used to be.
 If Caesar Victor's anger should subside
 I'd give you poems of great felicity,
 Not wanton as before. Let them have been
 Playful but once, for never shall they be
 As once they were. If just this savage scene
 With stern Getae (part of my penalty)
 Be taken from me, I will only sing
 What he approves. What should my verse, for now, 50
 Treat of but woe? Such is the pipe to bring
 To play at this interment. "But a vow,
 You say, "of silence is a better way
 To bear up, thus concealing quietly
 Your grief." No lamentation must, you say,
 Be uttered after torment? You'd bid me
 To hold back tears after a serious cut?
 Even Phalaris let Perillus wrest,
 Inside that bronze, groans from his bovine gut.
 Although King Priam's dolorous request 60
 Did not offend Achilles, you allow
 No tears from me, you even harsher foe?
 Although Latona's children would ensure
 Niobe's childless state, her tears of woe
 They did not bar. Its not so light a thing
 To ease one's fate: Halcyone's lament,
 And Procne's, came thus, and the wearying
 Of Lemnian rocks with groaning that was sent
 By Philoctetes from his chilly hollow.
 A grief that is suppressed will strangulate 70
 And seethe within: a greater strength must follow.
 Indulge me or my books eradicate
 If what avails me, reader, gives me woe.
 And yet it cannot for my verse impaired
 None but its author. "But it's bad." I know.
 What makes you write bad stuff? When you're ensnared
 Who stops your leaving it? I don't revise –
 Read what was penned: they're of no coarser grade
 Than where they were set down. In Rome's own eyes
 I must with her resident bards be weighed: 80
 The Saromatae think I'm a genius.
 I seek no glory nor that reputation
 That to one's talent puts the stimulus:
 I would not see my soul's debilitation
 Through constant woe, although such misery
 Thrusts in where it's forbidden. Why I write

You know. Why send my work? So I may be
Beside you in whatever way I might.

II

A letter from the Euxine? Do you pale
And open it with trembling hand? Fear not –
I'm well. My frame, once weak and apt to fail
At onerous tasks, bears up beneath its lot
Of hardship. Or I have not time, maybe,
To be infirm? My mind, though, lies unused,
Not braced by time. But as they used to be
My feelings still remain. My wounds, I mused,
Would close with time, but, as if new-created,
They hurt no less. Although as years move on 10
Small woes are healed, yet large ones are inflated
By time. Nigh on ten years did Poeas' son
Tend to the evil wound that had been wrought
By a venomous snake. Telephus would have died,
Destroyed by constant plague, was aid not brought
By who had injured him. But, on my side,
If I have done no wrong, let him, I pray,
Who caused the wounds be keen to remedy.
Content that I've been partially punished, may
He draw *some* water from that mighty sea. 20
Should he draw much, much rancour will persist
And partial punishment will be just as
Complete. As many flowers as exist
In lovely gardens, shells a shoreline has,
Sleep-giving poppies' seeds, beasts woods sustain,
Fish in the sea, feathers a bird will beat
Against the air, so many woes give pain
To me; to try to compass them complete
Would be to calculate the Icarian Sea.
To leave aside the perils of the way, 30
The sea's sore dangers, hands raised against me,
A land which could not be farther away
Keeps me, hemmed in with savage enemies.
I might leave here – no blood besmirched my crime –
If you loved me as I deserve. O he's
Compassionate in victory many a time,
That god on whom our Roman power relies.
Why hesitate? Why fear what holds no fear?
Approach him! Beg! The world with all its size

Holds nothing milder. When what's near and dear 40
 Abandons me, whatever shall I do,
 Alas? Do you too break the yoke and free
 Your neck? Where shall I fly? Where hasten to
 For solace for my weary misery?
 My ship is anchorless. You'll see! Although
 I'm hated, yet the sacred shrine I'll seek:
 For she repels nobody from her. Lo!
 If it is right for mortal men to speak
 To Jove, an absent suppliant, I address
 An absent god. O lord of our domain, 50
 Whose safety can assure the gods will bless
 Us all, the kingdom over which you reign
 Is still no greater than yourself: you ray
 Of glory, image of the fatherland
 Which prospers through your presence – may you stay
 On earth, while heaven hungers for you, and
 Go to your promised stars but tardily.
 Spare me and shed the smallest part, I pray,
 Of your thunderbolt. Sufficient penalty
 Will be left over. Your wrath, anyway, 60
 Is moderate – you spared my life, both due
 And name of citizen I still possess,
 Unlike some others; by your edict you
 Did not proclaim me “exile”. I confess
 I feared all this, thinking it justified.
 Your wrath was milder, though, than was my wrong.
 You ordered me to view the countryside
 Beside the Pontus and to sail along
 The Scythian Sea, an exile. Your decree
 Has banished me to this foul Euxine strand – 70
 The frigid pole guards this vicinity –
 Forever tortured in this icy land.
 The soil is constantly by hoar-white frost
 Shrivelled, the barbarous tongue is unaware
 Of Latin, Greek, though mastered, is quite lost
 In Getan accents. Worse, though, everywhere
 I'm harassed by the locals' enmity
 And with a low rampart we're not secure.
 There's peace sometimes but there can never be
 The certitude of peace: so we endure 80
 And dread assault by turns. If I may turn
 Elsewhere, then let Charybdis swallow me
 And send me down to Styx, or let me burn
 In Etna's scorching flames resignedly
 Or else be tossed from that Leucadian height.

I look for punishment: I do not fear
To suffer, but I beg you that I might
Be miserable somewhere else than here.

III

Unless I am deceived, this is the day
When poets praise you, Bacchus, temples bound
With fragrant wreaths and with your own wine pay
Respects. While fate allowed, I could be found
Among them, I recall, and was to you
Not irksome. Now beneath the Lesser Bear
I sojourn in Sarmatian land, close to
The barbarous Getae – I who, free of care
And labours, used to study with the band
Of Muses. Far from home, I'm harassed now 10
By war sounds, having suffered much by land
And sea. Should chance or heavenly wrath somehow
Have caused this, or a dark Fate paid a visit
When I was born, you should have all the same
Upheld one ivy-worshipper. Or is it
That what those mistresses of Fate proclaim,
Those sisters, is no more the gods' affair?
You reached the realm of heaven deservedly,
By no small industry arriving there.
Nor did you dwell in your own territory 20
But went as far as Strymon, land of snows,
And fierce Getae, Persia, wide Ganges too
And all that into swarthy Indus flows.
No doubt the Fates have twice ordained for you
This law with their threads when you first saw light
(And later!). If it's proper to equate
Oneself with gods, I too received a bite,
An iron bite from a relentless fate.
The man whom Jove drove back from Thebes with flame
For boasting fell no harder. When you heard
About one bolt-struck poet, all the same, 30
You might have had a sympathetic word,
Remembering your mother; looking about
At poets at your altar, you might say,
"A worshipper is missing." Help me out,
Good Liber. So may one more grapevine weigh
Down one more elm, and may one more grape swell
With wine, with Satyrs young and vigorous,

And may they with their frenzied singing tell
 Your praises; may axe-bearing Lycurgus 40
 Be fast weighed down. May constant penalty
 Hound Pentheus' wicked shade, and the clear crown
 Of Ariadne shimmer deathlessly,
 Surpassing all the neighbouring stars: come down,
 O fairest god, disburden my distress –
 I'm of your circle – gods negotiate
 With gods: O Bacchus, use your godliness
 To deflect Caesar's: likewise supplicate,
 You fellow-poets, pious coterie –
 Take up the wine. One of you, speaking out 50
 The name of Naso, pledge a surety,
 Tears mixed with wine, then, looking all about,
 Remember me and say, "Where is Naso,
 Once one of us?" That's if I justify
 Your grace through candour, judging that there's no
 Book I have harmed, and if I glorify,
 And rightly, earlier works and think the new
 No less delightful. May your writing be
 Under Apollo's favour: see that you
 Do what is right and still remember me. 60

IV

A letter penned by Naso on the shore
 Of Euxine, wearied by both land and sea,
 I've come. He, weeping, said, "See Rome, for you're
 Allowed. O such a greater destiny
 Than mine!" When writing, he was weeping too:
 Not to his lips but to his moistened cheek
 He brought the seal. If any one of you
 Should ask why he is sad, why, then, you seek
 To see the sun – he doesn't see the leaves
 Within the wood, the meadow's greenery, 10
 The full stream's water; why old Priam grieves
 At Hector's death he'll wonder, as will he
 About the son of Poëas' cries of woe
 When bitten by the snake. That such a fate
 The gods would grant him so that he'd have no
 Reason to grieve! Yet he can tolerate
 His bitter destitution patiently,
 As well he should; the bit he'll not resist
 As untamed steeds do. His expectancy

Is that our god's displeasure won't exist 20
 Forever, knowing that there is no crime
 In what he did. There's so much clemency
 In him, he often says, and every time
 He cites himself – he has his property,
 His citizenship, the fact he's breathing still –
 All a god's gifts. You're in his heart always
 (Dearer than all, believe if you will);
 You're like Pylades who spent all his days
 With Orestes, so he says, like Theseus too
 Or his Euryalus. He longs less for 30
 His land and all that's in it than for you,
 To see your face and eyes – you're so much more
 Sweet than the honey that the Attic bee
 Stores in the wax. He'll oftentimes recall
 In misery those incidents that he
 Regrets that his own death did not forestall.
 When others fled a sudden ruin's stain,
 All loath to cross a stricken household's door,
 He knows that with some few you would remain
 Steadfast if two or three and hardly more 40
 May be "some few". Though smitten, he knew all –
 That you bewailed his woes no less than he.
 Your face, your words, your grief he would recall,
 His weeping matching yours; his loyalty
 And his encouragement, although he too
 Needed some solace. Thus he will endure,
 Devoted, whether alive or dead, to you.
 So by his very life he will ensure
 His faithfulness, and by yours too, which he
 Reckons, I know, no cheaper than his own. 50
 He'll render you a full indemnity
 For all these many boons that he has thrown
 Upon you. Nor will he allow your strand
 To be turned over by your oxen's plough.
 Protect the exile with your guardian hand;
 Your friend won't ask, so I am asking now.

V

My lady's birthday claims its eulogy.
 Go, hands, to your devout solemnities!
 Thus for his wife did Ulysses, maybe,
 Perform such rites at earth's extremities.

Propitious be my tongue, forget heartache
 (It now has cast into oblivion
 Propitiousness), the garment that I take
 Out only once a year now let me don
 (It's white, unlike my life): green be the shrine
 With grasy turf and let a braided crown 10
 Cover the hearth. Come, servant, pour the wine
 To hiss in pious fire; but first take down
 Incense to make rich flame. The very best
 Of birthdays! Though I'm far away, come here,
 All white, unlike my own. If she's distressed
 With any wretched wound, may she not fear
 Such things for evermore due to my woe,
 And may her ship, much set upon of late,
 In future over placid waters go,
 And may her daughter, home and native state 20
 Please her – sufficient that *I* may not see
 All these – cursed with a spouse of hapless fate,
 May the remainder of her life be free
 Of gloomy cloud. So let her lover her mate,
 As is his due, though he is far away.
 And live out a long life. I'd say the same
 For me but fear my fate's pollution may
 Infect her too. There's nothing man may claim
 As certain. Who'd have thought these liturgies
 I would conduct in Getic territory? 30
 You see the smoke whose incense-fragrant breeze
 Is wafted on the way to Italy
 And happy places. So there's sentience
 In fire's vapours: it is with intent
 They flee you, Pontus. So the frankincense
 That in a common ritual was meant
 For those two brothers who each other slew
 Made the black ashes splinter equally,
 At odds as by command. "This is not true,"
 I once pronounced, it now occurs to me, 40
 "Callimachus was false," but now I see
 All's fact for, vapour, you have turned away
 From Arctos and repair to Italy.
 Without this dawn I would no festal day
 Have seen, poor wretch. This day has brought to light
 Andromache and Queen Penelope,
 Then, chastity was born, and virtue, right,
 Fidelity, but no felicity.
 No, sweat, care, fortune inappropriate
 To you, a juct complaint that may be brought 50

About your empty couch. It's definite
 That virtue in misfortune can be thought
 Praiseworthy in sad times. If resolute
 Ulysses had suffered no misery,
 There would have for his wife been no tribute
 Despite her joy. Evadne possibly
 Would have been unknown to her native ground
 If Capaneus had happily gone through
 The gates of Thebes. Why was Alcestis found
 The only woman out of all those who
 Were born to Peleas to merit fame?
 Perhaps because her spouse was woebegone.
 If it had been another who first came
 To Troy, there would have been no reason – none –
 To recall Laodamia. Your piety
 Would, as you would have chosen, been untold
 If only helpful winds had carried me.
 But, gods and Caesar who will be enrolled
 Among the gods, but only when you've spent
 The years of Nestor, pray you, spare not me,
 Who, I confess, deserve my punishment,
 But her, who's worthy of no misery.

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VI

You, who was once my refuge, harbour, stay,
 Do you too now dismiss your love of me,
 The friend you made, so quickly throw away
 The steadfast burden of true loyalty?
 I am a worry, that I must confess,
 But you should not have been my friend if you
 Were planning to leave me in my distress.
 Do you abandon ship when halfway through
 A voyage, Palinurus? Do not flee
 But let your faith be no less than your skill.
 Automedon in war's ferocity
 Did not desert Achilles' steeds. When ill,
 Podalirius did not leave him but applied
 The healing art he'd vowed. Don't oust a guest,
 But welcome him: when it is opened wide,
 Upon my shrine my right hand may I rest.
 At first the only one you helped was me:
 Now aid your judgment too, as long as there
 Is no new fault in me and loyalty

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Is quickly altered. Here the Scythian air
Is hard upon my breath which now I yearn
To yield before my sinfulness can pierce
Your heart and your ill-feeling I may earn.
I'm not oppressed with providence so fierce
That I'm deranged with long-past misery.
But if I were, how often go you guess
Orestes threw words of iniquity
At Pylades? In fact he did no less
Than strike his friend. But he remained true-blue.
To happy and unhappy folk we cede
A like regard. The sightless and those who
Wear purple and bear rods with their "Take heed!" –
Both we respect. If you don't honour me,
Honour my fate at least: none undergo
My anger. Select but one misery
Of mine – it's more than you may hope to know.
Reeds hidden in wet ditches, Hybla's bees,
The grain that tiny ants bring to their store
That lies beneath the ground – each one of these
Equals the number of my woes. What's more,
You may believe that all my misery
Falls short of what is true. Not satisfied
With all that I have said? Into the sea
Pour water and upon the waterside
Pour grains and sand and then pour ears of grain
Into each field. And, therefore, this vexation,
Unseasonable as it is, restrain –
Don't leave my vessel in its desolation.

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VII

This letter you now read comes from the nation
Where Hister adds its waters to the sea.
If you're enjoying safety's consolation,
That's one bright spot my fortune's given me.
My dearest friend, you ask, as usual,
How I am doing – this you must know well
Without my saying. I am sorrowful
(That is the nub), as all those must who dwell
In Caesar's disapproval. Do you seek
To learn of Tomis' ways and population?
Though they're a mix of Getan and of Greek,
This shore derives more from the warlike nation

Of Getae. Both frequent the roads in packs,
 On horseback, all of whom are always seen
 With quivers and with bows upon their backs
 And weapons yellow with a viper's spleen.
 Harsh-voiced, grim-looking, Mars to the very life,
 Their hair, their beards untrimmed by any hand,
 Ready to wound an enemy with the knife
 That every one of this barbaric band 20
 Wear at his side. Your bard lives here, alas,
 Love-poems forgotten now; such men I see
 And hear; would I might not live here but pass
 Away, but yet from this locality
 My soul depart! My poetry, you say,
 Now packs the theatre as a dancing show
 And is applauded. I have in no way
 Done anything for theatres – this you know.
 My Muse declines applause. Whatever brings
 This exile's name to people, what deters 30
 Oblivion of me, though – all these things
 I'm grateful for. Sometimes I curse the verse
 That hurt me and my Muses, nonetheless
 I cannot live without them and I crave
 The weapons bloody with my wounds; oh yes,
 My bark that's lashed by many a Euboean wave
 Of late, now dares sweep the Capherean Sea.
 I do not labour all the night for praise
 Nor do I want future celebrity
 (Best hidden); with studies I spend my days, 40
 Duping my grief and trying to cheat my stress.
 What else am I to do on this bleak shore?
 What other aid for my unhappiness
 Exists? I look around – what could be more
 Forlorn? The place is cheerless. Then I see
 Its men – the name they scarcely justify,
 Resembling wolves in their ferocity.
 They don't fear laws, rights yield to strength and lie
 Subdued by hostile swords. The evil cold
 They check with loose-made trousers and with fleece, 50
 And lanky hair their grim faces enfold.
 A few the relics of the tongue of Greece
 Retain, yet Getic makes them barbarous.
 There is not one in all this tribe who can
 Speak any Latin word well-known to us.
 I – Muses, pardon me! - , that Roman man
 Of letters, in Sarmatian am compelled
 To speak most things. It's shameful, I confess,

A Latin word is scarcely now expelled
Out of my mouth due to neglectfulness.\
There are some barbarisms even here,
No doubt: blame not the man, though, but the land.
But lest my use of Latin disappear
And of my native tongue I lose command,
I speak to my own self and deal again
In words long unused and the currency,
Ill-omened, of my art I try to attain.
That's how I spend my time, my misery
Removing from my thoughts. It's in my verse
That I am seeking the forgetfulness
Of my distress: it could be so much worse
Than by my writing seeking out success.

70

VIII

I've not collapsed so far, despite my woe,
As to be lower than you, than whom no man
Is lower. Why do you detest me so,
You wretch? Why mock adversities which can
Redound on you? With grief I lie prostrate,
Grief beasts would pity, yet your ruthless heart
Remains unmoved: the swaying wheel of Fate,
Rhamnusia's proud words don't make you start
With fear. She will exact a penalty
In vengeance for those men who earned it. Why
Trample my fate? I saw drowned in the sea
A man who laughed at shipwrecks: then said I,
"No wave was juster." He who once denied
Cheap food for wretches now is forced to eat
The bread of destitution. Far and wide
Does Fortune roam about on aimless feet,
Nor in one fixed place does she ever stay,
Now happy, now embittered, and steadfast
But in her fickleness. I had my day,
Though it was fleeting. My flame could not last,
Being of straw. Yet that your cruel glee
Be not too great, I still have hope to placate
Our god – my sin was no iniquity;
Though shame attaches to my fault, no hate
Attaches to it. All the wide world shows,
From sunrise to sunset, none more humane
Than he we serve. Unconquered by all foes,

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His tender heart assures that we attain
 The answer to our timid prayers, and he,
 Just like the gods with whom he will unite, 30
 Will with remission of my penalty
 Grant further boons. Should you count all the bright
 And cloudy days throughout the year, you'll find
 More of the former. Do not too much gloat –
 Consider I'll be pardoned. Keep in mind
 That when our leader is appeased you'll note
 My presence in the city and despair.
 Think, too, that I may very likely see
 You exiled for a weightier cause: this prayer
 Comes hard upon the heels of that first plea. 40

IX

Had you permitted your name to be set
 Within my poems, how often were you there!
 Of you alone I'd sing, knowing my debt
 To you, and every single page would bear
 Your name. That debt all Rome would apprehend
 If I'm still read in the city lost to me,
 The present and the future comprehend
 Your care, should these poems reach posterity,
 Wise readers bless you *in perpetuum*:
 This praise would stay with you , for you preserved 10
 A poet. Caesar's boon – my life – must come
 First; after the great gods, *you* have deserved
 My thanks. He gave me life – you guarded it,
 Allowing me to revel in his gift.
 Most men gawped at my fate in a panicked fit –
 Some even claimed they'd feared the coming rift –
 And watched the wreck somewhere safe overhead,
 Not succouring me in that savage sea,
 But you alone reclaimed me, now half-dead, 20
 From Stygian depths. It's you my memory
 My thanks. May Caesar and the gods give you
 Their friendship always. No more ample prayer
 Have I to give. These things should be on view
 For all in eloquent books, bright, shining fair,
 Should you allow it; charged to make no sound,
 My Muse yet scarce refrains from mentioning
 Your name against your will. Just as a hound,
 Scenting the timid deer's tracks, bellowing

In fruitless barks or as the eager steed
 Beats, now with hoof, now head, upon the gate 30
 Still bolted, my Thalia feels the need,
 Though bound and gagged by law, to promulgate
 Your banned name's glory. Lest you suffer pain
 Through your indebted ally's eulogy,
 Please do not fear – I'll heed what you ordain.
 I would not heed it, though, if you thought me
 Ungrateful. What you say does not veto
 My gratitude. And while I see the blaze
 Of life – and may that time be brief! - please know
 I'll serve you till the ending of my days. 40

X

Since I've been here, Hister's been made to stand
 Thrice ice-bound, and Euxine has twice stayed firm.
 It seems, though, that far from my native land
 I've been to emulate that ten-year term
 In which the Greeks fought Troy. Time, you'd surmise,
 Stood still, it moves so slow, the very year
 Trudges. For me summer does not excise
 One morsel from the nights, the winter here
 Does not curtail the days. Nature, maybe,
 In me has been renewed, thus everything 10
 Is as fatiguing as my misery.
 Or is the course of time still functioning
 As always, and my life it is that's bitter?
 The shore of Euxine that belies its name
 And Scythia's sinister land (a word that's fitter)
 Hold me. So many tribes, who think it shame
 To live a plunder-less life, are all around
 And threaten cruel war. Nothing out there
 Is safe: short walls defend the very mound
 Itself, as does the skilful site. Just where 20
 You least expect it, bird-like does the foe
 In droves sweep in and, barely clearly seen,
 Now snatch up booty. Often we will go
 And gather deadly weapons that have been
 Thrown, though the gates are closed, within the town.
 Rare is the man who dares to plough his field,
 Who, with one hand and an unhappy frown,
 Must plough but with the other he must wield
 A sword. Helmeted shepherds make to trill

Their pitchy pipes, and timorous sheep must fear 30
 Not wolves but wars. We're fortified but ill
 By our stronghold: dread is inspired here
 By barbarous hordes and Greeks. The hostile brute
 Lives with us quite at random, taking more
 Than half our houses. Though you may dispute
 A fear of them, the sight you may abhor
 Of chests obscured by hides and straggling hair.
 These too, though Greeks (we hear), wear Persian trews
 Instead of Grecian dress. A tongue they share
 Is spoken: to be understood I use 40
 Mere gestures. *I'm* the savage in this place,
 Understood by no-one; here the dim Getae
 Laugh at my Latin, curse me to my face,
 Perhaps reproach my exile, and, when I
 Nod "yes" or "no", think I dissimulate
 (That's natural); right they mete wrongfully
 With their harsh swords and they reciprocate
 Blows often in the forum. Cruelty,
 O Lachesis, to spin no briefer span
 To one so ill-starred! All my friends, my Rome 50
 I lack and rue this region Scythian:
 Dire prices! Nonetheless to lose my home
 Is merited; what I may *not* deserve
 Is exile here. Madman, what have you said?
 Caesar you have provoked, the god you serve,
 And for that sin you merit being dead.

XI

Your letter grieves that someone rudely stated
 That you're an exile's wife. This saddens me,
 Less for the insult to what has been fated
 For me, which I'm inured in misery
 To bear with fortitude, than that this smear
 Of mine now touches you, whom least would I
 Wish hurt by it: my tragedy, I fear,
 Abashes you. Endure, your head held high:
 You bore much more when Caesar's wrath took me
 From you. Who called me "exile" spoke untrue: 10
 A softer judgment was my penalty.
 My greatest was that I was galling to
 Our lord. Would I had died before that hour.
 My bark was shaken, though, but stayed upright,

Not conquered and, though portless, has the power
 To sail the seas. He did not take my right
 Of citizenship, my life, my wealth from me,
 Though my fault should have lost me everything.
 But since there was no deed of iniquity
 In that trespass, so a mere banishing 20
 Is all he ordered; as to other men
 (So many of them, too), our god to me
 Was merciful and says, as he did then,
 I'm "relegatus", not a refugee:
 My cause is safe by his decree. Therefore,
 Caesar, my poems, as greatly as they may,
 Rightly extol you. So may heaven's door
 Be still closed to you: may the gods, I pray,
 Desire you a man apart to reign
 Without their help. The folk want this also, 30
 And as all rivers to the mighty main
 Cascade, so does a meagre rivulet flow.
 And therefore, you whose lips articulate
 The word "exile", applying it to me,
 Please now refrain from burdening my fate
 By calling me what I will never be.

XII

Amuse your tearful hours with work, you say,
 Lest shameful sloth destroy your faculty.
 That's hard, friend, for my poems treat of what's gay,
 Requiring peace of mind. My destiny
 Is pressed by hostile blasts. No fate is worse
 Than mine. You urge that Priam, then, should play
 At his sons' funerals? Over the hearse
 Of her dead spouse, Niobe, would you say,
 Should dance? Does grief or poetry more agree
 For me out here among the Getae nation. 10
 Grant me a breast with such vitality
 As Socrates', yet such disintegration
 Will wisdom suffer: wrath of the divine'
 Beats human strength: that old man by Apollo
 Called brilliant, would have penned nary a line
 In such distress. Forgetfulness may follow
 Of Rome, of you, of all that's lost to me,
 Yet fear prevents my writing in repose:
 For I'm hemmed in by much hostility.

My wit, through long neglect, more heavy grows, 20
 Less lively than before. A fertile field,
 Unless it constantly may feel the plough,
 Will nothing except grass and prickles yield.
 A horse long being stationary will now
 Run poorly, coming almost last among
 Their fellow-steeds. A bark will rot and crack
 When from its waters it has sojourned long.
 Despair for me that I cannot go back
 To what I was, though in the time before
 Attaining little. Since I bore my grief 30
 So long, my wit is crushed and of my store
 Of strength, none's left. If I took up a leaf,
 As now, wishing to force into true feet
 My words, I wrote no verse (just what you see)
 That for their master's state or place is meet.
 In short renown gives ample energy
 To intellect and fertile hearts are made
 By love of plaudits. Once I was seduced
 By the allure of name and accolade
 While favourable breaths of wind induced 40
 My sails to billow. It's not so good now
 That I care for renown. I'd rather be
 Unknown by everyone if that somehow
 Were possible. Are you advising me,
 Because my verse went well at first, to write
 And follow up success? Now by your leave,
 You, Muses, you're the chief cause of my flight.
 And as Perillus took his punishment
 For that bronze bull, I pay the penalty
 For my profession. I should have no more 50
 To do with verse, as I shun every sea
 Once shipwrecked. Yet what's necessary for
 One's verse this place will give, should I retry
 In madness to take up this fatal sphere.
 No books, no-one to heed me are nearby,
 No-one can understand what I say here.
 It's all wild roaring cries and viciousness,
 All fear of hostile noises. I appear
 To have lost all my Latin: for I can express
 Myself in those two tongues that they speak here. 60
 But I confess my Muse cannot resist
 Composing verse. Once written, in the fire
 It's thrown: of all my work there now exist
 Just ashes. Inspiration I desire
 But have none: that is why my work is tossed

Into the flames, nor is there any part
 Of what I've penned except what's not been lost
 Because it has been saved by chance or art
 That reaches you. Would I had had my will
 That my *Ars Amatoria*, which earned 70
 Disaster for her boss (who no such ill
 Had ever feared), had into ash been turned.

XIII

I send you "health" from Getae, if one may
 Send what one has not. I drew, sick at heart,
 That sickness to my body – in that way
 I'm tortured thoroughly in every part.
 For many days my side's tormented me,
 Thus am I harmed by winter's vicious chill,
 But if you're well, in some sense I must be
 Well now: for you supported all the ill
 I bore. You proved your love, in every way
 Guarding my life, so why are you so sparing 10
 With cheery letters, why do you display
 Your ;loyalty, though not to me declaring
 The same in words? Emend this, I implore!
 If you correct one thing, there'll be no blot
 Upon a perfect body. There'd be more
 That I could charge you with, if there were not
 A chance that, though this letter has reached me,
 One has been sent. Gods grant our argument
 Is groundless and your faulty memory
 Is my mistake. My prayer is evident: 20
 I must not think your nature's fortitude
 Is changeable. Pontus would sooner lack
 White wormwood, Hybla honey, before you'd
 Be heedless of a friend. Not quite so black
 Are my fate's threads. But that you may drive hence
 This false charge, take heed that you don't' appear
 What you are not. As we in conference
 Would lengthy hours spend till night was near
 To end our chat, so let us now convey
 Our voiceless words in letters, let the had 30
 And paper play the role that voices play.
 Lest I seem too distrustful of this and
 That these few verses are enough for me
 To give you this advice (thus you may tell

That our states differ), my last word shall be
The one with which all letters end – “farewell.”

XIV

O wife, more precious than myself to me,
You see what great mementoes in my art
Extol you. Though its author's destiny
Took much from him, my verses shall impart
Great fame to you. While I am read, you too,
Through glory, will be read, so you will go
Not wholly to the mournful pyre. And you.
Though you will be considered, by my woe,
Worthy of pity, some will wish, you'll find,
To be like you, who, though you have some due
Of my distress, think you have peace of mind
And envy you. By giving wealth to you
I could not give you more. No man will bear
His riches down to Hades. Happiness
In endless fame you have from me, and there
You see the greatest gift. All I possess
Is in your care, and therefore no small fame
Comes to you. About you I'm never mute,
And you should be well-pleased with what I claim.
Stand firm against those who think this repute
Is rightly judged, preserve your loyalty
As well as me. Your worth was unsurpassed,
At least uncriticized, when I was free,
And now a space, since I have been downcast,
Is opened up for you; a monument
Should stand there to your virtue. Easily
One may be good when good's impediment
Is absent, and a wife may clearly see
Her duty. When god thunders, not to eschew
The cloud is truly loyalty to be sure
And wedded love. It's rare to see virtue
Unsteered by Fortune, standing quite secure
When Fortune flees. If virtue, though, should be
Her own reward and, in hard times, upright
(Though you should count the times), no age will see
Her silent and, wherever she may light.
She is admired. Penelope's faithfulness
And deathless name are praised throughout all time.
Alcestis and Andromache no less

10
20
30

Are lauded, and Evadne, who dared climb 40
The funeral pyre. Protesilaus' wife,
Laodamia, lives eternally,
Whose husband, swift of foot, gave up his life
On touching Trojan soil. It's loyalty
And love I need from you, not your demise:
Your fame you should not seek through stressful living.
Nor should you credit that what I advise
Comes from your inactivity. I'm giving
Sails in addition, though my bark now plies
Its oars already. I who counsel you 50
To do what you *are* doing eulogize
You and encourage you in all you do.