

VIRGIL ECLOGUES

I

Meliboeus:

Tityus, beneath a broad beech-tree you lie.
Playing your sylvan ditties. Meanwhile, I
Must leave my lovely fields, a refugee
From my own home, though, Tityrus, lazily
You sit there in the shade and with the sound
Of "Fair Amaryllis" bid the woods resound.

Tityrus:

Meliboeus, a god has vowed this ease to me
(A god indeed I'll name him constantly).
And from my folds a tender lamb of mine
Will with her life-blood stain his holy shrine. 10
The cows may roam while on my pipe I'll play
What ditties I prefer day after day.

Meliboeus:

I grudge you not but marvel more how wide
Confusion is about the countryside.
I drive my she-goats disconcerted, for
This, whom I scarce can lead, just lately bore
Her twins upon the hazel-thicket there
On the bare flint, hope of the flock – a care
I should have known about, for frequently,
Though I was blind, it was foretold to me 20
When thunder struck the oak, and often I
Had listened to the raven's ominous cry

That emanated from the trunk. But who
Is your fine god? Come, Tityrus, tell me, do!

Tityrus:

The city they call Rome I foolishly
Believed resembled this town, whither we
Are wont to drive our lambs; I also knew
That whelps resemble dogs and younglings, too,
Their dams, comparing small with great; but I
Was wrong, for Rome rears up her head so high 30
That she is like a cypress towering
Above our osiers.

Meliboeus:

What was the thing
That took you there?

Tityrus:

Freedom, who now has laid
Her eyes on me now that the barber's blade
Has shaved a whiter beard than in the past.
I tarried long, but she has come at last.
Now since from Galatea's slavery
I've been released, my only loyalty
Is to my Amaryllis, I must say
That when my former paramour held sway 40
I had no hope for freedom nor a thought
Of saving money – many a lamb I brought
To this unthankful town, and many a cheese,
Yet came home almost skint in spite of these.

Meliboeus:

I used to wonder, Amaryllis, why

You cried to Heaven so sadly, hanging high
The apples on the trees – for whom? I'd say.
Of course it was because you were away.
The very pines, the very fountains, too,
The very vineyards cried aloud for you. 50

Tityrus:

What could I do? How else to be set free,
Unless some god were here to succour me?
I saw the youth to whom I sacrifice
Upon my smoking altars for full twice
Six days per year. He said immediately,
"Just feed and rear your stock, as previously."

Meliboeus:

Then when you have grown old, these fields will still
Be yours. Though stones and weeds infest them all,
Your mother ewes eat well, nor do they fall 60
Ill with contagion from a neighbouring
Flock. With your streams and many a hallowed spring.
You'll seek the shade, and you'll be pacified
And lulled to sleep by bees that dwell beside
The hedge that borders your own property.
Then shall the pruner sing a melody
Beneath some lofty rock, and you will hear
The strident cooing, pleasing to the ear,
Of wood-pigeons, and to your great delight
The doves will moan upon an elm-tree's height. 70

Tityrus;

Sooner shall stags feed on the air, therefore,
And all the seas leave fish upon the shore,

And Germany and Parthia change place
Than I will lose the memory of his face.

Meliboeus:

But we must go to Libya far away
Or Scythia or Crete, and there we'll stay,
Or distant Britain. Will I ever see
Again my country? Will I finally
Behold my lovely, turf-roofed cottage where
I ruled as king. The meadows, trimmed so fair, 80
Some impious soldier will come to possess –
A foreigner! Oh, what a hopeless mess
Has civil war produced! Have we, then, sown
These furrows for these aliens to own?
So graft your pears, arrange your vines. Away,
My flock, my she-goats, blithe for many a day!
Never again shall I behold my flock
From my green cave as from a bushy rock
They hang. For, Tityrus, my aged friend,
They'll never more behold me as I tend 90
On them, browsing on willow or on clover-
Flowers. Indeed my singing days are over.

Tityrus:

Yet here you might repose with me this night,
Pillowed on leaves. My apples, friend, are bright,
My chestnuts soft, my milk is curdled well,
And you can see where all the farm-folk dwell.
See, too, their smoking chimneys far away
While shadows lengthen at the close of day.

For fair Alexis Corydon was flame:
 She was his master's joy, and so he came
 Not close to hope. But yet the shadowy
 Thicket that housed many a tall beech-tree
 He'd haunt and pour out artless melodies,
 Which echoed to the woods and promontories.
 "My songs, cruel Alexis, you won't heed.
 Have you no pity for me? Ah, you'll speed
 Me to my death! Now even cattle go
 To seek some shade; the lizard hides below 10
 The thorn. For rowers, weary from the heat,
 Thestylis pounds her savoury herbs to treat
 Them with wild thyme and garlic. Meanwhile, I,
 Alone save for the cicadas that cry
 Throughout the brake, still trace your footsteps, though
 The broiling sun beats down on me. I know
 I've better borne Amaryllis' mockery;
 I've wooed Menalcas better, although he
 Was dark and you are blond. Fair boy, don't trust
 In colour overmuch – white privets must 20
 Yet fall, while dusky hyacinths must be
 Taken away. Alexis, you scorn me,
 And who and what I am you do not care
 To ask about nor ask how well I fare
 In flocks and how in rich milk I abound,
 And yet a thousand lambs of mine around

The hills meander. My pails overflow
 With milk all year. I sing as long ago
 When Amphion sang a lovely melody
 For Circe when in Aracynthus he 30
 Called in his cattle. And I am not so
 Bad-looking, for I was, some time ago,
 Upon the beach and looked into the sea,
 And when the winds were still, it mirrored me,
 Unless it lies, as one who would not fear
 To challenge Daphnis even if you were here
 To judge me. Ah, if you were pleased with me
 To dwell in some low cottage or, maybe,
 Even the fields, shoot down the stags or round
 Up straggling sheep, I'd teach the lovely sound 40
 Of warbling to you, so that very soon
 You'd rival Pan, who first began to tune
 The reeds with wax and always takes great heed
 Of sheep and shepherds. You'd not rue the reed
 Marring your dainty lips. You must be taught
 All that Amyntas did, and there was nought
 That he has disregarded. I possess
 An instrument that hemlock-stalks compress
 In lessening lengths – Damoetas gave it me
 As he lay dying: "This was mine," said he - 50
 "It's yours now." Amyntas was envious!
 I nabbed two fawns, though it was dangerous,
 In a steep glen – dappled with white are they,
 Both suckled by a sheep twice every day.
 I keep them still for you; Thestylis, though,

Implores me for them, and this shall be so
Because you treat me still with such disdain.
Come hither, lovely boy, and you'll obtain
These baskets from the Nymphs; the Naiad, too,
Plucks violets and poppy-heads for you. 60

With fragrant fennel and narcissus she
Has made for you a balmy pot-pourri;
With cassia and other herbs they're blent,
With tender hyacinth to complement
Them with the yellow marigolds. And I
Will pick white quinces, all encompassed by
Their tender down, and chestnuts, favourite
Of Amaryllis, plums, equally fit
For honour, laurels, myrtles, growing near
My house, for all these sweets are mingled here. 70

Ah, Corydon, you lack sophistication! –
Alexis gives you no consideration
For all your gifts, and iollas equally
Would turn them down. What, in my misery,
Did I long for? The South Wind I have set
Upon my flowers to my loss and let
The wild boar haunt my springs. Such lunacy!
Whom are you fleeing from? Historically,
The gods have chosen in the woods to dwell,
And the Dardanian Paris has as well. 80

Let Pallas keep the walls she built! But we
Before all other things prefer to be
Wood-dwellers. The fierce lioness will trail
The wolf, the wolf the goat, who'll never fail

To trail the clover: meanwhile Corydon
Will trail Alexis, each of us led on
By what one or the other wants. Behold!
The weary oxen come back to the fold,
The shadows double with the fading sun,
Yet still I burn with love. Can anyone
Restrain love? On the elm the half-pruned vine
Still hangs. Why don't you hasten to entwine
Your bushes? Faced now by this mockery,
You'll find a new Alexis there will be.

III

Menalcas:

Is this flock Meliboeus' property,
Damoetas?

Damoetas:

No. Aegon has recently
Passed them to me.

Menalcas:

Unhappy sheep indeed!
While he still courts Neaera with a need
To know her choice will never fall on me,
This hireling wrings their udders constantly
(Twice every hour!), thereby taking away
Their life-juice from the lambs.

Damoetas:

Menalcas, stay
Your jeers at other men! We surely know

What man it was, and in what shrine with you, 10

While all the he-goats cast their eyes aside

And all the light Nymphs laughed –

Menalcas:

Yes, when you spied

Me slashing Micon's tender vines and trees

With my unfriendly hook.

Damoetas:

Or here by these

Old beeches when you broke the darts and bow

That Damon owned, since you were chafing so

When you first saw them given to the lad,

You impious Menalcas. Yes, and had

You not attacked him, you would now be dead.

Menalcas:

But what can masters do when so much dread 20

Is caused by thieves? Did I not see you lie

In wait for Damon's he-goat while nearby

Lyciscas barked? To Tityrus I cried,

"Gather your flock!" and off you went to hide

Behind the bushes.

Damoetas:

But should he I beat

Then keep it? Through his suffering defeat

When I out-piped him, that goat was for me.

Menalcas:

You won the contest?? Did I ever see

You pipe a waxen pipe? You have no skill!

Was it not you who made your hearers ill 30

At the crossroads with your discordant air

Upon a grating stalk?

Damoetas:

Shall we, then, dare

To try our skill against each other? Lest

You're loath to enter into this contest,

I'll pledge this heifer – she comes twice a day

Up to the milking-pail so that she may

Feed her two young ones. What's your stake for me?

Menalcas:

There's nothing from the flock I'll guarantee –

I have a father and a harsh stepmother

Who count them twice a day, one or the other 40

Checking the kids. But since you're keen to act

So wildly, what I'll vow you'll say in fact

Is better – two beech cups from the divine

Art of Automedon, embossed so fine,

Whereon a limber vine is wreathed around

Pale ivy-berries; also may be found

Two figures, one Conon, the other one

Who marked out with his staff for everyone

The heavens, when to plough and when to reap.

I have not touched them yet, although I keep 50

Them by me.

Damoetas:

For me, too, Automedon

Has wrought a pair of goblets, and upon

The handles is an acanthus circling

Orpheus with all the forests following.

The sweet and blushing hyacinths, the bays.”

Damoetas:

Gay Galatea throws a quince at me,

Then hides behind the trees but hopes I’ll see.”

Menalcas:

My dear Amyntas comes unasked to me –

My hounds don’t know Diana better than she.” 80

Damoetas:

“I’ve presents for my love – with my own eyes

I’ve seen the pigeons’ nests high in the skies.”

Menalcas:

“I’ve sent my boy ten apples – my whole store:

Tomorrow, though, there’ll be as many more.”

Damoetas:

“The words that Galatea spoke to me!

So sweet they were, and uttered frequently!

Waft some of them, you winds, far, far away

So that the gods may hear them all, I pray!”

Menalcas:

“Amyntas, what profit is there for me

That in your very heart no mockery 90

You show to me if, while you hunt the boar,

To guard the nets becomes my only chore?”

Damoetas:

“It’s my birthday, lollas – send Phyllis, do!

And when the harvest’s done, you must come, too.”

Menalcas:

“I love her more than anyone: she wept

To see me leave her presence, and she kept

On lingering upon the word 'Adieu'.

'My fair lollas,' she said, 'goodbye to you!'"

Damoetas:

"As cruel as the wild wolf is to these

My folded sheep, Sirocco to the trees, 100

Rain to the ripening corn, so equally

Is the wrath that Amaryllis shows to me."

Menalcas:

"As damp to corn, as the young willow-tree

To ewes, as arbut to the progeny

Of adult goats, Amyntas is as dear

To me: in sweetness no-one else comes near."

Damoetas:

"Pierian Maids, that muse of mine, although

She's country-bred, is loved by Pollio,

And therefore send a heifer that you may

Provide your reader with a meal, I pray!" 110

Menalcas:

"Pollio composes verses, too: therefore

Fatten a bull that's old enough to gore

By brandishing his horns at others and

Scatter with his four hooves the flying sand."

Damoetas:

"The man who loves you, Pollio, may he

Go where he may enjoy your company

And for him let the honey freely glide

And let the bramble-bush its spice provide!"

Menalcas:

"Let him who doesn't dislike Bravius

Take pleasure from your verses, Maevius! 120

Let him yoke foxes, too, and place his male
Goats, with great hopes above the milking-pail!"

Damoetas:

"You who pick flowers and strawberries that grow
Close to the ground, fly hence, you boys! Yes, go!
For a cold adder, though you're not aware,
Is lurking underneath the grass right there."

Menalcas:

"I'm warning you, my sheep – don't go too near
The brink, because this bank engenders fear.
For even now the ram is over there,
Exposing his fleece to the drying air." 130

Damoetas:

"Tityrus, check your nanny goats who graze
So near the river! I shall, in the days
To come, take all of them aside beyond
This spot, and there I'll wash them in the pond."

Menalcas:

"Gather your sheep, boys, and take them away
From the sun's rays, because the heat could stall
Our milk, as once it did. Accordingly
We'll wring their dried-up udders fruitlessly."

Damoetas:

How skinny is my bull; although among
The vetch that fattens! It's the same old song – 140
For both herdsman and herd it's serious,
Because the selfsame love wastes all of us."

Menalcas:

“Though love is not the cause, I have to say,
My little lambkins are wasting away,
With little flesh upon their bones. Thereby
I think they’re subject to some evil eye.”

Damoetas:

“Say in what country – and you then shall be
To me the great Apollo – can there be
A heaven whose whole breadth is just a wide
As three yards – just three yards! – from side to side.” 150

Menalcas:

“What country is there, I would like to know,
In which there are gardens of flowers that grow
With kings’ names on their petals? Just tell me
And Phyllis will be yours exclusively.”

Palaemon:

It’s not for me to judge between you two,
For you deserve the heifer, both of you,
And anyone who fears the splendiddness
Of love or have to taste its bitterness.
Now, boys, shut off the sluices now, for see!
The meadows have all drunk sufficiently. 160

You Muses, let's sing of a somewhat more
Important matter! Not all men adore
Coppice or tamarisk. Therefore, if we
Should sing about the woods, then let them be
Worthy of consuls! The age of Cumae,
Sung by the Sibyl, has from us passed by:
New centuries begin. Morality
Returns, and old Saturn's hegemony,
And down from Heaven a new breed of men
Has now been sent. So, chaste Lucina, when 10
The boy is born who'll cause a golden race
To be established in the world and chase
Iron away, befriend him. Pollio,
You will be consul then, and on will go
The glorious months and, with you as our guide,
Whatever wickedness may still reside
Within our hearts shall then be swept away
And free the world from permanent dismay.
He'll be a god, with heroes mingling,
And with his father's virtue he will bring 20
Peace to the world. For you, young boy, the earth,
Although it is untilled, will bring to birth
Her tiny gifts, the budding ivy-spray,
Foxglove, bean-flowers in a fine array,
Smiling acanthus. Of their own accord
Goats will come home, whose udders will afford
Plenteous milk; cattle will have no dread
Of lions; and your cradle itself will spread

Out flowers. Snakes and poisonous plants will be
No more; Assyrian spices will we see 30
Both far and wide. And you'll read of the glories
Achieved by heroes and the many stories
About your father's deeds; you'll learn as well
Of virtue, and the plain will slowly swell
With waving corn-crops which shall turn to gold,
And on the briar the bright grape shall take hold,
And stubborn oaks shall sweat their honey-dew,
And yet there'll lurk within some residue
Of ancient wrongs that tempt mankind to try
To sail upon the deep, build towers high 40
To gird their towns and cleave the earth. And thus
A second Tiphys will appear to us
To guide another *Argo*; there'll be war
Again: a new Achilles will once more
Be sent to Troy. When to maturity
You grow, no-one will venture to the sea,
But every land on earth will all things bear;
The soil shall no more feel the harsh ploughshare,
Nor vine the hook; the strong ploughman shall free
His bullock from the yoke; the wool won't be 50
Tinted with many hues; the ram will glitter
With purple and saffron, the flock's young litter
Shall graze in natural scarlet. "Let it be
Like this", the Fates have said, in harmony,
To spindles, for it must be so. Dear son
Of gods, assume your greatness, mighty one –
Your time approaches. See, the world is bent

Beneath the weight – the earth, the wide extent
Of ocean and the sky. They feel delight
For what the future brings. Oh, would I might 60
Have such a length of days given to me! –
Thus I'd outsing Orpheus in rivalry,
And Linus, too, despite their parents' aid.
Indeed I'd even put Pan in the shade
With Arcady as judge. Now, baby boy,
Welcome your mother with a smile of joy.
For you she bore ten months of weariness.
So, baby boy, begin! For I profess
The boys to whom their parents have not said
A word of cheer aren't worthy of their bed.

V

Menalcas:

Mopsus, you play well on the slender reed
While I sing ditties: and therefore, indeed,
Why should we not sit down, my skillful friend,
Here where the elm-trees and the hazel blend?

Mopsus:

Now as the younger man I must agree
To what you say, Menalcas, whether we
Should choose a shady place that's quivering
As breezes change or look for sheltering
Inside the cave, beneath where vines amass.

Menalcas:

Upon these hills of ours none can surpass 10

Your singing but Amyntas.

Mopsus:

What? Will he

Try to best Phoebus, then, in rivalry?

Menalcas:

Mopsus, begin! Perhaps you wish to sing

Of Phyllis or of Alcon, or to fling

Your insults at Codrus. While Tityrus

Watches the grazing kids, come, sing for us!

Mopsus:

These verses that I carved the other day

Upon a beech-tree's rind I will essay –

They are composed in iambs. Then we'll see

Whether Amyntas can compete with me! 20

Menalcas:

As willow cedes to olive, as the base

Nard from the Celtic land will yield its place

To bright rosebuds, Amyntas will be far

Below you. There's the cave! Yes, here we are!

Mopsus:

"The Nymphs all wept for Daphnis, cruelly

Slaughtered – hazels and streams, bear testimony!

His mother clasped poor Daphnis to her breast

And to the gods and pitiless stars addressed

Her grievance. Wretched Daphnis, in those days

No beast drank of the river or would graze 30

At all. The rocks and forests all around

The world would echo with the roaring sound

Of lions mourning you. For it was you

Who taught Armenian tigresses to do
 The work of pulling Bacchus as he sped
 Upon his chariot; you also led
 His revellers in all their pageantry
 And wreathed his bending spear-wands delicately.
 As vines are crowns of glory to the trees,
 And as the corn is to the fruitful leas, 40
 Bulls to the herd, grapes to the vine, so, too,
 A glory to your very self are you.
 And once the Fates had taken you away,
 Pales, and even Phoebus, would not stay.
 Where we had once sown barley frequently
 Nought but wild oats and darnel do we see.
 No violets or narcissi! In their steads
 Thistle and prickly thorn uprear their heads.
 Now, shepherds, strew the ground with leaves and veil
 The springs – for Daphnis said we must not fail 50
 In this to keep alive his memory –
 And build a tomb on which this elegy
 You are to write: 'I, Daphnis, shall have fame
 Since I, exalted, to the heavens came.
 Of a fair flock I once had custody,
 Though fairer still myself, considerably.'"
 Menalcas:
 As is your song, fine bard, as slumbering
 To weary limbs or from some bubbling
 River, quenching one's thirst when one is hot
 In summertime. Thrice happy boy, it's not 60
 Just with your reed but with your singing, too,

That you are skilled. Ranked with your master, you
Are second but to him. Yet will I sing
A song to you as well, ennobling
You with the stars, for I love Daphnis, too.

Mopsus:

Receiving such a boon, my friend, from you
Could not be dearer. For most worthily
Should Daphnis thus be honoured. Frequently
Has Stimichus himself in former days
Spoke to me of your singing skill with praise. 70

Menalcas:

"In dazzling sheen with unaccustomed eyes
That indicate his wonder and surprise,
Before Olympus Daphnis stands, where he
Can see beneath his feet a panoply
Of clouds and stars, wherefore the shepherd-band,
Pan and the dryads through the pasture-land
Are full of joy. The treacherous wolves now spare
The flocks, stags aren't entangled in the snare:
Daphnis loves peace. The mountains, too, address
To all the stars above their happiness. 80
The rocks themselves, the very thickets sing,
'He is a god'. Be kind, be promising
Unto your own! Altars we'll build for you,
Two for yourself and, for Apollo, two;
Two beakers of fresh milk year after year,
Two bowls of olive-oil we'll set right here,
But chiefly Bacchus' bounty will we bring,
If cold, before the hearth, at harvesting

In shade: thus will the festal hour be blessed.
We'll pour sweet nectar, then, at my request, 90
Damoetas and Aegon will sing for us
And in dancing shall Alpheisiboeus
Mimic the satyrs. You shall never lose
This service, both when we have paid their dues
To the nymphs each year and hold the rituals for
The fields in consecration. While the boar
Loves mountain-heights, and fish the streams, while bees
Eat thyme and crickets haunt the dewy leas
For food, all folks shall give you honour due.
As to Bacchus and Ceres, so to you. 100

VI

My first Muse sang the verse of Sicily
Nor was ashamed of her rusticity.
When I of war and royalty would sing,
Phoebus was at my ear and whispering,
"Shepherds should feed fat sheep. Nevertheless,
I'd have you sing songs of some tenderness,
Tityrus." So, Varus, since there won't be few
Who write of war and praise the deeds that you
Have done, I'll tune my oaten reed to play
Pastoral songs; I'll yield to what you say, 10
Phoebus! But if some lover reads them, too,
Our tamarisks, Varus, shall sing of you
Throughout the grove, for there is not one thing
That pleases Phoebus more than what can sing

Of Varus. Muses, speed! Just recently
Mnasyllus and Chromis happened to see
Within a cave Silenus sleeping sound,
Tipsy, as usual. The wreaths around
His head had fallen, and, not far away
From where he slumbered, there the garlands lay, 20
And by its grip a well-used cup hung there.
Often in vain they'd begged him for an air,
So with the wreaths they bound him sturdily.
Then Aegle, fairest of the company
Of Naiads, saw the frightened youngsters' fear,
And now Silenus, as she ventured near,
Opened his eyes, the mulberry juices spread
About his face, laughed at their guile and said,
"Untie me, boys! Enough that you suppose
You have the power. Now, for the songs, name those 30
You wish to hear, and I'll sing them for you;
Aegle shall have another present, too."
Thus he began. Wild things then set about
Frolicking with the Fauns and beating out
The time. The oaks would bend their branches low.
Even Apollo could not ravish so
Parnassus. Ismenus or Rhodope
Orpheus could not entrance so well, though he
Sang how the seeds of air, sea, fire and earth
Were thrust through the great vacuum at their birth; 40
The earth took shape and hardened; in the sea
Nereus was penned, and all things gradually
Developed; and the earth gaped in surprise

At the new sun now shining in the skies.
Rain fell, clouds soared; woods rose; live things would go
And scatter round the hills, which did not know
What they might be. The stones that Pyrrha threw
He sang of, and of Saturn's kingdom, too,
And also of Prometheus' thievery
And the Caucasian birds, and presently 50
The fountain where Hylas's mariners cried
To him until his name upon the tide
Re-echoed and he soothed Pasiphaë
With love of her white bull – ah, she would be
Much happier if here upon the earth
No herds of cattle had been given birth,
Poor frenzied maid! Proteus's daughters mooded,
And yet not one of them desired a rude
Union with a beast, yet on her brow
She longed for horns and feared the galling plough 60
About her neck. Poor ill-starred maid, you go
About the hills while he, as white as snow,
Lingers on hyacinths beneath the veil
Of a dark ilex, chewing on some pale
Herbage or tracks a heifer as she goes
Among the herd. Dictaeon nymphs, now close
The glades in order that I'll chance to see
The wandering prints he's made, or maybe he
Will dog the herd or, wishing to be fed
By pasture, by his fellow-beasts be led 70
To our Gortynian stalls. He sings as well
Of Atalanta captured by the spell

Of golden apples and the rings, moss-bound,
Of Phaethon's fair sisters, from the ground
Uprising into poplars. Then he sings
Of Gallus roaming past Permessus' springs,
Led by one of the Muses' company
To Aonia's hills, whereby accordingly
Apollo's choir arose in celebration,
How Linus, whose songs earned much admiration, 80
With flowers and parsley bound around his brow,
Declared, "These reeds the Muses give you now,
Though Hesiod owned them long ago, whereby
He lured the stubborn ash-trees from on high
With those who sing the Grynaean thicket's birth
So that no other thicket here on earth
May boast of Phoebus." Why say how he told
Of Scylla, who, we hear, as monsters rolled
And howled about her nether regions, sent
The Ithacan ships beneath the waves and rent 90
Their men apart? Or whereby Tereus got
Changed limbs according to his song, or what
A feast Philomela planned and how she fled
Out to the wastes and through the breezes sped
To her old home? For all of that, of old,
Beside blessed Eurotas Silenus told.
The laurels learnt them, too, and vales nearby
Re-echoed them into the starry sky,
Until the sheep were gathered for the night
And to the loath Olympus Dusk took flight. 100

Meliboeus:

Beneath a susurrating ilex-tree

Daphnis had just sat down, while recently

Thyrsis had brought the sheep and Corydon

The she-goats, swollen with their milk, each one

In bloom of youth, both raised in Arcady,

Ready to sing, replying equally.

Hitherward the he-goat himself had strayed

While from the winter's frost I sought to shade

My tender myrtles. Daphnis then I spied,

And when he saw me, "Quick! Come here!" he cried. 10

"Your goats are safe. If you've an idle hour

To spare, rest here within this shady bower!

Hither the steers will, of their own free will,

And unattended, come to drink their fill.

Mincius has trimmed his verdant banks around

With tender rushes, where one hears the sound

Of humming bees about yon sacred tree

Of oak." "What should you do?" you ask of me.

No Phylis or Alcippe then had I

At home to tend my lambs, and it was nigh 20

A weighty thing to judge a singing-bout

Between those two, and yet I opted out

Of serious business temporarily

To hear them singing. So immediately

They started, alternating strain for strain,

A mode the Muses in their minds retain.

Corydon:

"Nymphs of Libethra, whom I so adore,
Grant me a song that you some time before
Gave to my Codrus (for in verses he
Was closest to Apollo); but if we 30
Cannot with Codrus' skilfulness align,
Then let my pipe hang on this sacred pine."

Thyrsis:

"Arcadian shepherds, wreath with ivy spray
Your budding poet so that Codrus may
Explode with envy. But if he above
What's pleased praises me, then put foxglove
Around my brow that what he utters may
Not blight a poet of some future day."

Corydon:

"Delia, Micon sends this boar's head to you,
Paired with a sprightly stag's large antlers, too. 40
Should you be won, your statue, ankle-bound
In purple buskins, surely will be found."

Thyrsis:

"A bowl of milk and these cakes, Priapus,
Each year you can assume is plenteous
For you. You guard the plot of someone who
Is needy. Of marble we've fashioned you
Meanwhile, but if at lambing-time your fold
Is full of younglings, it will turn to gold."

Corydon:

"O Galatea mine, the progeny
Of Nereus, you are sweeter far to me 50

Than Hybla's thyme, whiter than swans, more fair
Than ivy. When the cattle shall repair
Back to the stalls, if Corydon to you
Means anything at all, you must come, too."

Thyrsis:

"May I seem more acerbic now to you
Than are Sardinian herbs, and rougher, too,
Than broom, worse than strewn seaweed if today
Has not seemed like a year! Cattle, away!"

Corydon:

"You mossy springs and grass more soft than sleep
And green arbut with meagre shade to keep 60
One cool, from the solstice keep my flock secure,
For burning summer's coming soon, it's sure,
And by the limber vine-shoot we can tell
The buds that grow there now begin to swell."

Corydon:

"Here is the hearth, and resinous logs we see,
A roaring fire, too, and ceaselessly
Smoke blackens all the doors. For here we care
For northern gales upon the biting air
As much as wolves for sheep, their common foe,
Or foaming rivers care to overflow." 70

Corydon:

"The junipers and prickly chestnuts stand;
Under each tree throughout the forest-land
Lie many fruits, and therefore everywhere
The entire world is smiling, but if fair
Alexis leaves these hill-slopes up on high,

Then you will see the rivers all run dry.”

Thyrsis:

“The fields are parched, and in the muted air

The grass is dying; Bacchus opts to spare

The hills his vineyards’ overshadowing;

But should my Phyllis come, with her she’ll bring 80

Greenness to all the grove, and we’ll obtain

The aid of Jupiter’s productive rain.”

Corydon:

“Alcides loves the poplar and Bacchus

Adores the vine and his own bays Phoebus

Loves dearly, and the myrtle, too, is dear

To beauteous Venus, while Phyllis, down here

On earth, loves hazels – no myrtle or bay

For her outvies the hazel any day.”

Thyrsis:

“The forest-ash is non-pareil, the vine

That flourishes in gardens is most fine, 90

The poplar by the stream, on the mountain’s height

The fir, but, Lycidas, my fair delight,

If you to me come oftener, I vow

The forest-ash and garden-pine would bow.”

Meliboeus:

Ah, yes, poor Thyrsis tried to win in vain.

Henceforth let Corydon with us remain!

VIII

Alphesiboeus and Damon I’ll sing,

Those shepherd-singers who in rivalling
With melodies made cows forget to graze:
The lynx stood awe-struck, and they would amaze
The streams which then would loiter just to hear
Their songs. But whether you should travel near
Timavus' crags or the Illyrian Sea,
When will the day arrive when I'll be free
To sing your deeds, where through the world I can
Sing of your verses, which only one man 10
Can rival? That would be great Sophocles.
You started, and shall end, those melodies.
Accept these songs you kindled, and around
Your temples let this ivy wreath be bound
Between the conquering bays! Scarce had the night
Removed the shade that brings a chilling bite,
When dewy grass is sweetest, when, upon
His olive staff leaning, began Damon.

Damon:

"Rise, Lucifer, and, heralding the light,
Bring in the day with welcome shining bright 20
While for my faithless Nysa I complain,
Deluded by a passion felt in vain,
And, as I die, now to the gods I call,
Although in this they are no help at all.
Begin, my flute, with songs of Maenalus,
For he will always have his susurrous
Thickets and pines that whisper in the breeze
And ever hear the shepherds' melodies
Of love, and Pan who first forbade the reed

To lie at leisure. Come, my flute, proceed! 30

Mopsus has Nysa now! What, then, can we

Who suffer love's great pangs expect to see?

Mares paired with griffins? Hounds and timid deer

Lapping together side by side? Come here,

Mopsus, and cut new brands to show your bride

The way, and, bridegroom, scatter far and wide

Your nuts! Your wish is granted! Of your mate

You're worthy, Nysa: all the rest you hate.

My shepherd's pipe, my goats, my shagginess,

My untrimmed beard you loathe, and you profess 40

That for mankind the gods have no regard.

Once with your mother in our orchard-yard

I saw a little maid, and she was you

(I was your guide) and apples wet with dew

You picked. I was but twelve and barely I

Could reach the brittle boughs that loomed on high.

A frenzy grasped my senses suddenly,

And now I know how cruel Love can be.

Amid harsh rocks the boy was brought to birth

From Rhodope or Tmaros or where earth 50

Comes to an end, where the Garamantes dwell.

He is no kin of ours, *that* I can tell!

A fierce love drove a mother once to kill

Her offspring – was this boy more cruel still?

Let wolves fly sheep, and let apples of gold

Hang on the oaks! Let alder-trees unfold

Narcissus! Let the tamarisk create

Rich amber! Let the screech-owl imitate

The swan in rivalry! Let Tityrus be
 Orpheus, and Orpheus accordingly 60
 Live in the glades! Be, Arion, in the deep
 Amid your dolphins! Let the whole earth sweep
 Into the ocean! You woodlands, goodbye!
 I from that rock upon that peak will fly
 Headlong into the sea. Take this from me,
 My dying gift, for all eternity!"
 Muses, since we cannot do everything,
 Now let us hear Alpheisiboeus sing!
 Aphisiboeus:
 "Fetch water! Wreathe these shrines with wool and burn
 Male incense and rich herbs that I may turn 70
 My lover's frigid heart! Here's just one thing
 I lack and that is song, and therefore bring
 Daphnis to me, my song! It is a fact
 That singing can the very moon attract
 From Heaven. Circe changed Ulysses' crew
 From human form, and in the meadows, too,
 By song the ice-cold snake is burst apart.
 These triple threads of colour now I start
 To wreathe about you; a likeness of you,
 Daphnis, I pass around these altars, too, 80
 Three times, because the god takes great delight
 To see uneven numbers. Bind them tight,
 Amaryllis, in three knots, pray, and mind
 You say, 'The chain of Venus now I bind.'
 As the flame hardens and with the same flame
 The wax melts, so may Daphnis be the same

And love me! Burn the bays and sprinkle meal.
Daphnis, your burning cruelty I feel –
And, therefore, likewise melt just like this bay!
For as a cow through woodland haunts may stray, 90
Love-lorn, not noticing the dusk draws nigh
That calls her home, with love I, too, have pined.
May Daphnis pine like her and I not mind
To heal him! These dear pledges he left me,
These relics of a man of treachery,
O earth, I give you, for he must regain
The debt he owes to me. These herbs of bane
Moeris gave me (in Pontus they were found,
For that is where pernicious herbs abound). 100
With these I've seen that man change frequently
Into a wolf and in the greenery
Of forests hide and from the tomb awake
The spirits of the dead and even make
Corn move from field to field. Amaryllis, throw
Ashes into the brook, not looking, though,
Behind you! I will work on him with these,
For he cares not for gods or melodies.
The altar's caught now with their flickering flame,
While I delay to fetch them – all the same, 110
May that prove lucky! Ah, it must, for hark!
On the threshold Hylax begins to bark.
Are lovers by their fantasies deceived
Or can what's happening still be believed?
At last, my songs! Now terminate your strain!
Daphnis is coming from the town. Refrain!

Lycidas:

Where are you off to, Moeris? Town?

Moeris:

Oh, see

How things have turned out, Lycidas, though we

Did not expect it! An intruder's gone

To our small farm and shouted out, "Move on,

You former men! These fields are mine!" So we,

Beset with fear and full of misery,

Since our good luck has changed to bad, now go

To take to him these kids (I wish him woe

With them!)

Lycidas:

But where the hills come to an end,

I've surely heard, and gradually descend 10

Down to the shallows of the river and

The broken crests of those beech-trees, that land

Was saved by your Menalcas' melodies.

Moeris:

That's true enough, but when hostilities

Occur our songs avail no more, we hear,

Than sacred doves do when an eagle's near.

And had I not, from out an ilex-tree,

Then heard a raven and accordingly

Cut short the feud, Menalcas, I must say,

And I, too, would not be alive today. 20

Lycidas:

Whoever could have wrought so great a crime?
How close were we to losing all the time
We hoped to spend in your fine company!
Who then would sing of the nymphs? Who would there be
To strew the flowering herbs upon the ground?
Who would there be to draw a veil around
The springs? What of the songs I secretly
Filched from you when you sang a melody
To Amaryllis, who would make us burn
With love? Sustain my goats till I return, 30
Tityrus (the path is short), then drive them to
The pool where they may drink, and, as you do,
Beware the he-goat's horn.

Moeris:

Oh, yes indeed!

And what about that song to Varius he'd
In mind to finish off?: "Varius, your name
The swans will sing to elevate your fame,
If only Mantua's still flourishing,
Too near wretched Cremona."

Lycidas:

Moeris, sing,

As you would have your Corsican yew-trees free
Of bees and all your cows browse placidly 40
On clover, with their udders burgeoning.
The Muses blessed me, too, for I can sing.
The shepherds call me poet, although I
Can scarce believe that – nothing that I try

Can rival anything that Varius
Or Cinna penned: unlike melodious
Swans, I am but a cackling goose.

Moeris:

I thought

To sing as well, for something now I brought
To mind – no paltry song!:"Galatea, pray
Agree with me that it's such joy to play 50
Amid the ocean-waves. Here glows the spring:
Beside the streams the flowers are flourishing
In hordes. Above the cave the poplar towers
And clinging vines entwine shadowy bowers.
Come, leave the violent waves that drive along
The shoreline!

Lycidas:

I once heard you sing a song

On a clear night alone. I can recall
The notes still but the lyrics not at all.
"Why, Daphnis, are you gazing way up high?
D'you see the constellations in the sky? 60
There's Caesar's star that gladdens all the leas
With corn and on the bright declivities
Brings colour to the grape. Accordingly,
Cultivate your pears so that your progeny
May pluck their fruit!"

Moeris:

Time carries everything

Away, even our wits. I used to sing,
While still a youngster, deep into the night,

But from my mind they all have taken flight.

My voice is failing, too: the wolves can see

Me first. Menalcas, though, will frequently 70

Repeat your songs to you.

Lycidas:

I pray, no more

Excuses! Silence reigns beyond the shore,

The morning breezes hushed. We're halfway there,

For here's Bianor's tomb. Here, Moeris, where

The men are lopping leafage, let us sing.

Set down the kids, though it's a certain thing

That we shall reach the town But should we dread

That it will rain before that, then instead

Let's sing to cheer ourselves upon the road:

That we may sing, I'll ease you of this load. 80

Moeris:

Cease, lad! Let's go to work, because when he

Arrives, we're sure to sing more skillfully.

X

Arethusa, grant to me this final thing:

A few lines for my Gallus I must sing,

Verse that Lycoris would approve. For who

Would fail to sing for Gallus? So, when you

Are gliding through the waves of Sicily,

May Doris never blend upon the sea

A bitter wave with yours! And let Gallus

Stand as our theme and all the torturous

Pangs that he bore, while our she-goats browse near

To us upon the brush. People will hear 10

Ur songs, for not one word of ours will leave

Our lips but that the woodland will receive

Each one and echo it. Where, though, were you,

You dryads, when for a love that was untrue

Gallus lay dying? For you were not stayed

By Pindus or Parnassus, not one maid,

Or Aganippe. Even the laurels shed

Great tears, and tamarisks. Gallus lay spread

Upon a lonely rock while Maenalus

And all the crags of frigid Lycaeus 20

Wept, too. Our sheep were not ashamed of us

As they were standing round us, glorious

Poet – even Adonis felt no shame

To graze sheep by the stream. The shepherd came

And the swineherds. Maenalus came, too,

Wet from his acorns. “Where’s the man whom you

Adore?” all asked. Apollo also came –

“Gallus, are you insane?” he cried. “Your flame

Lycoris seeks another, rushing through

The snows and filthy camps.” Silenus, too, 30

Was there, a rural personality –

The fennels and tall lilies he could see

Shaking before him. The god Pan we spied,,

With elderberry and vermilion dyed.

“Is there no end to this?” that deity stated.

Love does not care – his heart is no more sated

With tears than grass with streams, with cytissus

The bees or goats with leaves.” “Yet you to us

Will sing, Arcadians, of our misery
 Upon the mountains," he said dolefully. 40
 "Alone you have the skill. I would one day
 Rest peacefully if but your flutes should play
 And tell of how I loved. I would that I
 Had been part of your group in days gone by
 To tend your vines or sheep, for then I'd be
 Beloved of Phyllis, who'd enrapture me,
 Or dark Amyntas. Violets in hue
 Are black; the hyacinths are dusky, too,
 Among the willows under the limber vine,
 And by my side my love would then recline; 50
 Phyllis would pluck wreaths, Amyntas would sing.
 Soft mead and grove and many a cooling spring
 Are here, Lycoris. Thus our lives should we
 Have spent. But a mad love engrosses me –
 A love for stalwart Mars and fighting foes,
 While you – o would that I could not suppose
 It's true! – are quite alone and far from me
 And look upon depressing scenery,
 The frozen river Rhine, the Alpine snow.
 May frost and jagged ice not cause you woe! 60
 Upon my shepherd's pipe from Sicily
 My songs, of metre from Chalcidice
 Composed, I'll sing. I would much sooner bear
 The company of wild beasts in their lair
 Or carve my love affair upon the trees.
 For they will grow and you, along with these,
 Will grow as well. Mt. Maenalus I'll roam

With the nymphs meanwhile, and for boar I'll comb
 The woodland groves. I will with many a hound
 Parthenius's forest-glades surround, 70
 However cold they are. Even now I rove,
 It seems, the rocks and many an echoing grove
 And launch Cydonian arrows from a bow
 Of Parthia, as if by acting so
 I'll heal my madness, or that possibly
 A god will soften mortal misery.
 The Hamadryads and all songs delight
 Me more than anything; so, woods, take flight!
 Our pangs can't change that god, not even though
 We'd drink of Hebrus' stream or face the snow 80
 In Sithonia, or, when on an elm-tree
 The bark is dying, under Cancer we
 Drive African sheep. Love's all-victorious,
 And therefore let Love conquer all of us!"
 Muses, it shall suffice me to have sung,
 While here I sat, and of the mallow strung
 A splendid basket. For these songs shall be
 Welcome to Gallus, for whom constantly
 My love is growing, as in blooming spring
 The alder hour by hour is burgeoning. 90
 Come, let us rise! For singers often may
 Be harmed by shade, so let us be away!
 Indeed the shade the juniper will cast
 Is deleterious and it may blast
 The crops. The evening star is rising, You
 Have had your fill. Let's go! You she-goats, shoo!

