

STATIUS SILVAE

BOOK I

I

What is that massive statue towering
Above the Latian Forum, carrying
A mighty weight? Did it drop from the sky,
A masterpiece formed by the gods? Can I
Believe that in the fires of Sicily
It has been cast, causing much lethargy
For Cyclops, Brontes, Steropes? For us
Did Pallas mould it, a Germanicus
Grasping the bridles, as, far in the past,
The Dacians looked at you and were aghast 10
High in their mountain kingdom? Cast aside
The Trojan horse, to build which large trees died
On Dindymon and Ida! For this steed
Troy would not have received, although indeed
The walls were razed and boys and maidens, brought
By Aeneas and mighty Hector, sought
To drag it in. Besides, that horse was cursed,
Because the fierce Achaean troops were nursed
Within its belly. But upon this beast
There sits a man whose face is fine to feast 20
Upon, which mingles traces equally
Of war and peace, showing reality
Alone, because its comeliness and grace
Reflect the man himself. His steed from Thrace,
Delighting in its rider, loftily
Bears battle-weary Mars and flowingly
Beside the Strymon seems to race; the steam
His mouth expels appears to drive the stream
Onwards. The setting, too, is apropos,
Suiting the work put into it, for lo! 30
Across from it stands Julius Caesar's shrine,
Augustus' gift – Caesar showed our divine
Rulers the path up to the sky. For he
Will from your features know your clemency
To foreign enemies, and if you'd been
In arms, Pompey and Cato would have been seen
To bow to you. By Paulus twice restored
Are two basilicae, both which afford
A splendid view of them, while at the rear
Your father's temple stands, and very near 40
Is Concord's temple, too. High in the air
You shine above them as they seem to stare
In awe at you. Does not a palace rise

Upon the Palatine, to human eyes
 A fine new building, scorning every flame?
 And does not Vesta give a high acclaim
 To her priestesses? Does Troy secretly
 Not guard her fires? All controversy
 Has been prohibited by your right hand,
 Minerva light upon your left one, and 50
 She stretches Medusa's neck as if to press
 Your steed to gallop faster; the goddess
 Has never found a finer place to be,
 Not even when Jove held her tenderly.
 Your chest is wide enough that it can bear
 The world's anxieties. All her bronze-ware
 Temese gave so that it might produce
 Your likeness. At your back a cloak hangs loose;
 A sword protects your flank, large as that blade
 With which Orion oftentimes has made 60
 The stars afraid in wintertime. Your steed,
 Matching his master's gaze and every need,
 Lifts up his head as though he's threatening
 A furious gallop, his mane bristling,
 Preparing for the spur, and then, instead
 Of on mere earth, his bronze hooves seem to tread
 On captive Rhine. The courser would indeed
 Have terrified Arion, Adrastus' steed,
 And Castor's Cyllarus is trembling
 While gazing on him from the neighbouring 70
 Shrine. For this horse will know no other rein
 And to one star his loyalty will remain
 Steadfast. The earth can barely keep in place
 The weight it has to bear, nor can the base
 Which could hold mountains or Atlas's knee.
 Erecting it took no eternity -
 That godlike image made the effort so
 Delightful that the workers' strength would grow;
 The platform with their hammer blows would ring,
 Mars' seven hills constantly echoing 80
 The din, thus blotting out the noise of Rome.
 The guardian of that spot, whose hallowed home
 Was its famed pool, heard the bronze clashing sound:
 He raised his mud-stained head that he had crowned
 With an oak-wreath. At that vast effigy
 Startled, he saw the light that dazzlingly
 Gleamed from the horse, and then three times his head
 He lowered far into the depths in dread.
 Then at the noble sight he joyfully
 Cried out, 'Greetings to you, o deity 90
 That I've known from afar. Father and son
 Of mighty gods, receive my benison!

My marshy sanctuary will now be blessed,
 For I behold you near while I can rest
 My gaze upon your splendour finally.
 While I but once had the ability
 To save our city, you closed the affray
 Here in the Capitol and found a way
 To end the war against the Dacii.
 Born in the era that engendered me, 100
 Into the pit I fear you would have sought
 To cast yourself, but you would have been caught
 By Roman reins.' Yield, steed, who now display
 Yourself in Caesar's Forum, whom they say
 Lysippus moulded a long time ago
 For Alexander (now the rider, though,
 Bears Caesar's wondrous head). Scarce marked by age,
 It leaves it up to passers-by to gauge
 The time between those two. Who will not say
 The steeds are not dissimilar as they 110
 Who made them? This does not feel any fears
 Of rain, winds, thunderbolts or passing years.
 It shall endure through all eternity,
 As long as Rome will continue to be
 A city. When all earthly things delight
 The heavenly when it is darkest night,
 Your clan will glide down from the sky in bliss
 And hold you very close with many a kiss.
 Son, brother, sister, father – all will rest
 Within your arms while just one single breast 120
 Gives every star its place. Eternally
 Enjoy the Senate's gift! Decidedly
 Apelles would have painted you. As well,
 Old Phidias, to have your image dwell
 In a new temple to be dedicated
 To Jupiter, would have been much elated;
 Gentle Tarentum, too, would have preferred
 Your face, fierce Rhodes your starry eyes, than slurred-
 Over Apollo. May you faithfully
 Adore the earth and haunt the shrines that we 130
 Have given you. You care not for the sight
 Of heavenly halls but rather take delight
 In knowing that your grandsons will endow
 This gift with incense .

II

Why is it that now
 Our hills are singing sacred songs? And who
 Could be the reason why, Apollo, you
 Play music on your sounding ivory

Among your tresses? From a distance we
 Behold the goddesses as they descend
 In song from Helicon, whose torches send
 Out flames. From the Pierian fountain hear
 A choral chant, while Elegy draws near,
 Haughtier than of late, encouraging 10
 And wooing them to chant while covering
 Her lame foot (for she has the urge to be
 The tenth Muse), almost inconspicuously
 Moving among them. Now the blushing bride
 With downcast eyes stands at Venus's side,
 Who oversees the rites and marriage-bed,
 In Latian garments hiding her godhead
 And curtaining her hair, her face, her eyes,
 Extremely careful not to minimize
 The newly-weds. O Stella, everything 20
 That's happening today is for you! Fling
 The doors ajar! The choir sings for you!
 Phoebus and Bacchus, winged Mercury, too,
 From Maenalus, bring wreaths, while happy Love
 And all the Graces scatter from above
 Incense, as you clasp close your longed-for bride.
 You're wreathed with roses. Lilies, diversified
 With violets, hide your lady's shining face.
 Twined with the Fates' white thread, this day will grace
 Stella and Violentilla's wedding-day, 30
 Declared and celebrated. Keep away,
 You fears and cares! And let there be a truce
 To sidelong prophecies! Rumour, let loose!
 That errant love is bridled. Finally
 All whispering is at an end, and we
 See the caresses we were chattering
 About so long. But Stella's worrying
 Still, though he has already caught his bride,
 For of true happiness he's terrified.
 Sweet minstrel, let it go! She's yours! Your bed 40
 Is ready for you! You may go ahead
 Unchecked, No law, no shame impedes you now,
 No guard! Embrace her, then! Fulfil your vow!
 The prize was worth the quest. It is as though
 Queen Juno had forced you to undergo
 The tasks of Hercules and beasts of Hell
 You had to fight, though sinking through the swell
 Of oceans, or if by Pisa's decree
 You had to run a race and fearfully
 Hear Oenomaus' steps. If you had been 50
 Paris himself, this gift you'd not have seen -
 Even if Aurora had borne you away
 In her swift chariot. And, anyway,

What caused this marriage and the sweet delight
 You did not seek? Graceful Erato, right
 Beside me are the doors and halls that hold
 A mass of people, and on the threshold
 Is beaten many a staff. Therefore, Muse, tell!
 There's time for talk. The lair will listen well.
 It chanced one night, while Venus was abed 60
 With warlike Mars, and all the heavens shed
 Their milky stars, that round her couch there thronged
 A host of sweet Amors who keenly longed
 To hear a sign – what torches they should bear,
 What hearts transfix and should this happen where?
 On land or sea? Stir all the deities
 Or keep on vexing Jove? No theories
 Had she conceived as yet. She wearily
 Lay down upon the bed-sheets where once she
 Was caught in Vulcan's chains to her great shame. 70
 Then one of Venus' lads whose fiery flame
 Was brightest, one whose right hand never shot
 An errant dart, spoke sweetly like a tot
 (While all his brothers stood there silently,
 Their quivers still): 'Dear mother, you know me!
 I'm never slow to serve with my right hand -
 For any man or god whom you have planned
 To yield to me is set aflame. But now
 Let human tears move me, as in my vow
 And prayer I place my hands together. We 80
 Aren't made of steel! We are your progeny!
 A fine young Latian of patrician fame,
 Who has been granted a celestial name
 Presaging what he'd be when once he grew
 To adulthood, I pierced, obeying you.
 My merciless hail of darts caused him to shake.
 A host of ladies had aspired to make
 Him husband to their daughters. Nonetheless
 I sentenced him to years of hopefulness,
 Yoking him to a mistress of great might. 90
 But as for her, my graze on her was slight
 (As you commanded). I then was amazed
 To see within the youth what fires blazed
 And how by night and day he was distressed
 At what I did to him. I never pressed
 A man more cruelly, hurt after hurt.
 I've seen Hippomenes eagerly spurt
 Along the cruel field, never so wan.
 I've seen Leander pulling hard upon
 The oars and praised his efforts, frequently 100
 Lighting the path for him as through the sea
 He swam, and yet the waves were warmed far less

By his desire. Young man, your eagerness
 Excels past lovers. I am stupefied
 At how you have endured. I fortified
 Your soul and wiped your eyes. How frequently
 Has Phoebus in the past complained to me
 Of his discomfort! So, I pray, supply
 Him with the bride he wants! He's our ally,
 Our standard-bearer, and he might have told 110
 Of war, of actions valiant and bold,
 But it's for you that he has dedicated
 His pen and poems of love that he's created,
 While mingling the myrtle and the bay:
 Of erring youth he's had a lot to say,
 Of his own wounds and those that others bore,
 And he holds nought but veneration for
 Paphos's goddess – you! And it was he
 Who mourned the maid's black dove.' Then lovingly
 He hung about her as he warmed her breast 120
 With trembling wings. She answered his request:
 'You'll have your prize, granted infrequently
 Even to those who have contented me!
 I marvelled at her beauty, that excelled
 That of her glorious ancestors. I held
 Her at her birth and nursed her, adding grace
 And pulchritude to both her neck and face,
 With rich perfume I combed her luscious hair
 And in my likeness she has grown so fair.
 Look at her tresses and her noble brow! 130
 She is a non-pareil. Observe, too, how
 She's taller than Diana, even as I
 Above the Nereids also stand high!
 It is as though she rose up from the sea
 And took her place upon the shell with me.
 Had she scaled to the skies and entered here,
 You would, my Loves, have been perplexed, I fear.
 Her soul is greater than her riches, though
 I've given her much wealth. It brings me woe
 That China can't produce enough supplies 140
 Of silk to satisfy her wants. Likewise,
 The amber that is found in Clymene
 Fails her and poplars, insufficiently
 Weeping, and fleeces with Sidonian dye,
 And icy crystals. For her sake do I
 Bid Hermus and Tagus to flow with gold.
 Glaucus, Proteus and the Nereids I told
 To seek out Indian pearls that she might wear
 Them round her neck. Had Phoebus been aware
 Of her in Thessaly, there would have been 150
 No risk for Daphne. If she had been seen

At Theseus' side on Naxos by the sea,
 Bacchus would then have fled immediately
 To her and left Ariadne there alone.
 And if Juno had not, with many a moan
 Of grievance, stayed me, at that very hour
 Jove would have been a bird, a beast, a shower
 Of gold that he might have her. Yet she'll be
 Married to Stella as a gift from me.
 Although a second match she seems to spurn 160
 Often, already now she looks in turn
 To favour him.' At this she stretched, and through
 The airy regions of the sky she flew
 To call her swans. Then Amor sat astride
 The bridle's jewelled stanchion and applied
 That bridle to them. Then they travelled through
 The heavenly clouds till Rome came into view.
 They saw the lovely mansion glistening:
 The swans, upon the threshold settling,
 Were glad to rest. This residence, no less 170
 Than the bright stars, would merit the goddess.
 Here Phrygian stone, and Libyan, Spartan green
 Hard rock and onyx marble may be seen,
 Carystian, too, and its porphyrian hue
 Sparta begrudges and the stirrer, too,
 Of Tyrian dye-pots. Many a column gleams
 And countless pediments as well, while beams,
 Bolted with metals in Dalmatia found,
 Shine brightly while cool shade is cast around
 By ancient trees, and fountains, crystal-clear, 180
 Run down upon the marble channels. Here
 Nature is strange, for midsummer is cold
 And winter warm, the year itself controlled
 But by the mansion. Venus took delight
 To see the girl's fine house, much as the sight
 Of Paphos, Idalium or the sanctuary
 Of Eryx. She addressed the girl as she
 Lay on her lonely bed., 'My favourite
 Among Laurentian girls, how long will it
 Be that you sleep alone? When shall it be 190
 That you abandon this propriety?
 Submit! For sadder years will come. Deploy
 Your beauty and indulge in its great joy!
 I did not grant to you such looks, such grace,
 And care for you so well, to have you face
 Your years as widow. Quite sufficiently
 You've scorned so many other suitors! He
 Adores you more than any single one
 Of them. Handsome and noble, he has done
 Much clever work in verse. Ah, what young men, 200

What girls don't know the product of your pen
 By heart? Before due time you presently
 Will see the rods of the Quindecimviri
 Raised up by him. Even now Cybele's
 Portals he enters that the prophecies
 Of the Sibyl he may read, and soon he'll be
 In purple robes and curule ivory -
 Our Latian lord, whose aims I surely know,
 Will grant it – and another role also,
 For Dacian spoils he soon will solemnize 210
 And (yet a greater glory!) eulogize
 Those recent laurels. So immediately
 Prepare the bed! A multiplicity
 Of clans and hearts my torch has joined. No bird,
 No pack of wild beasts and no cattle-herd
 Deny me. Sky and earth are at my will
 Coupled when from the clouds rain starts to spill.
 Thus generations change. Had I not been
 Wed to a Phrygian, we'd never have seen
 A fresh Troy rising from the Grecian flame. 220
 How could the Tiber keep my Julian name?
 How could the walls of seven-hilled Rome, the base
 Of Latian rule, have found its rightful place
 Had I forbidden Ilia to play
 With Mars in secret dalliance that day?'
 And thus Venus beguiled her secretly
 With thoughts of marriage. In her memory
 She then recalled his gifts, his tears, his pleas
 And sleepless nights spent at her gates – all these
 Came back to her and how his Asteris 230
 Was well-known in the streets of Rome, for this
 At noon and eve was heard, much louder than
 The cries for Hylas. At last she began
 To soften into kindness, finally
 Acknowledging her guilt of cruelty.
 Great poet, all hail to your marriage-bed!
 At last into the harbour you've been led,
 Your labours over. That's how Alpheus,
 Fleeing from gleaming Pisa, amorous
 For a far-of foreign maiden, swiftly passed 240
 Within a deep stream-bed until at last
 He came up panting, open-mouthed that he
 Might drink from Sicily's fountain's waters. She,
 The naiad Arethusa, was surprised
 At his sweet kisses, having not surmised
 That he'd come from the sea. Ah, when you came
 To meet the heavenly prize that you would claim
 As yours, it was a glorious day! Oh, how
 You joyed when she assented to your vow,

Thinking it heaven. Priam's progeny, 250
 Paris himself, showed less felicity
 When meeting Helen on the Trojan shore;
 In Tempe Peleus was not any more
 Joyful when Chiron saw Thetis draw near.
 How long it took the bright stars to appear!
 How slow was Dawn! When Phoebus and Bacchus,
 The son of Semele, observed the fuss
 Of preparations, each urged on his band
 Of followers, each out of Delos and
 Nysa, the Lycian hills reverberated; 260
 Cool Thymbra and Parnassus resonated,
 Pangaea and Ismara and Naxos
 Re-echoed also, as they went across
 The house's threshold. Once they'd entered in,
 One gave to him a lyre, one the skin
 Of a deer, one wands and one a quill, one crowned
 His brow with laurel, while another bound
 His hair with vine-leaves. Dawn had scarcely broken
 Before one apprehended many a token
 Of the approaching match, for there was seen 270
 Much festive pomp. The doorposts all were green
 With leaves and everywhere felicity
 Was seen and heard. Ah, such nobility
 Took part among those folk more meanly dressed;
 On this side, knights, on that side, matrons blessed
 The both of them, but at the gathering
 More envied Stella. Hymen, lingering
 Against the doorpost, soon will charm the beau
 By singing his new wedding-song. Juno
 Brings on the sacred ribbons. Harmony 280
 With her twin torches marks their unity.
 Now let the bridegroom sing about the night
 That they'll enjoy, as much as it is right
 To know. So Ilia sank from Mars' embrace
 In cunning sleep; when Turnus saw her face,
 Lavinia did not blush; and Claudia could
 Gaze on the people when her maidenhood
 Was proved upon that boat. Now every friend
 Of the nine Muses and others who tend 290
 To Phoebus, it's your task to variously
 Take up your labour. Let our company
 Be wreathed in bands and ivy as you ply
 Your lyre. Most of all, you who deny
 Epic its final foot, sing songs that they
 May show they're worthy of this wedding-day!
 That he might have achieved the liberty
 Of singing songs at this festivity,
 Philetas would have vied to have his voice

Selected, Cos approving of his choice,
 And old Callimachus, Propertius, too, 300
 Inside his Umbrian cave and Ovid, who
 Would spurn his exile on the Euxine Sea;
 Tibullus, too, who thought prosperity
 A well-lit hearth. I am not drawn to sing
 By love of verse or any single thing,
 Stella – our Muses are alike, for we
 Have revelled at the altars frequently
 Like kindred spirits, and Pieria's spring
 Will always satisfy our hankering
 To write. My lady, Naples saw your birth 310
 And you first walked upon our patch of earth.
 High in the sky may you be dignified!
 Let Sebethos's stream flow on with pride
 In you, their darling foster-child, and may
 The Lucrine naiads never have to say
 They're happier than you are, although they
 Delight in their deep caverns as they play
 In Pompeii's Sarnus' waters. So then, come,
 Produce noteworthy sons for Latium -
 Lawyers and warriors! And take delight 320
 In song. Cynthia, I beg you, expedite
 Each birth! Be kind, Lucina! Do not maim,
 You boys, her swelling breasts and delicate frame!
 When Nature moulds your features secretly,
 Be like your father, but especially
 Your mother! And, fair lady, loveliest
 Of all our country's daughters and possessed
 Of a worthy spouse, cherish your long-sought pledge!
 May all your charms and looks not lose their edge!

III

If anyone had the authority
 To see fluent Vopiscus' sanctuary
 At Tibur and the mansions that are seen
 Just where the river Anio flows between
 Them both and knows the banks, whose halls contend
 To keep their owner, heat does not descend
 On him – the burning Dog-Star fails to howl
 And green Nemea's lion cub fails to scowl.
 Winter clings there, so cold, persistently
 Veiling the sun, and no torridity 10
 Is felt. Venus herself with gentle hand
 Forged them, then added Idalian unguents and
 Then cleansed them with her hair, embellishing
 Them both with grace, forbidding her offspring
 To leave them. Oh, what joys come to my mind!

A host of wondrous things to almost blind
 One's dazzled eyes! Such fair simplicity!
 Nature has never been so liberally
 Creative. Lofty woods! Swift rivers! Lo,
 The boughs are mirrored in the streams below, 20
 That image changing not at all as they
 Continue flowing on their lengthy way!
 And Anio (believe my words!), although
 His bed is rocky, curbs his angry flow,
 As though afraid to vex the verse-filled days
 Of calm Vopiscus and his nightly lays.
 Both banks are close to them, unsevered by
 The gentle stream, where towers stand up high
 On either bank. Let Fame boast of the bay
 Of Sestos, where Leander swam each day, 30
 Outswimming all the dolphins. Peace prevails,
 The waters calm, and there are never gales.
 Here sights and sounds, and almost hands, can reach
 Across, nor is one far from Chalcis' beach
 And Rhegium is not far from Sicily.
 How shall I start my song, how finally
 Conclude it? All the gilded rafters should
 I mention, placed above the citrus-wood
 Doorposts? The lustrous marble? Or maybe
 The fountain-nymphs that anyone may see 40
 In every room? It's all enrapturing,
 Wherever I may look. Shall I, then, sing
 About the sacred oak-grove? The hallway
 Above the streams? Or should I pen a lay
 About the meeting-room that oversees
 The silent woods, where one may take one's ease,
 Untroubled, where the merest murmuring
 Induces sleep? Or of the simmering
 Baths by a grassy ledge, where fires burn
 Upon the shore, the river, in its turn, 50
 Joined to a furnace, making mockery
 Of all the nymphs who gasp considerably
 Despite the nearby stream. To list for you
 The ivories that came into my view,
 Metals, rings, statues, miniatures, colossi,
 Crafted in silver and in bronze, would be
 A weary task. I wandered, looking around,
 Viewing it all, and then by chance I found
 Riches: a glowing light gleamed from on high,
 And tiles shone out, bright as the brightest sky, 60
 Reflected on the earth, which smiled to see
 Itself decked out with such great artistry.
 Mosaic tiles sent back their wondrous glow
 Displayed upon the shining ground below.

My steps were fearful. Why should we now be
 In awe of roofs divided into three
 Or linked or at a tree that through the air
 Has been allowed to soar whereas elsewhere
 It would be felled? Some fleeting nymph may be
 The one to earn the thanks from that one tree 70
 For its long life. Or am I to provide
 A song describing feasts on either side,
 Marcia's pipeline, pools and springs, in case
 The Alpheus alone will ever grace
 The setting, as its waters sweetly flow
 To Sicily's haven while the Anio
 Itself forsakes its course and in the night,
 Secretly doffing garments of a bright
 Blue colour, stretches out and rhythmically
 Splashes the water. There, too, one may see 80
 Tiburnus lying in the shade, and there
 Would Albula wish to wash her sulphurous hair;
 That place would coax Egeria to bind
 Taygetus with a spell to leave behind
 His dryads or lure Pan himself away
 From his Lycaean forests; Praeneste
 Might lose its matrons to it, should the shrine
 Of Tiryns start to send an alien sign.
 Why praise the orchards of Alcinous
 When branches there are always copious? 90
 You hills of Telegonus, every field
 Owned by Laurentian Turnus, you must yield!
 The shores of Baiae and the murderous
 Antiphates and Circe's treacherous
 Ridge, where she changed all of Ulysses' crew
 To wolves, and Lucrine homes and Anxur, too,
 And Terracina's splendid citadel
 Where Aeneas' nurse eternally will dwell,
 And Antium, where our bard will hibernate
 In winter – all of these, I have to state, 100
 Must yield. That is a place where you may lend
 Your mind to serious thought, where you may spend
 Your time in fruitful leisure, sir! Concealed
 Is fecund quiet: virtue is revealed,
 However, elegance and pleasure free
 Of all indulgence, which would certainly
 Have pleased old Epicurus, there to dwell
 Once he had to his garden said "Farewell" ,
 Braving Capella and the hindrances
 Of tempests and the rainy Hyades, 110
 Though he'd have had to sail his vessel through
 The Malean cape and pass by Sicily, too,
 With its own dangers. Why do we dismiss

Adjacent joys? Your lyre causes bliss
 In Tibur's fauns, and Hercules as well,
 Achilles, too, are dazzled by the spell
 Of your sweet music, whether you contend
 With Pindar or to stout heroics lend
 Your artistry or from your weaponry
 You hurl a biting satire or, maybe, 120
 A letter of great wit. For you are worth
 All of the wealth existing on this earth,
 All treasures of the East. The golden flow
 Of Hermus should across your meadows go,
 And gleaming Tagus. May your lettered leisure
 Thereby afford to you unending pleasure!

IV

Bravo, the gods exist! Yes, the goddess
 Clotho is, after all, not pitiless!
 Astraea witnesses our piety,
 Returned to Jupiter's side in harmony,
 And Gallicus can see the stars, although
 He could not see them not too long ago.
 Domitian, Heaven loves you – that is true -
 For Fortune would not think of robbing you
 Of such a man. Free of a deadly weight,
 His head now rises up, stronger and straight, 10
 Let loose from age's tangle and renewed
 That he may now enjoy a multitude
 Of years. Let your cohorts, which speedily
 Salute the flag, and laws, which frequently
 Protest in court, and Romans who reside
 In distant lands and urge you to decide
 Upon their grievances, show their delight,
 Competing with each other! Let the height
 On which we live ring out! Let every hum
 Of sadder information now be mum! 20
 He'll manage tranquil Rome, invigorated,
 And now the Fates won't be incriminated
 Nor will Tarentum's new altar offend.
 Though now my lyre is mute, I don't intend
 To call on Phoebus or the company
 Of Muses or Pallas or Mercury
 Or Bacchus. Come to me, for it is you
 I call to in my verse. Forge me anew
 With strength and spirit, for with fluency
 You gave advice to the Centumviri. 30
 Winning distinction. Though Pieria's spring
 Continues to frustrate my hankering
 For inspiration, and Pirene, too,

Denies assistance, deeper draughts from you
 Are flowing to me, whether you rehearse
 Your tale in prose or in meticulous verse.
 And therefore, since to Ceres we bestow
 Her corn, to Bacchus wine and since, although
 Diana's rich with spoils, the booty we
 Give her she welcomes and, similarly, 40
 Mars welcomes captured swords, so, Gallicus,
 Since in your eloquence you're glorious,
 Do not look down upon the lowly boon
 A lyre offers you!. Indeed, the moon
 Is all beset with stars, and mean springs pay
 Their tribute to the ocean's larger spray,
 You're well requited by an anxious nation.
 Upon that day I looked with desperation
 At senators and knights and even those
 Who do not normally indulge their woes 50
 On powerful men. The Senate, too, for King
 Numa felt fear when he was languishing
 In sickness, and for Pompey, too, such fear
 The nobles felt, the maids for Brutus. Here
 Is why: you loathed the clank of chains, forwent
 Using the rod and shunned the eminent,
 Had little to do with war, acknowledging
 Petitioners' humble prayers, exhibiting
 Your justice in the Forum, keeping, though,
 The magistrates within their seats, and so 60
 He moved men's hearts. We all were terrified
 To see the terrible and constant slide
 Of danger. Age was not a factor here -
 He was but sixty. No, it was, I fear,
 His toil for Caesar. For a weariness
 Attacked his body with a listlessness.
 Then Phoebus, who for long had turned away
 From him, gazed at him and, without delay,
 Cried out, 'I, with my son Asclepius,
 Will try to find out a fortuitous 70
 Way to revive him. Therefore let us take
 The spindles that stretch out the threads to make
 Them split! For blackening thunderbolts repress
 Your fears! For Jove will honour our prowess,
 For Gallicus is noble, truly blessed
 By Heaven. Briefly I'll tell you the rest
 As we go to his home. His pedigree
 Is ancient and can unmistakably
 Be seen, although his ancestors must yield
 To one who's even greater in their field 80
 Than they once were. His flair initially
 He showed robed in the gown, in fluency

Well-versed, then sworn to duty here and there,
 From west to east, not able once to spare
 The sword and never resting from the fray.
 Galatia warred against him (as once they
 Had warred against me, too!). For full nine years
 Pamphylia for him harboured great fears,
 And the Armenians, skilled in archery,
 Pannonia and Araxes, finally 90
 With its own bridge. He was a praetor, too,
 And twice a governor of Asia, who
 Wished he had governed it three times or four
 Had he not been recalled to something more
 Important, gaining the magistracy
 Of Rome, a post that had been frequently
 Promised to him. Why speak of the submission
 Of Libya? Why of its coalition
 With Rome? Why should I speak of the release
 Of triumph's booty in the time of peace? 100
 Even its instigator could not dare
 Expect such riches. Joy was everywhere -
 The Alps, the ghosts of Cannae, Trasimene,
 And Regulus himself could then be seen,
 Delighted most of all, for it was he
 Who learned of this tribute primarily.
 The time is far too short for me to sing
 Of armies in the north, the mutinying
 Germans, Velada's prayers, the mightiest
 And newest glories while our land was blessed 120
 With his attention, while the Dacii
 Were slain, and he, used to prosperity,
 Was picked to take our leader's reins, and so,
 My son, if I speak aptly, from Pluto
 We'll have to rescue him. Domitian fain
 Would save him, as he should do. Not in vain
 At the Secular Games did those boys honour me,
 In purple clothed. Whatever remedy
 Chiron possess or if there's a store
 Within your Trojan shrine or any more 130
 In Epidaurus or in Crete there be
 The power of the flowering dittany
 Or serpent's foam, whatever remedies
 The shepherd takes from Arabia's fragrant leas
 Or from Amphitryon's herbs, I'll gather.' Thus
 He spoke. The limbs, they found, were languorous;
 The breath was short. They dressed in doctors' dress
 And worked upon him with true earnestness
 Until the vapours were evaporated
 And Gallicus himself facilitated 140
 The gods, too strong to let the malady

Take hold, and thus aided his recovery,
 Which was as swift as that of Telephus
 When he was cured by the ingenious
 Achilles, or when Machaon's remedies
 Were quickly ministered to Atrides.
 What time is there for me to anxiously
 Pray to the people and the company
 Of senators and others? And yet I
 Must take the time to call the gods on high. 150
 Apollo, hear how I have spent both day
 And night as in my terror and dismay
 I hung upon the doorpost. Now with ear
 And now with eye I strained that I might hear
 And notice everything. For in my mind
 I'm like a little boat that drifts behind
 A massive ship when storms blow furiously,
 As waves high in the self-same westerly
 Are raging. Fates, now spin your shining thread
 With joy, concerned with but what lies ahead. 160
 O Gallicus, you're worthy to outlast
 Those aged Trojans from the distant past,
 The Sibyl's heap of dust, Nestor's decay.
 Poor as I am, what tribute can I pay
 To you, even should Mevania offer me
 Her vales or by Clitumnus I should be
 Given her snow-white bulls. And yet a god
 Will often be content with just a clod
 Of soil, grain or a dash of salt, nought more.

V

My lyre shall not beat at Helicon's door,
 Nor will I call the Muses, frequently
 Pestered by me before. The company
 Of Phoebus and Bacchus I send away.
 And, Mercury, hide your tortoise-shell, I pray.
 The naiads I'll elicit and the king
 Of fire, Vulcan, ever labouring
 And sweating at his work in Sicily.
 Thebes, leave your battles temporarily!
 I wish to bring to a dear friend some joy. 10
 Pour out the cups and do not spare them, boy,
 And string your lazy lyre! Away with care
 And labour! For I'd like to sing an air
 About the baths with marble shimmering,
 While Clio, my Muse, is set to gambolling,
 With braids and wanton ivy garlanded.
 Each green goddess, the hair upon your head
 Bind up with reeds, of all your garments free,

And tease your Satyr lovers when they see
 Your naked form emerging from the spring, 20
 Though to you guilty ones I shall not sing,
 Oenone and Salmacis and the one
 Who stole from Hercules his foster-son.
 I call the nymphs of Rome, whose waters swell
 The Tiber and you whom the Anio well
 Delights, you Aqua Virgo, welcoming
 Your swimmers, Aqua Marcia, who bring
 The snows, and you who flow cascading through
 The channels, raised on countless arches. You
 I try to emulate. My gentle air 30
 Reveals your mansion; no style anywhere
 Can be as rich as this is. Venus swayed
 Her husband's hands and in this way she made
 Them even more accomplished, while below
 His furnaces, she made her torches glow
 Much brighter than his own. Not in Thasos
 Is there such marble seen, nor Carystos;
 The onyx grimly sulks, the serpentine
 Mutters in exile; from Numidia's mine
 The stones are quarried, save the porphyry 40
 Of Tyre and Sidon and (a sight to see!)
 The red-flecked marble which Attis had stained
 With his own blood, for that can be obtained
 In Synnas. Eurotas can barely pass
 With its long veins of green around Synnas.
 The doors and ceilings glow, the rafters gleam
 In many different ways; the fires seem
 Amazed at all the wealth that they display
 And check their flames. There is the light of day
 In every place. The sun roams everywhere, 50
 By different flames made warm. There's nothing there
 That's vulgar. Copper found in Temese
 Is absent. Silver pours down pleasantly
 Into more silver yet, while hovering
 Upon the very brim and marvelling
 At its own beauty, loath to leave the scene.
 Outside, the river, with its dark-blue sheen,
 Gleams on the snow-white verge, so clear and bright
 From top to base. Who is there whom it might
 Not tempt to swim there, doffing all he wore. 60
 Venus herself would have a craving for
 These deeps for her birthplace; Narcissus, too,
 Would have preferred them (I am sure that's true),
 Diana, though she might well have been found,
 Would still have wished to bathe there. On the ground,
 Moreover, wooden planking has been laid
 So that the game of ball may then be played,

Where languid flames surround it, a mild heat
 Sent by the hypocausts. If one might greet
 These baths from Baiae's shores (if it's right to approximate 70
 The great and small) some bather who was new
 From Nero's baths would love to sweat here, too.
 Blessings, then, on your ingenuity,
 And may your works reach their maturity
 With you, sir! May your fortunes rise once more
 With you and be more happy than before!

VI

Stern Pallas, great Apollo, keep away!
 And, Muses, keep your distance! Go now, play!
 We'll call you back on January the First.
 Let Saturn join with me! December, thirst
 Soaked ever, smiling Humour, Wantonness,
 Hear me of happy Caesar's day express
 My joy and tell of drunken banqueting!
 Scarce had Aurora ceased her welcoming
 The dawn but lovely fruits rained on the ground,
 Dews from the eastern wind scattered around - 10
 Fine nuts from Pontus, dates from Idume,
 Damascene dates, figs which grow lusciously
 In Etasus and Caunus. Spoils abound
 Upon the earth, and everywhere are found
 Pastries and 'little Gaiuses', undried
 Amerian apples and pears – all may be spied.
 Spiced cakes and ripened dates fall plenteously
 Out of a palm-tree that no-one can see.
 No stormy tempests from the Hyades
 Nor the great showers from the Pleades, 20
 Lashing the theatre, could hurl down such rains.
 Ah. let Lord Jupiter menace the broad plains
 With all his clouds, while he can shed on us
 Such splendid gifts! But see that beauteous
 And well-dressed crowd, indeed a multitude,
 As many as those waiting for their food!
 Baskets of bread and white napkins and fine
 Dainties they bring and pour out mellow wine -
 You'd think each one of them a Ganymede.
 Grave, gown-clad noble men recline to feed. 30
 Annona, though, for all her dignity,
 Contributes nought to this festivity.
 Come now, Old Age! I urge you to contrast
 Our present time with days now long gone past,
 When Jove was young! Wine flowed less copiously
 In those days; harvests acted sluggishly.
 One table's occupied by all today,

Since it is immaterial if they
 Are women, children, of low class or high.
 Freedom has banished veneration. Why, 40
 You feast with us (which of the deities
 Sends and accepts his own RSVPs?)
 For now it's true that all folk may profess
 They dined with Caesar, rich or penniless.
 Amid the noise and novel luxury
 The evening passes by agreeably.
 Women, unused to battle, now assay
 The weapons of fighting men. You'd think that they
 Were Amazons along the Tanais
 Or cruel Phasis. And then, following this, 50
 A troop of fearless midgets threatening
 Each other, Mars and Courage chuckling
 While cranes swoop down upon their errant prey,
 Amazed at the pugnacity that they
 Display. As night draws in, a clamouring
 Begins amid the cheer, for entering,
 A bevy of beauties, easily possessed,
 Appears before them, charming every guest
 With both their beauty and their artistry.
 Plump Lydian beauties in one company 60
 Applaud; the cymbals clash amid the strain
 Of jingling music from the land of Spain.
 Syria's troupes are here; theatre-fans, too,
 Appear before us all and those men who
 Barter cheap sulphur that they might thereby
 Gain scraps of glass Then suddenly birds fly
 Down from the clouds, a wealth of pedigrees -
 Flamingos, pheasants, guinea-fowl. All these
 Are from the Nile and Phasis and the land
 Of wet Numidia. There is no hand 70
 To seize all of these gifts. It would repress
 One who desired to gather such largesse.
 A thousand voices rose up in the air
 In praise of Caesar's splendidous affair.
 This was the only licence Caesar banned.
 Scarcely had darkness covered all the land
 Before a fiery ball appeared, which shone
 With more effulgence than the light upon
 The Cretan crown. The bright flame shamed the night,
 Permitting it no freedom. At the sight 80
 Sleep and Repose took flight. Who can recount
 The wondrous spectacle and the amount
 Of licensed jollity, the food, the flow
 Of copious wine. I feel my vigour go,
 I need to sleep this off. I'm sure this day
 Will never from our minds be swept away.

While there are all the hills of Italy,
As long as Tiber flows and Rome shall be
Untainted and the Capitol is alive,
Restored by you, this memory shall thrive. 90

BOOK II

I

O Melior, how can I comfort you
While you are yet in grief for Glaucus' too-
Early demise, your foster-son, beside
The glowing pyre? His wound's still gaping wide.
While I write verse to ease your pain, you seek
Beating of breasts and mournful friends who shriek
Their grief. This is no time for poetry -
I'd rather hear a tigress growl at me
Or a lioness who's been robbed of her young. 10
A song that by the Siren maids is sung,
The lyre that charms the wild beasts could not take
Your grief away. Your soul is filled with ache
And at a touch you groan in misery.
None would forbid it, and therefore be free
To quell your pain! Do you still feel the need,
To weep, annoyed to her somebody plead?
Shall I now sing? Yet at my mournful strain
Droplets of tears course down my cheeks and stain
The page. I was among the retinue -
Behind the black-draped bier I walked with you, 20
As Rome was watching. What a cruel sight
To look upon – a young boy's funeral rite!
I saw the incense of the gods below,
That cruel heap defining all our woe.
A father's misery you have outdone
And a mother's arms stretched out to hold her son,
Ready to eat the flames. I scarcely could
Restrain you, thinking that I maybe would
Offend you. So the garland from my brow
Thrown down, I drop my lyre that I now 30
May beat my breast. Be comforted, I pray.
If I may join you in your sorrow, may
I be your friend! For fathers in their grief
Have heard me sing, and I have brought relief
To mothers mourning for their progeny.
I even tempered my own misery
When grieving my dear father.. I maintain
That you must mourn your loss, but share your pain!
Let's weep together! Such uncertainty
I had how to begin my eulogy 40

For your dear boy. For now I thought I'd sing
 About his adolescence hovering
 Above life's threshold, now it came to me
 To sing of his precocious modesty,
 And now his sense of honour, now a grace
 Beyond his years. Ah what a lovely face
 He had, suffused with blushes, orbs so bright
 They shamed the stars, filled with a heavenly light,
 And slender forehead, delicate locks of hair
 With their attractive, gentle fringe, Oh, where 50
 Now is that voice, its charming melody,
 Kisses that smacked of flowers in spring when he
 Embraced you, tears and laughter coalesced,
 And when he spoke to you his voice was blessed
 With sweetness like that which the honey-bee
 Brings us from Hybla, such a melody
 To charm a hissing serpent and to sway
 A cruel stepmother so that she'll pray
 That she might serve him. The attractiveness
 That he displayed I do not overstress, 60
 For I maintain his throat was milky-white,
 Around his master's neck his hands clasped tight.
 The promise of his manhood is now gone,
 The beard you often swore would grow upon
 His cheeks. All gone in one disastrous day!
 Only our memory of him will ever stay.
 Who'll soothe your heart with happy converse? Who
 Will lull the secret cares distressing you?
 When with your slaves you're angry, who'll assuage
 Your bitter wrath and turn aside your rage? 70
 Who'll steal your food and wine, occasioning
 Sweet havoc with his cheeky plundering?
 Who'll leap upon your bed at break of day
 And interrupt your slumber and delay
 You with his kisses and a fond embrace?
 And when you come back home again, who'll place
 His little hands around you? I can swear
 The house is mute, neglect is everywhere -
 The hearth, the bedroom and the table, too.
 Atedius, it's no surprise that you 80
 Received so grand a funeral. You brought calm
 To your dear foster-father, such a balm
 For his old age, sometimes a sweet delight,
 Sometimes a care. It has not been your plight
 To be a child for sale, whirling around
 A slaver's platform, where there can be found
 Pharian goods, while telling jokes that you
 Have learnt by rote, in hope for someone who
 Will buy you, but in vain. You were born here

And raised. Both of your parents, ever dear 90
 To Glaucius, were by his hand set free
 In case you should mourn your nativity.
 Snatched from your mother's womb, immediately
 Lifted up by your master happily,
 You cried out to the stars, and to his breast
 He clasped you tight and, as his, you were blessed.
 To parents and to Nature now I pray
 (For Nature knits all hearts together), may
 I mention here that consanguinity
 Is not the only bond, for progeny 100
 That are adopted often are more dear
 To us than kin? Although it's very clear
 Legitimate sons are a necessity,
 The ones we choose are chosen joyfully.
 To kind Chiron Achilles meant much more
 Than to his actual father Peleus. Nor
 Did Peleus go to Troy with him, though he
 Was never far from Phoenix' company.
 Evander, too, though he was far away,
 For Pallas' successful homecoming would pray, 110
 While he who bore his armour watched the fight,
 Loyal Acoetes, and amid the light
 Of twinkling stars his father Jove would be,
 While angler Dictys raised his progeny.
 Why need I speak of mothers who display
 Less feeling than the nurse? Why need I say,
 Bacchus, that you were safer on the knee
 Of Ino since your mother Semele
 Was turned to ash by Jove? Lax with her son,
 Rhea Silvia maintained dominion 120
 In Tuscan waters while his nurse would grow
 Weary with carrying Romulus to and fro.
 I've seen twigs grafted on an alien tree
 Grow taller than alone. Your energy,
 Melior, and your fancy have made you
 His father at the first, though not yet due
 Are both his loyalty and his grace. But dear
 To you already was each childish tear.
 Just like a flower the wind will cause to fall
 Because it has been standing far too tall, 130
 His looks and proud steps were beyond his years
 And prematurely he outdid his peers.
 Firm in a wrestling hold, he seemed to be
 Born of a Spartan mother (readily
 Apollo would yield Oebalus's son
 For him, or Hercules his favoured son,
 Hylas); when in Greek costume he spoke out
 Menander's speeches, there's not any doubt

Thalia would have clapped and mussed his hair
 By settling a wreath of roses there. 140
 When he recited Homer's *Iliad*
 Or *Odyssey*, his father praised the lad;
 Even his teachers were amazed at this
 Clear understanding. Surely Lachesis
 And Envy touched him in his infancy -
 One stroked his cheeks and hair, one probably
 Taught him those words we mourn. Though he was still
 An infant, it appeared that he would fill
 Hercules' shoes. He had a vigorous stride;
 The clothing that he sported qualified 150
 His stature, and it always seemed that he
 Would outgrow them. His master constantly
 Bought him new clothes. Across his boyish chest
 He fit short mantles, but he never dressed
 Him in loose robes, and he would always gauge
 The clothing that he bought to suit his age,
 With not too ample folds, now dressing you
 In scarlet, now in green, now with the hue
 Of purple, lad, while your gemmed fingers glowed.
 And you had many servants and a load 160
 Of endless gifts. The garb of liberty
 Was all you lacked: this infelicity
 Your birth inflicted. But then Fate, in spleen,
 Raised up her hand, eager to intervene
 With her fell talons. Was she, then, so blind
 To his fair looks and youthfulness, combined
 To touch one's heart? For Procne – even she -
 Would not have killed the boy with cruelty,
 Nor fierce Medea, even if the lad
 Was Jason's by Creusa, and the mad 170
 Athamas would have put aside his bow;
 Ulysses would have been in tears, although
 He hated Troy and Hector, to have cast
 That child from Troy's ramparts. Six days had passed,
 His eyes already languid, cold and dim,
 When Queen Proserpina laid her hands on him,
 And as she took his life, his chill eyes sought
 Your own and from his failing lips you caught
 Your whispered name – yes, it was at his death
 Your name was spoken with his final breath, 180
 Quelling your pain. Yet we are glad that he
 Was spared the lengthy pangs of misery,
 His lovely looks unscathed. But do not seek
 To know about his rites – I will not speak
 Of them, nor of the gifts heaped on his pyre
 Nor of the corpse in splendour set afire,
 The flames grown tall, Calician saffron

And gifts of Indian spices thrown upon
 The heap, while eastern perfumes drench the hair.
 Then Melior makes haste that he might bear 190
 His many gifts, for there is not one thing
 That he'd deny his dear boy, hankering
 To burn up all the wealth he's left behind.
 The flames, as if they had a jealous mind,
 Won't burn it all. I shudder, Melior,
 Calmest of men, for I am fearful for
 Your hearing these last rites. Was this the face
 I used to know, so sweetly full of grace?
 Whence dome these fits, these gestures, this wild woe?
 Shunning the light of day, you're crouching low - 200
 You tear your clothes and rake your skin and press
 Your mouth to his cold face in your distress.
 His parents, both awed by your misery,
 Were there – no wonder, for this tragedy
 Was mourned by everyone. The crowd had gone
 Ahead across the Mulvian Bridge upon
Via Flaminia, where the fires swept
 Over the child as everybody wept
 For him. Palaemon was mourned in this way,
 Where by his mother Ino mourners lay 210
 Within an isthmian harbour; Opheltes
 Was torn by snakes, as in Nemea's leas
 He played, and then cremated. Cease your fear,
 For three-jawed Cerberus will not come near
 To him and snarl, nor will the Furies bear
 Their torches, and those writhing snakes won't scare
 The lad, and Chiron in his greedy boat
 Will closer to the barren coastline float
 That he might step aboard more easily.
 What is the message Mercury's giving me, 220
 Waving his joyous wand? Can there be joy
 At such a dreadful time? And yet the boy
 Will know Blaesus by his nobility,
 For in your house he's seen the statuary,
 When you twined garlands or clasped to your breast
 The waxen images. As he progressed
 Along the Lethe's banks, escorted by
 Nobles, the lad took his position nigh
 The man and walked beside him timidly
 While plucking at his robe persistently. 230
 But Blaesus thought he was some young relation
 Unknown to him, but at the revelation
 He was the darling son of his dear friend
 Whom he'd consoled when he had reached the end
 Of his own life; he hugged him happily,
 Taking him through the land that he might see

The charms with which Elysium might please -
 The birds that never sing, the fruitless trees,
 The pallid flowers. He urged you not to part
 With memories of you, but, heart to heart, 240
 Share them with him. The wound you now must heal.
 Raise up your head and doff the grief you feel.
 All's doomed to pass! Yes, all must fade away -
 The stars, the massive earth, each night, each day.
 All nations die. Who'll stay to sorrow for
 His feeble fellow-humans? Seas and war
 Claim victims, as do love and lunacy
 And passion. Why bewail infirmity?
 Winter's cold breath, fierce heat and pallid fall
 Lash out dearth-dealing storms. It's certain all 250
 Are born to die. Chill winters some of us
 Await while some from scorching Sirius
 Or sallow autumn's rain-filled depths must die.
 All living creatures quake when death is nigh:
 Aeacus shakes the urn for all. Yet he
 We mourn is far from every deity
 And human, of all dangers now exempt.
 He did not fear death nor did he attempt
 To pray for it. Free of anxiety,
 We know not when our final day will be, 260
 How we shall leave this life, what star shall fall,
 What thunder-cloud will likely cast a pall
 Upon us. Aren't you moved by what I say?
 You will be, and with good grace! Come away
 From that dark door! For you alone can gain
 All blessings, for Charon will not restrain
 Innocent souls, nor baleful Cerberus.
 Soften his heart and stay his piteous
 Cascading tears! Speak to him lovingly
 And fill his long nights with felicity! 270
 Say you're alive and tel him that he leaves
 Sad parents and a sister, too, who grieves!

II

There is a lofty villa in between
 The Sirens' walls and cliffs that may be seen
 To bear Minerva's shrine, impressively
 Topping the waters of Puteoli.
 Bacchus adores this place, for the incline
 Grows grapes not envious of Falernum's wine.
 Hither from the five-year festivity,
 Held in the place of my nativity,
 I sailed in happiness. The white dust lay
 In quiet there as for the Ambracian bay 10

The athletes yearned. The gentle eloquence
 Of Pollio and the benevolence
 Of Pollia then tempted me, although
 I'd previously set my mind to go
 To where the Via Appia, the queen
 Of highways, takes folk through the well-known scene
 Leading to Rome. I found that the delay
 Was worth it, for I saw the tranquil bay
 With curving headlands stretched on either hand.
 Nature grants spaciousness – the streaming strand 20
 Divides the heights. The first thing that you see
 Is a twin-domed bath-house, whence a tributary
 Flows to the sea. Here the melodious pair,
 Glaucus and Cymodoce, their hair
 Wet, and Oceanus would happily
 Cavort. Neptune, who rules the dark-blue sea,
 Is guardian of this villa and its shrine
 Moistened with drizzle from the foaming brine.
 Hercules guards the happy fields, the bay
 Rejoicing in those deities, for they 30
 Protect their land and tame the savage sea:
 The wild south winds now breathe more moderately;
 The headlong storm abates, the pool serene
 Just like its lord; a colonnade is seen
 Zig-zagging on the cliffs, resembling
 A city, its long column mastering
 The rugged rocks. It gives such great delight
 To wander where thick dust once dimmed the bright
 Sunlight, the going rough. It seems to me
 Just like the covered path that from the sea 30
 At Lechaëum ascends to Corinth. Oh,
 If Helicon were able to bestow
 Its powers on me, if Pimplea could slake
 The thirst I have, if Hippocrene could make
 A wondrous poet of me or, furthermore,
 Phenomone could pour on me her store
 Of waters, or if I'd gain from the flow
 From Pollius' pitcher not too long ago,
 When with Phoebus Apollo as his guide
 He deeply plunged into that pitcher, I'd 40
 Be totally unable to relate
 All the embellishments that permeate
 The place. My eyes began to weary me
 As I was led, seemingly endlessly,
 To see them all. Should I admire the place
 Or Pollius? One building points its face
 Eastward, another, holding back the night,
 Points westward and denies the fading light
 At day's end, all the shadows darkening

The glassy flood of waters mirroring 50
 The mansion. Here with voices of the brine
 The rooms resound, while other rooms decline
 To know the thunderous surges, favouring
 Silence. While here the ground is burgeoning,
 There Nature yielded to the builder's hand
 And learned new, gentler ways to deck the land.
 Now there is level ground where once there stood
 A hill; some time ago there was a wood
 With lofty thickets; what you see today
 Are soaring groves with not a hint of clay. 60
 The place is tamed and blithely has the land
 Surrendered to its master's stern command.
 For he's removed the rocks or shaped them. See!
 The cliffs bow to his yoke obediently.
 And now the hill's been ordered to retire.
 Let Arion bring out his Theban lyre!
 May Thracian Orpheus' plectrum sing of you!
 May you have soaring groves and move rocks, too!
 What of the bronze and waxen effigies?
 It seems that they were forged by Apelles 70
 Or by the hands of Phidias supplied,
 While Pisa was as yet unoccupied.
 The skill of Polyclitus or Myron,
 It seems to me, could have breathed life upon
 These sculptured images resembling
 Corinthian funeral bronze, outdistancing
 The worth of gold, the busts of famous men -
 Chiefs, poets, sages, all within your ken,
 For you are virtuous and trouble-free.
 What of the thousand roofs, a joy to see? 80
 Ah, every room provides its own delight,
 And every window offers us a sight
 Of its own sea. At one Ischia cheers
 One's sight, while rugged Prochyta appears
 At another; and Misenum's spread out wide
 (For Hector's arms-bearer identified);
 From yet another, while, set in the sea,
 Nisida breathes out odoriferously.
 Elsewhere one sees Euploea, promising
 Fair winds, and, jutting through the spiralling 90
 Billows, is Megaris; your Limon, too,
 Distressed that it lies opposite to you
 As it looks at your palace far away.
 One room over the others, though, holds sway,
 Displaying Naples straight across the sea,
 Where Grecian marble is, though there will be
 Some strata from Syene. This is where
 There are busts carved in Synnas where the air

Was filled with Cybele's lamenting moan 100
 For Attis where, as on a painted stone,
 White ground picked out with rings of red you'll see
 And from Lycurgus' hills a mimicry
 Of grass in stone is seen. Stone from Thasos,
 Numidia and Chios and Carystos
 All glisten yellow here as they address
 The towers of Naples opposite. Ah, bless
 Your choice of Greece! Let not Puteoli,
 The place where you were born, feel jealousy!
 Our new lord will prevail! What can I say
 Of farmland in the sea, a rich array 110
 Of fruitful fields, rock-faces that cascade
 With juices of the grape, which will be made
 Into the fruit of Bacchus? Frequently,
 When Bacchus' crop is growing, secretly
 A sea-nymph scales the rocks in darkest night
 And wipes the brine away to clear her sight
 With a ripe bough and takes the grapes away,
 Which then are saturated by the spray
 Of water frequently. The satyrs plunge
 Into the sea in eagerness to lunge 120
 At sporting Nereids displaying all
 Their bodily charms. May happiness befall
 The lord and lady of this land till they
 Have lived for many years! And never may
 It lose its loyalty, nor may it be
 Outmatched by Hercules's property
 Or Puteoli or the Tarentine
 Glaucus's gardens of seductive wine!
 And this where my Pollius pursues
 The Muses' skills, whether it be the Muse 130
 Of Gargettus or else he pens a lay
 In elegiacs or should choose to play
 Upon his lute or unleash menacing
 Satires; the Sirens here come hurtling
 To hear the songs that easily excel
 Their own; Minerva lends her ear as well,
 Nodding her crest; the winds fall and the sea
 Is ordered not to roar; delightfully
 The dolphins leap out of the waves to catch
 The playing of the harp that few can match. 140
 Richer than Midas and Croesus, you joy
 Beyond the thrones of Persia and of Troy.
 You are untroubled by the treachery
 Of might, the fickle mob, the military,
 The law; you neither hope nor fear raised high,
 Above all longing and unbothered by
 Your fate, denying Fortune. Your last day

Won't find you in disquiet or dismay
 But ready to be gone. A worthless crew
 Are we and, though content with making do, 150
 We hope for more, scattered hither and yon
 By chance breezes, while up there you look on
 Our errant ways and laugh at what we see
 As joy. There was a time when the loyalty
 Of two lands puzzled you – Puteoli
 Loved you, as did my Naples equally.
 Unsure which path to take while yet a youth,
 You finally found out what was the truth.
 Others upon the troubled seas are cast,
 But you have found a peaceful port at last, 160
 Proceed as you began and nevermore,
 To face the hurricane, desert the shore!
 And you, wise Pollia, who may compare
 Your wisdom with your husband's, you whom care
 Never oppresses, you who do not store
 Your wealth in greedy chests, not tortured for
 A loss of gain, who feel satiety
 With what you have, live on contentedly
 With Pollius. Such souls have learned to give
 Themselves to luxury and thereby live. 170
 May your two hearts be merged eternally
 And live in chaste congeniality,
 And as the years roll by, enlarge your fame
 And therewith be the match of old acclaim!

III

Great Melior has a tree encompassing
 His crystal lake. It stands there, hovering
 Above it from its base, its crest erect,
 As though born of the waves, one might suspect,
 Why ask Apollo for its history?
 You fountain-nymphs and fauns can easily
 Recount the tale. The tender nymphs were flying
 In a bevy here and there (for they were trying
 To shake Pan off, although he craved but one,
 Pholoe). Through the woods and streams she'd run. 10
 Past Janus' warlike grove she fled in fright
 And Cacus' Aventine as black as night
 And past Quirinus' fields till she attained
 The woods of Caelius. Then wholly drained
 With all her efforts and fatigued with dread,
 She came to placid Melior's homestead
 And sank down on the shore, while rapidly
 Pan dogged her, thinking she would certainly

Be his. Breathless no more, above his prey
 He loomed. Diana, though, hastened that way 20
 (For on the Aventine she tracked a deer).
 In indignation, as she ventured near,
 She said to her comrades, "Will it be thus
 Always? Can I not keep these lecherous
 Satyrs in check? Am I condemned to see
 My votaries forfeit their chastity
 One at a time?" An arrow then she drew
 From her quiver, which one-handedly she threw.
 It touched the drowsy nymph's left hand, they say -
 She woke at once and saw that it was day 30
 And spied her enemy. And, therefore, lest
 He'd see her limbs, she plunged, still fully-dressed,
 Into the deep, so, thinking he might go
 After her still, within the weeds below
 She hid herself. Unable to pursue
 Her underwater, what could he then do?
 To dive into the depths he did not dare,
 For he was conscious of his shaggy hair
 Nor ever taught to swim from infancy,
 So to Diana he carped bitterly. 40
 He planted a young plane-tree then beside
 The waters, long-stemmed and amply supplied
 With shoots: its acme to the heavens leaped.
 And then around the tree fresh sand he heaped
 And waters of desire, and to the tree
 He said, "May you live long in memory
 Of my desire! At least reach down and grace
 The cruel naiad's hidden resting-place
 With your affection! Would that you might press
 Upon the water's face your leafiness! 50
 Let her not feel the heat above nor be
 Rained on, though it would be deservedly.
 And I will keep the two of you in mind
 And guard you, for this haunt is calm and kind,
 Into old age. For Jove's and Phoebus' trees,
 Those poplars of countless varieties,
 And my own pines may all be awed to see
 You flourishing." He ended, and the tree,
 Revivified, arched with affectionate grace
 Over the pool. It longed for an embrace, 60
 The pool repelling it. It then ascended,
 Stretched upwards to the sky, and then descended
 Into the pool. Diana's votary
 No longer hates it but affectionately
 Welcomes the branches which the pool denied.
 Such is the little gift that I provide
 For you on your birthday. Although it's small,

It may last many years and will enthrall,
 For you are calm, replete with courtesy,
 Possessing grave but gay integrity, 70
 Who are the scorner of all sluggishness
 And black ambition and the forcefulness
 Of tyranny, faithful, unknown to unrest,
 A private man because you have been blessed
 With the ability to organize
 Your life with skill; you're quick, too, to despise
 The lust for gold, and yet what you possess
 You use for benefit with skilfulness
 And bring it to the light. Long may you thrive,
 Young in your heart and mind, and stay alive 80
 Until you reach the age of Ilium's king
 And old Tithonus, too, outdistancing
 Your parents, their old age won by consent
 Of the harsh Fates. Now it is evident
 Blaesus's skill shall not fall in decay
 But will in you grow green again one day.

IV

Parrot, who imitated with such skill
 Our tongue, your master's prize, what sudden ill
 Cut short your lisps? While we dined yesterday,
 Sad bird, you were about to fade away,
 Though we were watching you with great delight
 As you from couch to couch till past midnight
 Pecked at the table's gifts. You spoke as well
 With words that you had learned, but now you dwell
 In Hades. No more tales of Phaëthon
 Should now be told. It is not just the swan 10
 That celebrates its death. Your lovely home
 Was a fine cage, topped with a bright-red dome,
 Its silver bars all set with ivory,
 Its portals ringing out ear-piercingly
 As you would peck them. But, alas, today
 Those portals speak aloud their own dismay -
 The scolding voice that filled that cage is mum!
 May all you scholar bird flock hither! Come!
 You have the noble skill of mimicry;
 Let Phoebus' raven show its misery, 20
 The starling cry the words that it has learned;
 Let the Pierides who have been turned
 To magpies mourn, the partridge, which replies
 In mimicked sounds; and let the maid who sighs
 That she's become a nightingale inside
 Her chamber grieve, for your kinsman has died.
 Lament as one and bear him to the flame

And chant, "The parrot who has earned great fame
 Is dead, the bright-green sovereign of the East,
 Whose fine appearance could not in the least 30
 Compete with Juno's peacock, nor would I
 Compare it with the pheasant-birds that fly
 In Colchis, nor the guinea-fowl, the prey
 Of the Numidians. *This* bird could say
 'Caesar' and greeted kings. He would console
 A comrade or at dinner play the role
 Of a light-hearted guest, prepared always
 To echo given words, and on the days
 He was released, Melior, my dearest friend,
 You weren't alone. And yet we do not send 40
 Him down to Hades without yet more fame,
 For with Assyrian spice his ashes flame:
 His fragile feathers smell of Arabian scent
 And of Sicilian saffron. Now unspent
 By age's languor, he will now retire,
 A happier phoenix, to a richer pyre."

V

What gain is there for you when you suppress
 Your rage and learn to shun destructiveness,
 Obey a puny master's words and grow
 Inured to being told to come and go
 Both to and from your cage and leave the kill
 That you have taken and, of your free will,
 Loosen your jaws and free the hand inside?
 Trained foe of taller creatures, you have died,
 Not by Numidians captured cunningly
 Nor falling in a hidden cavity 10
 Nor leaping spears. Oh no, a wild beast's rage
 Destroyed you. All the hinges of your cage
 Had been unloosed – a fatal act for you!
 Meanwhile, tame lions roared a hullabaloo
 At the outrage when you were dragged away:
 Their manes drooped down, nor would they but display
 Their shame and frown. And yet this strange disgrace
 Could not destroy you, for you still could face
 Your foe. Just like a soldier, who well knows
 His wound is fatal and before he goes 20
 To Hades stands before his enemy,
 Raising his arm up high and threateningly
 Waving his sword, you, though stripped of all pride,
 Maintained your slow advance, stride after stride,
 Your jaws wide-open, as you sought your foe
 While focussing your steady gaze. Although
 You were defeated, there was consolation,

For everyone groaned out their lamentation 30
As for a famous gladiator felled
On the harsh sand. Great Caesar was compelled
To grieve. Wild beasts from Libya, Germany,
Egypt and Scythia, each one worthlessly
Regarded, were destroyed – our emperor, though,
For this one single lion felt such woe.

VI

To measure grief is cruel – tragically
Some parents bear their infant progeny
To the pyre, and it's hard to watch dismay
When husbands see their spouses snatched away,
And we must hear a sibling's cries of woe.
Some are affected by a lesser blow
With even deeper grief: a slave (a name
Fate thoughtlessly ascribes yet, all the same,
Ignores the heart) you mourn, whose loyalty
And love for you has earned your misery, 10
Your servant, for whom free thought counted more
Than liberty. So keep on grieving for
Your servant! Feel no shame! Do not restrain
Your sorrow if the gods enjoy your pain,
You mourn a man (alas, it falls to me
To light the pyre!) who welcomed slavery,
Resenting nothing. Who would turn away
One's tears for such a death? Killed in the fray
Of battle, a horse is mourned for by those who
Reside in Parthia. The Molossi, too, 20
Grieve for their loyal hounds while at their end
Some birds have funeral pyres and Virgil penned
A eulogy for a deer. What if, maybe,
The man had not been born to slavery?
Although his character I surely knew
And saw how he always deferred to you,
He had a generous spirit and there was fire
In him that many mothers would desire
To notice in their sons, whether they should be
Of Greek descent or from our Italy. 30
Not even Theseus would have been his peer,
When Ariadne used a thread to steer
Back to her side, nor Paris, Priam's son,
Soon to behold Helen, who would be won
When his reluctant pine-bark on the sea
He launched. Trust me, this is not trickery!
My verse is true! I see him yet once more,
So like Achilles on that virgin shore
Where Thetis hid him so that he might shun

20

30

The war in Troy, and Troilus, too, undone 40
By a Thessalian weapon as he ran
Around Apollo's walls – more handsome than
All but his master! As the moon outgleams
The lesser lights, as Hesperus outbeams
The stars, you outdo him. Upon his face
There was no softness and no girlish grace,
And though he was a boy, nevertheless
There was in him a manly comeliness;
His glance was not too bold and his eye gleamed 50
With earnestness, though mild as well. So seemed
Parthenopaeus readying to fight -
His comely locks, his smooth chin and his bright
Youthful regard. Such striplings have been seen
By the Eurotas; Elis, too, has been
The home of others. Ursus' soul was free
Of stain and calm, with a sagacity
Beyond his years. He'd often rally you
And give you counsel – and you'd listen, too!
Your grief and joy you shared. Your inclination 60
Was his and no-one matched his dedication
To you, equal to that of Pylades
And Theseus. Fortune, limit eulogies!
Eumaeus waited no less faithfully
For Ulysses' return. What deity
Or circumstance determined such a blow
As this? And why was Fate so certain? Oh,
He would have borne it better were he free
Of ample fortune and prosperity!
Had Locrian fields Vesuvian fire spewed, 70
Had the Pollentine glades all been subdued
By rivers, had the Tiber or Acir
Flooded their banks, he would have felt no fear,
Or if Cyrene or if nurturing Crete
Or any other land that is replete
With wealth refused their harvest. Envy, though,
Found your weak point, the avenue of woe.
He was about to change from youth to man,
Peerless in looks, completing now a span
Of fifteen years, when Nemesis looked down 80
On him with an uncompromising frown.
She made him more robust, while brightening
His eyes, and raised his height – a deadly thing
For the poor boy! The goddess was consumed
With envy, clasped him to her breast and doomed
The lad to Hades, plucking mercilessly
With cruel talons at the face that she
Should have revered. He barely saw daybreak
Before the shores of Acheron would take

His life. How many tears for him you shed
 As you cried out his name! Were they not dead, 90
 His parents could not have more cruelly
 Damaged their arms nor wept more bitterly;
 His brother, present at his exequies,
 Felt shame to be outdone. His obsequies
 Outdid those of a lowly minion,
 With perfumes from the East and cinnamon
 That has been stolen from the phoenix' nest,
 The flowing juices, too, that have been pressed
 From Assyrian buds. Your tears exclusively
 The flames consumed, drinking them endlessly. 100
 Neither the wine that quenched your embers nor
 The smooth onyx around your bones were more
 Welcome than grief to him. Why, though, give way
 To sorrow, why perversely love dismay?
 Where is that eloquence your clients need?
 Why plague his shade with violent grief? Indeed
 He was unequalled, worth your misery,
 But now your grief has reached its apogee.
 He's joined the blest and now has come to know
 Some famous relatives of long ago 110
 Or joins the naiads as they dally there
 In Lethe as he notes a sidelong stare
 From Queen Proserpina. I beg you, end
 Your moans! It's possible the Fates will send
 To you another loved one, or maybe
 The man himself will offer joyously
 One just like him and teach him how to earn
 Your love and be like him for whom we yearn.

VII

Whoever has been stirred by poetry,
 Drinking Pirene's waters, come with me
 To honour Lucan's birthday! Mercury, too,
 The inventor of the lyre, I call on you,
 And Bacchus, Phoebus, Muses, who possess
 The power of poetic gracefulness.
 Wreath your white robes with ivy, beautify
 Your hair with purple bands! Let verses fly
 More freely! May Aonia be more green,
 And if the shade is pierced by the sun's sheen, 10
 Let pleasant garlands fill the empty space!
 A hundred fragrant altars you must place
 In Thespiae, a hundred beasts to slay
 Upon those altars, bringing them away
 From Dirce, where they've bathed, or Cithaeron,
 The mountain whose lush grass they fed upon.

Today's it's Lucan whom we celebrate.
 Favour us, Muses, on this happy date!
 He praised you in arts both chained and released,
 In verse and prose, the Roman choir's priest. 20
 O happy land that looks far to the west
 To see Hyperion set beneath the crest
 Of Ocean, listening to the hissing sound
 His wheels make, you whose olive-groves abound
 With olives that contend with those that sprout
 In Athens. Andalusia, now roll out
 Your splendid carpets! For this gift shall be
 Greater than that for the nativity
 Of Seneca and Gallio, whose tongue
 Was golden. Baetis is more widely sung 30
 Than Meles. Baetis, turn your stream and speed
 It to the stars! Let Mantua take heed
 Of challenging you! For Lucan, at his birth,
 While he still crawled about upon the earth,
 Lispered verses sweetly, while Calliope
 Clasped him to her. Never before had she
 Her misery for Orpheus put aside
 And mollified her heart. "My child," she cried,
 "The Muses love you, and you'll soon outdo
 The ancient celebrated poets. You 40
 Won't thrill wild creatures or the Thracian trees
 Upon your lyre. Oh no, but you will please
 Our hills and Tiber with expressive song
 And knights and senators. Let others throng
 Upon the path of poetry! Let them sing
 Of captured Troy, the tale of lingering
 Ulysses or, upon the Euxine Sea,
 The *Argo*. Knowing your identity,
 Be bolder! Sing of Rome! While still a boy
 Of tender years, with Hector you will toy, 50
 A chariot of war in Thessaly,
 King Priam ransomed with a quantity
 Of gold; you will unbar the gates of Hell;
 Of Orpheus and Nero you will tell;
 You'll praise chaste Polla happily; anon,
 When you're a man, your verse will thunder on
 To tell of Roman bones becoming white
 After Philippi and recount he fight
 At Pharsalus and Caesar's victory,
 And of great Cato, trustworthy and free; 60
 You'll sing of Pompey, too, the people's choice,
 And criticize foul deeds with pious voice,
 Then sing of Pompey's murder when he came
 To Egypt, build a tomb of nobler fame
 Than Pharos – all of this when you were at

A younger age than Virgil when *The Gnat*
 Was heard! Bold, rough-hewn Ennius shall give way
 To you; well-read Lucretius can't hold sway
 Above you, not the *Argo's* bard Varro
 Nor he who wrote of changing forms, Naso. 70
 But now I'll claim a greater thing indeed -
 Even the *Aeneid* will have to concede
 To you. And yet it's not just poetry
 I grant you – no, your ingenuity
 Is honoured by a poetess, a bride
 Such as Juno or Venus might provide
 For you: she'll have good looks and innocence,
 Grace, kindness, parentage and opulence.
 Before your gates I'll sing your wedding-song.
 And yet the Fates denied your living long. 80
 Why are the highest peaks brought down so low?
 Why does harsh Fate treat glorious people so?
 Great Alexander through such a decree
 Lies in a tiny tomb. Similarly
 Thetis shook when she saw Achilles dead,
 By Paris struck; thereby the severed head
 Of Orpheus I followed as along
 The river Hebrus it poured out its song.
 Thus you, by Nero doomed to make your way
 To Lethe while you nobly would allay 90
 Grand tombs as you sang of hostilities,
 Will sadly end your life.” Words such as these
 She spoke and with her gleaming quill she brushed
 Away the tears that from her eyes had gushed.
 But whether you have soared up to the sky,
 Possessed of fame, and look down from on high
 And smile at your own fate, or you now dwell
 Within the grove of bliss which you have well
 Deserved among the brave of Pharsalus,
 And where your strains, grand and melodious, 100
 Are heard by Catones and Pompei,
 Or else survey that place of misery,
 Where dwell the damned, and watch Nero grow white
 When of his mother's torch he catches sight,
 Appear to us sand, at your Polla's plea,
 We hold a day of silence. Frequently
 The portals of the Heavens open wide
 To let a husband come back to his bride.
 She won't exalt you as a deity -
 Oh no, she loves you for yourself, and she 110
 Keeps you within her heart. She is allayed
 To have your face above her bed, inlaid
 With gold, which lulls her sweetly. Keep away
 From here, grim Death! Today's a happy day.

Banish all grief! Let teardrops of elation
Be shed and turn our woe to veneration!

BOOK III

I

Today the lord of Tiryns, Pollius,
Revives suspended honours, showing us
The reason for the pause – now there's a more
Commodious shrine than there has been before.
No longer just a hut on the bare strand
Where wandering seafarers chance to land
But bright doorposts and lintels that reside
On marble, borne through the air from Oeta's pyre,
And honoured by the flaming tongues of fire. 10
Amazing! You are, then, no longer he
Who watched over that tiny sanctuary.
How has Alcides come from such a place
Hither to find such unexpected grace?
The gods are blessed with fates and places. O
What speedy piety! Not long ago
All this was barren sand; drenched by the sea,
These rocks were smeared with soil entirely
And barely seen by men. But now behold 20
These splendid decorations that enfold
These sterile cliffs! Who built this? Amphion?
Or Orpheus? Just one year's toil has gone
Into this shrine, and yet it will remain
Forever. Hercules, with sweat and strain,
Built his own stronghold. You perhaps would guess
His stepmother, Juno the merciless,
Had aided him in this. Come hither, sir,
Whether you're in your Argos, free of her,
Or trample on Eurystheus, buried deep 30
Beneath his monument, or maybe keep
Beside your father Jove, far from the earth
Among the stars (for you have proved your worth),
And Hebe, than young Ganymede more fair,
Gives nectar to you. Hither fly through the air!
The noxious Lerna does not call you here,
Nor does Nemea's country, full of fear,
Nor Molorchus' poor fields, nor, far away
In Thrace, those caverns, nor he who held sway
In Pharos and upon his altars slew 40
His subjects. No, a blessed home calls to you,
Guileless and worthy of a heavenly guest.
Then give your darts and deadly bow a rest
And set apart that club that has been dyed

With the oppressor's blood, and put aside
Your lion-skin! Cushions that are inlaid
With Sidonian acanthus have been made
For you, and a rugged seat of ivory
Figures. Come here in cordiality
And peace! Don't come in anger or in dread
Of servitude! Present yourself instead 50
As Auge saw you when you wearily
Came to her from a Bacchanalian spree,
As Thespius, who each night was beguiled
To know his daughters soon would bear your child.
Here is a festive scene, where annually
Bare-knuckled youths stage fights in rivalry
To honour you. To your grandfather's joy
The priest who was appointed is a boy
Who's of the age that you were long ago
When choking Juno's serpents, then in woe 60
Regretting it. Come, blessed Calliope,
And tell us how this shrine has suddenly
Appeared! And Hercules with his bow-string
Will make a sonorous noise and make it sing.
It was the time when on the torrid ground
The skies were most ferocious; all around
The breathless fields the pitiless dog-days
Scorched everything, struck by Hyperion's rays.
Diana's grove was lit with brands that day,
The grove that ushered in a runaway 70
To be its monarch, and Hippolytus'
Hidden lake was with torches luminous.
Diana polished up her weaponry
And wreathed her hounds, allowing to run free
The creatures that are usually her prey.
All Italy celebrated Hecate's day.
And, although I had my own property
Beneath the Alban Hills given to me
By bounty of our gracious lord, beside
A running streamlet, which has modified 80
The heat and soothed my thoughts. However, by
The Sirens rocks and Pollius's homestead I
Dwelt for a while: I was no stranger there,
For I was seeking busily to share
The secret of his calm humanity
And pluck the blossom of his melody
Close to the shore upon Diana's day,
Escaping narrow walls and indoor ay
Of life, beneath the leaves of a spreading tree
Dodging the sun's harsh heat, when suddenly 90
The sky was hidden and huge clouds appeared.
The faint breath of the western wind now veered

Into a strong Sirocco, such a thing
 As Juno once from Libya would bring,
 When Dido to her Trojan groom was wed,
 The nymphs who saw it hurling cries which spread
 Abroad. The servants grabbed the festive fare
 And jars of wine: we could not picnic there
 And so we scattered, although we could see
 A host of homes in the vicinity, 100
 Damp rooftops gleaming on the hills, and yet
 The rain's force and an optimistic bet
 The sun would soon return caused us to try
 To find the nearest shelter. Well, nearby
 There stood a hut, the humble dwelling-place
 Of Hercules, which barely had the space
 To hold a sailor. Here we congregated;
 The food and sofas were manipulated
 By Polla's servants and my own. Nd yet,
 With such a crowd, the portals would not let 110
 Us in. The doors near burst. The god, ashamed,
 Entered dear Pollius's heart and claimed
 Him to his arms and said, "Are you, then, he
 Who filled the buildings of Puteoli
 And Naples with your gifts when you were still
 A young man? Did you plant on many a hill
 Green groves, build turrets, statues, every one
 Lifelike whether in stone or marble done?
 The very wax appears to breathe the air!
 What was that hill and that park over there 120
 Before you owned it? That protected way
 Across the rocks you drew. Where stands today
 Bright pillars underneath a high arcade
 There used to be a mere footpath. You made
 Twin vaults next to the bay. So much to see
 That it is barely possible for me
 To list it all! Is Pollius in need
 Of cash because of me? And yet indeed
 I go into this shrine delightedly
 And love the shore you spread in front of me. 130
 But Juno covertly sneers at my shrine:
 "Give me a temple that I can call mine
 In order that all ships will be downcast
 When winds too quickly carry them straight past;
 That Jove and all his guests bidden to dine,
 My sister, also, from her lofty shrine,
 May hither come. Don't fear a solid mass
 Of ancient hillside could be an impasse
 To you! I shall be there to aid so big
 An enterprise as through the earth I dig. 140
 Don't snub my words! Not toil-wrought Pergamum,

Not even Amphion's towers could become
 So swiftly built." He left. Then straightaway
 The plan was sketched. There was a large array
 Of workers for this project. Some of these
 Were given their commands to fell the trees,
 Some planed the beams, others were set to lay
 The groundwork. Soon they baked the moistened clay
 As proof against the frost and winter storm,
 A rounded furnace keeping all things warm. 150
 The greatest task of all is cutting out
 With might and main the cliffs and crags that flout
 The pick. So then the lord of Tiryns set
 Aside his weapons and, with dripping sweat,
 When day was done, attacked the uneven ground
 With a stout axe. The regions all around
 Rang out, Taurubula and rich Capri;
 A mighty echo sounded from the sea.
 Not even Etna when the anvils shake
 At blows the Steropes and Brontes make, 160
 Reverberates like that; no greater sound
 Comes from Lemnos where Vulcan may be found
 Shaping the aegis that will decorate
 Pallas. The cliffs at an amazing rate
 Were lowered; the workers came back at cockcrow.
 Scarce had the following summer come when, lo!
 The god, from his great tower rivalling
 That of Queen Juno, looked down, summoning
 Pallas to his fine shrine. Now trumpets sound
 With peaceful noise, while on the torrid ground 170
 Trials of strength are held. Lord Jove on high
 And Delphi's god Phoebus would not decry
 Such rites. There is no sadness here. Give room,
 Severe Nemea! Isthmus, full of gloom,
 Make way! A happy child makes offering.
 The sea-green Nereids are wandering
 Beyond their caves as unashamedly
 They look upon the bare-limbed rivalry,
 And vine-filled Gaurus, and the woods, as well,
 That wreath Nesida, girt by Ocean's swell; 180
 Limon, Euploia, Lucrine Venus, too,
 Misenus on your Phrygian headlands, you
 Hear the Greek trumpets with their clarion
 Summons to fight, and Naples smiles upon
 The people's rites. Come, sir, and graciously
 Approve the feats you love, whether they be
 A running race, discus or javelin throw
 Or wrestling, which you some time ago
 Performed in Libya. If you possess
 The fruits of the Hesperides still, then bless 190

Polla with them! She'll cherish them. If she
 Resumes her charms of yesteryear, maybe
 She'll be your mistress. All these things I bear.
 Now Hercules I see is standing there
 Upon the threshold. "Blessings on your zest,"
 Says he, "for this harsh rock have you repressed
 And conquered untamed Nature, tailoring
 The wilds to human use, thus honouring
 My slighted godhead. How, then, can I pay
 You back? On the Fates' threads my hand will stay 200
 And check their spindles. Have I not the skill
 To conquer even Death itself? I will
 Banish all grief and loss; I will renew
 Your youth and see to it, my friend, that you
 Will die a hale old man, and I'll make sure
 That your grandchildren will in strength mature
 And wed, from whom another generation
 Will spring, though now in their exhilaration
 They climb upon your shoulders and then speed
 To gain your Polla's kisses. Oh indeed, 210
 This shrine shall live as long as I may be
 Beneath the glittering heavens' canopy.
 I'll not frequent Nemea anymore
 Or Tivoli, as I have done before,
 Or westerly Cadiz." The flame that went
 Up from his shrine he touched and then he bent
 A head well wreathed with leaves from a poplar tree,
 By Styx and Jove's bolts vowing solemnly.

II

You gods who love to guard bold ships and quell
 The dangers on the stormy ocean's swell,
 Now calm the waves and listen to my prayer.
 Neptune, the charge I bring is great and rare:
 Now Marcius will face the fickle sea,
 And he is young. He'll take one half of me
 With him. You Twins, light up the sky! I pray
 You keep your sister's nimbus far away!
 You Nereids, who rule half of the skies
 (Though nymphs of the blue sea as well), arise 10
 From Doris' caves! Keep peaceful rivalry
 Across the bay of Baiae till you see
 The lofty ship that Celer, noble ward
 Of Italy, always delights to board.
 You need not seek her long – across the sea
 She reached Dicarchus' shores most speedily
 And poured libations on the starboard side
 To Queen Minerva. In a circle glide!

You each have duties – brace the mainmast's stays,
 Some of you! Others of you then must raise 20
 The topsails. Spread the canvas, some of you!
 Arrange the thwarts and steer the vessel through
 The water! Plumb the shallows and then make
 The skiff secure to follow in her wake!
 Haul up the anchor! And control the tide!
 Send the waves eastward! No task be denied!
 And let the vessel by two guides be led
 As Proteus and Triton swim ahead!
 Let biformed Glaucus be the first to reach
 Anthedon, gliding by his native beach! 30
 And yet, Palaemon, you primarily
 And Leucothea, your mother, show to me
 Your favour, whether I desire to sing
 Of Thebes and, with my lyre not weakening,
 Of Amphion. May he whose winds are laid
 Within his cavern, Aeolus, obeyed
 By winds, storms, clouds, all breaths on every sea,
 Imprison all of them more narrowly!
 Let Zephyrus haunt the heavens on its own,
 Drive on the ships and skim the waves alone 40
 Until Egypt is reached.' They heard my plea.
 Zephyrus chid the tardy company
 Of men. Alas, my heart is cold with fear:
 However ominous it may appear.
 I cannot weep. A mariner lets slip
 The cables, and a gangplank from the ship
 Is lowered. With a total lack of heart,
 The captain calls out loud and breaks apart
 All last embraces. Last to touch the strand,
 However, I'll not leave till from the land 50
 The vessel scuds away. Who made the sea
 A highway when faint men would timidly
 Avoid it, causing men to undergo
 Its cruel jaws and depths? I do not know
 One more audacious – even he who set
 On Ossa snowy Pelion, nor yet
 He who from its twin summits overthrew
 Olympus. Was it an easy thing to do,
 Crossing foul swamps and pools., assembling
 Bridges on narrow streams? Another thing 60
 Must we attempt, the hazards of the sea?
 Exposed to all the elements, must we
 Sit in a tiny boat and face the roar
 Of storms and Jupiter's thunderbolts? Before
 The age of ships, the ocean calmly slept,
 There was no foam, the clouds were barely swept

By waves. However, when they first caught sight
 Of ships, the waves rose to a massive height
 To challenge all the crew as on they sailed.
 The Pleiades, Capella, too, were veiled, 70
 Orion fiercer still. And I was right
 To gripe. And see, the bark speeds in its flight,
 Seeming to dwindle as it moves away,
 Holding so many fancies and dismay,
 And, Celer, you above them all. Oh, where
 Can I unearth the confidence to bear
 The wait until some word of you I hear,
 For now I am the prey to every fear.
 Are you now saved from the Lucanian Sea?
 Or does Charybdis eddy dreadfully? 80
 Does Scylla threaten? Does the sea impede
 Your journeying? Does it frustrate your speed?
 What winds bear you across the Cretan sea
 That on Jove and the bull smiled happily?
 And yet I have deserved the right to sigh.
 When as a soldier you departed, why
 Did I not go with you to savage Thrace
 Or India, that holds an unknown race?
 Beneath my patron's banner would I stand,
 A bridle or a sword held in your hand, 90
 Or maybe you were ordering your men.
 I would have been a follower, though then
 No soldier. If Phoenix, a man of peace,
 With proud Achilles left the shores of Greece,
 Why was I such a coward? But my heart
 Will be with you, so we shall never part.
 And Isis, Io, you who had your stall
 Within Phoroneus' cave, now queen of all
 Pharonians, the breathless East's goddess,
 Give welcome to his bark with joyfulness, 100
 And let your timbrels shake! This youth was sent
 To fight the cohorts of the Orient.
 Lead him yourself, therefore, with kindly hand
 Into the port of the Egyptian land!
 With you to guard him he'll learn how the Nile
 May flood and with its fertile swamps beguile
 Its folk and how its shallows may recede
 And how its banks, where swallows nest and feed,
 Constrain the waters. Ah, the jealousy
 Of Memphis and the wanton revelry 110
 Displayed by Therapnaean Canopus!
 And Lethe's guard, the canine Cerberus
 Protects the altars; common beasts are found
 As gods; the phoenix builds her funeral mound;
 And Apis, whom the shepherds all esteem,

Treasures the fields and bathes in the Nile's stream.
 Lead him to Alexander's monument
 Where that great warrior slumbers, redolent
 Of Hybla's honey. Take him, too, where dwelt
 Queen Cleopatra, who soft poison felt 120
 When Actium was over, having fled
 Roman confinement; and let him be led
 To his Assyrian camp and leave him there
 With Mars. His visits thither were not rare.
 You toiled there as a boy where he was known
 For his tunic's gleaming purple stripe alone,
 But strong enough to fight the cavalry
 In agile reeling round the enemy
 As he disgraced their arrows with his spear.
 And it is sure that one day he'll appear 130
 When Caesar bids you leave your loyal men,
 Destined for greater things. And I will then
 Take up my place and stand upon the shore
 And watch the giant billows break once more,
 Requesting further wins. How proud I'll be
 While playing on my lyre powerfully!
 You raise me to your shoulders, and I'll fling
 My arms about your neck, while everything
 You've stored up you will tell me and we'll chat
 About the years we've lost – of this and that 140
 We'll talk: of swift Euphrates you will tell,
 Bactra, the ancient treasures, too, that dwell
 In Babylon and Zeugma, which would bring
 Our folk to Roman peace, the blossoming
 Edom's date -palms, and Tyre's costly hue,
 Which, dipped in Sidon's vats, is turned into
 A purple glow, where balsam lets out sweat
 Upon the fertile branches; while I yet
 Describe the tombs I made for Argive foes.
 And that will bring my labours to a close. 150

III

O greatest of goddesses, Piety,
 Who on defiled Earth looks infrequently,
 Come hither with your robes as white as snow
 And sporting ribbons, as when long ago,
 Before you were by dreadful desecration
 Dismissed, you felt a worthy adoration
 For people of the Golden Age. Attend
 The funeral rites and celebrate the end
 Of a kind man. Look on Etruscus' grief,
 That breaks his heart and brings him no relief, 10
 And wipe away his tears. It seems, maybe,

That he is sorrowing the tragedy
 Of a young wife's demise, or that his woe
 Is for his son, although that is not so:
 He mourns his father. Gods and men, I pray,
 Attend our rites! All sinners, keep away,
 Who harbour some concealed iniquity
 Or who believe his father's age to be
 Too long or who has ever dealt a blow
 Upon his mother, fearing he may go 20
 To Hell! The innocent I'm summoning.
 He hugs that aged head while sprinkling
 His sacred tears upon those reverend
 Grey hairs and cherishing right to the end
 The last cold breath. This son, remarkably,
 Believes his father's years too speedily
 Removed, the Sisters' stroke too swiftly made.
 Rejoice, you ghosts who dwell within the shade
 Of Hades! Let Elysium delight!
 Garland the shrines and make the altars bright! 30
 A happy shade comes here – too happy, though,
 Because his son laments him. Furies, go!
 And Cerberus, you tri-formed guard, begone!
 Now open wide your doors and look upon
 A noble shade! Let him approach the king
 Of Hell and give his thanks, petitioning
 For like years for his son! Be sanctified,
 Etruscus, for the tears that you have cried!
 We'll soothe your grief and to your father bring
 Aonian offerings. Now you must fling 40
 The spices from the East upon the pyre.
 Now let your rich inheritance feed the fire!
 Heap up the treasures! Send up to the sky
 The duteous clouds! The offerings, though, that I
 Will offer must not vanish in the blaze
 Of flames. Your grief will last for many days
 To come. A father's death I, too, have known,
 Stretched out before the pyre with many a moan.
 So I am moved by memories of that day
 To soothe your grief by singing you a lay . 50
 Kind father, you have no bright pedigree,
 With no abundance in your family,
 But your high fortune filled your parents' place,
 Concealing the obscurity of your race.
 You served no common masters – east or west
 Were subject equally to their behest.
 No shame to you! For there's not any doubt
 That heaven and earth cannot exist without
 The law of duty, because everything
 Is ruled and rules, while each land has its king. 60

Kings rule in Rome, while sacred sovereignty
 Towers above them, though each deity
 Bows down to rule: each flying constellation
 Exists in vassalage; to subjugation
 The moon is bound; it's not without command
 That daylight runs its course throughout the land,
 And (if I may compare high with the low)
 Even Hercules was forced to undergo
 The strictures of a cruel king; no less,
 Apollo's flute felt no shamefacedness 70
 In being mastered. From no barbarous strand
 Did you come hither. Your own native land
 Was Smyrna. Meles' hallowed spring did you
 Drink from, and golden Hermus' waters, too,
 Where Bacchus bathes and gilds his horns once more
 With the fine sands that strew the aureate shore.
 Your rank increased – you earned the right to be
 At Caesar's side, learning the mystery
 Of all the gods, and when you scarce began
 To reach the mellow ripeness of a man, 80
 Tiberius' palace stood there readily
 For you, and there you gained your liberty,
 Gifted beyond your years; the next heir, too,
 Cruel Caligula, did not send you
 Away. You went with him to Germany,
 Enduring all his dreadful tyranny,
 Like those who master lions and command
 That they return to them a bloody hand.
 But Claudius, in late maturity,
 Gave you the top responsibility 90
 Of serving Nero. Whoever before
 Has been allowed to tend to any more
 Temples than you have emperors? We see
 Jupiter's messenger is Mercury,
 Iris serves Juno, Triton's swift to heed
 Neptune's directions: you yourself, indeed,
 Have served so many lords, and you have sailed
 Upon the sea of life and have prevailed
 Without a scar. Your home shone out with cheer,
 And Fortune in her excellence drew near, 100
 And Caesar's government was given you
 Alone, and all the nation's revenue,
 The treasure-pits of Spain, the glistening ore
 Found in Dalmatia's hills, and the great store
 Gathered from Africa, Egyptian grain
 And all the gleanings divers can obtain
 From eastern seas, flocks which in Galaesus graze,
 And crystals also, through which one may gaze,
 Massilian citrus-wood and ivory

That comes from India; all things that we 110
 Enjoy which north and fierce east breezes and
 The south winds bring – all at one man's command.
 In fact, it would be easier to count
 The drops of winter rain or the amount
 Of forest-leaves. He's taken extreme care
 To swiftly calculate what he can spare
 For Roman armies sent to every land,
 What tribes, temples and waterways demand,
 The forts, the roads, the gold that's needed for
 His ceilings; and the melted lumps of ore 120
 To paint the gods; the metal that should clink,
 Stamped from the mint. You could but rarely sink
 In rest, and joy was banished from your sight;
 You ate but little, taking no delight
 In copious cups of wine; but you instead
 Discovered happiness in being wed,
 Producing loyal servants who will care
 For him you work for. Who is not aware
 Of grand Etrusca's high nobility
 And beauty? Her I was not blessed to see. 130
 Her portrait, though, is equal to her fame
 And shows the loveliness that people claim,
 Which is reflected in her progeny;
 Nobility dwells in her family:
 Her brother held the highest curule seat
 And bore the rods, his faithfulness complete
 While heading the whole Roman military,
 The Dacians seized with some strange lunacy,
 Doomed to defeat. The mother compensated
 For the father's race's shortcomings, elated 140
 At this reunion, the weaker side
 Within this house becoming dignified.
 Two children now were born, the agony
 Of childbirth softened by the deity
 Lucina. Happy you'd surely have been
 If by a well-earned fate you could have seen
 Their little faces! You were dispossessed
 Of half your youthful days, no longer blessed
 With life, for Atropos's ruthless shears
 Have disconnected all your growing years, 150
 Like lilies drooping down, fading and wan,
 And glowing roses which are swiftly gone
 At the first sirocco or, one might say,
 Fresh purples of the spring that die away/
 The arrow-bearing Loves fluttered around
 The bier and with their mother's perfumes bound
 The kindling, while continuing to fling
 Locks from their hair and feathers from each wing,

Their quivers, too. What offerings would you
Have made, Etruscus, what lamenting due 160
A mother's death when you now realize
Your father's early death with many sighs!
Caesar, who rules the heavens effortlessly,
Dividing the sons he sired equally
On earth and in the stars, with happiness
Has authorized your father's great success
In Edom, granting him the pageantry
That showed him worthy of his victory
Despite the fact of his humble descent,
And he paid him the further compliment 170
Of a knighthood, raised his house and from his hand
Removed the iron ring; he gave command
To elevate him to the same high station
Of his own sons. Now the exhilaration
Of wealth endured for eighty years, as he
Lived on without a cloud. How lavishly
He served those sons, quite well-disposed to cede
His wealth for them, as in his son indeed
Is now reflected. His affinity
Has given to his son nobility. 180
His kisses at their parting could not bear
A farewell that was never full of care.
His brother was more eager for his fame
Than for his own, so overjoyed to claim
It for him. Honest youths return to you
Their thanks, great lord. What pious pledges do
They offer for his pardon! Quite content
Were you to carry out some punishment
With thunder and a short-lived storm, while he
Gazed at the lightning-bolts dumbfoundedly, 190
Old, spent, by Fortune dropped; across the seas
The partner of all his anxieties
Was banished, while he was bidden to go
To temperate Campania, although
A guest, no exile. Soon Germanicus
Again opened the gates of Romulus
To soothe him and restore his family.
No wonder, for this is that clemency
That you, o gentle ruler, once bestowed
Upon the conquered Chattian race and showed 200
The Dacians, giving back their mountain-land
To them and when a Latin triumph you banned
Upon the Marcomani and the men
Who dwell as nomads in Sarmatia, when
The savage war was over. Now he's dead,
For cut is the inexorable thread.
Etruscus asks of me a finer song

Than that the Sirens used to sing among
 The cliffs of Sicily or, possibly,
 The dying swan, sure of its destiny, 210
 Or Tereus' nightingale. With many a blow
 I see him strike himself in grievous woe
 And kiss his father. Scarcely can he be
 Restrained by servants or his coterie
 Of friends, undaunted by the pyre. Just so
 In Sunium did Theseus suffer woe,
 Falsely beguiling Aegeus – when he died,
 With stains of mourning on his face he cried
 And to his corpse said, “Why unhappily
 Have you left us just as prosperity 220
 Returned, dear father? For just yesterday
 Jove's short-lived anger we saw fly away.
 Robbed of all benefits from this, you flee
 Into the Underworld ungratefully.
 We cannot move the Fates; the deities
 Of Lethe's baleful stream we cannot please.
 Aeneas bore his father gratefully
 As Grecian flames gave him the liberty
 Of saving him. Scipio from the foe
 In Carthage saved his father, as also 230
 In Troy did Lausus in his piety.
 Alcestis gave her life up willingly
 For her Admetus; Orpheus by his pleas
 Softened the pitiless Styx. Looking at these
 Strong claims, shall there not be a stronger one
 That sees a father rescued by his son?
 But, father, you shan't wholly disappear
 From me, for I shall keep your ashes here
 Under my roof. Father, far from the shade
 You'll be our guard and master and obeyed 240
 By all. With meat and drink I ceaselessly
 Shall serve you, honouring your effigy
 Of gleaming stone, wax, ivory and gold.
 I'll seek advice from it and you'll unfold
 The wisdom of long life and prophecies
 That dreams bestow and pious notions.” These
 Were his own words, which in their sweetness made
 His father happy as towards the shade
 He slowly sank as he gave up his life,
 Soon to recount them to his darling wife 250
 O gentlest of fathers, fare you well!
 While your son is alive, you'll never dwell
 In a neglected tomb. Until the day
 He dies, the shrine will breathe out an array
 Of flowery perfumes, and your urn will be

Redolent of Assyrian fragrancy,
And tears, a more important rendering.
Your son will pay a timely offering
To you and build a mound. This is your due!
This song we both will dedicate to you. 260

IV

Go swiftly, locks of hair, across the sea,
Couched in encircling gold – this is my plea!
Kind Venus will placate the southerlies
And take you from the ocean's menaces
Into her shell. The gift of Caesar's boy,
Tell them, Apollo's progeny, with joy
And show them to your father, who is yet
A youthful god, and so with Bacchus let
Him match their lustre! He will cut away
Perhaps one of his own locks to display 10
In yet another wreath of gold. You are
More blessed than pine-clad Ida is by far,
Though Ida prides herself that Ganymede
Was given to the gods, although indeed
Juno recoils from him and will not share
In nectar. Heaven thinks you very fair,
Distinguished by your handsome ward. But you
Have sent to Latium a servant who
Is by Jove welcomed and Domitian and
His Roman Juno. We must understand 20
That it is not without the deities'
Commitment to their lord that one can please
Lord Jove. The golden Venus, so they say,
Was by the downy swans borne on her way
To Ida from the heights of Eryx, where
She reached the halls of Pergamus, and there
He helped the sick. There was a child at play,
A lovely babe, fair as a starry fay,
Before the shrines. She momentarily
Became deceived, believing him to be 30
One of the Cupids, although he possessed
No bow or shadowy wings. She was impressed,
Gazing upon his curly brow, and so
She said, "Is it to towering Rome you go?
Shall I allow you to dwell in a crude
And mean abode and live in servitude?
A master worthy of your beauty I
Will find. In my swift car across the sky
I'll bear you to a king, a gift long due.
No humble slavery's awaiting you. 40
I've not in all the world been so beguiled

Or ever looked upon so fair a child.
 You'd outmatch Attis and Endymion;
 Narcissus fruitlessly would gaze upon
 His image in the pool. You would have been
 The choice of that sea-nymph, though she had seen
 Hylas, and she'd have more tenaciously
 Seized on your urn, for categorically
 You excel everyone except the one
 To whom I give you." With this, she was done. 50
 She raised him up and bade him sit beside
 Her in her swan-car. After a short ride
 They reached the Latian hills where used to be
 Evander's home, but now resplendently
 Germanicus' new mansions beautify
 The regions, making fair the stars on high.
 She pondered what would fittingly enhance
 His tresses and what raiment would advance
 His looks, what golden ornaments should be
 Around your neck and on your fingers. She 60
 Knows well our master, for he was the one
 Who openly vouchsafed the union
 With his dear bride. And so she combed his hair
 And draped the lad in Tyrian dress with care
 And granted him her rays. The former band
 Of favourites drew back; with fairer hand
 A goblet made of crystal and murrine
 Is given to our leader, and no wine
 Has tasted sweeter. Lad, you are the best
 Of those dear to the deities to test 70
 The nectar frequently, like the Getae,
 Indians, Armenians and the Persae.
 You by the gods are blessed: Asclepius,
 God of the land, left lofty Pergamus,
 Before the first down marred the rosy glow
 Upon his cheeks and any beard could grow
 And crossed the sea to him. For only he
 Was marked to take his masculinity
 Away. There was no damage to be seen
 Upon him, since Venus was very keen 80
 To spare him pain. While there was no mandate
 To cease the practice then, now to castrate
 A boy's illegal. Nature takes delight
 In this, while there's no mother who takes fright
 To bear a man-child. Masculinity
 Would have been yours after the new decree
 With bearded cheeks and virile prime, and you
 Would have received more gifts from Phoebus, too.
 Now to your country this bark will convey
 The lock alone, dripping with a display 90

Of precious scents the Paphian goddess
Provided, and the Graces with finesse
Have combed it. Nisus' lock will yield to it,
And Sperchius's tress, too, will submit
When first it was decided to lay bare
Your gleaming shoulders and to cut the hair
Upon your snow-white brow. The winged boys flew,
Escorted by their mother Venus, to
Give you a silken bib and to prepare
Your locks, and with their darts they took great care 100
To cut them. Venus caught them, once again
Bathing them in their secret scents. And then
One lad held up a mirror gemmed with gold
And said, "Let's send this, too, for, truth be told,
Nothing will please your altars more. Now gaze
Upon it and until the end of days
You'll be there." Pergamus was awed to see
The altars moving quite perceptively.

V

Why do you grieve, my wife, with anxious care
All day and nightly in the bed we share?
You broke no vow, I'm sure; I'm not distressed
Another may be harboured in your breast.
No shaft can pierce you: although Nemesis
May frown to hear me, I can't credit this.
Had I for twenty years been torn away
From home to fight a war, compelled to stray
Abroad, you would, a pure Penelope,
Cast out a thousand suitors – openly, 10
No weaving feigned. Yes, armed, you would deny
To wed another man. But tell me why
You're frowning? Is it that for weariness
I plan to go back to my old address,
My own Campania, where I would stay
In my old age upon my native clay?
Why does that make you sad? Assuredly,
You have no liking for profligacy;
The Circus does not charm you; the furore
In theatres does not touch your soul. No, you're 20
A peaceful innocent; felicity
Is yours. Why fret about the stormy sea
We'd cross, as if I'm urging you to go
Up to the Arctic land of frost and snow
Or past dim Thule or the Nile, whose streams
Are seven-fold? The lady of my dreams,
You married me when I was innocent
Of love, through a kind fate by Venus sent,

Keeping me through old age. I would submit
To you, accepting both bridle and bit, 30
And I remained forever true to you,
Just as a faithful steed is wont to do.
For it was you, when I was garlanded
With Alba's wreath, while, placed upon my head,
Was Caesar's sacred gold, who held me tight
And kissed those garlands, too, with all your might.
And when the Capitol disdained my songs,
You grieved and fretted at the cruel wrongs
Of Jupiter, and when I sang the lays
I was composing in those early days, 40
The secret of my endless industry
You shared until my *Thebaid* would be
Full-grown. Indeed of late I almost drowned
In Lethe's waters, for I heard the sound
And saw your apprehension. Due to this,
My life has been restored by Lachesis,
Be sure! The gods, then, feared your frown. And so
Because of this do you refuse to go
With me to that delightful bay? Tell me,
Where has it gone – your constant loyalty? 50
For you have proved it in a host of ways,
Just like the heroines of ancient days
In Greece and Rome. If Ulysses had agreed,
His consort would have gone to Troy (indeed
What holds a lover back?). Aegiale
Missed Diomedes when he crossed the sea
Thither, Laodamia, too, was turned
Into a frenzied Maenad as she yearned, 60
Grieving her husband. You, too, are no less
Able to recognize your faithfulness,
Who'd die for your own husband. Certainly
You mourned that vanished shade with loyalty,
Grieving your minstrel husband as you beat
Your breast, though you were mine. You also treat
Your girl with equal love and care, and she
Is dwelling in your heart perpetually.
Even Alcyone cannot compare
With you in cherishing her young with care, 70
Nor Philomela, she who in the spring
Hovers around her nest, inspiriting
Her nestlings. Now she sits alone without
A mate and sadly lives her bright youth out
In fruitless woe. Her life, though, soon will turn
Around when wedding-torches start to burn,
As she deserves through every attribute
She shows, whether she plays upon her lute
Or sings my verse or dances gracefully,

Swaying her snow-white arms. Her purity 80
 Is sweeter than her art. Such loveliness
 Without a mate should cause shamefacedness
 In Venus and her Loves. The nuptial brand
 Is not in Rome alone, though: in my land
 Are suitors, too. Vesuvius's flow
 Of flames has not killed everyone – oh no,
 Cities exist, alive with people still.
 Puteoli, founded by Apollo's will,
 Still stands, its shore and harbour welcoming
 The world, and Capys' ramparts mimicking 90
 The walls of Rome, now filled with Trojans who
 Have settled there, and there's our Naples, too,
 To which Parthenope went across the foam
 That she might make that gentle land her home,
 Guided by Venus' dove that had been sent
 By Phoebus. It's a land that's clearly meant
 To harbour citizens, and settlers, too,
 And that is such a place I wish for you
 And me to settle in (for my birthplace
 Was neither Libya nor savage Thrace) 100
 The temperatures are modest all the year,
 In winter mild, in summer cool: you'll fear
 No angry sea. Stillness is guaranteed
 At all times – violent storms will not impede
 Your leisure. In the courts there's no furor,
 No sword-like laws designed to make one sore.
 For all are governed by morality
 And rights that don't need the authority
 Of judges; and the buildings in that land
 Are splendid – temples, squares that proudly stand 110
 In countless columns; and beyond that shore
 Are theatres, too, both indoor and outdoor,
 And five-year contests threatening to outshine
 Those that are held upon the Capitoline.
 What need to praise the plays, the liberty,
 The laughter, mixed with Roman dignity
 And Greek abandon? Joy is everywhere,
 Whether it be your pleasure to repair
 To the alluring beaches of Baiae
 Or to the Sibyl's temple at Cumae, 120
 Or to the tomb known for its Trojan oar,
 Or maybe you might have a longing for
 A glimpse of Gaurus' vineyards, or Capri,
 A sweet refuge for those who sail the sea,
 Where Pharos shows its light, the Surrentine
 Uplands, which revel in their sour wine,
 Where Pollius, my friend, especially
 Honours the land with his integrity;

Or Inarime's healing streams, or I
Could take you to the reborn Stabiae, 130
Should I tell all these charms to you? Or may
It surely be enough for you to say,
“This is the land that bore me for your wife
To live beside you for much of my life,
And is it not therefore worthy to be
Our nurse and mother both?” Listen to me,
Doubting your heart with such ungratefulness!
My dearest wife, come with me nonetheless
Or even go ahead! For without me
Rome cannot offer you felicity. 140

BOOK IV

I

Today we celebrate delightedly
Our emperor, who conquered Germany.
A consul sixteen times! And now with cheer
He celebrates another glorious year.
He rises with the stars of a new day,
Although he shines more radiantly than they,
And greater than the dawn. Judges, rejoice!
Rome, at this honour, send abroad your voice
Across the seven hills! Especially
Evander's mount is overjoyed to see 10
The lictors, who have broken Caesar's rest.
The senate's prayers were heard and they are blessed
To urge their ruler to this accolade.
Janus himself, as well, who's ever made
Renewal of the ages, from each side
Of his threshold gives thanks, he whom you've tied
In bonds of peace, demanding that you stay
All wars and swear allegiance and obey
The new statutes, and says, “All hail to you,
Great father, who assist me to renew 20
The ages! Rome is ever keen to see
You in my new month. Then, accordingly,
Set out new years and grant us happiness
Continually! And may you often dress
In Queen Minerva's purple! See how bright
The temples gleam, and see the greater height
To which the altars' fires rise! See, too,
How winter's stars themselves glow warm for you,
Matching your spirit! Knights, show your delight,
And common folk! Each office shines so bright 30
With lustre from your own. What former day

Has seen the likes of this? Great Rome, I pray,
 If so, the past's long years enumerate,
 Ignoring lesser cases. But relate
 The ones Domitian may deign to exceed!
 Augustus in the years gone by indeed
 Wielded the axes and for many a year
 Was forced to wait to launch his own career.
 But you outstripped your forefathers when you
 Were young and frequently refused your due. 40
 Yet you will yield at last, and constantly
 You will be honoured with the dignity
 Of consul. You and I will celebrate
 The Secular Games once more. You'll consecrate
 Your father's altar. You must but agree
 To take the triumph so that soon there'll be
 A thousand more. Bactra still wants acclaim,
 And Babylon as well still lacks the same;
 There are no Indian laurels still to set
 Upon the lap of Jove; the Seres yet 50,
 And all Arabia are undefeated;
 And so before ten months have been completed
 You need a title still." Then willingly
 He closed the gates and left. The company
 Of all the gods then opened wide their shrines
 And to the heavens issued joyful signs ,
 And Jove vowed you upon his royal throne
 As many years to enjoy as his own.

II

Virgil, who brought Aeneas from the East,
 Sung of Sidonian Dido's royal feast;
 The splendid banquet of Alcinous
 Was penned in deathless verse and sung to us
 By him who wrote of weary Ulysses
 Sailing from Troy across the wide, wide seas.
 But Caesar now at last has granted me
 The pleasure to enjoy the luxury
 Of his most holy banquet. Could I find
 An apt thank-you, though Smyrna and Mantua bind 10
 My brow with laurel? No! It seems that I
 Sit with Lord Jove among the stars on high
 And sip immortal nectar offered me
 By Trojan Ganymede. But previously
 My life was barren. For my life began
 Upon this very day – my mortal span
 Did not exist before. Is it, then, you
 Who conquered all the world, whom I now view,
 The hope of all mankind? Am I indeed

Allowed to sit close by you as I feed 20
 And drink? Is it not right that I should stand
 And pay you homage? Your palace is grand
 With countless columns that could raise you high
 To Heaven and the gods up in the sky
 In order that Atlas may rest a while.
 Jove's temple gapes at it; the gods all smile
 To see a palace like the one that they
 Possess. I urge you, though, that you delay
 To rise to Heaven. Your halls are so wide
 That they seem to embrace the heavens inside 30
 Their roof. Indeed they're wider than the vast
 Plateau beyond, and they are but surpassed
 By their own master, who fills up the place
 With his great presence, giving it such grace.
 Here's stone from Libya's heights, from Ilium
 As well, and stones that from Syene come
 And Chios, rivalling the ocean's green,
 Carystian marble, too. Luna is seen
 Bracing the columns; and you scarce can see
 The vault that rises to its apogee 40
 So far above. Great Caesar gives a call
 To the great men of Rome and bids them all
 To sup at countless tables, while Ceres
 And Bacchus offer up great quantities
 Of food and drink; amid such plenteous
 Dishes the heaven-born Triptolemus
 Rains down his bounty: thus the god of wine
 The hills and fields spreads with the clustered vine.
 But citrus tables, legs of ivory
 And ranks of servants did not interest me. 50
 To gaze on him, now I had earned the chance,
 Was what I yearned for, with his radiance
 Tempered with majesty, upon his face
 A peaceful look which he tried to erase.
 Though not yet knowing him, the enemy
 Might well have recognized that majesty.
 His horses stabled, Lord Mars in this way
 Reclines in some chill valley far away
 In Thrace. And Pollux likely would repose,
 Resting his gleaming limbs, after the close 60
 Of a wrestling bout in Therapnae; Bacchus
 On Ganges' banks would take his respite thus
 Amid the Indians' wild ecstasy;
 And grim Alcides would similarly
 Rest on his lion-skin. That's not enough,
 For my comparisons are light and rough,
 Your look unmatched, for Jupiter looks so
 When he along the shores chances to go

To banquet in the Ethiopian land,
 Fragrant with nectar, as at his command, 70
 The Muses sing their mystic melody
 And Phoebus celebrates the victory
 Gained in Pallene. May the gods, I pray,
 Who often hear our prayers – or so they say -
 Make it a certainty that your life's span
 Continue three or four times further than
 Your aged father's! Send up to the skies
 Deified spirits, and may you apprise
 The world with shrines! Cherish your family!
 Open the temples' portals frequently 80
 For the new year! And bring lictors anew
 To Janus! And I beg you to renew
 The five-year rites with victims at the shrine,
 All garlanded. When you bade me to dine
 At your bright feast and feel the hallowed cheer
 I think of that occasion many a year
 Before – in Alba I sang of the fray
 In Dacia and upon the Rhine. That day
 Upon my head your royal hands came down
 And placed thereon Athena's golden crown. 90

III

What flints, what steel, what vast cacophony
 Filled stony Appia, close to the sea?
 They're not because of any Libyan band
 Of foes that harry our Campanian land.
 There is no Nero there unsettling
 The waters, cleaving hills, engendering
 Foul swamps. Oh no, all this activity
 Comes from the man who's brought legality
 To Janus' warlike home, and he'll provide 10
 Chaste Ceres with those fields so long denied
 Their produce and forbid emasculation
 Of adult males who fear the castigation
 For handsomeness, the man who vivifies
 Jove in the Capitol and sanctifies
 With peace the shrine of his own family
 And glorifies the Flavian sovereignty.
 In anger at the roads that have delayed
 His people and the grasslands that have stayed
 Their progress, long diversions he has banned
 And has solidified the heavy sand. 20
 The Sibyl's cave, Gaurus's slopes, Baiae
 Will seem to Romans to be more nearby
 The Seven Hills. Of old, while travelling,
 Folk found the soil beneath them swallowing

Their wheels: such journeying filled them with dread.
 On tracks like this nobody ever sped!
 The beasts beneath the heavy yoke would crawl
 In weariness, their slow pace caused by all
 The baggage. Tasks that not too long ago
 Took all day take two hours now. There's no 30
 Vessel or bird that travels with more speed.
 Marking out trenches was the foremost deed
 To hollow out the earth and then refill
 The trench so that the soil remained quite still,
 Covered with stones, and then to lay the ground
 With boundary-stones and spread them all around.
 So many hands worked on it – some of these
 Stripped all the hills and felled all of the trees.
 Some smoothed the beams and rocks, while others bound
 Together all the stones to fill the ground 40
 And with baked bricks and dingy pumice pressed
 The mighty mass together, while the rest
 Drained ditches while diverting lesser streams
 Elsewhere. Such diligent working-men, it seems,
 Might carve Mt. Athos or perhaps connect
 Hellespont's shores, unlike Xerxes' project
 Of ships but with a bridge. Should Fate allow
 The deed, that, too, could happen even now.
 There's liveliness through every wood and shore
 And in the cities sounds a mighty roar, 50
 And there's an echo breaking from Gaurus
 That reaches to the vine-clad Massicus.
 Liturnum's marsh, Savone and Cyme
 All seem amazed at the cacophony.
 Volturnus soon shows us his yellow hair
 And rises from the sedge into the air:
 Leaning on Caesar's bridge, he speaks his mind
 From his hoarse throat and cries out, "Greetings, kind
 Landscaper of my dwelling-place! You see
 Me, spread through distant vales, unwittingly 60
 Stretching my limits, so confine me by
 Creating a straight channel. See how I,
 Who once was grim and dreadful, now possess
 A bridge where once no small skiff could progress.
 I'm now a thoroughfare. The flood that cast
 About the entire forest in the past
 Is but a river now. My gratitude
 Is great, however, for this servitude,
 For it is to your strength that now I cede
 Since in the future men will ever read 70
 Of you as him who for eternity
 Conquered my shores through your authority.
 You free me of all silt and wipe away

The shame on every side of barren clay
 Defiled with sand and mud; I am not lost
 Upon the sea, as Bagrada, which crossed
 The fields of Carthage. No, for I shall be
 So clear that I'll be like the tranquil sea
 And nearby Liris." He came to a close
 As a long reach of marble road arose. 80
 In front a shining arch stood as its gate
 Which showed the trophies which our lord of late
 Won in the wars and all the opulence
 Of the Ligurian quarries, as immense
 As rainbows arching through the cloudy sky.
 There, leaving Appia to heave a sigh
 At being left behind, the traveller makes
 A turn, and suddenly the journey breaks
 Into a swifter mood: even one's steed
 At this phenomenon enjoys the speed, 90
 As sails are filled up with a rising breeze
 And oarsmen's weary arms may take their ease.
 Come, all you people of the East, who owe
 Allegiance to your emperor, and flow
 Freely to us! No bar is in the way
 Of your desire that can cause your delay.
 Leave Rome at daybreak and you'll be by night
 At the Lucrine! But what's this in my sight
 As I approach the end at old Cumae?
 Her hair is white, as is her cap. Am I 100
 Deceived or does the Sibyl from her cave
 Bring wreaths? Withdraw your lyre a while and save
 Your song for later, for a holier sound
 Is starting to be heard, and we are bound
 To silence. See her neck sway side to side!
 Upon the new track she goes far and wide.
 Her presence fills the road. "Did I not say,"
 Says she, "river and plains, that you should lay
 Aside your haste, for there would surely be
 A road and bridges by the charity 110
 Of Heaven and an easier access
 For travellers through an unsafe wilderness?
 Behold the man who did this! It is he
 To whom Jove granted the authority
 To rule the world. He is the worthiest
 For this since Aeneas, in his keen quest
 For future years, with some guidance from me,
 Threaded Avernus' woods of prophecy,
 He is a friend of peace, although he's grim
 In war: Nature's less kind and grand than him. 120
 Were he the lord of all the starry sky,
 India would be watered from on high

With lovely showers, fresh and copious,
 And Libya, too, and there'd be in Haemus
 Warm summer. Hail to you, divinity
 Foreseen, who've been attested to by me,
 Leader of men and gods. Don't seek to seize
 And read the Fifteen's destined litanies!
 And listen to my song, as you deserve:
 I've seen the coming years in which you'll serve 130
 Your people, which the Sisters wove. The story
 Is great that will relate your future glory,
 Beyond the span of all your progeny
 To come, from youth to that maturity
 Tithonus and Nestor attained, it's said,
 As many, too, as I myself was led
 To ask of Phoebus. Already obeyed
 High in the North, many an accolade
 You will acquire. You're destined to go where
 Bacchus and Hercules went, past the sun's glare, 140
 The stars, the Nile's source and Atlas's snow.
 A warrior wreathed with crowns of glory, go!
 The chariot and the laurel-wreath disdain!
 As long as Ilium's altar-fires remain
 And Jove still roars, you'll keep your majesty
 Till this road's as old as Appia presently.

IV

Make haste, my letter, brooking no delay
 Across Euboea's grasslands! Turn away
 From Via Appia, whose sands below
 Are crushed by her huge mass! And once you go
 To Rome, turn to the Tiber, where the shore
 Pens in the waters that were built to store
 Vessels, with parks and villas all around.
 For that is where Marcellus may be found,
 Handsome and tall. First greet him normally,
 But then relate this poem to him from me! 10
 "Spring rain has unloosed both the earth and sky
 While Sirius is burning up on high.
 The throngs are thinned out now in towered Rome -
 Some Romans make their temporary home
 In blessed Praeneste, others seek to take
 Transient refuge in some woodland brake,
 Some in Algidus, some in Tusculum,
 Some in the coolness of the Anio, some
 In Tibur's woods. What land steals *you* away?
 Where do you revel in a cooler day? 20
 Tell me of Gallus, who's my friend as well,
 But chiefly yours - and who's able to tell

Whether for worth or wit he's praised the most? -
 Does he spend summer on the Latvian coast?
 Is he in quarried Luna? Should he be
 Close by your side, my name will certainly
 Be in your discourse. That is why, I'm sure,
 Both of my ears are ringing. Now, while you're
 Beneath the powerful sun, assuage your heart!
 Be free of care and place yourself apart 30
 From toil! Even the Parthian hides his quiver,
 His bow unbending. His steeds in the river
 The charioteer will bathe when from the race
 In Elis they are sweating. In my case,
 A faint lyre I unstring. For strength is found
 Through timely rest, and valour may abound
 After repose. Achilles, once he sang
 Of Briseis, went forth to meet the clang
 Of war more furiously, for he would lay
 His lute aside that he might join the fray. 40
 And kill Hector. You, too, after a spate
 Of brief repose, are sure to generate
 Fresh fire and return exultantly
 To your accustomed work. Assuredly
 Our laws are quiet now, for we feel pleasure
 Since we are basking in a time of leisure,
 For it's the season now for harvesting
 And clients are no more assembling
 Inside your rooms. The spear, the Hundred's guide,
 Is idle where your eloquence far and wide 50
 Rings out, already of a high repute
 Beyond your years, and in every pursuit
 You're happy, for you do not look upon
 Parnassus' wreaths or those of Helicon
 With pleasure. You possess a vigorous mind,
 Ready for every task, prepared to find
 With strength whatever comes, although my choice
 Of consolation is to raise my voice
 In idle song, seeking celebrity
 In literary fame. Look then, at me! 60
 Towards the happy shore I turn my feet,
 On which Parthenope once found retreat.
 Listless, I pluck the strings, sitting apart
 On Virgil's tomb, and then when I take heart.
 At my immortal master's shrine I chant,
 But if it pleases Atropos to grant
 Long life to you (as I entreat that she
 Will do) then more responsibility
 Our lord may give you, whom you venerate
 Next to Lord Jove, for he indeed of late 70
 Has given you the task of straightening

The Latin Way. Next you'll be governing
 The troops, perhaps, bringing security
 To people of the Rhine or dark Thule
 Or else the Danube or the entrance to
 The Caspian pass. Your fame's not only due
 To eloquence. Your limbs are apt for war
 And you might don Achilles' armour. For
 If you were on the march you'd have a crest
 That would be waving over all the rest 80
 Of your cohort. But if a jingling
 Bridle were in your hands, would it not bring
 The meanest steed to heel that it would be
 The meekest slave to your authority?
 I'll sing the deeds of others while I coast
 Into old age, but you, who well could boast
 Of exploits of your own, will cause more men
 To celebrate your actions with their pen.
 Set an example for the little boy
 Geta, acquainting him with all the joy 90
 Of triumphs for his house, demanding, too,
 Much of him. Boy, get up, I beg of you!
 You're happy in your mother's ancestry
 And father's courage, so begin to be
 Just like your father! Fame, the sorceress,
 In Tyrian purple, is happy to bless
 You with her omens, vowing radiantly
 To give you roles of great supremacy."
 Marcellus, I penned this upon the shore
 Of Chalcis, where Vesuvius's furore 100
 Is spouting here and there in Sicily
 With flames of columned rows in rivalry.
 It's strange, and yet it's true. When the crops grow
 Once more and all the desolate meadows show
 Their verdancy again, will all mankind
 Living in future generations find
 It credible that underneath our feet
 Lie other cities? That peak's flames repeat
 Their deadly blasts. Far be the conflagration
 From your Teate! May such devastation 110
 Not strike her hills! If you would possibly
 Learn what my muse assays, the argosy
 Of my *Thebaid* now has sailed into
 The haven she has longed for. Then she threw
 Incense on Parnassus and Helicon,
 And a pure heifer's entrails. Now upon
 The votive tree she hung her ribbons, now
 Twining a chaplet round my uncrowned brow.
 Now I assay to tell the tale of Troy,
 But Lord Apollo bids me to employ 120

Myself with war in Lower Italy.
 I'm tempted, but I fear that I may be
 Beyond the task in hand – am I up to it?
 Tell me, Marcellus, truly – can I do it?
 Am I to risk the wild Ionian Sea
 When only lesser seas are known to me?
 Farewell! Retain my love of someone who
 Is bound by both his heart and soul to you!
 For even Hercules did not withhold
 His warmth for others, as we have been told. 130
 So loyal Theseus' fame you will outstrip
 And that of him who in a nine-fold trip
 Dragged Hector round the towered Ilium
 In order to placate his lifeless chum.

V

Blessed by the bounty of my small estate,
 Where Alba Longa used to venerate
 The Lares of the Teucri, I rehearse
 A lyric tribute in no common verse
 To one who's full of pluck and fluency,
 Septimius Severus. Finally,
 The sun appears and winter now has fled
 Far north and we've been ransomed from the dread
 Of icy gusts, and we are welcoming
 Sun and warm zephyrs everywhere. Now spring 10
 Abounds. The trees are all in soft leaves dressed
 And with the plaintive songs of birds we're blessed.
 A patch of soil, fire burning constantly,
 A roof that's darkened by lamp-smoke to me
 Bring comfort; wine, but recently fermented,
 Poured from a jar, also makes me contented..
 I do not hear a woolly sheep-flock's bleat
 Or lowing cows who hanker for their sweet
 Lovers; the fields, save when they're echoing
 The music of their owner's warbling, 20
 Are mum. Yet, save my land, this place has been
 My greatest love. Minerva, virgin queen
 Of battle, gave me for my poetry
 Great Caesar's golden prize, while you gave me
 Support in my great struggle, trembling ,
 As Castor shook while he was listening
 To the Bebrycian din. Is Leptis where
 You first saw light of day? She'll soon lay bare
 Her crop and let Sabaeans not receive
 Her cinnamon. Can you perchance believe 30
 That on the seven hills of Romulus
 The baby steps of dear Septimius

Weren't placed? Who thinks Septimius would slake
 His thirst at Juturna's spring makes a mistake!
 Your worth's no wonder – you were well aware
 Of Africa's seas and so could sail from there
 To Latium. At once, an adoptive child,
 You learned to swim in our chaotic, wild
 Waters. Then, with the purple robe content,
 You gained adulthood, after which you spent 40
 Your years in boundless tasks. No indication
 Of Carthage is in your communication
 By word or mien: your heart's no alien,
 For you will ever be Italian,
 Though foster-sons of Libya dwell in Rome
 And serve the Senate, calling here their home.
 In Roman courts your voice delightfully
 Rings out – no-one can buy your oratory.
 Your sword within its scabbard sleeps unless
 Your friends bid you to draw it. Peacefulness 50
 And country rambles are more frequently
 Enjoyed by you. Now you at Veii,
 Your father's place, will sojourn, now frequent
 The Hernici or Cures, quite content.
 Most of your work's in prose, completely free
 Of measure, but sometimes remember me!
 But now and then your lyre do not spare,
 Which modestly lies in your grotto there!

VI

As in the Saepta Julia idly
 I wandered at sunset, my mind set free,
 My labours put aside, I met the kind
 Vindex who took me to an inn. We dined.
 I well recall it as though it were still
 In progress, though we swallowed nothing ill,
 No foreign food brought from some distant clime,
 No wine that seems to be as old as time.
 Wretched are they who tell us joyfully
 That winter's crane which lives in Rhodope 10
 To the pheasant of Phasis cannot compare,
 As is he who will happily declare
 What goose contains the richest guts; wherefore
 Is there less breeding in the Umbrian boar
 Than that found in the boar of Tuscany,
 And what shoreline the oyster finds to be
 Its softest bed. No, rather from the heights
 Of Helicon we found our best delights,
 And true affection, and we joyously
 Stayed up on wintry nights, till finally 20

Vindex peeped out that daylight may be seen
 To mock the recent feast where we had been
 Merry. A splendid night that surely rated,
 As Tiryns once, a moon that's duplicated!
 Ah, to be marked with pearls of the Red Sea
 Of Thetis, living long in memory.
 It was from then and there I came to know
 Bronze, ivory, wax statues that were so
 Lifelike they seemed to speak. Where can you find
 His peer who can acknowledge an unsigned 30
 Sculpture? It's only Vindex who's aware
 Of bronzes that were wrought with sleepless care
 By Myro or tireless Praxiteles
 Or knows at once which of one's ivories
 Was smoothed by Pisan Phidias's hand,
 Which works were fashioned in the Grecian land
 By Polyclitus, and what line can show
 The work of Apelles of long ago,
 Even from afar. His lute once put away,
 Vindex decides to have a holiday, 40
 Lured from the Muses' caves. I was aware
 Of Hercules among his treasures there:
 It gave me great delight as long I gazed
 Upon the statue, very much amazed.
 Within his art there dwelt such majesty,
 Such strength in such a narrow boundary.
 Here was the god! For though to viewers' eyes
 He's but a foot tall, he's of ample size
 In comprehension. "This was he, " you'd say,
 "Who the Nemean predator would slay; 50
 Who bore a deadly club, who broke apart
 The *Argo's* oars." So subtle is the art
 The sculptor has displayed in fashioning
 A great illusion by his rendering
 A small form large, forging a decoration
 And yet, making, through his imagination,
 A mighty giant. Even the Telchines
 In Ida's grottoes or the strong Brontes
 Or Vulcan could not fabricate so small
 A gem of bronze like this. It's not at all 60
 Unsited for a feast, unquestionably
 Appearing like the god he was when he
 Was poor Molorchus' guest, he whom priestess
 Auge in Alea's grove with happiness
 Beheld, who rose from Oeta as he downed
 With joy his nectar while Juno still frowned.
 He urges on the diners as his cup
 He holds in one hand while he's holding up
 His club, grasped in the other. You may view

The hide of the Nemean beast he slew 70
 On which he's set. Once Pella's lord possessed
 This figure, showing all that he was blessed
 As a god, and it was happily displayed
 Upon a table. Ever as he made
 His way about the world, he with that hand
 That granted and removed concessions and
 Destroyed great cities, clasped it. In this way
 He'd seek out courage for the morrow's fray.
 A victor ever, he'd tell Hercules'
 In secret all his wondrous victories 80
 Whether from Bacchus he received acclaim
 For chaining Indians or merited fame
 By casting his great spear or shattering
 The gates of Babylon or conquering
 The land of Pelops, ending its liberty,
 Skipping, they say, only the victory
 In Thebes. Then when Fate snapped the thread, the king
 Drank of the deadly wine, exhibiting
 Dark shades of grievous death, afraid to see
 The much-changed face upon the god whom he 90
 Adored, and now the sweating bronze, as they
 Were dining at the feast that final day.
 It passed to Hannibal, the savage lord,
 Who proudly wielded the most treacherous sword,
 Who to the god of valour dedicated
 Libations, although by him he was hated
 For bringing fatal flame to Rome, although
 He offered him food and wine. The god, in woe,
 Followed his camp, though he particularly
 Detested him when sacrilegiously 100
 He crushed his very shrines, dishonouring
 The innocent Saguntum, kindling
 Her folk with noble frenzy. Now it passed
 On to no common owner, for it cast
 Great light on Sulla's feasts. And now today,
 If gods will read men's hearts and souls, though they
 Don't mix with kings, its master's soul is free
 Of fault and pure: an old-time loyalty
 Is his; his friendship, once it's been professed,
 Will yet remain unswerving till the rest 110
 Of his life. Think of Vestinus long ago
 Who vied with his forefathers, even though
 He was but young, whose spirit evermore
 Will breathe in Hades. Hercules, therefore,
 You'll find rest! Not on battle do you gaze
 But on your lyre and peace-loving bays
 And garlands. You will be commemorated

In solemn verse – how you intimidated
 The Trojan race and snowy Stymphalos
 And all the hills of moist Erymanthos, 120
 How you dealt with your Spanish enemy
 Who owned the cattle and how mercilessly
 You used Busiris. He will tell how you
 Plundered and pierced the halls of Hades, too,
 And how the Amazons and Hesperides
 You left in tears. Such accolades as these
 You'd not have from the Macedonian king
 Nor Hannibal, nor would harsh Sulla bring
 Such praise to you. You, who fashioned the prize,
 Would not be judged by any other eyes. 130

VII

Erato, you have wandered far and wide
 About the plain – now you should set aside
 Your labours and employ your energy
 Within a more restricted boundary.
 And, Pindar, leader of the lyric band,
 Now I have sung your sacred Theban land,
 Let me pick up a different pen awhile,
 Using for Maximus another style,
 My garlands fashioned with a virgin bay.
 This deeper thirst I have must I allay 10
 With a purer draught. When will you come once more
 To your own hills, where from the very core
 Of earth the miner comes back just as pale
 As all the gold he mines? But I, who hail
 From nearer parts, don't spend time lingering
 In Baiae, nor with him whose bugling
 Was known to Hector. A torpidity
 Affects my verse without you. Even he
 Who rules Thymbra is now more ponderous,
 And my Achilles is quite motionless 20
 At the first turn. However, your counselling,
 When my *Thebaid* by much editing
 Was harmed, urged me to try to scale the heights
 While playing on my lyre the delights
 Of Mantuan verse. And yet your lingering
 I pardon inasmuch as you now bring
 New life into your lonely home. Now we
 Welcome the advent of your progeny,
 A second Maximus. We all should spare
 Ourselves no lack of children, for an heir 30
 Will pray for it perversely (ah, for shame!)
 And hold out every hope that death will claim
 His kinsman. Childless men are laid below

The earth unmourned. The mean successor, though,
 Prepares to snatch the spoils, while the amount
 Of cash the funeral costs he'll even count.
 Long live the noble babe! And may he go
 Where few may travel, so that he may grow
 Up like his father! May he also do
 Brave deeds just like his grandfather! For you 40
 Will tell the little lad about the sword
 You took to the Orontes as the lord
 Of Castor's cavalry; and he'll find out
 From his grandfather how he cast a rout,
 In Caesar's path, upon the fugitive
 Sarmatae and, so that the foe might live
 In one clime only, bitter terms he laid
 On them. But firstly let him learn your trade,
 Tracing once more the world's antiquity,
 As Sallust and Livy, Padua's progeny! 50

VIII

Parthenope, the gods' portals fling wide!
 With fumes of Saba's frankincense provide
 Smoke for the entrails of the sacrifice,
 For famed Menecrates has sired thrice
 A son! Three noble boys! A consolation
 For raging Mt. Vesuvius' devastation!
 And don't let Naples crowd exclusively
 Around the festal shrines, but equally
 Give welcome to the harbours hither, too,
 And Dicaearchus' lands as well! And you 10
 Must greet Sorrento, where Cadmus is king,
 Thronged by a group of children rivalling
 Each other as they try to imitate
 His features. May their uncle cele
 Your worthy brate
 The birth, distinguished by his Libyan spear!
 May Polla, too, to whom they are most dear,
 Hug them benevolently to her breast!
 And hail to you, Menecrates, who's blessed
 Your worthy land with hopes. Another boy!
 In sweet turmoil the house is thrilled with joy. 20
 Leave, sullen Envy! Turn your thoughts away!
 Fate vows those babes will live for many a day
 In fame with Phoebus' laurels. It was thus
 Proved by an omen that our glorious
 Father of Rome granted a trinity
 Of heirs to you: Lucina frequently
 Entered your pious home. May it, I pray,
 Not change its gifts and last for many a day

In fruitfulness. May you delight once more
 In siring another boy. But for 30
 A youthful man a daughter, too, brings joy,
 For, although valorous deeds more fit a boy,
 A daughter soon bears her own progeny,
 As Helen did, who once had falteringly
 Tottered between her brothers. Such a fair
 Young girl and even then worthy to share
 The wrestling-ground; or as on Heaven's face,
 On some clear night, two radiant stars will grace
 The sky each side the moon. Nevertheless,
 A grievance I maintain, I must confess - 40
 A major one! O you most rare young man,
 I'm even angry, as a dear friend can
 Be angry. So I ask you, "Was it right
 That I should hear the news of your delight
 Only from rumour?" When your progeny
 Wailed out, why did a herald instantly
 Not order me to heap festival-fire
 Upon the altars while wreathing my lyre,
 Decking the lintel, honouring the day
 With wine and song? But if I should delay 50
 And chant my vows but now, the infamy
 And guilt are yours. But it's too hard for me
 To press you further. With such happiness
 Your children throng about you: who can't guess
 That with such love the world's at your command
 To conquer at your will? Gods of our land,
 For whom Abas's vessels crossed the sea
 With your high auguries to Italy,
 And Phoebus, guide of his far-wandering
 People, whose dove, forever settling 60
 On your left shoulder, is made such a fuss
 Of by Parthenope's father, Eumelus,
 Who eyes it fondly; and you, too, Ceres,
 In praise of whom we silent devotees
 Brandish the torch, and you, Tyndaridae,
 Who've not more fervently been worshipped by
 Therapnae or severe Taygetus,
 Guard everyone within this house for us!
 May they serve Rome with wealth and fluency,
 For she's fatigued with age and industry, 70
 Keeping her name still green! Let gentleness
 Be theirs, learnt from their father, and largesse
 And splendour from their grandfather, while each
 Of these two gentlemen, I pray, will teach
 Them love of virtue. For inevitably
 A maid from such a splendid house, when she
 Looks on the kindled marriage-torch, will wed

A noble man; and if Caesar's godhead
Honours true worth, these boys, once youth is past,
Will pass into the Senate House at last. 80

IX

Grypus, you surely jest in sending me
A book for mine. Yet it could only be
Thought comic if you followed up by sending
A proper one. But if you are intending
To jest, you fail! Look at them! - mine's created
With fresh parchment: it's purple, decorated
With knobs at both their ends, and it cost me
Much cash as well as all my industry.
The gift you sent to me is full of blight
And bitten by moths, such dry pages as might 10
Be moistened by olives or else permeated
With pepper or perhaps be saturated
With frankincense from Egypt, or the smell
Of tunnies from Byzantium. As well,
The book does not contain such fluency
As you hurled out in your maturity
And set the three courthouses in a roar,
Nor what you hailed the Hundred with, before
Caesar made you controller of the train
Of Rome's supplies and all our ships of grain. 20
Old Brutus' drowsy musings *you've sent me*,
Bought with a coin of His Majesty
The mad Caligula and taken out
Of the pack of some poor bookseller, no doubt.
Call this a gift? Were there no caps for sale,
Stitched with cloak trimmings? Did you even fail
To buy a towel? Could you not procure
A yellowed napkin? Could you not secure
Some notebooks, Theban dates or figs imported
From Caria? Could you not find assorted 30
Plums, prunes from Syria, all held within
A crumbling cone? And not one single skin
Peeled from an onion? Could you not buy
Eggs, oats, rough meal or lamp-wicks rendered dry?
Slimy snail-shells from the Cinyphian plain?
Rank lard or scraggy ham? What? Not obtain
Lucanian sausage? Stinking wurst? No cheese?
No salt? Fish-pickle? Not a whit of these?
Saltpetre bread? Wine boiled with lees? Wherefore
No knife? And why no smelly candles or 40
A thin notebook? Tinned raisins? Tell me why
No dishes from the potteries of Cumae
Weren't sent to me! And why (no need to fear!)

Weren't spotless pots and pans delivered here?
 But no, like a fair dealer, you decide,
 With rigorous calculation, to provide
 No change but give me tit for tat, yet say,
 When I have brought you at the break of day
 A surly greeting, will you greet me, too, 50
 At my own house in turn? But after you
 Have fed me well, do you expect to be
 My guest as well? Grypus, you anger me!
 But do not send your verses in reply
 With your accustomed waggishness! Goodbye!

BOOK V

I

If only I had the ability
 To mould in wax or upon ivory
 Or gold to stamp a likeness, I'd create
 A work, Priscilla, to alleviate
 Your husband's sorrow. For his faithfulness
 Deserves that you're portrayed with the finesse
 Of an Apelles or a Pheidias,
 Which will restore you, helping sorrow pass
 Away. He strives to keep you from the grave
 And fights with Death in hopes that he might save 10
 You in another form by wearying
 Artists to try out almost anything
 To represent you. But that loveliness
 That artists forge will yield to nothingness
 In time. My lyre, though, is sure to pay
 A deathless homage knowing no decay,
 If Phoebus favours me and Caesar, who
 Always makes one with you, gives sanction, too,
 Rare wife of a praised lord. You won't possess
 A monument of more deservedness. 20
 The treatment's late for such a malady,
 For now a second year is fleetingly
 Approaching. When the affliction, though, was new,
 The house in darkness, what could anyone do
 To reach his ear? Tears were the only thing
 That eased his grief, then endless wearying
 His servants, outdoing their misery,
 Blaming the Fates and each divinity
 With passionate laments. And even though
 Orpheus, after whom there used to go 30
 Forests and streams, had come, his malady
 To try to lessen, should Calliope
 And all her sisters and the priests who wait

On Bacchus and Apollo congregate
 Round him, that bard would not succeed, although
 He's always heeded by the gods below
 And all the Furies, so great was the pain
 Within his heart and, while I sing that strain,
 The wound still shrinks and many tears arise,
 And does the sorrow overwhelm his eyes? 40
 It does! Niobe's tears would sooner dry,
 Aurora's grief for Memnon sooner die,
 Or that of Thetis, who eventually
 Would be exhausted by the tears that she
 Shed for Achilles. Honour is your due!
 And while you're grieving, he is watching you
 Who rules the world, closer than Jove to us,
 And gives commands for all men's tasks, and thus
 Esteems you for the love you show her ghost.
 For this indeed is ardour of the most 50
 Sublime, which earns approval from our lord
 And master. It's no wonder this accord
 Remains unbroken. Though she'd been a bride
 Before, yet like a maiden to your side
 She came, and lovingly she clung to you
 As lusty vines about elm-trees will do,
 Their leafage intertwined; the elm-trees pray
 For a rich autumn, and at an array
 Of lovely clusters their felicity
 Is great. Those maids who lack morality 60
 Are praised for their descent and loveliness
 Of face, though loyalty they don't possess.
 Your pedigree was flawless and your face,
 Priscilla, was replete with happy grace,
 For which all lovers long; yet you but knew
 One bed, so greater honour lived in you.
 No Trojan raped you nor an Ithacan
 Suitor, nor were you sullied by that man
 Who stained Atreus's marriage as he brought
 His Mycenaean gold with which he wrought 70
 Havoc. Tempted by the prosperity
 Of Babylon and Lydia's property
 And all the royal treasure of Cathay
 And what in India or Arabia lay,
 You'd choose to die in honest penury,
 Exchanging life for pure integrity.
 Yet you never displayed a frowning face,
 Nor did undue severity displace
 Your manner. No, for simple loyalty
 Was what you showed, all charm with modesty. 80
 If some alarm, though, for your lord had beckoned,
 You'd not have temporized at all or reckoned

The cost: you would have faced an angry host
 Or jeopardy at sea, far from the coast,
 Or lightning-bolts. Yet no adversity
 Would test your care or cause pallidity
 To match your peril. But the prayers, instead,
 That you have offered for your husband led
 You to a happier path. Both night and day,
 A suppliant to the gods, you knelt to pray, 90
 And to our mighty leader – every word
 Won favour for your lord. Your prayers were heard:
 Our leader saw his perfect loyalty
 And pure devotion and tenacity,
 His understanding and his clever wit,
 His business acumen that's clearly fit
 For weighty matters; and his emissaries
 He knows so well – no wonder, since he sees
 The south, the wintry north, the east, the west,
 Reviewing war and peace, while he would test 100
 Men's very hearts. Upon his back he placed
 A weight almost past bearing and thus faced
 A heavy task (there is no other role
 So harsh), transmitting orders through the whole
 Wide world, handling responsibility
 Of state, telling of the northern victory;
 What the Euphrates or the Danube say
 Or legions of the Rhine; how far away
 Earth's ends have shrunk; how ebbing waves surround
 Outlying Thule with their moaning sound, 110
 All spears with laurel crowned; in no degree
 Did lances bear the mark of infamy.
 And he decided whom to authorize
 To lead a company or supervise
 A cohort, who should fill a vacancy
 For tribune, who should head the cavalry;
 To tell a chance event that Fortune yields -
 For instance, has the Nile flooded its fields?
 Is Libya drenched with rain? If I should count
 Them all, there would be no greater amount 120
 Of messages borne by Lord Mercury
 Or Iris, Juno's messenger, when she
 Descended through the moist air as she spanned
 The rain-filled heavens with her coloured band,
 Or Fame, who bears your laurels through the air,
 Domitian, faster than the tardy Bear,
 As she outstrips the sun, outrunning, too,
 Iris across the sky. How humble you
 Appear, Priscilla, to all gods and men
 At that most favourable moment when 130
 Your husband gains that eminent employ!

That feast of yours brought to you so much joy
 When with an overflowing heart you prayed
 Before our lord Domitian as you made
 Obeisance to him. Not such joyfulness
 Possesses the Aonian priestess
 By Phoebus named to guard his cave, nor she
 To whom Dionysus grants the liberty
 Of wielding his chief *thyrsus* and bestows
 On her the standard of the band of those 140
 Who follow him. And yet your restfulness
 Was not disturbed – your heart by bounteousness
 Was not puffed up. For you solicitously
 Lessened your husband's cares, his industry
 And leisure spurring, and you would prepare
 The temperate cup of wine and modest fare
 With your own hands and urge him to embrace
 Our leader's ways. You were like one whose face
 Is tanned by the Sabine sun, a woman who
 At dusk, when all the stars are peeping through 150
 The sky, anticipates her farmer-spouse
 Who's left his toil, returning to their house,
 Preparing board and bed with hastiness,
 And listens closely in her readiness
 For his returning plough. However, these
 Are lesser things, for the uncertainties
 Of frozen lands you would have undergone
 With him, the Danube, the pale frosts upon
 The Rhine, Sarmatian winters, while no land
 Had such great heat that one could not withstand 160
 The sultry climate. Had camp-law decreed,
 You would have been an archeress indeed,
 Guarding your body with an Amazon's shield
 That you might see him in the dust-filled field
 Of battle, close to Caesar's steed, as he
 Brandished the arms of the divinity
 That is Domitian, spattered by the gore
 Of his great spear. But now's the moment for
 Laying aside my bay, the moment, too,
 To shroud my hair with cypress, Phoebus. Who 170
 Among the gods has knit unpeaceably
 Greatness and Envy? Whose authority
 United them to wage eternal war?
 Must those two goddesses forevermore
 Be foes? Must one with grim gaze drive delight
 Off from the other? This home once was bright
 And thrived untroubled, far from any woe.
 How could Dame Fortune, false and faithless, though,
 Be feared when Caesar was so courteous?
 And yet Fate found a way to injure us, 180

Just as the vile sirocco extirpates
 Mature vines, while too much rain devastates
 A ripe crop, and a speedy vessel may
 Suffer an adverse wind. Fate snatched away
 Lovely Priscilla, as when a pine-tree,
 A lofty piece of woodland dignity,
 Is wasted by a bolt of lightning or
 Uprooted from the soil, doomed nevermore
 To whisper to the breeze. Your loyalty,
 Your upright heart, your stainless fealty 190
 To Heaven were in vain. Ah, every snare
 Of death encompassed you both here and there.
 The Sisters' thread were taut and nobody -
 No slave, no doctor – had a remedy.
 Yet the attendants round about you tried
 To look assured – the only tears you spied
 Were in your husband's eyes. He fruitlessly
 Entreated Lethe and perturbedly
 Prayed at the altars of the gods. Anon
 He kissed the gates and flung himself upon 200
 The doors and begged great Caesar's aid as well.
 Is Caesar barred from anything? To Hell
 With rigid Fate! Imagine, if Domitian
 Were made all-powerful, the great addition
 Of years we'd have! Yes, Death would be laid low,
 Moaning, in an abyss; the Fates would throw
 Their threads aside. Your face now fell, your eyes
 Fluttered, ears dull, though you could recognize
 Your husband's voice at least. Within your mind
 You saw but him: your flailing arms you'd wind 210
 About him tightly with unmoving gaze,
 For you preferred to look, in your last days,
 At him. You gave him comfort as you died:
 "A living part of me shall still reside
 In you! Don't weep! May you live out, I pray,
 The years that Atropos has snatched away
 From me! Don't beat your breast! Don't, as I leave,
 Torture my shade! There are others who'll grieve,
 Since I go first – the order, then, between
 Our ages we preserve. Thus to have been 220
 In love this long excels than being forced to bear
 A long decrepitude. I've been aware
 Of you in total luminosity,
 Approaching the right hand of majesty.
 No Fate, no god can touch you now. Their hate
 I take with me. Cheerfully dedicate
 Yourself to your pursuit! Continue now
 To worship Caesar! And I bid you vow
 A golden statue to the Capitoline

Temple, on which our leader's face may shine, 230
 Showing my love, then I shall circumvent
 The Furies and deep Tartarus, content
 With calm Elysium." Then as you died,
 You clasped your husband to your lips and sighed
 A final, lingering breath; his hand you pressed
 Upon your eyes. But still was he distressed.
 He filled the desolate house with many a cry;
 Now would he draw his sword, now he climbed high
 Above his friends who barely could suppress
 His movements. Then he bent down low to press 240
 Kisses upon your mouth. Ferociously
 The sorrow that was buried piercingly
 Within his heart he vented, just the same
 As Orpheus when he looked upon the flame
 That blazed upon his wife Eurydice's pyre -
 Beside the Strymon he laid down his lyre
 And wept. He'd have committed suicide
 That you could go to Tartarus side by side,
 But through his own responsibility
 And a yet greater love and loyalty 250
 To Caesar, he demurred. Who could recount
 In worthy verse your rites? A huge amount
 Of Arab and Cilician scents would waft
 Together in a lengthy train aloft,
 Sabaeen flowers, crops from India's land,
 Palestinian and Hebrew incense and
 Corycian myrrh and saffron. There you lay
 High on the bier, veiled in silken array
 And Tyrian purple. But of all those there
 Your spouse alone was he who drew the stare 260
 Of others. Great Rome gazed at him, as though
 He mourned his little sons, such was the woe
 Upon his brow, such was the great despair
 Within his eyes, so unkempt was his hair.
 "She's happy," people said, "for she has met
 A peaceful end." But all their eyes were wet
 For him, before the gates, the very place
 Where the great *Via Appia* can trace
 Its origin, the place where Cybele
 For Almo's sake cast off her misery, 270
 Dismissing Ida's rivers. In this spot
 Your spouse interred you in a blissful plot.
 The funeral smoke and wailings of 'adieu'
 He could not bear. Long years can't injure you,
 For he has guarded you so carefully -
 The marble holds a wealth of fragrantcy.
 And soon you will be seen in effigies
 Of various kinds, for here's a bronze Ceres,

And Ariadne there, Maia in clay
 And Venus made of stone. All these display 280
 Your lovely face, disdaining not your beauty,
 While servants circle you, for any duty
 Prepared. Tables and chairs are constantly
 Made ready for you. This is certainly
 No gloomy grave! No, it's a home! Well might
 One show one's tears directly at the sight
 Of Abascantus' homage. Readily
 One might exclaim, "Indeed this man is he
 Who's forged a shrine for his eternal race
 But lately and set new stars on the face 290
 Of one more heaven!" Thus when a tall ship's wide
 Mainmast is rigged for sail upon the tide
 And she leaves Pharos, on the selfsame sea
 A narrow ship demands more southerly
 Breeze for herself. Why are you grieving so,
 Fine youth, still cherishing excessive woe?
 Perhaps you fear the bark of Cerberus
 Will cause Priscilla to be timorous
 And make her quake? Well, do not fear, for he
 Is silent for the virtuous. Maybe 300
 You fear Charon is tardy and will force
 You off. Oh no, he steers a speedy course
 For worthy souls and sets them carefully
 Upon his skiff. And Queen Proserpine,
 Whenever there's a phantom drawing near
 Who has her husband's blessing, will appear,
 Ordering festal brands to be set alight.
 With radiant light the darkness now shines bright.
 She calls on heroines from the ancient days
 To leave their caves, and now Elysian sprays 310
 And wreaths are strewn. Then to the nether lands
 Priscilla went: there, with entreating hands,
 She bids the Fates for you and wins the grace
 Of the Dark Lords that you may fill the space
 Of mortal life and, as an old man, cease
 To live your time on earth and offer peace
 To all, leaving your leader young, and there
 The three unerring Fates will grant your prayer.

II

Crispinus seeks the fields of Tuscany
 And the Etruscan glades, although he'll be
 In them but briefly, nor does he propose
 To go far. And yet there are hidden woes
 That plague my heart, and both my eyeballs brim
 With swelling tears as though I'm watching him

Sail on the harsh Aegean or on high
Follow his course and give out many a sigh
That I can barely see him. My fine boy,
If you should join the army, how my joy 10
Would soar, how I'd embrace you lovingly!
Should people pray for friends' despondency?
Though you have only just attained sixteen,
Your young age is belied by what is seen
In your resolve. Your youth bows down below
The burden, but it is no wonder, though -
For you possessed no common pedigree,
No unknown line that lacks the dignity
Of former days, of no knightly descent,
Nor as a newcomer were you intent 20
On joining that grand group; a long array
Of your forefathers has before this day
Preceded you. Just as a noble steed
That is acknowledged for his famous breed
Inside the amphitheatre draws the eye
Of everyone, as every cheering cry
Goads him to even more alacrity,
The very dust, the turning-posts that he
Must run around rejoicing as he flies,
Even so the senators all recognize 30
Your talent and have placed the demi-lune
Of senators upon your shoes. Quite soon
Your shoulders knew the purple folds that bear
The mark of power, for, that you might share
His fame, your father made his mark before.
Once he'd attained his manhood, he waged war
By the Araxes, against the Armenian foe,
Bowmen who would not yield to harsh Nero.
Corbulo led the troops, but even he
Marvelled at Bolanus's bravery, 40
His friend in arms. To him he would confide
His toughest quandaries, nor would he hide
His fears from him – the time to use deceit
Or the right moments to turn up the heat
On open war, when faith seemed false and when
Retreat was actual but then again
When it was not. Bolanus must survey
A perilous road and find a ridge that may
Provide a camping-ground. Bolanus, too,
Must mete the fields and make a pathway through 50
Forests and torrents, thus accomplishing
His honoured master's will and handling
All his requests alone. Even this land
Soon knew this man, the second in command.
Thus were the Phrygians beaten; and, although

They knew our hero and Cleonae's bow
 That crushed their ranks, they nursed anxieties
 Regarding Telamon, not Hercules
 Alone. To learn the love of bravery
 You need no stranger – in your family 60
 You find it. So let other people learn
 About the Decii and the return
 Of Camillus. From your father you should mark
 His splendid journey to the distant, dark
 Thule, near which the sun set on the sea
 With its black waves. Know how magnificently
 He governed mighty Asia, which possessed
 A thousand cities and was surely blessed
 With his mild rule. Drink in attentively
 These matters and allow your family 70
 To let you know them. For your father's old
 Companions have such principles extolled.
 Now for a swift departure you prepare,
 Although the signs of manhood aren't yet there
 Upon your cheeks; your life's course is not clear
 As yet; your father is no longer near
 To you, for by a cruel fate he died,
 So your two young ones are without a guide
 Or guardian: he did not live to doff
 Your boyhood purple and, once it was off, 80
 To outfit you anew with pure attire.
 What young lad is there who does not admire
 The garb of manhood and the liberty
 That seems to sanction it? It's true the tree
 That does not feel the pruning-hook will flourish
 Too soon and is unable then to nourish
 Its leafage in the shade. The Muses' art,
 However, made a home within your heart,
 And honour, too, and you had chastity,
 A law to itself; you had integrity, 90
 And you were blithe and tranquil; nor were you
 Too dashing, and according to its due
 Your love was weighed. You were made to adhere
 To your brother's wishes, though he was your peer,
 And to esteem your father and to be
 Forgiving of your mother – how could she
 Prepare that fateful measure when you might
 With just your voice deflect a serpent's bite
 Or by a look defuse the enmity
 Of a stepmother? I'd make sure that she 100
 Was harassed in her grave and curse her ghost,
 Which she most surely merits. But you, most
 Ethical of all lads, now turn away
 With words of thoughtfulness: I hear you say,

"I beg you, spare her ashes! It was Fate!
 The Three Sisters were angry, and too late
 They saw human intent and failed to cause
 Vile acts to be brought to an end and pause
 The fledgling acts of evil. Blot that day
 From history! Let future folk, I pray, 110
 Dismiss it! Or at least we should maintain
 A silence so that charges will remain
 Interred within the deepest, darkest night.
 Our caring chief determined to requite
 Such acts: this piety, constantly feared
 By every evil, once again appeared
 On earth. Though we accept this vengeance, we
 Must weep! O that we might win sympathy
 From the Furies and save her from Tartarus' cur,
 The guardian Cerberus, dispatching her 120
 To Lethe. Hail! Your mother's guiltiness
 Is all the greater. And your fearlessness,
 Not merely virtue, was your aspiration
 Straight from the first. A friend's false accusation
 But lately gave the jurymen a jolt,
 And as she waved aloft her lightning-bolt
 Lex Julia appeared. You, until then
 A stranger to the iron laws of men
 And deep in study, forestalled jeopardy
 And saved your friend, though new to weaponry, 130
 Driving the foe away. Never before
 Has one so young taken the Forum's floor.
 The judges marvelled at your energy,
 Your enterprise and boldness, as did he
 Who was the defendant, and your limbs possess
 A wondrous vigour, and your strength no less
 Is ripe for action. Not too long ago,
 Where Tuscan and Laurentian waters flow
 Together, I saw you as with great speed
 Upon the Tiber's banks you urged your steed - 140
 Your hand, your manner were so menacing
 That I believed that you were readying
 For battle. Thus Ascanius would ride
 Upon his steed, his hands both well supplied
 With weapons, hunting in Queen Dido's land
 Where his stepmother Venus would command
 The boy to shoot a dart that it would fly
 Directly to his father's heart, thereby
 Making him love Queen Dido; similarly
 Did Troilus try to dodge the enemy; 150
 Parthenopaeus, whom the dames of Tyre
 Would contemplate with eyes of torrid fire,
 Kept watch upon all the Arcadian men

Over the Theban plain. Get ready, then!
 Domitian goads you on. In happiness
 Your brother leaves a trail for your success
 With promises. Let your strong soul arise!
 Mars and Athene will familiarize
 You with the deeds of war. Castor will show
 You how to guide your steed, and you will know 160
 At Quirinus' hands the proper way to wield
 Your arms with that same shoulder which felt Mars' shield
 Out of the sky against your neck. And so
 Into what worlds of Caesar's will you go?
 Will you swim northern rivers, conquering
 The Rhine? Or sweat across the blistering
 Deserts of Libya? Or will you try
 To harry the vagabond Sauromatae
 And harsh Pannonia? Or will you be
 At war upon the Danube or Peuce 170
 Or will you on Jerusalem's ashes tread
 Or Edom's subject groves of palms, whose bed
 Holds fruit for other nations? If there should
 Exist, though, some place which Domitian could
 Give you to govern, it would surely please
 Armenia's rushing river Araxes.
 How Caledonia would rejoice to see
 Her plains exalted! And then possibly
 Some ancient dweller in that savage land
 Will tell you: "Here your father used to hand 180
 Out justice to his troops upon this mound.
 You see these forts and towers all around
 The area? They were his gift. Yes, he
 Around the fortress built the moat. And see!
 These are his weapons, which he offered to
 The gods of war (look, the inscription you
 May read). There is a breastplate over there,
 Snatched from a British chief, which he would wear
 In battle." So when Pyrrhus presently
 Prepared to fight a war with the Teucri, 190
 Phoenix told him about Achilles, who
 Was yet unknown to him. Happy are you,
 Optatus, who, a healthy youth, will face
 Each march and rampart and – may you find grace
 In our great leader! - be like Patroclus,
 An ever-faithful friend to Crispinus,
 As you fight battles, or like Pylades.
 You, trusting in your youthful faculties,
 Will be his comrade – such the harmony
 Between you and your leader! As for me, 200
 My youthful strength is fading. I'll take care
 In Rome to boost your hearts with vows and prayer.

But when the Roman elders gather round
 To hear my songs, Crispinus won't be found.
 No, my *Achilles* all along each tier
 Will seek him fruitlessly. But he'll appear
 Again more fittingly than previously.
 A poet's vows are not nugatory,
 So he who opens up the camps for you
 Today will hustle you directly through 210
 The ranks, surrounded by the rods, and there
 You'll sit upon your father's curule chair.
 From Alba's heights, wherefrom our deity
 Looks down upon our towered Rome, I see
 Crispinus on his way to entering
 Your house and filling it while bettering
 Rumour in speed. I said but recently
 That poets' vows are not nugatory:
 Behold, great Caesar gives you the command
 Of military forces in our land. 220
 Then go, my boy, and thrive to be the peer
 Of this great gift! Now you are full of cheer,
 Receiving from our leader your first sword.
 This honour is no less than if the lord
 Of war gave you his eagles, on your brow
 Setting his warlike helmet. Forward now
 And take up your profession with a will,
 And learn to merit greater honour still!

III

O father, eminent scholar, honour me
 With some Elysian spring, sad melody
 And strength! How shall I stir up without you
 The Delian haunts or, as I used to do,
 Move Cirrha? I have unlearned everything
 Phoebus taught me as I was languishing
 In the Corycian shade and what upon
 Ismarian hills Bacchus showed to me. Gone
 Are all Parnassus' ribbons from my head,
 Those votive bands. The yew tree, to my dread, 10
 Has veiled my ivy, and the tripod's bay
 (To my eternal shame!) now wastes away.
 Surely I'm one whose noble inspiration
 Might sing of lofty kings with approbation,
 Praising their battles. Who now is the one
 Who's enervated me, darkened my Sun?
 The Muses cower their poet as around
 They gather, as never a single sound
 Comes from their lips or lutes. Silently
 Their leader bows her head, as once when she 20

Had looked upon Orpheus's ravishing
 Stood on the banks of Hebrus, noticing
 The herded beasts accustomed to his lute,
 Though with the music gone they stood quite mute.
 Free of your body, you soar to the sky,
 Reviewing all the glistering spheres on high
 While contemplating everything that's in
 Nature – what God is, what's the origin
 Of fire, what guides the sun and in what way
 The moon wanes and, when hiding from the day, 30
 How does she reappear, continuing
 Aratus' verses, or when travelling
 On Lethe's hidden meadows where you mix
 With Hesiod and Homer past the Styx,
 All of you making music tirelessly,
 For you possess those bards' capacity
 For verse. Therefore grant me the inspiration
 To give voice to my utter desolation!
 Three times the moon has come and gone, yet still
 I'm dumb, and there's no tune to ease this ill. 40
 Since I looked on your funeral-fire's light
 While weeping tears of grief upon the sight
 Of your dear ashes, poetry seems vain,
 And I can scarce employ my mind again
 To carry out this rite and brush away
 The dust from silent strings in my dismay.
 My hands fail even now, my eyes are wet,
 Where you sleep softly, where Ascanius set
 Alba, after Aeneas died, for he
 Hated the plains filled with the butchery 50
 Of Trojans. Here I (and no softer air
 Breathes from Sicilian saffron and no rare
 Sabaeen cinnamon nor scented fruit
 From Arab regions) somberly salute
 You with Pierian song, here to be crowned
 With holy offerings. Yours be the sound
 Voiced by the dirge, your own son's threnody
 That's paid to fathers so infrequently!
 Would I were rich enough to build for you
 An altar for your shade that's equal to 60
 Some lofty temple that outmatches those
 Cyclopean cliffs or those bold granite rows
 Of Pyramid blocks and hem your tomb around
 With a great grove, and after that I'd found
 Games to surpass those games in Sicily
 Preserving old Anchises' memory
 Or those of Pelops or Opheltes. There
 No naked Greek athlete would cleave the air
 With the Oebalian discus, fields not wet

With flying hooves of horses as they sweat 70
Above some crumbling trench. However, there
Would be Apollo's votaries who'd share
The place with bays – the meed of minstrelsy -
To honour your dear shade propitiously,
While I myself, moist-eyed and piteous,
Would lead the funeral rites. Not Cerberus
Nor Orphean rules would chase us all away.
And maybe, as I sang for you a lay
Recording all your virtues, piety
Would classify me in my artistry 80
No less than Homer or the great Maro.
Has a sad mother by her son's barrow
More right to rail against the gods on high
Or blame the Fates' unyielding thread than I,
Or she who looks on her young husband's pyre,
Anxious to die upon the funeral-fire
As she flings off her friends who would suppress
Her strong intent? Can greater bitterness
Storm Heaven and Hell? From even alien eyes
At funeral rites like these can tears arise? 90
But not just duty, not just loyalty
Have prompted me to this solemnity:
It seems to me you've entered Tartarus' gate,
Father, at the first threshold of fate.
The maid of Marathon, Erigone,
Mourned Icarus, slain by the savagery
Of his own folk, and when her darling boy
Was hurled down from the battlements of Troy
Andromache wept. Erigone at the last
Took up the fatal noose and tied it fast 100
About her neck, and no less bitterly
Andromache suffered great ignominy
When Hector had been slain – she was compelled
To wed a foreigner and thus be held
In bondage. I do not intend to pay
The tribute that the swan, her dying day
To her foreknown, with her death-melody
Sings out, nor will I sing the threnody
The Sirens sang to sailors from on high
Above the gloomy cliff – not these will I 110
Bring to my father's grave. The grievous sighs
Of Philomela I'll not exercise,
The woes she to her fierce sister would tell,
For these tales every poet knows too well.
The story of the daughters of the Sun
Turned into trees was told by every one

Of them; and Marsyas who once was maimed
 With a knife in Phrygia because he claimed
 To be Apollo's peer in minstrelsy;
 Minerva, too, rejoicing in her glee 120
 At the boxwood flute's demise. Let piety,
 Forgetful of mankind, feel sympathy
 For your decease, and let fair-mindedness,
 Recalled to Heaven, and expressiveness
 In either tongue sing out their lamentation!
 Let Phoebus and Pallas in federation
 In epic strains attune their poetry
 That it may fit the lyre of Arcady!
 I summon, too, those bards with seven-fold fame
 Whom everywhere on earth Wisdom can claim, 130
 And those who thunder out formidably
 Upon the stage a tale of lunacy
 And guilty kings and stars that in the sky
 Reverse their course, and those who satisfy
 Themselves with penning only comedy
 And those who choose composing elegy.
 You contemplated every measure you
 Had been prepared to sing while ranging through
 The field of song or were inclined to lend
 Yourself to Aonian verse or to extend 140
 Your words to prose, in your delivery
 Matching a shower of rain. Parthenope,
 Emerge beneath that ash! Locks of your hair,
 By Mt. Vesuvius blackened, now prepare
 To lay for your illustrious foster-sons
 Upon his grave. For there has been no-one
 In Sparta, Cyrene or Munychia who
 Has proved himself a better man. Had you
 Been rated common (may it not be so,
 You Heavens!) with no document to show 150
 Your origin, he'd prove your pedigree,
 For you possess Euboean ancestry.
 His brow with garlands wreathed, he'd often sing
 At the quinquennial pageant, rivalling
 Nestor, the Pylian king, and Ulysses,
 Acquiring on his brow both effigies
 Of theirs. Father, you're of no mean descent,
 Although your family with accident
 Of loss was struck. When young, you laid aside
 Your purple gown and gold pendant supplied 160
 To you at birth. The Muses smiled success
 For you; Phoebus, who showed me graciousness
 Even then, gave you a lute and bathed your face
 In sacred water. But your native place
 Is in dispute, for Hyele would claim

You as her own (she who received her name
 From Latium, where Palinurus, half-asleep,
 Fell from his ship and woke up in the deep);
 One greater, Naples, frequently has held
 You are her Homer since you long have dwelled 170
 In her. Yet other lands seem to agree
 That you're their native son, but obviously
 That can't be so - hope feeds each hypocrite.
 When you were young, possessed, though, of great wit,
 And keen for fame, you hastened even then
 To that five-year contest, where adult men
 Were scarcely adequate, so rapidly
 You won, so daring was your artistry.
 All the Euboean folk were stupefied,
 And for their sons you were identified 180
 By fathers. Often then you would compete
 In competitions, every time replete
 With honours; never so repeatedly
 Did Castor win a race in rivalry
 And not so often did Pollux succeed
 At boxing. If to carry off the meed
 Were easy, though, in Rome, what's there to say
 Of Grecian competitions, holding sway,
 Now wearing Phoebus' laurels on one's brow,
 Now with the herb that comes from Lerna, now 190
 The pine of Athamas, when victory,
 Who often brings the victor lethargy,
 Has never left your side nor snatched away
 Your bays, thus on another's brow to lay
 The crown? Therefore a father's expectation
 Was pinned on you, under whose regulation
 Noble young men would learn the loyalty
 Of all the men of old, the agony
 Of Troy, Odysseus' lingering, the skill
 Of Homer as his pages he would fill 200
 With dauntless deeds and splendid cavalry;
 What Hesiod and he of Sicily
 Showed farmers; Pindar's lyre; Ibycus,
 Who prayed to birds; and bold Stesichorus;
 Alcman; and rash Sappho, who fearlessly flew
 Down to her death in Leucas; others, too,
 All worthy of the lyre. Strains of the son
 Of Battus you performed, and Lycophron,
 The tragic poet; Sophron's baffling;
 And elegant Corinna. Why, though, sing 210
 But slender praise? You stayed at Homer's side
 With flowing prose and never let your stride
 Trail him. It's hardly extraordinary

That boys leave home in southern Italy
 And meadows under Daunus' stern command.
 The place that Venus sorrowed for, the land
 Alcides scorned, an where Minerva keeps
 A watchful eye upon the Tuscan deeps,
 The hill near where the estuary lies,
 That gulf the oar and trumpet symbolize, 220
 Cyme, Dicarchus' havens and the beach
 Of Baiae, where the blasts of fire reach
 The waters' heart and keeps a conflagration
 Beneath. The people of each ancient nation
 To Avernus and the Sibyl's caves would crowd
 For counsel, and the Sibyl asked aloud
 Where they were from and sung the Fates' decrees
 And Heaven's threats. In all her prophecies
 Unswerving, although Phoebus was deceived.
 The sons of Romulus shortly received 230
 Your schooling in their fathers' steps. Through you
 The prover of the secret fire who
 Concealed Minerva's statue, swiped away
 By Diomedes, who has straightaway
 Mastered the ceremony, although he
 Was yet a boy; you praised the Salii,
 Showing them their arms to seers you indicated
 The truth in Heaven, and you have related
 Who might consult the Sibyl and revealed
 Wherefore the Phrygian priest's head is concealed; 240
 Your lash was dreaded by the Luperci.
 Now possibly one of that company
 Governs the east, another rules the land
 Of the Ebro, while another has command
 At Zeugma; someone, too, is governing
 Asia or else the land that's bordering
 The Pontus; others hold authority
 In peaceful courts; some lead the soldiery.
 All spring from you. Who is there who has been
 Your peer in fashioning the hearts of green 250
 Youngsters? Not Nestor, and not the guru
 Of Achilles, Phoenix, and not Chiron, who,
 When that same youth heeded the clarion
 And warlike bugle that would urge him on,
 Calmed him with song, when Fury suddenly
 Raised high her torch upon the promontory
 That's called Tarpeia stirred up such combat
 As that which was stirred by the giants at
 Phlegrae. With brands the Capitol was afire
 And Latian cohorts displayed Gallic ire. 260
 Scarce had the pyre shrunk, its flames at rest,
 When, swifter than the fire itself, you blessed

The shrines with solace. The nobility
 And Caesar, Heaven's avenger, totally
 Were awed, and in the midst of conflagration
 Jupiter himself sent forth his acclamation.
 So now in strains of sympathy you sought
 To mourn the ruin Vesuvius had wrought,
 When Jove lifted the mountain through the air
 Only to cause destruction here and there 270
 On wretched cities. The Muses welcomed me
 To their Boeotian glades of melody
 Once I had made it known to them that I
 Was son to you. The boon of earth and sky
 And sea I owe to you, as every man
 Owes to his parents, but what skill I can
 Declare that I possess in song I owe
 To you as well; however, it was no
 Familiar strain you taught me but a strain 280
 To bring me glory which I might retain
 When I am dead. When I infatuated
 The elders with my song, you were elated
 To hear the gifts you gave me! And what tears
 And prayers and happy melody and fears
 Were mingled with your joy! My triumph, though,
 Brought you more happiness than me. Just so,
 When fathers watch their sons in a display
 Of boxing in the Olympic Games, it's *they*
 Who are performing, *they* who feel each hit,
They whom the audience, from where they sit, 290
 Gaze at. On the arena constantly
 They keep their eager eyes till they can see
 No longer as they swear to die unless
 Their son is crowned with bay that marks success
 While pouring sand upon their heads. I vow
 That I am rendered heartsick that my brow
 Bore but my city's wreath, made out of wheat.
 Dardan Alba should have made your joy complete
 If Caesar's garlands had been give you -
 That victory would certainly renew 300
 Your youth! And when the crown eluded me,
 That oak and olive wreath, how placidly
 Would you have borne Jove's envy! I came near
 The poetry of bards of yesteryear
 With my *Thebaid*, for you prompted me
 To pen heroic deeds of bravery.
 I falter without you, sailing through ways
 That are ambiguous, clouded with haze.
 Not me alone you cherished lovingly,
 For you adored the lady who bore me, 310
 Your only love. I may not take away

My mother from your ashes - you hold sway
 Within her heart at dawn and at cockcrow,
 As other women scrutinize the woe
 Of Attis and Osiris as they pay
 Their homage to their African dismay.
 What should I say about your gravity,
 Your open face? What of your loyalty,
 Your scorn of avarice, your watchfulness
 Of honour and your love of righteousness? 320
 Your charming conversation when at ease,
 Your spirit and your mind, both qualities
 Untouched by years? The gods have granted you
 Fame in great measure and you're never to
 Be downcast. Now you have been snatched away,
 Father, not young nor inordinately grey,
 But I'll not count the years, for love and woe
 Forbid me: you indeed deserve to go
 Beyond Tithonus, Nestor and the king
 Of Troy, Priam, in age, while meriting 330
 To see me at that age! Nevertheless,
 The gates of death held you in no distress:
 You did not linger on in atrophy
 Before you were interred – you seemed to be
 Asleep. Ah, how I mourned in my distraction
 (My mother marked my grace with satisfaction,
 My friends watched me in fear). You shadows, be
 Compassionate with me, allowing me
 To speak; Aeneas was full of delight,
 Although in Tartarus, as black as night, 340
 To clasp his father once again, although
 It was a fruitless task, and with him go
 Down to the Elysian fields. Yes, it was he
 Who, led by Sibyl, seer of Hecate,
 Attempted, though he was alive, to tread
 On Tartarus. The aged priestess led
 Him to Diana. If Orpheus was brought
 To indolent Avernus, since he sought
 A lesser mission, if in Thessaly
 Admetus felt such happiness to see 350
 His wife again, if for a single day
 Protesilaus' ghost could make its way
 Back to his home, why, father, should not we
 Earn such a favour for our artistry?
 Let me but touch your face while holding you
 By your dear hand, whatever may ensue!
 You Shadow-lords and you, Proserpine,
 Should you but dignify my litany
 Of prayers, ward off the smoke-haired Furies, who
 Brandish their torches! Muzzle Cerberus, too! 360

Let Hydra and the Centaurs go to ground,
And let the monstrous Scylla not be found
In distant glades! Let Charon send away
The crowd and on the far shore gently lay
His aged shade! Come, each and every ghost
Among the virtuous, and come, you host
Of Grecian bards and strew the illustrious shade
With wreaths! Whither no Fury may invade
Conduct him to a grove of mimic day
And heavenly skies above! Then, come away 370
Across the horn-built portal that exceeds
The one of ivory and for my needs
Be counsellor as you have been before,
As sweet Egeria once taught the lore
And sacred rites to Numa in her den
And as – so it was stated – Scipio, when
Asleep, received Jupiter's inspiration
And Sulla gained Phoebus' consideration.

IV

O Sleep, of Heaven's gods the gentlest son,
How have I trespassed? What wrong have I done
To lose you? Sheep are silent everywhere,
All beasts, all birds. The tree-tops free of care,
Appear to sleep; the raging of the sea
Is stilled; the waves are pillowed tranquilly
Upon the shore. And yet a seventh moon-rise
Has brought no slumber to my fevered eyes.
Wherever shall I find the energy,
Should Argus' thousand eyes belong to me, 10
Which never were awake at once? There might
Be one clasped in his mistress' arms all night
Who spurns you – leave him, then, and make your way
To me, o Sleep! And do not shed, I pray,
Your feathers on my eyes! No, that would be
The prayer of happier souls. Merely touch me
With your wand's tip and in your kind embrace
Hold me as you go past with airy pace.

V

I use no prelude in my misery,
Though that's my wont, now there's antipathy
Between me and Castalia's maids of song
And Phoebus. Muses, what have I done wrong?
Tell me, upbraid me and let me confess.
Have I sinned in some sanctified recess
Or drunk from some forbidden spring? Tell me

The crime for what I've paid considerably!
 Look at my child, who with his last embrace
 Clings to my heart and soul! - not of my race, 10
 Unlike me in both name and looks, it's true;
 I'm not his father, but, I beg of you,
 Look on my tears! Don't doubt the agony
 Of loss! You fathers, hither come to me!
 You mothers, beat your breasts! Let everyone
 Who at the grave has seen an unweaned son,
 Beating her teeming breast and squeezing out
 Upon the glowing ashes her last gout
 Of milk. look on this dreadful tragedy!
 Let him who has immersed his progeny 20
 Who's still a lad into the cruel fire
 And noted, as he lay upon the pyre,
 The flames that licked upon his downy cheek
 Lament with me until it makes him weak!
 Nature, you'll be ashamed because my woe
 Is violent and raging, even though,
 Now that a complete month has passed us by,
 I lean upon his monument and try
 To speak, turning my sighs to melody;
 My strains are jangled and my threnody 30
 Is choked with sobs – such is the strength the lute
 Possesses, for it irks me to be mute.
 My head's devoid, though, of accustomed bay;
 No sacred ribbons does my brow display.
 Behold the yew-fronds withering in my hair,
 And gloomy cypress while no ivy's there.
 I use no spectrum now but furiously
 Pluck with my fingers. Ah, it pleases me
 To pour forth discord with a pot-pourri
 Of jumbled metres in my misery. 40
 Is this what I deserve? Is this the way
 The gods should see me – with a dismal lay
 And dressed in black? Shall my Achilles, he
 Who is my latest subject, and Thebes be
 Thus jumbled? Will I never sing an air
 Of peace? How often with sweet words of care
 I've solaced parents' pain and soothed the grief
 Of those who are bereaved, bringing relief
 To them as by a tomb they mourned the dead!
 But now I can no more but must, instead, 50
 Crave healing hands myself. Now it is you
 Whose eyes and bleeding hearts I've dried off, who
 Must aid me in return. This debt you owe:
 Yes, I rebuked you in your tearful woe:
 “To you who mourns another's loss I say
 That you must hoard your ears. Stash them away!

Keep them for your own grief!" It's true – I'm weak
 In body – I am scarce able to speak.
 My melodies aren't worthy to impart
 The lightning sorrows burning in my heart. 60
 Ah, stony-hearted Orpheus, who could see
 The bridal wounds yet find a melody
 To fit them! Harsh Apollo, who, although
 You held Linus's funeral urn, your woe
 You sang. You say that I'm excessively
 Given to grief, beyond all decency.
 That man unschooled in Fortune's sway is blessed
 Immoderately, who with his steely breast
 Dares to lay down a law for lamentation
 And checks all tears, because our desolation 70
 He merely goads. You sooner would suppress
 A raging river which in its excess
 Surmounts its banks or halt the flames that spread
 Than stop the mourners grieving for their dead.
 Now let this critic, whosoever he be,
 Be aware of my anguish and misery!
 My dear boy was no parrot that was bought
 From an Egyptian boat, having been taught
 The curse-words of the Nile from infancy,
 Glib-tongued and insolent of wit. No, he 80
 Was mine. A new-born babe was he when I
 Anointed him and sang a lullaby.
 He wailed as I received my little son.
 What more was there his parents could have done?
 A second birth I gave you, my young lad,
 When I released you while your mother had
 You at her breast, although unknowingly
 You laughed at what I'd done for you. Maybe
 My love was hasty, but that was your due
 In case such short-lived freedom lost for you 90
 One single day. In my bedraggled woe
 Shall I not call upon the gods below?
 Shall I not weep for you, my little one?
 For when you lived I craved no other son.
 From your first day on earth my heart you caught
 And to it fixed yourself. To you I taught
 Our language. While you played upon the ground,
 I'd pick you up and hug you. When I found
 Your eyes were streaming, I made you conceal
 Them in my loving arms and thus I'd heal
 You with sweet sleep. My name was your first sound
 And at your laughter my joy would abound.

