

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 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 afeard 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 ave 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 hopelessness,
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 sput
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
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, 190
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
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, 240

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 manly 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
To Phoebus, it's your task to variously 290
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
And you first walked upon our patch of earth. 310
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,
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,
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
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,
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,
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 Thassos
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 splendorous 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.
A song that by the Siren maids is sung, 10
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, tts 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 learnted 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
To Glaucus, 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
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,
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 your 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
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,
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 come 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 swallow 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 Lechaeum 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.
Richer than Midas and Croesus, you joy 140
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
(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 - 20
She woke at once and saw that it was day
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 scion 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
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.
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

The war in Troy, and Troilus, too, undone
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
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
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,
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
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 Asyrian 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.
Wreathe 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,
Lispes 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, notrthe *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
These splendid decorations that enfold 20
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
Beneath his monument, or maybe keep 30
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
His subjects. No, a blessed home calls to you, 40
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 my 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
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,
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
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 an dbuild 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 furore,
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 40
Were young and frequently refused your due.
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
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
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
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.
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
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,
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
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.

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
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.
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 n 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
Unsuited for a feast, unquestionably 60
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
Will pray for it perversely (ah, for shame!) 30
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 worthyb 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
Waile 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!

50

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
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
Your husband gains that eminent employ! 130

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 *thrysus* 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,
Sabaean 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 270
For Almo's sake cast off her misery,
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 fragrancy.
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
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
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
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,
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
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
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100

They knew our hero and Cleaonae'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;
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
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. 210
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!

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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 cow 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

10

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 glistening 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
Sabaeon 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
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
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?
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
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
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
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,
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
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
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
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

120

130

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160

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
By fathers. Often then you would compete 180
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 200
Of Homer as his pages he would fill
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
Phlegra. 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
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
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,
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
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,
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.

370

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 pillow'd 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,
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.

10

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,
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 10
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 20
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. 30
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, 40
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!" 50

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
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.

