

## TIBULLUS II

Attendees, be benign: we purify  
Our crops and fields, a custom passed on by  
Our ancestors. Coome, Bacchs, let the sweet grape  
Hang from your horns, and let the grain-stalks drape  
About your temples, Ceres. On this day  
The earth must rest, the ploughman, too, must stay  
His toil, the share hung high. Your team set free:  
Now garlanded, they should contentedly  
Feed at the trough. We must do everything  
In honour of the fod. No maid must bring 10  
His hand to the weight of wool. Be far away,  
You who indulged in congress yesterday.  
The gods are gratified by chastity.  
Impure garb take the fount's pure water. See,  
The lamb goes to the shining shrine, behind  
A gleaming company, their hair entwined  
With olive-wreaths. Gods of our fathers, we  
Cleanse fields and farmers: drive iniquity  
Out of our land, and may our crops not cheat  
The harvest, may the laggard lamb not bleat 20  
In fear of the swift wolf. Farmers now will smile  
On their full fields and confidently pile  
Great logs for a roaring fire. A company  
Of slaves, a symbol of prosperity.\,  
Will blithely build a wooden hut. I pray  
For the outcome: see the entrails that display  
The favour of the gods! Break out for me  
A smoky Falernian from antiquity.  
Unplug the Chian jug! Let wines delight  
The day! No shame to be a little tight 30  
Or stagger on festal days! Let each man say  
'Here's to Messalla' while he is away.  
He conquered Aquitania, gaining fame  
And from his ancestors a glorious name.  
Come hither and inspire me while I pay  
Thanks to the farmer's deities with my lay..  
I sing the country and her gods. They taught  
Our race to shun the acorn when we fought  
Off hunger and to build a house, though wee,  
With fitted beams and roofs of greenery . 40  
He also taught bulls – it is rumoured so -  
To work for man and placed a wheel below  
The wagon. Raw food now was never seen,  
Fruit grafted, and the gardens all were green

From drinking from the streams. Gold grapes were pressed  
 By feet and tempering water coalesced  
 With carefree wine. The countryside conveys  
 The harvest while beneath the starry haze  
 The earth casts off its gold locks annually,  
 While vernal flowers by the nimble bee 50  
 Are heaped within his hive that he may make  
 Sweet honey. Farmers took a welcome break  
 From ploughing as they sang to a fixed beat  
 Some country harmonies, and then, replete,  
 Tuned with a drying reed a melody  
 To sing before each honoured deity.  
 Red with vermillion, with rustic skill,  
 He led the dance and then, that he might fill  
 The meagre flock, the lead goat he would bring  
 To his full fold, a splendid offering. 60  
 Of vernal flowers a boy made a bouquet  
 Which he around the household gods would lay.  
 Bright sheep with pliant fleeces would supply  
 A task for tender maidens by and by.  
 Hence also came the distaff with the wool  
 Which with a well-placed thumb women would pull  
 Upon the spindle, while a weaver sang  
 To Minerva while the loom rattled and rang.  
 Amid the flocks, the untamed mares, the corn  
 It has been said Cupid himself was born. 70  
 There he, untaught, would ply the bow, but how  
 (Alas for me!) proficient is he now!  
 No longer chasing beasts, these days he'll tame  
 Bold men and pinion girls – that's now his game.  
 He's robbed youths of their wealth and old men he  
 Has made to utter words of obscenity  
 At angry women's doors. With him as guide,  
 Young girls have managed, all alone, to glide  
 Past sleeping guards to meet their beaux at night.  
 With feet they feel the way, frozen in fright, 80  
 Their hands outstretched, Poor people thus oppressed  
 By Cupid! Thos, however, have been blessed  
 On whom Love lightly breathes! Come to our feast,  
 Blest one, but set aside your darts at least  
 And hide your burning torches far away.  
 Let all chant of the honoured god, I pray,  
 And call him to the flock. Sing openly  
 To the flock, but for yourselves sing quietly -  
 Or openly, perhaps: the playful crowd  
 And the cutved flute in Phrygian tones are loud. 90

Enjoy yourselves: her steeds are yoked by Night,  
Followed by her bright stars, a lusty sight,  
Then dark-winged silent Sleep comes to one's bed  
And gloomy nightmares with their unsure tread.

## II

Let's speak fair words; Natalis to the shrine  
Is coming: let not one tongue, then, malign.  
Burn incense at your hearths and burn bouquets  
With the delicate, wealthy Arab hither conveys.  
And let your Genius itself his honours see  
His sacred locks crowned with soft greenery,  
His brows wet with pure nard. Fill him with wine  
And cake and let him nod at you, a sign  
That he will give you all you want. Why wait?  
He nods. Go on, ask. I prognosticate 10  
Your wish: a faithful wife, though I suspect  
The gods know this; and you would not select  
Instead any field a farmer stalwartly  
Ploughs with his sturdy oxen, nor would he  
Prefer whatever gems the fertile land  
Of India bears, which stains the eastern sand  
With red. Your prayers are cast. Behold! Love flies  
On clamorous wings that he may symbolize  
With bonds of yellow hue your wedding-day:  
Those bonds ill last till you are old and grey 20  
And wrinkled. Be you blessed with progeny  
To gambol at your feet contentedly.

## III

Cornutus, my girl's in the countryside:  
Those folk are adamant who (alas) abide  
In town. Venus to fertile pastureland  
Has transferred, learning how to understand  
The ploughman's speech. If I could only see  
My mistress, I would turn valiantly  
My stout hoe in the rich ground, and I'd tread  
Behind the plough, a farmer, while ahead  
My team would plant the seeds. I'd not complain  
Of sunburn or of blisters causing pain. 10  
Even fair Apollo fed Admetus' throng  
Of bulls. He gained no succour from his long  
Locks or his lyre. No herbs could amend  
His woes: Love brought his healing to an end.

The god himself would drive the cows away  
 Out of their barns and taught, so people say,  
 Coagulating milk and thickening  
 It into cheese and intermingling  
 A basket's strips through which was forced thin whey.  
 How often did his sister blush, they say, 20  
 To see him hug a calf! How often, too,  
 Did the cows dare to disturb him with a moo  
 When in the vales he sang a learned song,  
 And leaders often looked, when things went wrong,  
 For oracles, and from the shrines there went  
 Back home a thwarted mob. What a lament  
 Latona made when his sacred locks they saw  
 In disarray! – even his mother-in-law  
 Had once admired them. Who saw that hair  
 Il unadorned would seek out in despair 30  
 Phoebus's locks. Where did your Delos go,  
 Phoebus? And where, indeed, is your Pytho?  
 Love bids you live in a hut. Back in the day  
 The eternal gods were not ashamed, they say,  
 To be the slaves of Venus openly;  
 Now he is scandalous: however, he  
 Whose girl is always causing him distress  
 Prefers that than to have the lovelessness  
 Of a god. But you, whoever you may be,  
 Whom Cupid should command tyrannically 40  
 That you should settle down in camp *chez nous*,  
 ...  
 ...  
 The age of iron chooses to eschew  
 Venus but praises gain. Many a sin  
 Has gain involved. Fierce hosts it has hemmed in  
 With hostile arms. Hence slaughter comes with gore  
 And then a hasty death. Gain's charged, what's more,  
 Perils to burgeon on the wandering sea,  
 Unsteady ships steeped in hostility.  
 The profiteer through vast seas loves to sweep  
 To pasture his innumerable sheep. 50  
 He wants some foreign marble? It's conveyed  
 Through mobs of folk, on sturdy trestles laid.  
 Rock-piles enclose the indomitable sea,  
 The sluggish fish no more in jeopardy  
 From winter's threats. Let Samian jugs supply  
 Long, happy feasts; the wheel, too, of Cumae  
 Let smooth the moist clay. Girls love wealth, I see:  
 If Venus now opts for prosperity,

Let gain appear that Nemesis may flow  
With luxury and through the city go  
Known for my gifts, and Coan silks may she  
Then wear, shot through with gold, and may there be  
Dark slaves to serve her whom the Indian sun  
Has scalded while her steeds have swiftly run  
Above, and may the African continent  
And Tyre contend to render her content  
With violet or crimson. What I say,  
However, is in vain: that man holds sway,  
That foreigner, who showed his chalky feet  
Upon the stand.

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For you who took my sweet  
Nemesis away, harsh Ceres, may your soil  
Fail to repay the fruits of all your toil.  
And you, the planter of the pleasant vine,  
Mild Bacchus, cast your cursèd vats of wine  
Away. For you will have to pay the cost  
That in your wretched fields fair maids are lost  
To us. Your wine is not worth that much pain  
Be healthy, crops, so long as fields contain  
No girls. Let acorns feed us, then, and may  
We drink plain water – that's the ancients' way.  
If we lack seeded furrows, why should we  
Be harmed? Mild Venus offered openly  
To those Live favoured sexual delight  
In shady vales. There was no guard at night,  
No door to ban the eager: if we may,  
Let us see once again the ancient way.

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...  
Let folk wear shaggy pelts. Now, if my sweet  
Is shut away and we've no chance to meet,  
Why should I wear a flowing toga? Lead  
The way: in furrows we will sow our seed  
At our mistress's command: I still will urge  
The usage of the shackles and the scourge.

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#### IV

I spy my mistress's rule and slavery  
For me. Farewell, my father's legacy.  
Thrall's bitter chains constrain me. In my woe  
Cupis will never ever let me go.  
He burns me, innocent or not. Away  
With torches, cruel girl. I would I may  
Not feel this pain or rather be a rock

On icy mountains or withstand the shock  
 Of winds as a crag smashed by the deadly sea!  
 My days are harsh, my nights are shadowy 10  
 And harsher still: I'm steeped in bitter gall.  
 My elegies are of no help at all,  
 Nor is Apollo, who created song.  
 She's always begging me! Get you along,  
 Muses, if you won't help a lover, for  
 I've no desire that you should sing of war.  
 I don't sing of the journeys of the sun  
 Nor how the Moon, when she her course has run,  
 Turns round her steeds. No, with my poetry 20  
 I seek to gain access effortlessly  
 To Nemesis. If poetry can't assure  
 Me that, then, Muses, leave. I must secure  
 My gifts to her through wicked deeds lest I,  
 In tears, before her padlocked doorway. Lie,  
 Or pilfer holy emblems: but I'd best  
 Defile the love goddess before the rest.  
 Down with that men who emeralds will buy  
 And snowy fleece with Tyrian purple dye.  
 Coan cloth and shiny shells fro the crimson sea  
 Arouse in tender girls cupidity. 30  
 They've turned a woman evil, and therefore  
 A key is now inserted in the door,  
 A guard-dog barking, too. But if you bear  
 A splendid gift, farewell the guardian's care,  
 The key, the dog itself now being mute.  
 Alas, whatever god resolved to suit  
 Beauty with greed, to such iniquity  
 What good did he attach? Consequently  
 Weeping ensues and noisy quarrelling.  
 Thua ill-famed Amor's always wandering. 40  
 But you who shut out lovers who don't pass  
 Muster as generous men – may all your mass  
 Of wealth be mined by wind and fire, and may  
 Young men enjoy the flames blazing away  
 And may there be no helpful soul to try  
 To douse the blaze and, should your death be nigh,  
 May there be none to mourn you or bestow  
 A gift at your sad rites. Good women, though,  
 Strangers to greed, though they a hundred years  
 Have lived, will on the pyre hear all our tears. 50  
 Are there, in honour of love's lengthy span,  
 A yearly garland by some aged man  
 Will then be laid. "Sleep well and peacefully,"

He'll say as he departs; "may the earth be  
 Light on your tranquil bones." I'm fair and square  
 In warning you, and yet why should I care  
 For truth? It's by her rules our Love must be  
 Worshipped. If she says, "Sell the family  
 Estate," submit, Lars, to the girl's command.  
 Whatever herbs live in the Thessalian land, 60  
 What poisons Circe and Medea possess,  
 And when Venus incites with amorousness  
 The untamed herds, what equine lunacy  
 Drops from a lusting mare, if I should see  
 Nemesis wink, though she may coalesce  
 A ton of herbs, I'll drink it nonetheless.

V

Phoebus, bless us: a new priest's entering  
 Your temple: come, let's hear the lyre and sing.  
 Now pluck the lyre's string, and what I say  
 Adapt to tunes of eulogy, I pray.  
 Brows bound with bay, your shrines by acolytes  
 Heaped up, come now, I beg, to your own rites.  
 Be fair and shimmering. Your raiment wear,  
 Long set aside. Comb well your streaming hair,  
 As when, after they drove King Saturn away,  
 You sang of Jupiter's victory, they say. 10  
 You see far to the future. She knows well  
 Who serves you what the prophet bird will tell.  
 The lots you master; the diviner sees  
 When on the entrails the god's prophecies  
 Are marked. The Sibyl never used deceit  
 On Romans – now in verses of six feet  
 She sings our cryptic oracles. Once here,  
 Let Messalinus touch the scripts of the seer:  
 Teach him her songs. He gave a prophecy  
 To Aeneas after – so it's rumoured – he 20  
 Carried his father and the blest Lares  
 (He thought there'd be no Rome with Troy ablaze  
 When he looked back upon it). Romulus  
 Had not yet built Rome's walls, his twin Remus  
 Doomed not to share them. On the Palatine  
 Back then cows grazed and on the Aventine  
 Stood humble huts, and milky Pan took shade  
 Beneath an oak, and with a scythe was made  
 A wooden Pales. Hanging on a tree,  
 An offering to the sylvan deity 30

Was a vagrant shepherd's pipe, each reed made fast  
 With wax, each ne being shorter than the last.  
 Where Velabrum opens out, upon its way  
 A skiff would glide, while on a festal day  
 A young girl, to make love to her wealthy beau,  
 The owner of the splendid flock, would go,  
 Returning with gifts from the fertile land,  
 A snow-white lamb from a snow-white mother and  
 A cheese). "Aeneas, ever labouring,  
 The brother of winged Cupid, carrying 40  
 Troy's relics on your fleeing argosy.  
 Now Jove shows you Laurentian greenery;  
 The land welcomes your wandering gods. That place  
 Will honour you when Numicus will grace  
 You with the name 'Native Divinity'.  
 Behold at last distinguished Victory,  
 Flying above your weary fleet. I see  
 The burning fires among the Rutuli:  
 Cruel Turnus, I foreshadow your demise  
 While the Laurentian camp's before my eyes, 50  
 The Lavinian wall and Alba Longa, too,  
 Which Lord Ascanius founded. Priestess, you  
 Of Troy I see, noting that you have quit  
 The Vestals' hearth, preparing to be fit  
 For Mars, your secret trysts, braids flung aside,  
 The lusty god's arms by the riverside  
 Thrown down. You bulls, now pluck grass while you may  
 Upon the seven hills because one day  
 A mighty city will be built tight here.  
 O Rome, your very name will strike with fear 60  
 The lands you'll rule. Ceres peers down to gaze  
 Upon her fields, and where sunny haze  
 Is seen and where Sol's panting steeds are wet  
 With Ocean's stream. Tory surely, you may bet,  
 Will marvel at herself and say that you  
 Have served her well for long. I sing what's true:  
 May I, unharmed, always feed on the bay  
 Of gods, a virgin till my dying day."  
 Thus sang the priestess who ro Phoebus cried,  
 Tossing her flowing mane from side to side. 70  
 What was said by Amalthea and Hierophyle,  
 What Grecian Phoeto spoke in prophesy,  
 The many sacred lots transported by  
 Tiburs on Anio's stream, her clothes still dry -  
 A comet that warned of war they would maintain  
 Would come and, down upon the earth, would rain



A shower of rock; war-trumps and weaponry  
 Would make the sky ring with cacophony  
 And groves would forecast flight and, as he yoked  
 His fallow steeds, the sun himself never poked 80  
 Between the clouds for a year; warm tears were shed  
 By statues of the gods; what lay ahead  
 Talking cattle forecast. These things had occurred,  
 But, merciful Apollo, give your word  
 To drown these portents in the untamed sea  
 And let the laurel crackle genially  
 In holy fire, an omen for a year  
 That's glad and full. No, farmers, give a cheer,  
 For when the laurel's auguries bode well,  
 Ceres with ears of corn the barns will swell 90  
 While all the jugs and vats have space to spare.  
 The shepherd, drunk, will sing the Parilian air.  
 Wolves, keep far from our pens. Then he will light  
 The holy straw and leap across the height  
 Of the sacred flame. His wife will bear a boy  
 Who, holding both his ears, will kiss with joy  
 His father; his grandpa won't be distressed  
 To babytalk. The young ones then will lie  
 Upon the grass, their worshipping gone by, 100  
 Screened by an ancient tree. Shades with wreaths bound  
 They make from their clothes, the very bowl, too, crowned.  
 Each man will pile his gestal food on high  
 At turf boards on turf couches. Passing by,  
 A youth will curse his girl, consequently,  
 When sober, ruing his antipathy  
 And blaming madness. Phoebus, may your bow  
 And arrows perish and may Cupid go  
 Unarmed. Your skill is good, but once that lad  
 Took arms himself, he showed that he proved bad. 110  
 To many – me above all! For I lie  
 Wounded all year. The sickness, grief's supply,  
 I feed. I sing of Nemesis constantly,  
 Without whom I possess no poetry,  
 No metre. But (since poets are in the care  
 Of the gods) I counsel you, my girl, to spare  
 The holy bards, that I may eulogize  
 Messsalinus when his conquered towns, a prize  
 Of war, before his chariots are brought.  
 Then, laurel-bound, the men with whom he fought 120  
 Will loudly celebrate his victory.  
 Then may Messalla for the citizenry  
 Sponsor displays, and, as his son rides by,

Cheer him upon his way. Phoebus, say aye,  
And may your locks flow to eternity.

VI

Macer is off to war: what will befall  
Mild Love? Will he go, too, and bravely haul  
His gear? Whether long treks or the wandering sea  
Will plague him, will he with his weaponry  
Escort him? Burn him, boy – your easy way  
Of life he's quit. Call back the runaway  
Beneath your flag. If you are courteous  
To soldiers, he will be one, too, and thus  
Bear water in his helmet. I will swell  
War's ranks. So, Venus and my girls, farewell. 10  
Grand words! And yet closed doors fling back at me  
That eloquence of mine. How frequently  
I swore I'd not to go back to it. Although  
My oath seemed fine, my feet would always go  
Thither. Harsh Love, your darts I yearn to see  
Broken, your torches doused, if that may be!  
You plague the lovesick and force me to say  
A curse upon myself, my mind astray,  
And speak foul words. I would have ceased my grief  
In death but trustful Hope pledges relief 20  
Tomorrow, fostering life. Hope also feeds  
Farmers and fills the ploughed furrows with seeds  
The fields retuen with plentiful revenue.  
She catches birds in nets, and fishes, too,  
With rods she snares, the bait serving to hide  
The slender hooks. The soothes the man who's tied  
With heavy chains which jangle, although he  
Sings as he toils. She also promises me  
My yielding Nemesis, though she says no.  
Watch out, harsh girl – don't try to make a foe 30  
Of a goddess. By your little sister who  
Was prematurely dead, I beg of you,  
Desist! To me she's sacred – to her bier  
I'll bear gifts and wreaths wet with many a tear:  
Thither I'll flee and there will I remain  
While to her voiceless ashes I'll complain  
About my fate. That I should weep for you  
She never will endure, while I taboo  
Indifference to her words and me, in case  
The neglected Shades send evil dreams to chase 40  
You as you sleep and she in misery

Stand there, her guise as when precipitately  
 She fell from high above and went below,  
 All bloodied, to Avernus' lakes of woe.  
 I'll cease lest Nemesis' bitter grief should be  
 Renewed: my worth is not of such degree  
 That she should shed one tear – she should not stain  
 Her eloquent eyes. The bawd causes us pain,  
 Though Nemesis is good. That procuress  
 Goes slyly to and fro and brings distress 50  
 With missives carried where I may not see.  
 I at her cruel door have frequently  
 Heard Nemesis' velvet tones, but she'd deny  
 She was at home, and often, too, when I  
 Was pledged a night, "She is not well," she's said,  
 Or "She's afraid of threats" Cares kill me dead:  
 "Who holds my love?" my ruined mind will say,  
 And "Which positions do they use?" I pray,  
 The Furies, bawd, will fill you with distress,  
 Should one part of my prayer bring me success. 60