

# Sextus Propertius

## Elegies



translated by C. John Holcombe

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translated by

Colin John Holcombe

Ocaso Press 2009

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a new translation by Colin John Holcombe

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THE ELEGIES

OF

SEXTUS PROPERTIUS

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Sextus Propertius was born around 50 BC, probably near Assisi in Umbria, and seems to have been dead by 2 BC.<sup>1</sup> His family were well-to-do farmers who lost land after the Perusine War, but neither the confiscation of estates nor the early death of Propertius's father reduced its equestrian standing. Money was found to send the young man to study law in Rome, where he won a literary reputation with startling ease. His first collection of Elegies was published in 29 or 28 BC,<sup>2</sup> when the poet was still in his early twenties, and brought something new to Latin literature: a slavish subjection to love expressed in vivid elegiac couplets that no one has bettered.<sup>3</sup> Catullus was more intense and personal, but published only short pieces in the metre. Tibullus was more continuously graceful, but seems over-refined when set against the turbulent moods that Propertius depicts in his love affair with Cynthia.

That inspiration we cannot fully know.<sup>4</sup> Apuleius identified the model as Hostia, a vivacious demi-monde, which there is no reason to doubt, but Cynthia is also a literary stalking-horse, a persona Propertius created to explore the many facets of romantic infatuation. By turns, the lover is tender, ecstatic, despairing, worldly-wise, self-pitying and importunate. Cynthia is just as various, everything from the warmed-hearted and cultivated lover to the calculating hussy. Anyone who has been in love will recognize these shifting fictions of the heart, which are a tribute to what poets have created from the emotional turmoil of our lives, and where the Latin elegists played a large part.

Marriage for traditional Romans was a duty, and while couples could marry for love, most unions were contracted for social, financial and political advancement.<sup>5</sup> Upper-class young men were encouraged to indulge their passions with courtesans or women in approved brothels before settling down to the serious business of life, which was service in the army, the law courts or public affairs. Upper-class women enjoyed no such licence: they managed the home, brought up the children and found recreation in spinning wool to make their husband's clothes. As Rome conquered the east, however, the city absorbed more cosmopolitan attitudes, becoming addicted to luxury and pleasurable living. As a social contract, marriage

could be ended quickly, and wealthy couples frequently found themselves new spouses. More independent women also took lovers, sometimes multiple lovers, changing them as the whim took them. Among the most notorious was Clodia, wife of Q. Caecilius Metellus Celer, with whom Catullus fell in love and addressed as Lesbia in his poems. Men were even freer: affairs attracted little attention if matters were kept within bounds, and it was understood that young entertainers of both sexes at discreet musical evenings offered more of their body than singing or musical skills. Naturally, such goings-on were not a tribute to the self-denying Roman fortitude of old, and the Emperor Augustus, by no means innocent himself, tried to inculcate more family values, first by encouragement and then by legislation. Offenders were punished, and even the well-placed and popular Ovid was exiled to the Black Sea for some unknown but egregious misdemeanour.

For some fifty years the Latin elegists fought back, arguing a case for an alternative morality, one based on feelings more than social standing or material gains. Catullus expected love to last a lifetime, forlorn hope though that was with the rapacious Clodia. Propertius went further, and made himself a slave to love — something bewildering to the average Roman. Horace found this absurd and distasteful. Ovid pulled fun at its earnestness.

Propertius himself soon came up against the realities of urban life. The Cynthia of the Elegies has a sharp eye for the main chance: all very well to be showered with verses but money and social connections were what really counted. Propertius persists, finding examples from mythology to excuse the unfortunate errings of his beloved. He sees himself bound in traditional military service, though now to Venus, reporting back with advice for others conscripted. He draws from the classics, finding the gods and heroes too had their setbacks and humiliations. He pays the obligatory tributes to contemporaries, to Maecenas and Augustus, but still in Book Three is arguing that his achievements are real, and not to be diverted into Rome-glorifying epics.

Book Four brings the inevitable, and under the stern eye of the emperor, Propertius starts making amends. He burnishes the reputations of Roman heroes. He explores the etymology of Roman names and landmarks. For Cynthia he continues to feel an irresistible attraction but in the end allows her to go her own way, a fading jewel in the tawdry setting of mercenary

sex. His last elegy praises the faithful devotion of a chaste wife, as faithful to her husband's name as he had been to his romantic ideals.

Are the Elegies sincere, representing real attitudes and experience? Propertius was following an established tradition that need only broadly correspond with life, but to recite poetry about a non-existent mistress, or about a mistress without Cynthia's charms, was to invite ridicule. Upper-class Rome was tightly knit, and its members would expect to find in the Elegies something of their own lives and attitudes. Cynthia was simply being professional, moreover. Had the demi-monde forgotten her training and become the doting partner there would have been scant material for the emotional range of the Elegies: all would have gone smoothly. Conversely, had Cynthia really been as portrayed, then the high-flown flattery and continual importuning of Propertius would have been intolerable, driving the poor woman to her wits' end. Friends would have pointed this out, even had their author hoped to continue in his blindness. In short, some awareness of his extravagance we have to grant Propertius: to take all the Elegies entirely at their face value not only defies common sense but detracts from our opinion of the man, and how we respond to his words. Ezra Pound's approach was to construct a flippant Propertius, one whose self-deprecating mockery hints at their author's hapless circumstances. Other translators have shied away from adding what is only implied in the text, no doubt thinking the translation would be more their Propertius than the man in his own words.

One solution may be to remember Aristotle's view of art, that it gives us something in a more satisfying fullness than is possible in everyday experience. Elegy 2.13 stems from self-pity, but the sheer eloquence of the writing lifts this unattractive emotion from the commonplace and makes it poetry. Elegy 4.5 is unreasonably bitter, but through it Propertius writes movingly of the dark side of love, its degeneration into lust and recrimination. In Propertius the mundane is being moved towards the eternal, which classical poetry can claim kinship with, though never fully occupy.

If poetry enables its own kind of truth, then so does mythology, which was known to contemporaries in poetry, wall paintings, mythological handbooks and civic celebrations. Greek playwrights saw the gods as providing insight into the inscrutable workings of fate. Ovid saw them as decorative parables on selfish human nature, his witty commentaries on Roman morals rounding

off the short life of the Latin love elegy. Propertius used myths to add emotional depth to his stories, reminding readers that current states were ever changing, and that only in poetic expression could the doings of gods become a lasting substrate to our fleeting natures. Love for Propertius can persist beyond the grave, can end at death, or end well before death. Yet the gods remain, and it is to poetry's advantage to use these personifications of human feelings, which for Propertius are real and life-enhancing within the ambit of his words.

Cynthia is the focus of the first two books. Book One is the more charming, complete and playful, seeming to possess a carefully balanced structure, the elegies being arranged in four groups and rounded off by a coda of Elegies 20 to 22.<sup>1</sup> A date of 29 to early 28 BC is suggested by the dedication to Tullus, nephew to the proconsul of Asia in 30 BC.<sup>2</sup>

Book Two is a mixture of superb elegies, broken fragments and rather mechanical pieces. It probably dates from 26-25 BC, to judge from the reference to the repeal of Augustus' marriage law (28 BC), the prospect of an Arabian expedition (carried out in 25-4 BC), the death of Gallus (by suicide in 26 BC) and the opening of the temple of Apollo Palatinus (October 28 BC).

The mentioned death of Marcellus (23-22 BC), and the unmentioned Parthian settlement (20 BC), suggest that Book Three belongs to the years 25-22 BC. To avoid writing the epic that Virgil had left incomplete by his death, something which Augustus could certainly have expected, Propertius feigns a kinship with Callimachus and Philetas, Alexandrian poets who avoided such uncongenial tasks. By now, Propertius is writing smoothly on a wider range of subjects, and while the Elegies are competent they lack some of the previous invention and fervour.

Book Four is very different: twelve long elegies on varied matters, in which Cynthia makes a final appearance: once in affectionate farce and another from beyond the grave. The latest poem (4.6) seems to have been composed for the Ludi Quinquennales of 16 BC.

Whatever the role, Propertius remained his own man.<sup>4 5</sup> The address to Tullus, nephew of the proconsul of Asia, is cordial, one friend to another. The dedication to Maecenas in Book Two suggests the poet was a member of the literary salon founded and supported by this rich and influential

patron, but the dedication is not fulsome, and throughout his elegies Propertius makes reference to politically sensitive matters where financially dependent writers like Horace or Virgil do not. Perugia was treated harshly in the civil war, and it was hardly tactful to remind readers of Octavian's past savagery (1.21 and 22) when Maecenas' master had become the all-powerful Augustus. Again, the naval battle of Actium comes close to burlesque in Propertius's Callimachean treatment (3.11), and the belittlement of Cleopatra takes something from Octavian's achievement. Subsequently, when Maecenas fell from grace, and Augustus used his power more openly, Propertius took refuge in the non-military themes of Callimachus, but didn't resist making fun of the Hercules (4.9) to whom Augustus had been compared by Horace. Thereafter, Propertius disappears from the record. The younger Pliny writes of Passenus Paullus, who claimed descent from Propertius,<sup>2</sup> so the poet may indeed have married. Ovid in the *Remedia Amoris* published in 2 BC implies that his fellow-writer was by then dead.

The Elegies are known in some 146 manuscript versions, but most are blundering copies of others no better.<sup>1 2</sup> Lines have been miscopied, altered to fit in with misconceptions, transposed to new places or lost altogether. Book Two is probably a mule, the remains of two books now fused in a way that makes the originals difficult to know. Scholars in fact recognize two families of manuscripts. One stems from a northern France MS of around 1200, and is missing only 4.11.17-76. The other MS was written around 1240 near Orleans, and ends at 2.1.63, though text missing is supplied by later copies. Both MSS probably originate in a single MS barbarously copied in the Dark Ages of Latin scholarship, in the 6-8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

Though Propertius is a learned author and needs an extensive glossary to be understood, this is not an academic translation but a literary one. Greatly assisted by previous translations and the studies listed under *References and Resources*, I have worked from the Loeb 1990 text to produce what I hope will be a pleasing rendering that provides some of the poetry in English that Propertius provides in Latin. Generations of intensive scholarship have created a tradition of Propertius understanding, and it would be a perverse originality that forwent the many attractive renderings of words or phrases previous translators have come up with. I have often adopted them, making only the modifications required by metre, tone and overall sense. Many parts of the text are problematical, or have disputed

corrections, and to the extent that this is possible in a single rendering from the Loeb text, I have taken these alternatives into account while still aiming for something that reads as a coherent set of poems. The *Glossary* documents the departures from a general prose rendering, and the only novelties ventured by this translation are in Elegy 1.3.23-4 where the 'apples' seem only too obviously to be Cynthia's breasts, in Elegy 4.1b.142 where the baffling 'fishing hook' will be the spike used to grapple with and fasten to ships in naval battles, and in Elegy 4.Ib.150 where a standard astrological reading of 'crab' is simply the mother or the fourth house, i.e. the allusion warns of the hidden (below the horizon) power of women.

Because so much of the pleasure given by Propertius lies in his rhetoric and phrasing, which can only be faintly indicated in English, readers will get more from this book if they also read the Latin. To this end, a *Note on Translation* was formerly included in the ebook, but this information — pronunciation, scanning the verse, and previous translations — has now been placed in articles on the [Ocaso Press Propertius](#) site pages.



# LIBER PRIMUS

I

Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis,  
contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.  
tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus  
et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,  
donec me docuit castas odisse puellas 5  
improbus, et nullo vivere consilio.  
ei mihi, iam toto furor hic non deficit anno,  
cum tamen adversos cogor habere deos.

Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores  
saevitiam durae contudit Iasidos. 10  
nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris,  
ibat et hirsutas saepe videre feras;  
ille etiam Hylaei percussus vulnere rami  
saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit.  
ergo velocem potuit domuisse puellam: 15  
tantum in amore fides et benefacta valent.  
in me tardus Amor non ullas cogitat artes,  
nec meminit notas, ut prius, ire vias.  
at vos, deductae quibus est pellacia lunae  
et labor in magicis sacra piare focis, 20  
en agedum dominae mentem convertite nostrae,  
et facite illa meo palleat ore magis!  
tunc ego crediderim Manes et sidera vobis  
posse Cytinaeis ducere carminibus.

aut vos, qui sero lapsum revocatis, amici, 25  
quaerite non sani pectoris auxilia.  
fortiter et ferrum saevos patiemur et ignes,  
sit modo libertas quae velit ira loqui.

# BOOK ONE

## 1. Love's Madness

Cynthia's eyes first brought me to this wretchedness:

I had not felt love's pull before.

Amor, the little boy, reduced my scornful look,  
and with his feet pressed down my head.

He it was who said despise the virtuous girls,  
and wantoned with me, had no sense.

And in this folly he has kept me one full year  
in constant danger from the gods.

But, Tullus, my friend: Milanion went on to quell  
the savage hardness of Iasus.

He wandered, maddened, through Parthenian caves, in sight  
of long-haired beasts, and howled the pain

produced by that club's blow the centaur Hylaeus gave  
from glen to glen in Arcady,

to win at last his Atalanta, fleet of foot.

Such then is love's true strength in prayer  
and deed, but his poor wits run slow for me, and do  
not keep to ways they one time travelled.

But you whose sorcery draws down the temptress moon,  
propitiates the magic flames,

come, change the disposition of my mistress, turn  
her face a paler shade than mine.

Do that, and I'll believe you have the Colchis spells  
to summon up the ghosts and stars.

But, friends, it is now late to call the fallen back,  
or seek to aid the wounded breast

that fiercely would outdo the worst in fire and blade  
if inner torment found its tongue.

ferte per extremas gentes et ferte per undas,  
qua non ulla meum femina norit iter. 30  
vos remanete, quibus facili deus annuit aure,  
sitis et in tuto semper amore pares.

nam me nostra Venus noctes exercet amaras,  
et nullo vacuus tempore deficit Amor.  
hoc, moneo, vitate malum: sua quemque moretur 35  
cura, neque assueto mutet amore torum.  
quod si quis monitis tardas adverterit aures,  
heu referet quanto verba dolore mea!

Convey me through the furthest lands and waves to where  
that woman cannot find my track.

I leave all those who have the ear of gods and live  
in safe and constant mutual love.

On me now Venus works but bitter nights, and Amor  
toils the same through emptiness.

I therefore warn you: cling to love, escape this curse,  
and keep your love's familiar place.

If any are too slow to turn their ears, in grief  
they will recall these words of mine.

Notes

II

Quid iuvat ornato procedere, vita, capillo  
et tenuis Coa veste movere sinus,  
aut quid Orontea crines perfundere murra,  
teque peregrinis vendere muneribus,  
naturaeque decus mercato perdere cultu, 5  
nec sinere in propriis membra nitere bonis?  
crede mihi, non ulla tuaest medicina figurae:  
nudus Amor formam non amat artificem.

aspice quos summittat humus non fossa colores,  
ut veniant hederæ sponte sua melius, 10  
surgat et in solis formosior arbutus antris,  
et sciat indocilis currere lympa vias.  
litora nativis praegaudent picta lapillis,  
et volucres nulla dulcius arte canunt.

non sic Leucippis succendit Castora Phoebe, 15  
Pollucem cultu non Helaira soror;  
non, Idae et cupido quondam discordia Phoebo,  
Eueni patriis filia litoribus;  
nec Phrygium falso traxit candore maritum  
avecta externis Hippodamia rotis: 20  
sed facies aderat nullis obnoxia gemmis,  
qualis Apelleis est color in tabulis.  
non illis studium fuco conquirere amantes:  
illis ampla satis forma pudicitia.

non ego nunc vereor ne sis tibi vilior istis: 25  
uni si qua placet, culta puella sat est;  
cum tibi praesertim Phoebus sua carmina donet  
Aoniamque libens Calliopea lyram,  
unica nec desit iucundis gratia verbis,  
omnia quaeque Venus, quaeque Minerva probat. 30  
his tu semper eris nostrae gratissima vitae,  
taedia dum miserae sint tibi luxuriae.

## 2. Beauty Unadorned

Who can be pleased, my love, by such a hairdo, float  
of contours through a Cōan dress?

Or curls so wetted with Orontean myrrh they frame  
a face sold out to foreign ways?

You have a natural beauty with unblemished limbs  
that need not trade in cultivation.

Your figure, trust me, is its own revival: how  
can naked looks need artifice?

Think how the untilled soil throws out its brilliant hues,  
and ivy spirals by itself,  
how pretty strawberry trees will grace deserted hollows,  
and water, untaught, find its course.

The unaffected shoreline throws up glittering pebbles,  
birds to please dispense with art.

Was it their ornament made Dioscuri twins  
for Phoebe and Helaira burn?

Or Idas and fond Phoebus fight for Evenus's  
daughter on her father's shore?

Her false white face had Hippodamīa whirled away  
to marriage on those Phrygian wheels?

What jewels detracted from those natural dew-soaked skins  
that glowed in tints Apelles paints?

In truth, cosmetics found them few affairs: for them  
a sun-flushed modesty sufficed.

Though, while you count yourself no less than others, winning  
one man gives a girl her charms.

Phoebus sends his words to you, Calliōpe  
the joy of the Aolian lyre.

Nothing's wanting from your winning tongue, enchanting  
Venus and Minerva too.

With these you'll ever stay my love of life, but not  
with vile and tiresome ornament.



### 3: After A Night's Drinking

Lain out as that deceived Cnossian girl was left  
with Theseus long shipped away,  
as Andromeda, King Cepheus's daughter,  
slept when freed from her harsh rock;  
or as incessant Maenad dancers, tired, stretched out  
in grass beside the Apidanus:  
so was my Cynthia with her softly breathing body,  
head extended on her hands,  
as I came blundering in from too much wine, the boys  
with lanterns throwing lights about.

But still I had some wits about me, made advances,  
gently pressed her on the bed,  
and in the clutches of Amor and Bacchus — both  
of them are cruel gods — I  
eased an arm beneath the slumbering body, raised  
it up and stole a kiss at last,  
but careful, all too conscious of the trouble should  
my mistress wake in usual temper.

And so in rapture, holding you, my eyes like Argus  
seeing Io's new-horned brow;  
I took the garland that my brows were wearing, slipped  
it gently on your temples, Cynthia,  
gladly rearranged where tresses fell, which seemed  
like stolen apples in my hands,  
rewards bestowed ungratefully on sleep, and which  
from your curved body fell away.

But when you, stirring, gave occasional starts, I stopped,  
supposing you beset with omens,  
that in your sleep you felt a someone take you,  
forcefully, against your will,  
till in the window opposite a moon appeared,  
and hastened with its interfering

compositos levibus radiis patefecit ocellos.

sic ait in molli fixa toro cubitum:

'tandem te nostro referens iniuria lecto 35

alterius clausis expulit e foribus?

namque ubi longa meae consumpsti tempora noctis,

languidus exactis, ei mihi, sideribus?

o utinam talis perducas, improbe, noctes,

me miseram qualis semper habere iubes! 40

nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum,

rursus et Orpheae carmine, fessa, lyrae;

interdum leviter mecum deserta querebar

externo longas saepe in amore moras:

dum me iucundis lassam Sopor impulit alis. 45

illa fuit lacrimis ultima cura meis.'

beams to press your shut eyes open. You awoke,  
pushed elbows on soft couch, and said,  
'Has misbehaving closed some other's door and sent  
you shamefaced to our bed at last?  
Where have you wasted what was mine, the night long past  
and stars now fading from the sky?

'You wretch! I hope continually you have such nights  
as I'm so cruelly treated to.  
For you I put off sleep by weaving crimson threads,  
and held out hearing Orpheus's lyre.  
At times I sadly told myself that unwed love  
is often subject to delays,  
until the downy wings of Sleep came over me,  
and formed my weeping's last respite.'

Notes

## IV

Quid mihi tam multas laudando, Basse, puellas  
mutatum domina cogis abire mea?  
quid me non pateris vitae quodcumque sequetur  
hoc magis assueto ducere servitio?

tu licet Antiopae formam Nycteidis, et tu 5  
Spartanae referas laudibus Hermionae,  
et quascumque tulit formosi temporis aetas;  
Cynthia non illas nomen habere sinat:  
nedum, si levibus fuerit collata figuris,  
inferior duro iudice turpis eat. 10

haec sed forma mei pars est extrema furoris;  
sunt maiora, quibus, Basse, perire iuvat:  
ingenuus color et motis decor artubus et quae  
gaudia sub tacita discere veste libet.  
quo magis et nostros contendis solve amore, 15  
hoc magis accepta fallit uterque fide.

non impune feres: sciet haec insana puella  
et tibi non tacitis vocibus hostis erit;  
nec tibi me post haec committet Cynthia nec te  
quaeret; erit tanti criminis illa memor, 20  
et te circum omnis alias irata puellas  
differet: heu nullo limine carus eris.

nullas illa suis contemnet fletibus aras,  
et quicumque sacer, qualis ubique, lapis.  
non ullo gravius temptatur Cynthia damno 25  
quam sibi cum raptio cessat amore decus,  
praecipue nostro. maneat sic semper, adoro,  
nec quicquam ex illa quod querar inveniam!

invide, tu tandem voces compesce molestas 29(1.5.1)  
et sine nos cursu, quo sumus, ire pares! 30(1.5.2)

#### 4. Rebuke to Bassus

Why, Bassus, recommend so many girls if not  
to have me cast my mistress off?

Why not allow whatever life is left be spent  
in more accustomed servitude?

You praise Antiope's good looks, of Nycteus born,  
the Spartan girl Hermione,  
and all the women born of that past age of beauty:  
Cynthia casts them in the shade.

Still less she fears a mark down by our trivial efforts,  
judge though lacking common sense.

In truth the least share of my madness comes from looks:  
far greater parts to perish by  
are found in fair complexion, knit of limbs, the secrets  
given us between the sheets.

The more you mount this challenge to our love, the more  
we shall undo you with our faith.

But you will suffer for it: that demented girl  
will not be silent when she hears.

Forever she will ban our meetings, cut you dead,  
and long remember your offence.

With other girls she'll make such mischief with your name  
you'll find no doorstep welcomes you.

No shrine is then too mean for her hot tears, however  
plain the stone or whereabouts.

She's most provoked to see her charms ignored, a love  
denied her, and especially mine.

I beg she stay that way, and therefore never give  
me cause to find the one complaint.

So curb that tiresome tongue, you envious man, and let  
this pair together run their course.

## V

Quid tibi vis, insane? meae sentire furores? 3  
 infelix, properas ultima nosse mala,  
 et miser ignotos vestigia ferre per ignes, 5  
 et bibere e tota toxica Thessalia.

non est illa vagis similis collata puellis:  
 molliter irasci non sciet illa tibi.  
 quod si forte tuis non est contraria votis,  
 at tibi curarum milia quanta dabit! 10  
 non tibi iam somnos, non illa relinquet ocellos:  
 illa ferox animis alligat una viros.

a, mea contemptus quotiens ad limina cures,  
 cum tibi singultu fortia verba cadent,  
 et tremulus maestis orietur fletibus horror, 15  
 et timor informem ducet in ore notam,  
 et quaecumque voles fugient tibi verba querenti,  
 nec poteris, qui sis aut ubi, nosse miser!

tum grave servitium nostrae cogere puellae  
 discere et exclusum quid sit abire domum; 20  
 nec iam pallorem totiens mirabere nostrum,  
 aut cur sim toto corpore nullus ego.  
 nec tibi nobilitas poterit succurrere amanti:  
 nescit Amor priscis cedere imaginibus.

quod si parva tuae dederis vestigia culpae, 25  
 quam cito de tanto nomine rumor eris!  
 non ego tum potero solacia ferre roganti,  
 cum mihi nulla mei sit medicina mali;  
 sed pariter miseri socio cogemur amore  
 alter in alterius mutua flere sinu. 30

quare, quid possit mea Cynthia, desine, Galle,  
 quaerere: non impune illa rogata venit.

## 5. Warning to a Rival

What, are you mad, that you'd adopt my lunacy?

You run to ruin, unhappy man.

You take your wretched steps through hidden fires, and drink  
the poisons from all Thessaly.

She's not as other, more promiscuous girls, nor one  
to go on smiling through her rage.

And if she yield to your desires, she still may cause  
you countless moments of despair.

Sleeplessly you'll see her eyes, and know how fiercely  
passion binds men to her will.

How often you will run, rejected, to my door,  
your strong words loosened by the grief.

The gloom of sharp, disfiguring and shaking fears  
will fasten on that careworn face.

You will not even know the words to make complaint,  
nor who you are, nor where you're at.

You'll know the slavery my girl exacts, sent home,  
unwanted, from a door shut fast.

Nor be astounded at my wanness, seeing body  
now reduced to fairly nothing.

Nor think nobility will help you: love concedes  
no place to ancient images.

Show slightest indiscretion, and a noble name  
becomes at once mere tittle-tattle.

Nor can I offer comfort that you'll seek: I have  
no remedy for my own ills,  
but both unhappy in our common love we may  
embrace in tears each other's breast.

So, Gallus, ask no more of Cynthia's power: a heavy  
toll is laid on those she takes.

## VI

Non ego nunc Hadriae vereor mare noscere tecum,  
Tulle, neque Aegaeo ducere vela salo,  
cum quo Rhipaeos possim conscendere montes  
ulteriusque domos vadere Memnonias;  
sed me complexae remorantur verba puellae,  
mutatoque graves saepe colore preces.

5

illa mihi totis argutat noctibus ignes,  
et queritur nullos esse relicta deos;  
illa meam mihi iam se denegat, illa minatur  
quae solet ingrato tristis amica viro.  
his ego non horam possum durare querelis:  
ah pereat, si quis lentus amare potest!

10

an mihi sit tanti doctas cognoscere Athenas  
atque Asiae veteres cernere divitias,  
ut mihi deducta faciat convicia puppi  
Cynthia et insanis ora notet manibus,  
osculaque opposito dicat sibi debita vento,  
et nihil infido durius esse viro?

15

tu patrum meritas conare anteire secures,  
et vetera oblitis iura refer sociis.  
nam tua non aetas umquam cessavit amori,  
semper at armatae cura fuit patriae;  
et tibi non umquam nostros puer iste labores  
afferat et lacrimis omnia nota meis!

20

me sine, quem semper voluit fortuna iacere,  
huic animam extremam reddere nequitiae.  
multi longinquo periire in amore libenter,  
in quorum numero me quoque terra tegat.  
non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis:  
hanc me militiam fata subire volunt.

25

30

## 6. An Invitation Declined

I have no fear to sail the Adriatic, Tullus,  
brave the Aegean swell with you.

Together we could climb the cold Rhiphaean mountains,  
venture south from Memnon's house.

But still my girl would hold me back: her fond embraces,  
flushed complexion, long entreaties.

Whole nights she babbles of her passion, swears  
my going would deny the gods,  
no longer is she cherished in my eyes: the threats  
an unhitched woman makes to man.

I cannot stand another hour of peroration,  
perish thoughts of tepid love.

Besides, how would it help to visit learned Athens,  
see all Asia's ancient wealth,  
if Cynthia made such dreadful scenes at embarkation,  
cursed me with a hand-scratched face,  
declared she kept her kisses for an adverse wind,  
that none's so fickle as a man?

You, you should surpass your uncle's well-earned axes,  
turn our allies back to law.

Your life forbade the leisure owed to love, forever  
warring fatherland you served.

On you the youthful rascal can't impose his labours,  
tasks I know too well from tears.

And seeing fortune's ever sought to bring me down,  
I give my life to worthlessness.

How many perished in such long and glad devotion:  
let me join them in the earth,  
who was not born to arms or martial fame, but hope  
to soldier on as fate allows.

at tu, seu mollis qua tendit Ionia, seu qua  
Lydia Pactoli tingit arata liquor,  
seu pedibus terras seu pontum remige carpes,  
ibis et accepti pars eris imperii:  
tum tibi si qua mei veniet non immemor hora,  
vivere me duro sidere certus eris.

But you among the rich Ionian plains, or where  
Pactōlus waters Lydia,  
when crossing lands on foot, or seas by oar, will go  
as part of an accepted rule,  
and if the thought of me should come at times, recall  
I live beneath an unkind star.

Notes

## VII

Dum tibi Cadmeae dicuntur, Pontice, Thebae  
armaque fraternae tristia militiae,  
atque, ita sim felix, primo contendis Homero  
(sint modo fata tuis mollia carminibus),  
nos, ut consuêmus, nostros agitamus amores, 5  
atque aliquid duram quaerimus in dominam;  
nec tantum ingenio quantum servire dolori  
cogor et aetatis tempora dura queri.

hic mihi conteritur vitae modus, haec mea famast,  
hinc cupio nomen carminis ire mei. 10  
me laudent doctae solum placuisse puellae,  
Pontice, et iniustas saepe tulisse minas;  
me legat assidue post haec neglectus amator,  
et prosint illi cognita nostra mala.

nec poterunt iuvenes nostro reticere sepulcro 23  
'ardoris nostri magne poeta, iaces.' 24

te quoque si certo puer hic concusserit arcu — 15  
quo nollem nostros me violasse deos! —  
longe castra tibi, longe miser agmina septem  
flebis in aeterno surda iacere situ;  
et frustra cupies mollem componere versum, 20  
nec tibi subiciet carmina serus Amor.

tum me non humilem mirabere saepe poetam,  
tunc ego Romanis praeferar ingeniis.

tu cave nostra tuo contemnas carmina fastu: 25  
saepe venit magno faenore tardus Amor.

## 7. To an Epic Poet

While you're singing, Ponticus, of Cadmean Thebes,  
and that sad war the brothers fought,  
competing with great Homer if the truth be told —  
let fates be kind with what you tell —  
we are, as usual, labouring at our verse to find  
some means to fight a cruel mistress.  
Compelled to serve emotions more than gifts, I moan  
at torment that my life's become.

But that's the path I tread, my fame: from this  
I want my name for verse to come,  
that they approve my pleasing such a well-schooled lover,  
Ponticus, despite abuse,  
and those deserted therefore read me constantly,  
and take their comfort from my woes.  
Nor will the youths keep silence at my tomb, but say:  
'here lies our love's great architect.'

And if the boy should catch you with his truthful bow —  
forbid he ever fight our gods —  
you'll weep to find your camps and seven armies  
sunk beneath eternal dust,  
and vain will be the elegies you'll write when love  
has come too late to wing your song.  
Amazed, you may then see me as no humble poet,  
but preferred to Roman wits.

So do not scorn my verse, for honour often comes  
when late with added interest.

Notes

## VIIIA

Tune igitur demens, nec te mea cura moratur?  
an tibi sum gelida vilior Illyria?  
et tibi iam tanti, quicumquest, iste videtur,  
ut sine me vento quolibet ire velis?  
tune audire potes vesani murmura ponti 5  
fortis, et in dura nave iacere potes?  
tu pedibus teneris positas fulcire pruinas,  
tu potes insolitas, Cynthia, ferre nives?

o utinam hibernae duplicentur tempora brumae,  
et sit iners tardis navita Vergiliis, 10  
nec tibi Tyrrhena solvatur funis harena,  
neve inimica meas elevet aura preces  
et me defixum vacua patiatur in ora 15  
crudelem infesta saepe vocare manu!

sed quocumque modo de me, periura, mereris,  
sit Galatea tuae non aliena viae;  
atque ego non videam talis subsidere ventos, 13  
cum tibi provectas auferet unda rates, 14  
ut te felici post lecta Ceraunia remo 19  
accipiat placidis Oricos aequoribus.

nam me non ullae poterunt corrumpere, de te  
quin ego, vita, tuo limine verba querar;  
nec me deficiet nautas rogitare citatos  
'dicite, quo portu clausa puella meast?'  
et dicam 'licet Artaciis considat in oris, 25  
et licet Hylaeis, illa futura meast.'

## 8A. Cynthia Plans to Go Abroad

Are you mad, so unrestrained by love of mine?  
I matter less than cold Illyria?  
With — whoever he may be — but not with me,  
you'd head off into any wind,  
would hear impassively the maddened sea, and make  
uncomfortably your bed on deck?  
You'd put soft feet into the biting frost, endure  
the snow you're new to, Cynthia?

Let time of winter storms be doubled, mariners  
detained by slow-rise Pleiades,  
Tyrrhenian sands hold fast the cable, no strong breezes  
carry off my fervent prayer  
that you'd not leave me on this barren shore, becalling  
you forever with my fist.

You merit that, but, faithless one, may Galatēa  
still be friendly to your voyage,  
and when the ship is under way, let winds not drop,  
but currents bear you happily  
on past Ceraunia with your oarage, Oricos  
to welcome you in calmer seas.

But in the meantime none shall tempt me from your door,  
uttering grievances, my love,  
nor shall I stop accosting sailors, asking them  
what port my girl is shut up in,  
announcing, though she settle on Propontic shores,  
or Hylaeon even, she is mine.

Notes

## VIIIB

Hic erit! hic iurata manet! rumpantur iniqui!  
vicimus: assiduas non tulit illa preces.  
falsa licet cupidus deponat gaudia livor:  
destitit ire novas Cynthia nostra vias. 30

illi carus ego et per me carissima Roma  
dicitur, et sine me dulcia regna negat.  
illa vel angusto mecum requiescere lecto  
et quocumque modo maluit esse mea,  
quam sibi dotatae regnum vetus Hippodamiae, 35  
et quas Elis opes apta pararat equis.

quamvis magna daret, quamvis maiora daturus,  
non tamen illa meos fugit avara sinus.  
hanc ego non auro, non Indis flectere conchis,  
sed potui blandi carminis obsequio. 40

sunt igitur Musae, neque amanti tardus Apollo,  
quâs ego fretus amo: Cynthia rara meast!  
nunc mihi summa licet contingere sidera plantis:  
sive dies seu nox venerit, illa meast!  
nec mihi rivalis certos subducet amores: 45  
ista meam norit gloria canitiem.

## 8B. Cynthia Changes her Mind

Success! She stays, she swears. Let envy curse. She could  
not hold out from our constant prayers.

False, envious love has lost its gaudy hue: no more  
will Cynthia travel unknown ways.

Again I'm dear to her, and through me Rome. No kingdom  
satisfies if I'm not there.

To sleep with me, if on a narrow bed, in any  
way to be my own, is more  
than Hippodamīa's dowry could be, though a kingdom,  
wealth of Elis, won by horse.

And though he gave her much, and promised more, she was  
not greedy, nor would flee my lap.

Her I swayed, and not with gold or Indian pearls  
but charmed her with respectful song.

The Muses live: Apollo's quick to aid a lover:  
in these I trust: rare Cynthia's mine.

And now I walk among the stars in highest heaven:  
day or night the girl is mine.

Unquestionably no rival robs me of my love:  
a glory when my hair is grey.

Notes

## IX

Dicebam tibi venturos, irrisor, amores,  
nec tibi perpetuo libera verba fore:  
ecce iaces supplexque venis ad iura puellae,  
et tibi nunc quaevis imperat empta modo.  
non me Chaoniae vincant in amore columbae 5  
dicere, quos iuvenes quaeque puella domet.  
me dolor et lacrimae merito fecere peritum:  
atque utinam posito dicar amore rudis!

quid tibi nunc misero prodest grave dicere carmen  
aut Amphioniae moenia flere lyrae? 10  
plus in amore valet Mimnermi versus Homero:  
carmina mansuetus lenia quaerit Amor.  
i quaeso et tristis istos sepone libellos,  
et cane quod quaevis nosse puella velit!  
quid si non esset facilis tibi copia? nunc tu 15  
insanus medio flumine quaeris aquam.

necdum etiam palles, vero nec tangeris igni:  
haec est venturi prima favilla mali.  
tum magis Armenias cupies accedere tigres  
et magis infernae vincula nosse rotae, 20  
quam pueri totiens arcum sentire medullis  
et nihil iratae posse negare tuae.  
nullus Amor cuiquam facilis ita praebuit alas,  
ut non alterna presserit ille manu.

nec te decipiat, quod sit satis illa parata: 25  
acrius illa subit, Pontice, si qua tuast,  
quippe ubi non liceat vacuos seducere ocellos,  
nec vigilare alio limine cedat Amor.  
qui non ante patet, donec manus attigit ossa:  
quisquis es, assiduas heu fuge blanditias! 30  
illis et silices et possint cedere quercus,  
nedum tu possis, spiritus iste levis.

## 9. A Warning Come True

I used to tell you, mocking one, that love would come  
and curb your free forever words.

And look, you're silent now, and bid as girl may call:  
some recent purchase gives the orders.

No Chaōnian doves surpass my insight: well

I know which youths the girls subdue,  
but if so expert through my pain and tears, I would  
prefer to be the novice still.

How will it help you, wretch, to tell the world's great epic,  
mourn Amphion's lyre-built walls.

In love the songs of Mimnermus outdo good Homer's:  
taming Love needs gentle words.

I beg you put away those gloomy books, and sing  
the words that girls would wish to hear.

It would be different if you lacked supplies, but you  
in midstream, madman, look for water.

You are not pale yet, even, know no flame, that faint  
presentiment of pain to come.

You will prefer the Armenian tigress or the cruel  
bonds of the infernal wheel,  
than have the boy's bow strike you to the marrow, find  
you can't deny an angry girl.

Amor has given no one easy wings, except  
to press down with the other hand.

Nor, Ponticus, be tricked by her compliance: once  
she yields you'll know her fierceness more.

You'll not be able to withdraw your eyes from her,  
or look for Love at other doors.

Amor discloses nothing till his hand bites bone;  
I beg all flee his blandishments.

If rock and oak can yield to Orpheus, so must  
a spirit that's as slight as yours.

quare, si pudor est, quam primum errata fatere:  
dicere quo pereas saepe in amore levat.

For shame, confess your error now: it eases love  
to tell what you are dying for.

Notes

# X

O iucunda quies, primo cum testis amori  
affueram vestris conscius in lacrimis!  
o noctem meminisse mihi iucunda voluptas,  
o quotiens votis illa vocanda meis,  
cum te complexa morientem, Galle, puella 5  
vidimus et longa ducere verba mora!  
quamvis labentis premeret mihi somnus ocellos  
et mediis caelo Luna ruberet equis,  
non tamen a vestro potui secedere lusu:  
tantus in alternis vocibus ardor erat. 10

sed quoniam non es veritus concredere nobis,  
accipe commissae munera laetitiae:  
non solum vestros didici reticere dolores,  
est quiddam in nobis maius, amice, fide.  
possum ego diversos iterum coniungere amantes, 15  
et dominae tardas possum aperire fores;  
et possum alterius curas sanare recentis,  
nec levis in verbis est medicina meis.  
Cynthia me docuit, semper quae cuique petenda  
quaeque cavenda forent: non nihil egit Amor. 20

tu cave ne tristi cupias pugnare puellae,  
neve superba loqui, neve tacere diu;  
neu, si quid petiit, ingrata fronte negaris,  
neu tibi pro vano verba benigna cadant.  
irritata venit, quando contemnitur illa, 25  
nec meminit iustas ponere laesa minas:  
at quo sis humilis magis et subiectus amori,  
hoc magis effectu saepe fruire bono.  
is poterit felix una remanere puella,  
qui numquam vacuo pectore liber erit. 30

## 10. Gallus in Love

How pleasurable to contemplate your start in love,  
stand witnessing your mutual tears.

How happily I can recall the night which was  
besought so often in my prayers:

I saw you swooning, Gallus, in a girl's embraces,  
lost among the drawn-out words.

Though sleep was pressing on my eyes, and reddened moon  
was halfway horsed across the sky,

I could not leave your amorous sporting, such the passion  
voices spoke with, each to each.

But you have placed your trust in us, and I must therefore  
share the joy you've given me.

I have not only learnt to keep my silence, but  
return a more than loyalty.

For I can bind together undone lovers, and  
unlatch a mistress's deaf door,  
or heal if need be wounds of yet some other, such  
strong medicine I have in words.

Cynthia's taught me what to seek and what avoid:  
and this at least has Love achieved.

You should not argue with an angry mistress, speak  
contemptuously or hold aloof.

Do not refuse her in some haughty manner, make  
her waste her kindly words on you.

Ignore her and she's angry, more so hurt: she'll not  
relinquish then her rightful threats.

The more submissively and meekly that you love,  
the more that love will find its bliss.

And he who's happy with one girl will find his heart  
is never emptied for another.

## XI

Ecquid te mediis cessantem, Cynthia, Baiis,  
qua iacet Herculeis semita litoribus,  
et modo Thesproti mirantem subdita regno  
proxima Misenis aequora nobilibus,  
nostri cura subit memores adducere noctes? 5  
ecquis in extremo restat amore locus?  
an te nescio quis simulatis ignibus hostis  
sustulit e nostris, Cynthia, carminibus,  
ut solet amoto labi custode puella, 15  
perfida communis nec meminisse deos?

atque utinam mage te remis confisa minutis 9  
parvula Lucrina cumba moretur aqua,  
aut teneat clausam tenui Teuthrantis in unda  
alternae facilis cedere lympha manu,  
quam vacet alterius blandos audire susurros  
molliter in tacito litore compositam!

non quia perspecta non es mihi cognita fama, 17  
sed quod in hac omnis parte timetur amor.  
ignosces igitur, si quid tibi triste libelli  
attulerint nostri: culpa timoris erit. 20  
ah mihi non maior carae custodia matris  
aut sine te vitae cura sit ulla meae!  
tu mihi sola domus, tu, Cynthia, sola parentes,  
omnia tu nostrae tempora laetitiae.  
seu tristis veniam seu contra laetus amicis, 25  
quicquid ero, dicam 'Cynthia causa fuit.'

tu modo quam primum corruptas desere Baias:  
multis ista dabunt litora discidium,  
litora quae fuerunt castis inimica puellis:  
ah pereant Baiae, crimen amoris, aquae! 30

## 11. Cynthia at Baiae

While you may holiday in warm Baiae, Cynthia,  
shore-line path of Hercules,  
amazed the waters under kingdom of Thesprotus  
are close to famous Misenum,  
perhaps some thought or care for me steals up of nights,  
some corner that is kept for love?  
Or has an enemy by simulated rapture  
stolen Cynthia from my verse —  
as girls will wander, lacking keeper, shamefully  
forget the gods that witnessed troth.

I would be happier if some little boat with paddles  
amused you on the Lucrine Lake,  
or water yielding to alternate strokes would simply  
hold you in the Teuthras waves,  
than you should hear from shoreline holding secrets whispered  
flattery from someone else.

Of course I do not doubt you, nor your good repute,  
but love is fearful of itself.  
Forgive me therefore if you find my letters gloomy,  
it's the fear which makes me speak.  
More care's not possible than for my own dear mother:  
what is life bereft of you?  
You are the only house I have, are both my parents,  
every instant of delight,  
and how I meet my friends, in gloom or smiling, that's  
what Cynthia does to me, I say.

But all the same, I beg you, quit corrupt Baiae:  
many ruptures mark that coast.  
Forever was it foe to virtuous creatures: cursed  
be Baiae's waters blighting love.

## XII

Quid mihi desidia non cessas fingere crimen,  
quod faciat nobis, Pontice, Roma moram?  
tam multa illa meo divisast milia lecto,  
quantum Hypanis Veneto dissidet Eridano;  
nec mihi consuetos amplexu nutrit amores 5  
Cynthia, nec nostra dulcis in aure sonat.

olim gratus eram: non ullo tempore cuiquam  
contigit ut simili posset amare fide.  
invidiae fuimus: num me deus obruit? an quae  
lecta Prometheis dividit herba iugis? 10

non sum ego qui fueram: mutat via longa puellas.  
quantus in exiguo tempore fugit amor!  
nunc primum longas solus cognoscere noctes  
cogor et ipse meis auribus esse gravis.

felix, qui potuit praesenti flere puellae 15  
(non nihil aspersus gaudet Amor lacrimis),  
aut, si despectus, potuit mutare calores  
(sunt quoque translato gaudia servitio).  
mi neque amare aliam neque ab hac desistere fas est:  
Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit. 20

## 12. Cynthia Absent

Why would you call me slothful, Ponticus, repeat  
that Rome's the cause our delays,  
when she is from my bed as is Hypanis distant  
from Venetian Eridanus?  
Her warm embraces no more nourish love, nor is  
her sweet voice heard now in our ears.

Yet I was favoured once, and none more fortunate  
to have that faithfulness in love.  
Did envy crush me, or a god? Some herb that's picked  
from peak that held Prometheus?

I'm not the man I was, or travel changes girls.  
How quickly love can take its leave.  
Compelled, the first time now, to spend long nights alone,  
a nuisance even to my ears.

Happy he who weeps with girl still close, for love  
is warmly pleased by such tears.  
Or, if he's spurned, can move his passion on (there's joy  
from servitude to someone else).  
For me, it's Cynthia: not to leave or love another:  
this she started, this she ends.

Notes

### XIII

Tu, quod saepe soles, nostro laetabere casu,  
Galle, quod abrepto solus amore vacem.  
at non ipse tuas imitabor, perfide, voces:  
fallere te numquam, Galle, puella velit.

dum tibi deceptis augetur fama puellis, 5  
certus et in nullo quaeris amore moram,  
perditus in quadam tardis pallescere curis  
incipis, et primo lapsus abire gradu.  
haec erit illarum contempti poena doloris:  
multarum miseras exiget una vices. 10  
haec tibi vulgaris istos compescet amores,  
nec nova quaerendo semper amicus eris.

haec non sum rumore malo, non augure doctus;  
vidi ego: me quaeso teste negare potes?  
vidi ego te toto vinctum languescere collo 15  
et flere iniectis, Galle, diu manibus,  
et cupere optatis animam deponere labris,  
et quae deinde meus celat, amice, pudor.

non ego complexus potui diducere vestros:  
tantus erat demens inter utrosque furor. 20  
non sic Haemonio Salmonida mixtus Enipeo  
Taenarius facili pressit amore deus,  
nec sic caelestem flagrans amor Herculis Heben  
sensit ab Oetaeis gaudia prima rogis.

una dies omnis potuit praecurrere amantes: 25  
nam tibi non tepidas subdidit illa faces,  
nec tibi praeteritos passast succedere fastus,  
nec sinet: addictum te tuus ardor aget.

### 13. Gallus Succumbs

You will be pleased as usual with my troubles, Gallus:  
girl abducted, I alone.

I will not copy words of yours, nor, traitor, hope  
some girl attempt to trick you too.

Though reputation for deceiving girls has grown,  
as one that will not stay in love,  
of late you've lost yourself, grow pale, begin  
to fall away from what you were.

One girl is penalty for what you gave the others,  
serves as punishment for all.

She'll put an end to scandalous affairs of yours;  
you'll no more hunger for the new.

I say this not from augury or rumour, but  
as witness, which you can't deny.

I've seen you fastened on her neck and fainting — weeping,  
Gallus, as you clung to her,  
to lose your soul in her sweet lips, and other things  
that modesty conceals, my friend.

I could not tear the two of you apart, so much  
the frenzy raged between you both.

Not so well did Neptune mingle with Enipeus  
to win Salmōneus's child,  
or Hercules for heavenly Hebe flame in love  
when joy succeeded Oeta's pyre.

A single day sufficed to outrun other loves,  
not mild the torch she plunged in you.

She's not allowed your past contempt, nor will she: your  
own feelings bring the bondage on.

nec mirum, cum sit Iove dignae proxima Leda  
et Leda partu gratior, una tribus; 30  
illa sit Inachiis et blandior heroinis,  
illa suis verbis cogat amare Iovem.

tu vero quoniam semel es periturus amore,  
utere: non alio limine dignus eras.  
qui tibi sit felix, quoniam novus incidit, error; 35  
et quotcumque voles, una sit ista tibi.

No wonder: worth great Jove, a Leda or her daughters,  
she's more graceful than the three,  
and outdoes heroines of famed Inachus; speech  
from her would win the love of Jove.

And since you are to die for love, accept your fate:  
no other door's appropriate.

So new this error that I pray it will prove happy:  
many wished for, one you keep.

Notes

## XIV

Tu licet abiectus Tiberina molliter unda  
Lesbia Mentoreo vina bibas opere,  
et modo tam celeris mireris currere lintres  
et modo tam tardas funibus ire rates;  
et nemus omne satas intendat vertice silvas, 5  
urgetur quantis Caucasus arboribus;  
non tamen ista meo valeant contendere amori:  
nescit Amor magnis cedere divitiis.

nam sive optatam mecum trahit illa quietem,  
seu facili totum ducit amore diem, 10  
tum mihi Pactoli veniunt sub tecta liquores,  
et legitur Rubris gemma sub aequoribus;  
tum mihi cessuros spondent mea gaudia reges:  
quae maneant, dum me fata perire volent!  
nam quis divitiis adverso gaudet Amore? 15  
nulla mihi tristi praemia sint Venere!

illa potest magnas heroum infringere vires,  
illa etiam duris mentibus esse dolor:  
illa neque Arabium metuit transcendere limen  
nec timet ostrino, Tulle, subire toro, 20  
et miserum toto iuvenem versare cubili:  
quid relevant variis serica textilibus?  
quae mihi dum placata aderit, non ulla verebor  
regna vel Alcinoi munera despiciere.

## 14. Love and Money

You may recline beside by the Tiber's waves, and drink  
a Lesbos wine from Mentor cups,  
and mark the speed at which the small craft move, or how  
unhurriedly are barges drawn,  
or marvel looking at a lofty grove, the trees  
as tall as clothe the Caucasus,  
and yet these joys do not compare with love, nor can  
Amor concede to towering wealth.

Her lengthening out a long-awaited night with me,  
a whole day in unruffled love,  
makes waters of Pactōlus spread beneath my roof,  
and pearls collect from Indian deeps.  
My happiness is pledge that kings defer to me:  
may these persist until my death.  
For who can joy in wealth while Amor fights? And gifts  
are sorrowful with Venus sad.

She can outdo the greatest strength of heroes, pierce  
her pain into the stoutest mind,  
She's not afraid to cross the thresholds of Arabia,  
nor, Tullus, climb the empurpled bed,  
or make the lovesick sleepless on his couch, and know  
no help is gained from woven silks.  
But if she kindly come to me I need no realms,  
and scorn the gifts of Alcinous.

Notes

## XV

Saepe ego multa tuae levitatis dura timebam,  
hac tamen excepta, Cynthia, perfidia.  
aspice me quanto rapiat fortuna periclo!  
tu tamen in nostro lenta timore venis;  
et potes hesternos manibus componere crines 5  
et longa faciem quaerere desidia,  
nec minus Eois pectus variare lapillis,  
ut formosa novo quae parat ire viro.

at non sic Ithaci digressu mota Calypso  
desertis olim fleverat aequoribus: 10  
multos illa dies incomptis maesta capillis  
sederat, iniusto multa locuta salo,  
et quamvis numquam post haec visura, dolebat  
illa tamen, longae conscia laetitiae.

nec sic Aesoniden rapiantibus anxia ventis 17  
Hypsipyle vacuo constitit in thalamo:  
Hypsipyle nullos post illos sensit amores,  
ut semel Haemonio tabuit hospitio. 20  
coniugis Euadne miseros elata per ignes  
occidit, Argivae fama pudicitiae.

Alphesiboea suos ultast pro coniuge fratres, 15  
sanguinis et cari vincula rupit amor.

quarum nulla tuos potuit convertere mores, 23  
tu quoque uti fieres nobilis historia.  
desine iam revocare tuis periuria verbis,  
Cynthia, et oblitos parce movere deos;  
audax ah nimium, nostro dolitura periclo,  
si quid forte tibi durius inciderit!  
alta prius retro labentur flumina ponto,  
annus et inversas duxerit ante vices, 30  
quam tua sub nostro mutetur pectore cura:  
sis quodcumque voles, non aliena tamen.

## 15. Cynthia Slow to Visit

Your fickleness would often give me cause for fears,  
but, Cynthia, not this treachery.  
You see how fast misfortune tangles me, but still  
come slowly in our hour of need.  
You have the hands to set the hair set yesterday,  
and languidly compose your looks,  
and on your breasts drape eastern gems, as though a beauty  
off to meet her latest man.

Not so Calypso when the Ithacan had left her,  
weeping to the emptied waves.  
Long days she sat there gloomy, with her hair unkempt,  
complaining to the unfair sea,  
and though she grieved she never more would see him, still  
recalled long happiness they had.  
Nor so when winds had swept off Aeson's son: in empty  
bedroom paced Hypsipyle:  
after him she felt no other love, not then  
as one with the Haemonian guest.  
Evadne, proud to burn on her sad husband's pyre,  
displayed the Argive chastity.  
Avenging spouse, Alphesiboea killed her brothers;  
love had severed kindred ties.

If none of these can make you change your ways that you  
in turn become a famous legend,  
give up repeating vows you made, and, Cynthia, angering  
gods that let them rest unheard.  
You are too bold, but come to suffer at my cost  
should anything more serious happen.  
Sooner should steep streams flow backward from the sea,  
and year reverse the ordered seasons,  
than love of you will leave my breast. Act as you wish  
to be yourself but not another's.

tam tibi ne viles isti videantur ocelli,  
per quos saepe mihi credita perfidiast!  
hos tu iurabas, si quid mentita fuisses, 35  
ut tibi suppositis exciderent manibus:  
et contra magnum potes hos attollere solem,  
nec tremis admissae conscia nequitiae?  
quis te cogebat multos pallere colores  
et fletum invitis ducere luminibus? 40  
quis ego nunc pereo, similis moniturus amantes  
non ullis tutum credere blanditiis.

But do not cheapen those fine eyes: because of them  
I've often trusted your deceit.  
You swore that if they ever furnished less than truth,  
they'd fall into your waiting hands.  
How can you lift them to the mighty sun and still  
not tremble at admitted sins?  
Who forced this pallor on you, or the blush, or drew  
unwillingly the tears from eyes?  
Though now they ruin me, I'll tell related lovers  
not to trust such blandishments.

Notes

## XVI

Quae fueram magnis olim patefacta triumphis,  
ianua Patriciae vota Pudicitiae,  
cuius inaurati celebrarunt limina currus,  
captorum lacrimis umida supplicibus,  
nunc ego, nocturnis potorum saucia rixis, 5  
pulsata indignis saepe queror manibus,  
et mihi non desunt turpes pendere corollae  
semper et exclusi signa iacere faces.

nec possum infamis dominae defendere voces,  
nobilis obscenis tradita carminibus; 10  
nec tamen illa suae revocatur parcere famae,  
turpior et saeculi vivere luxuria.  
has inter gravius cogor deflere querelas,  
supplicis a longis tristior excubiis.  
ille meos numquam patitur requiescere postes, 15  
arguta referens carmina blanditia:

'ianua vel domina penitus crudelior ipsa,  
quid mihi tam duris clausa taces foribus?  
cur numquam reserata meos admittis amores,  
nescia furtivas reddere mota preces? 20  
nullane finis erit nostro concessa dolori,  
turpis et in tepido limine somnus erit?  
me mediae noctes, me sidera prona iacentem,  
frigidaque Eoo me dolet aura gelu.

o utinam traiecta cava mea vocula rima 27  
percussas dominae vertat in auriculas!  
sit licet et saxo patientior illa Sicano,  
sit licet et ferro durior et chalybe, 30  
non tamen illa suos poterit compescere ocellos,  
surget et invitis spiritus in lacrimis.  
nunc iacet alterius felici nixa lacerto,  
at mea nocturno verba cadunt Zephyro.

## 16. The Door's Complaint

I who once collected mighty triumphs, door  
that held to true Patrician ways,  
saw threshold packed with gilded chariots, and felt  
the tears that captive subjects wept,  
am now defiled by noisy drunkards and abused  
by ugly treatment at their hands.

Disgraceful garlands hang on me, and torches lie  
as signs of the excluded one.

Nor can I stop graffiti that degrade my mistress:  
noble once, now lewd remarks,  
nor does she help me with her ill-repute, but lives  
less honourably than times allow,  
and through such painful grievances I join the lengthy  
vigil of a suppliant,  
who never leaves my posts in peace but must recite  
his senseless flattering poetry.

'Why, door, be crueller than your mistress, stay so silent,  
obdurate and shut to me?  
Why not unlock yourself, let in my love, receive  
if silently my soulful prayer?  
Is there no end to suffering that I must sleep  
in shame outside your scarce-warm step?  
For me, stretched out, there grieve the midnight constellations,  
the morning star and chilly breeze.

'Why can't some hollow crack let in my wheedling voice,  
to reach my mistress, turn her ears?  
Though she be adamant as is Sicilian stone,  
be forged of iron, toughest steel,  
she'd not be able to refuse her eyes, nor check  
the sob that comes unwilling through tears,  
though now she lies on some blessed other's shoulder, hears  
no words of mine through night-time breeze.

sed tu sola mei, tu maxima causa doloris, 35  
victa meis numquam, ianua, muneribus,  
tu sola humanos numquam miserata dolores 25  
respondes tacitis mutua cardinibus.  
te non ulla meae laesit petulantia linguae; 37  
quae solet irato dicere tanta ioco,  
ut me tam longa raucum patiare querela  
sollicitas trivio pervigilare moras? 40

'at tibi saepe novo deduxi carmina versu,  
osculaque innixus pressa dedi gradibus.  
ante tuos quotiens verti me, perfida, postes,  
debitaque occultis vota tuli manibus!'  
haec ille et si quae miseri novistis amantes, 45  
et matutinis obstrepat alitibus.  
sic ego nunc dominae vitis et semper amantis  
fletibus alterna differor invidia.

'You are my greatest, one, sole cause of pain, the grief  
that's not been conquered by my gifts.  
You take no pity on our human sorrows, keep  
your silence on unmoving hinge.  
You've not been injured by my raucous speech that's apt  
if drunk to make ferocious jests.  
Indeed you've left me, hoarse with long complaint, to dally  
all night long where gutters meet.

'How often have I given you the freshest verses,  
knelt to you and kissed your steps.  
How often I've frequented your perfidious lintel,  
paid the secret vows I owed.'  
That's what is said, and suchlike lovers' babble, which  
would kill the morning song of birds.  
Between the crimes of mistress and the tears of lovers  
I must suffer this vile talk.

Notes

## XVII

Et merito, quoniam potui fugisse puellam,  
nunc ego desertas alloquor alcyonas.  
nec mihi Cassiope salvo visura carinam,  
omniaque ingrato litore vota cadunt.

quin etiam absenti prosunt tibi, Cynthia, venti: 5  
aspice, quam saevas increpat aura minas.  
nullane placatae veniet fortuna procellae?  
haecine parva meum funus harena teget?

tu tamen in melius saevas converte querelas: 10  
sat tibi sit poenae nox et iniqua vada.  
an poteris siccis mea fata reposcere ocellis,  
ossaque nulla tuo nostra tenere sinu?

ah pereat, quicumque rates et vela paravit  
primus et invito gurgite fecit iter!  
nonne fuit levius dominae pervincere mores 15  
(quamvis dura, tamen rara puella fuit),  
quam sic ignotis circumdata litora silvis  
cernere et optatos quaerere Tyndaridas?

illic si qua meum sepelissent fata dolorem, 20  
ultimus et posito staret amore lapis,  
illa meo caros donasset funere crines,  
molliter et tenera poneret ossa rosa;  
illa meum extremo clamasset pulvere nomen,  
ut mihi non ullo pondere terra foret.

at vos, aequeoreae formosa Doride natae, 25  
candida felici solvite vela choro:  
si quando vestras labens Amor attigit undas,  
mansuetis socio parcite litoribus.

## 17. A Storm at Sea

Justly, since I had no sense and left my girl,  
I talk to lonely halcyons.

Nor Cassiōpe care to see my keel: my vows  
are wasted on a thankless shore.

Though gone now, Cynthia, winds still take your side: you see  
how threateningly the gale can roar.

No changing fortune comes to quell the waters: must  
this strip of sand inter my bones?

Ameliorate your fierce complaints, and make the shoals  
and darkness punishment enough,  
or would you look upon my death dry-eyed, disdain  
to have your breast console my bones?

Cursed be those who first conceived of ships and sails,  
and travelled the contesting sea.

Far easier was the conquest of my stormy mistress —  
cruel she was, but worth the cost —  
than see these shores hemmed in by trackless forests, seek  
the kindness of the Heavenly Twins.

If fate at home had brought an end to passion, some  
small grave would mark the end of love,  
and at my funeral she'd have placed her much-loved hair,  
and soft on roses laid my bones,  
my name she would have whispered over final ashes,  
prayed that earth not weigh me down.

But you, the aqueous daughters of the shapely Doris,  
unfurl white sails in happier dance:  
if Amor's ever swooped to touch your waters, keep  
your comrade safe for kinder shores.

## XVIII

Haec certe deserta loca et taciturna querenti,  
et vacuum Zephyri possidet aura nemus.  
hic licet occultos proferre impune dolores,  
si modo sola queant saxa tenere fidem.  
unde tuos primum repetam, mea Cynthia, fastus? 5  
quod mihi das flendi, Cynthia, principium?  
qui modo felicis inter numerabar amantes,  
nunc in amore tuo cogor habere notam.

quid tantum merui? quae te mihi crimina mutant?  
an nova tristitiae causa puella tuae? 10  
sic mihi te referas, levis, ut non altera nostro  
limine formosos intulit ulla pedes.  
quamvis multa tibi dolor hic meus aspera debet,  
non ita saeva tamen venerit ira mea,  
ut tibi sim merito semper furor, et tua flendo 15  
lumina deiectis turpia sint lacrimis.

an quia parva damus mutato signa colore,  
et non ulla meo clamat in ore fides?  
vos eritis testes, si quos habet arbor amores,  
fagus et Arcadio pinus amica deo. 20  
ah quotiens vestras resonant mea verba sub umbras,  
scribitur et teneris Cynthia corticibus!  
ah tua quot peperit nobis iniuria curas,  
quae solum tacitis cognita sunt foribus!

omnia consuevi timidus perferre superbae 25  
iussa neque arguto facta dolore queri.  
pro quo continui montes et frigida rupes  
et datur inculto tramite dura quies;  
et quodcumque meae possunt narrare querelae,  
cogor ad argutas dicere solus aves. 30  
sed qualiscumque's, resonent mihi 'Cynthia' silvae,  
nec deserta tuo nomine saxa vacent.

## 18. The Poet in Solitude

At least this lonely spot withholds my grievances,  
and Zephyr's breath rules empty woods.

Freely I can pour out here my secret anguish  
if the rocks alone keep faith.

How, Cynthia, did that first contempt begin, and whence  
came, Cynthia, all the tears you caused?

Though lately I was with your happy lovers counted,  
now I'm branded with your mark.

But why? What allegations made you change to me?

A rumour of some other girl?

As much as you would trifle with me, still no other's  
shapely feet have crossed my door,  
and though my grief should be your castigation, never  
will that savage anger serve  
to bring your endless fury on, or spoil those eyes,  
so beautiful, by shedding tears.

Or is it feelings aren't avowed by changed complexion,  
faithfulness has silent lips?

May trees be witnesses, if trees know love — and beech  
and pine were both well loved by Pan —  
so often have my words been whispered through their shade  
with Cynthia carved on their soft bark.

How great the suffering your cruelty brought me, as  
is witnessed by your shut-up door.

I've meekly grown accustomed to your haughty manner,  
make no querulous complaint,

and for this have received enclosing hills, cold cliffs  
and sleeping rough where all trails end.

In truth my grievances can only talk to silence,  
tell, at most, the singing birds.

Whatever you may be, let 'Cynthia' fill the woods  
and lonely rocks repeat your name.

## XIX

Non ego nunc tristis vereor, mea Cynthia, Manes,  
nec moror extremo debita fata rogo;  
sed ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore,  
hic timor est ipsis durior exsequiis.  
non adeo leviter nostris puer haesit ocellis, 5  
ut meus oblito pulvis amore vacet.

illic Phylacides iucundae coniugis heros  
non potuit caecis immemor esse locis,  
sed cupidus falsis attingere gaudia palmis  
Thessalis antiquam venerat umbra domum. 10  
illic quidquid ero, semper tua dicar imago:  
traicit et fati litora magnus amor.

illic formosae veniant chorus heroinae,  
quas dedit Argivis Dardana praeda viris:  
quarum nulla tua fuerit mihi, Cynthia, forma 15  
gratior et (Tellus hoc ita iusta sinat)  
quamvis te longae remorentur fata senectae,  
cara tamen lacrimis ossa futura meis.

quae tu viva mea possis sentire favilla!  
tum mihi non ullo mors sit amara loco. 20  
quam vereor, ne te contempto, Cynthia, busto  
abstrahat a nostro pulvere iniquus Amor,  
cogat et invitam lacrimas siccare cadentis!  
flectitur assiduis certa puella minis.

quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes: 25  
non satis est ullo tempore longus amor.

## 19. Facing Death

I do not dread that gloomy underworld, my Cynthia,  
grudge what's owed the final flame,  
but only that my funeral rites may lack your love:  
a fear that's worse than death itself.  
Not so lightly settled on the lids is love that I'd  
forget or lose it in the dust.

Phylacus's, heroic in the realms of dark,  
could not forgo his lovely wife,  
but reached for joys with unreal hands, returned a ghost  
to Thessaly, his native home.  
So I, whatever else, shall there be called your shade:  
great love can cross the shores of death.

And if there came the beauteous heroines of Troy  
as booty given Argive men,  
still none could match the pleasure of your beauty, Cynthia,  
(may Earth allow it and be just),  
and though the fates retain you to a weary age,  
my tears will hold that body dear.

May you, still living, know this from my embers, when  
no place of death is harsh for me.  
But how I fear you will despise my tomb, and cruel  
Amor drag you from my dust,  
compel you dry your tears, for, when fatigued, the truest  
girl must yield to constant threats.

Yet, while we may, let us enjoy our love, for that,  
though long, can never last enough.

Notes

## XX

Haec pro continuo te, Galle, monemus amore,  
id tibi ne vacuo defluat ex animo:  
saepe imprudenti fortuna occurrit amanti:  
crudelis Minyis sic erat Ascanius.

est tibi non infra specie, non nomine dispar, 5  
Theiodamanteo proximus ardor Hylae:  
huic tu, sive leges Umbrae rate flumina silvae,  
sive Aniena tuos tinxerit unda pedes,  
sive Gigantei spatiabere litoris ora,  
sive ubicumque vago fluminis hospitio, 10  
Nympharum semper cupidas defende rapinas  
(non minor Ausoniis est amor Adryasin);  
ne tibi sit duros montes et frigida saxa,  
Galle, neque expertos semper adire lacus.

quae miser ignotis error perpessus in oris 15  
Herculis indomito fleverat Ascanio.  
namque ferunt olim Pagasae navalibus Argo  
egressam longe Phasidos isse viam,  
et iam praeteritis labentem Athamantidos undis  
Mysorum scopulis applicuisse ratem. 20  
hic manus heroum, placidis ut constitit oris,  
mollia composita litora fronde tegit.

at comes invicti iuvenis processerat ultra  
raram sepositi quaerere fontis aquam.  
hunc duo sectati fratres, Aquilonia proles 25  
(nunc superat Zetes, nunc superat Calais),  
oscula suspensis instabant carpere plantis,  
oscula et alterna ferre supina fuga.  
ille sed extrema pendentes ludit in ala  
et volucris ramo summovet insidias. 30  
iam Pandioniae cessit genus Orithyiae:  
ah dolor! ibat Hylas, ibat Hamadryasin.

## 20. Hercules and Hylas

Allow me, Gallus, for your constant love, advise  
    (and let it not escape your mind)  
that chance befalls the careless lover, cruel as was  
    Ascanius to Argonauts.

Your love is like that Theiodamas son, that Hylas,  
    both in brightness and in fame,  
where, should you sail through rivers crossing wooded Umbria  
    or let the Anio wet your feet,  
or pace the margin of the Giant's shore, or have  
    an errant river welcome you,  
you need ward off licentious nymphs (Ausonian  
    as lustful as the Adryasin),  
for otherwise you face bleak hills, cold rocks, and, Gallus,  
    pools you have not known before.

Such hardships bore the wandering Hercules, who wept  
    beside the harsh Ascanius.  
For when, on leaving docks at Pagasa, the Argo  
    took long journey on to Phasis,  
gliding past the waves of Hellespont, put in  
    beside the cliffs of Mysia,  
the band of heroes went ashore in quiet, covering  
    seashore with soft layer of leaves.

The youth, the invincible's companion, went ahead  
    to seek choice waters from a spring.  
Pursuing him two brothers of the northern wind  
    (first Zetes wins, then Cālaïs)  
buffeted him with breath, their whirling airborne feet  
    now up, now down, to snatch their kisses.  
He mocks them as they hang wing-tips away, and with  
    a branch repels their swift assaults.  
Orithyia's nearest then gave up, but Hylas, sadly,  
    went on to the Hamadryads.

hic erat Arganthe Pege sub vertice montis,  
grata domus Nymphis umida Thyniasin,  
quam supra nulli pendebant debita curae 35  
roscida desertis poma sub arboribus,  
et circum irriguo surgebant lilia prato  
candida purpureis mixta papaveribus.  
quae modo decerpens tenero pueriliter ungui  
proposito florem praetulit officio, 40  
et modo formosis incumbens nescius undis  
errorem blandis tardat imaginibus.

tandem haurire parat demissis flumina palmis  
innixus dextro plena trahens umero.  
cuius ut accensae Dryades candore puellae 45  
miratae solitos destituere choros  
prolapsum et leviter facili traxere liquore,  
tum sonitum raptu corpore fecit Hylas.  
cui procul Alcides ter 'Hyla!' respondet: at illi  
nomen ab extremis montibus aura refert. 50

his, o Galle, tuos monitus servabis amores,  
formosum ni vis perdere rursus Hylan.

Beneath Arganthus' crest there was a spring, called Pegae,  
haven to the Thynian nymphs,  
which here was overhung with unpruned trees that held  
their isolated dewy apples.

In water meadows round there grew unclouded lilies,  
mixed with poppies, purple-red.

With childish pleasure Hylas cuts them with his nail,  
neglecting his intended task.

Carelessly he hangs above the water, dallies,  
charmed by his reflection there.

He recollects, and cups his hands to draw full draft,  
right shoulder, leaning, takes the weight,  
at which the Dryads looking up, and drunk on beauty,  
in amazement stopped their dance.

He lurched: they tugged him through the yielding water. Hylas'  
body howled as it was caught.

Far off, three times Alcides calls out, 'Hylas'. Wind  
returns but name from distant hills.

Be warned by this, then, Gallus: keep good guard, unless  
you too would lose a lovely Hylas.

Notes

## XXI

Tu, qui consortem properas evadere casum,  
miles ab Etruscis saucius aggeribus,  
quid nostro gemitu turgentia lumina torques?

pars ego sum vestrae proxima militiae.

sic te servato possint gaudere parentes,

5

haec soror acta tuis sentiat e lacrimis:

Gallum per medios ereptum Caesaris enses

effugere ignotas non potuisse manus;

et quaecumque super dispersa invenerit ossa

montibus Etruscis, haec sciat esse mea.

10

## 21. A Dead Kinsman Speaks

You, soldier wounded on the Tuscan ramparts, running  
to avoid a common fate,  
why at my groaning do you throw a tortured glance?

I'm closest to your regiment.

Though parents will rejoice at your survival, let  
your grieving sister learn that Gallus,  
though he passed unscathed through Caesar's lines, could not  
escape his death at unknown hands,  
and bones she finds far scattered on the Tuscan hills  
assuredly they will be mine.

Notes

XXII

Qualis et unde genus, qui sint mihi, Tulle, Penates,  
quaeris pro nostra semper amicitia.

si Perusina tibi patriae sunt nota sepulcra,

Italiae duris funera temporibus,

cum Romana suos egit discordia cives—

5

sic mihi praecipue, pulvis Etrusca, dolor,

tu proiecta mei perpressa's membra propinqui,

tu nullo miseri contegis ossa solo—

proxima suppositos contingens Umbria campos

me genuit terris fertilis uberibus.

## 22. The Poet's Birthplace

You ask my home and rank and lineage, Tullus,  
in eternal friendship's name.  
Perusia, if you know it, grave of Italy  
in ominous and grievous times,  
when Roman discord caught up citizens — to me  
most principally a grief when dust  
of Tuscany disdained the limbs of scattered kinsman,  
left uncovered his poor bones —  
an Umbria bordering the plains below, so rich  
in fertile soil: here was my birth.

Notes

# LIBER SECUNDUS

I

Quaeritis, unde mihi totiens scribantur amores,  
unde meus veniat mollis in ore liber.  
non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo.  
ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.  
sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere vidi, 5  
totum de Coa veste volumen erit;  
seu vidi ad frontem sparsos errare capillos,  
gaudet laudatis ire superba comis;  
sive lyrae carmen digitis percussit eburnis,  
miramur, facilis ut premat arte manus; 10  
seu compescentis somnum declinat ocellos,  
invenio causas mille poeta novas;  
seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu,  
tum vero longas condimus Iliadas;  
seu quidquid fecit sivest quodcumque locuta, 15  
maxima de nihilo nascitur historia.

quod mihi si tantum, Maecenas, fata dedissent,  
ut possem heroas ducere in arma manus,  
non ego Titanas canerem, non Ossan Olympo  
impositam, ut caeli Pelion esset iter, 20  
nec veteres Thebas, nec Pergama nomen Homeri,  
Xerxis et imperio bina coisse vada,  
regnave prima Remi aut animos Carthaginis altae,  
Cimbrorumque minas et benefacta Mari:  
bellaque resque tui memorarem Caesaris, et tu 25  
Caesare sub magno cura secunda fores.

## BOOK TWO

### 1. The Task.

You ask me why I often write of love affairs,  
my verses soft upon the lips.  
The songs are not Apollo's, nor Calliōpe's,  
but what the girl herself inspires.  
The splendour of a dress she's walking in creates  
great volumes in that Cōan cloth.  
And if I've seen her forehead's straying curls, my praise  
persuades her walk more proud of head.  
The melodies her ivory fingers pluck from lyre  
amaze me with their practised touch.

And if in sleep she droops her heavy eyes, through me  
the poet finds a thousand themes.  
Or if, with dress undone, she wrestle me, in truth  
from that I build long Iliads,  
and from whatever she has done, or may have said,  
are born vast sagas out of nothing.

So if on me, Maecēnas, fates bestowed the means  
to lead heroic troops to war,  
I'd not sing Titans, Ossa on Olympus piled,  
with Pelion the route to heaven,  
nor Homer's glory, Pergama, nor ancient Thebes,  
the two seas joined at Xerxes' word,  
nor early reign of Remus, lofty rise of Carthage,  
Cimbrian threat and Marius' feats:  
I'd tell the wars and actions of your mighty Caesar,  
you but second in my themes.

nam quotiens Mutinam aut civilia busta Philippos  
 aut canerem Siculae classica bella fugae,  
 eversosque focos antiquae gentis Etruscae,  
 et Ptolomaei litora capta Phari, 30  
 aut canerem Aegyptum et Nilum, cum attractus in urbem  
 septem captivis debilis ibat aquis,  
 aut regum auratis circumdata colla catenis,  
 Actiaque in Sacra currere rostra Via;  
 te mea Musa illis semper contexeret armis, 35  
 et sumpta et posita pace fidele caput:  
 Theseus infernis, superis testatur Achilles,  
 hic Ixioniden, ille Menoetiaden.  
 Caesaris et famae vestigia iuncta tenebis 3.9.33  
 Maecenatis erunt vera tropaea fides. 3.9.34

sed neque Phlegraeos Iovis Enceladique tumultus  
 intonet angusto pectore Callimachus, 40  
 nec mea conveniunt duro praecordia versu  
 Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen avos.  
 navita de ventis, de tauris narrat arator,  
 enumerat miles vulnera, pastor ovis;  
 nos contra angusto versamus proelia lecto: 45  
 qua pote quisque, in ea conterat arte diem.

laus in amore mori: laus altera, si datur uno  
 posse frui: fruar o solus amore meo,  
 [si memini, solet illa levis culpae puellas,  
 et totam ex Helena non probat Iliada.] 50  
 seu mihi sunt tangenda novercae pocula Phaedrae,  
 pocula privigno non nocitura suo,  
 seu mihi Circaeο pereundumst gramine, sive  
 Colchis Iolciacis urat aëna focus.  
 una meos quoniam praedatast femina sensus, 55  
 ex hac ducentur funera nostra domo.

I've sung of Mutina, and Philippi, that grave  
of Romans, routs off Sicily,  
the altars overturned of old Etruscans, captured  
shores of Ptolemaic Pharos,  
and would of Egypt and the Nile, displayed through Rome,  
its feeble seven streams curtailed,  
the necks of kings with golden chains, and Actium's prows  
progressed along the Sacred Way.  
To such exploits my Muse would always add you: faithful,  
leading and rejecting peace.  
As Theseus showed below, above Achilles, sons  
of Ixion and Menoetius:  
your steps will march along with Caesar's fame, Maecenas:  
faith of yours his greatest prize.

No Phlegra roar of Jove with Enceladus battle  
thin-built Callimachus makes,  
nor does my talent lie in epic verse that follows  
Caesar's Phrygian ancestors.  
The sailor talks of winds, the ploughman oxen, soldier  
of his wounds, and herdsman sheep.  
I tell of battles on our narrow bed: let each  
wear out the day as he knows best.

Praise he who dies for love, and more for one girl only,  
bless me with that single joy —  
[she's quick to castigate the fickle girls; because  
of Helen hates the Iliad] —  
though I be forced to take the potions Phaedra used,  
which left her stepson quite unharmed,  
or die of Circe's herbs, or those the Colchian witch  
distilled in cauldron on Iolcos,  
since she it was who seized my feelings, from her house  
it follows that my funeral goes.

omnis humanos sanat medicina dolores:  
solus amor morbi non amat artificem.  
tarda Philoctetae sanavit crura Machaon,  
Phoenicis Chiron lumina Philyrides, 60  
et deus exstinctum Cressis Epidaurius herbis  
restituit patriis Androgeona focis,  
Mysus et Haemonia iuvenis qua cuspide vulnus  
senserat, hac ipsa cuspide sensit opem.  
hoc si quis vitium poterit mihi demere, solus 65  
Tantaleae poterit tradere poma manu;  
dolia virgineis idem ille repleverit urnis,  
ne tenera assidua colla graventur aqua;  
idem Caucasia solvet de rupe Promethei  
bracchia et a medio pectore pellet avem. 70

quandocumque igitur vitam mea fata reposcent,  
et breve in exiguo marmore nomen ero,  
Maecenas, nostrae spes invidiosa iuventae,  
et vitae et morti gloria iusta meae,  
si te forte meo ducet via proxima busto, 75  
essedae caelatis siste Britanna iugis,  
talique illacrimans mutae iace verba favillae:  
'huic misero fatum dura puella fuit.'

Medicine will cure all ills, excepting love,  
which has no doctors for its pain.  
Machaon cured Philoctetes's legs, and Chiron,  
Philyra's son, the eyes of Phoenix.  
The Epidaurian god with Cretan herbs restored  
Androgeōn to father's hearth.  
The Mysian youth when wounded by Achilles' spear  
from that same spear received his cure.  
So only he who'd rid me of this fault could put  
a fruit in Tantalus's hand.  
The same would fill the casks from maidens' urns, undo  
the water's weight soft necks must bear,  
Prometheus let loose from the Caucasian rocks,  
the vulture driven from his breast.

When fate calls back this life, therefore, and makes my name  
the briefest on a marble slip,  
Maecēnas, hope and envy of our Roman youth,  
and my true pride in life and death,  
if chance should bring you near my tomb, I ask you halt  
your splendid British chariot,  
and say in tears to my mute ashes, 'One hard girl  
was fate enough for this poor man.'

Notes

II

Liber eram et vacuo meditabar vivere lecto;  
at me composita pace fefellit Amor.  
cur haec in terris facies humana moratur?  
Iuppiter, ignosco pristina furta tua.

fulva comast longaeque manus, et maxima toto 5  
corpore, et incedit vel Iove digna soror,  
aut ceu Munychias Pallas spatiatur ad aras,  
Gorgonis anguiferae pectus operta comis;  
*aut patrio qualis ponit vestigia ponto* 8a  
*mille Venus teneris cincta Cupidinibus* 8b

cedite iam, divae, quas pastor viderat olim 13  
Idaeis tunicas ponere verticibus!  
hanc utinam faciem nolit mutare senectus, 15  
etsi Cumaeae saecula vatis aget!

## 2. A Description of Cynthia

Free I was, and looked to life of unshared bed,  
but Amor tricked me making peace.

Why does such human beauty haunt the earth? I pardon,  
Jupiter, your past affairs.

Auburn hair, long hands: throughout her frame she walks  
as worthy sister of great Jove.

Or as Pallas to Munychian altars, breasts  
obscured by Gorgon-ringlet hair,

*or as does Venus with her thousand tender Cupids  
on the sea that gave her birth.*

Make way, you goddesses that once a shepherd saw  
disrobing on the peaks of Ida!

Old age refuse to change these looks, for all she live  
the Cumae Sibyl's centuries.

Notes

III

'Qui nullum tibi dicebas iam posse nocere,  
haesisti, cecidit spiritus ille tuus!  
vix unum potes, infelix, requiescere mensem,  
et turpis de te iam liber alter erit.'  
quaerebam, sicca si posset piscis harena 5  
nec solitus ponto vivere torvus aper;  
aut ego si possem studiis vigilare severis:  
differtur, numquam tollitur ullus amor.

nec me tam facies, quamvis sit candida, cepit  
(lilia non domina sint magis alba mea; 10  
nec de more comae per levia colla fluentes,  
non oculi, geminae, sidera nostra, faces,  
nec si quando Arabo lucet bombyce puella 15  
(non sum de nihilo blandus amator ego):  
ut Maeotica nix minio si certet Hiberno, 11  
utque rosae puro lacte natant folia), 12  
quantum quod posito formose saltat Iaccho, 17  
egit ut euhantis dux Ariadna choros,  
et quantum, Aeolio cum temptat carmina plectro,  
par Aganippaeae ludere docta lyrae; 20  
et sua cum antiquae committit scripta Corinnae,  
carminaque Erinnae non putat aequa suis.

num tibi nascenti primis, mea vita, diebus  
candidus argutum sternuit omen Amor?  
haec tibi contulerunt caelestia munera divi, 25  
haec tibi ne matrem forte dedisse putes.  
non, non humani partus sunt talia dona:  
ista decem menses non peperere bona.  
gloria Romanis una's tu nata puellis:  
post Helenam haec terris forma secunda redit. 32  
nec semper nobiscum humana cubilia vises; 31  
Romana accumbes prima puella Iovi, 30

### 3. Enslaved Again

'Though you were saying none could hurt you, now you're trapped,  
the spirit in you has succumbed.

You cannot rest a month, unhappy one, and now  
a second book comes bringing shame.'

I sought to know if fish inhabited sand, or sea  
could hold the savage boar,  
or I could stay awake in serious study, love  
to be deferred but not destroyed.

Not beauty in the face that captures me, (and lilies  
are not whiter than my mistress).

Nor fashion's hair that falls about the smoothest neck  
or eyes, my lodestone, as twin stars,

nor when my girl's resplendent in Arabian silks  
(I'm not an empty flatterer) —

Maeotian snows to vie with Spanish cinnabar  
as in pure milk rose petals float —

but if, Iacchus wine set out, she dance, it's free  
as Ariadne's Maenad song,

and if she pick out songs from the Aeolian lyre,  
it's something fit for Aganippe.

If with Corinna's classic script she weighs herself,  
she finds Erinna's are no match.

Did not, my life, a glowing Amor bless first days  
by giving you a noisy sneeze?

A benefaction of the gods, so don't imagine  
these were gifts your mother sent.

Such qualities are not from humans, nor ten months  
produced the talents that you have.

Unique your fame in Roman women: after Helen  
beauty is returned to earth.

It's not to merely human beds you'll go: of Romans  
you'll be first to lie with Jove.

hac ego nunc mirer si flagret nostra iuventus?  
pulchrius hac fuerat, Troia, perire tibi.  
olim mirabar, quod tanti ad Pergama belli 35  
Europae atque Asiae causa puella fuit:  
nunc, Pari, tu sapiens et tu, Menelae, fuisti,  
tu quia poscebas, tu quia lentus eras.  
digna quidem facies, pro qua vel obiret Achilles;  
vel Priamo belli causa probanda fuit. 40  
si quis vult fama tabulas anteire vetustas,  
hic dominam exemplo ponat in arte meam:  
sive illam Hesperiiis, sive illam ostendet Eois,  
uret et Eoos, uret et Hesperios.

What wonder that she sets our youth aflame, for her  
how better had been Troy to burn.  
I marvelled at the Asian-European war  
of Pergamum some girl had caused,  
but now I see your wisdom, Paris, Menelaus:  
one who asked and one refused.  
Her face how well had merited Achilles' death,  
and granted Priam cause for war.  
If any would surpass the ancient painters, let  
him take my mistress for a model:  
exhibiting to east-lands or the west, he'd make  
both Eos and Hesperia burn.

Notes

## IV

His saltem ut tenear iam finibus! ei mihi, si quis, acrius, ut moriar, venerit alter amor!	3.45
ac veluti primo taurus detractat aratra, post venit assueto mollis ad arva iugo, sic primo iuvenes trepidant in amore feroces, dehinc domiti post haec aequa et iniqua ferunt.	3.50
turpia perpressus vates est vincla Melampus, cognitus Iphicli surripuisse boves; quem non lucra, magis Pero formosa coegit, mox Amythaonia nupta futura domo.	
multa prius dominae delicta queraris oportet, saepe roges aliquid, saepe repulsus eas, et saepe immeritos corrumpas dentibus ungues, et crepitum dubio suscitet ira pede!	4.1
nequiquam perfusa meis unguenta capillis, ibat et expenso planta morata gradu.	5
non hic herba valet, non hic nocturna Cytaeis, non Perimedaea gramina cocta manus; nam cui non ego sum fallaci praemia vati?	15
quae mea non decies somnia versat anus?	16
non eget hic medicis, non lectis mollibus aeger, huic nullum caeli tempus et aura nocet;	11
ambulat—et subito mirantur funus amici! sic est incautum, quidquid habetur amor.	
quippe ubi nec causas nec apertos cernimus ictus, unde tamen veniant tot mala caeca viast;	9 10
hostis si quis erit nobis, amet ille puellas: gaudeat in puero, si quis amicus erit.	17
tranquillo tuta descendis flumine cumba: quid tibi tam parvi litoris unda nocet?	20
alter saepe uno mutat praecordia verbo, altera vix ipso sanguine mollis erit.	

#### 4. The Miseries of Love

Let me keep within these boundaries: God forbid  
I die in pain of some new love.

The bull will first reject the plough, but, yoke familiar,  
come in quietness to the field.

So youths first tremble at ferocious love, but, conquered,  
take both rough and smooth alike.

The seer Melampus bore his shameful fetters, knew  
he'd stolen Iphiclus's cattle,  
and not for gain but for the lovely Pero, soon  
his bride in Amythaon's house.

So many sins you will complain of in your mistress,  
ask a favour, be repulsed,  
be forced to bite a blameless nail, and drum in anger  
foot against the ground, perplexed.

In vain I've found my hair's been dressed in perfume, foot  
advanced with slow and costly step.

No powerful herb will then avail, nocturnal Colchis,  
potion brewed by Perimede.

What doubtful fortune-teller does not gull me, witch  
that ten times over tells my dreams?

So sick a man needs not his doctor, nor his bed,  
no wind nor season brings him harm,  
but swiftly friends he's walking with will find a corpse:  
so unpredictable is love.

It comes without a cause or open strike, along  
a gloomy path with countless ills.

If I've an enemy, let him love girls, or boy  
delight in while I yet have friends.

Down the stream in innocence your boat will glide,  
for how can shallow waves bring harm?

A word will often calm a boy's breast, where a girl  
will scarce relent to have your blood.

## V

Hoc verumst, tota te ferri, Cynthia, Roma,  
 et non ignota vivere nequitia?  
 haec merui sperare? dabis mihi, perfida, poenas;  
 et nobis aliquo, Cynthia, ventus erit.  
 inveniam tamen e multis fallacibus unam, 5  
 quae fieri nostro carmine nota velit,  
 nec mihi tam duris insultet moribus, et te  
 vellicet: heu sero flebis amata diu.

nunc est ira recens, nunc est discedere tempus:  
 si dolor afuerit, crede, redibit amor. 10  
 non ita Carpathiae variant Aquilonibus undae,  
 nec dubio nubes vertitur atra Noto,  
 quam facile irati verbo mutantur amantes:  
 dum licet, iniusto subtrahe colla iugo.  
 nec tu non aliquid, sed prima nocte, dolebis; 15  
 omne in amore malum, si patiare, levest.

at tu per dominae Iunonis dulcia iura  
 parce tuis animis, vita, nocere tibi.  
 non solum taurus ferit uncis cornibus hostem,  
 verum etiam instanti laesa repugnat ovis. 20  
 nec tibi periuro scindam de corpore vestis,  
 nec mea praeclusas fregerit ira fores,  
 nec tibi conexos iratus carpere crinis,  
 nec duris ausim laedere pollicibus:  
 rusticus haec aliquis tam turpia proelia quaerat, 25  
 cuius non hederæ circuiere caput.

scribam igitur, quod non umquam tua delet aetas,  
 'Cynthia, forma potens; Cynthia, verba levis.'  
 crede mihi, quamvis contemnas murmura famae,  
 hic tibi pallori, Cynthia, versus erit. 30

## 5. Cynthia's Wantonness

Is it fitting, Cynthia, you've become a byword  
in our Rome for doubtful ways?  
Have I deserved such treatment, faithless one? You'll pay:  
the wind will drive me somewhere else.  
Among the many false, I'll find the one who's worthy,  
winning fame my verse will bring,  
who'll not insult me but will censor you. Too late  
will weep the one I loved too long.

When anger's fresh it's time to go, for love, when pain  
is past, believe me, will return.  
Carpathian waves are not so changed by northern winds  
nor dark clouds varied by the south,  
as irate lovers by a word. So while there's chance  
withdraw your head from that harsh yoke.  
You'll find it painful, but the first night only: hurt  
in love is tolerable when borne.

But by the sweetness of your mistress Juno, cease  
my love of life, to harm yourself.  
A bull attacks with out-curved horns, but injured ewe  
can turn on its tormentor too.  
I will not rip the clothing from your perjured body,  
angrily break down your door,  
nor will my fury wrench off braided curls, nor give  
your body mischief at my hands.  
Some simpleton can pick a boorish quarrel, not  
the one whose head the ivy crowns.

I'll phrase the words a lifetime won't erase, a Cynthia  
famed for beauty but a slut  
in verse, that though you scornfully deny the rumours,  
nonetheless will make you blanch.

## VI

Non ita complebant Ephyraeae Laidos aedis,  
ad cuius iacuit Graecia tota fores;  
turba Menandreae fuerat nec Thaidos olim  
tanta, in qua populus lusit Erichthonius;  
nec quae deletas potuit componere Thebas, 5  
Phryne tam multis facta beata viris.  
quin etiam falsos fingis tibi saepe propinquos,  
oscula ne desunt qui tibi iure ferant.

me iuvenum pictae facies, me nomina laedunt,  
me tener in cunis et sine voce puer; 10  
me laedet, si multa tibi dabit oscula mater,  
me soror et quando dormit amica simul:  
omnia me laedent: timidus sum (ignosce timori)  
et miser in tunica suspicor esse virum.

his olim, ut famast, vitiis ad proelia ventumst, 15  
his Troiana vides funera principiis;  
hinc olim ignaros luctus populavit Achivos, 3.18.29  
Atride magno cum stetit alter amor; 3.18.20  
aspera Centauros eadem dementia iussit 17  
frangere in adversum pocula Pirithoum.

cur exempla petam Graiûm? tu criminis auctor  
nutritus duro, Romule, lacte lupae: 20  
tu rapere intactas docuisti impune Sabinas:  
per te nunc Romae quidlibet audet Amor.

felix Admeti coniunx et lectus Ulixis,  
et quaecumque viri femina limen amat!  
templa Pudicitiae quid opus statuisse puellis, 25  
si cuivis nuptae quidlibet esse licet?

## 6. Unwanted Influences

Not so thronged the temple to Corinthian Lais,  
    though at her gate lay fawning Greece,  
or great a crowd about Menander's Thāis, who  
    enraptured the Athenians,  
or wealth Phrynē derived from many men, enough  
    to reconstruct a ruined Thebes:  
your game's to manufacture relatives, so none  
    can be denied their kissing rights.

The portraits of young men, or names, can trouble me,  
    or babe in cradle lacking speech;  
I'm worried at your mother's kisses, sisters', jealous  
    when a girlfriend sleeps with you.  
Everything has dangers, and with fear (forgive me)  
    in each dress I see a man.

Before, the story goes, such faults have led to battles:  
    deaths at Troy from such a start.  
That misery undid the Greeks, when Agamemnon's  
    second love had cost them dear:  
a madness making Centaurs break their embossed cups  
    on adversary Pirithous.

Why Greek examples? Romulus began this crime,  
    brought up on bitter she-wolf's milk:  
you taught us how to rape the Sabine women: love  
    dares anything in Rome from that.

Be blessed the wives of Ulysses and of Admetus,  
    wives respecting husband's house.  
What use the temple girls erect to Chastity,  
    if brides do anything they please?

quae manus obscenas depinxit prima tabellas  
et posuit casta turpia visa domo,  
illa puellarum ingenuos corruptit ocellos  
nequitiaeque suae noluit esse rudis. 30  
ah gemat in tenenbris, ista qui protulit arte  
orgia sub tacita condita laetitia!  
non istis olim variabant tecta figuris:  
tum paries nullo crimine pictus erat.  
sed nunc immeritum velavit aranea fanum 35  
et mala desertos occupat herba deos.

quos igitur tibi custodes, quae limina ponam,  
quae numquam supra pes inimicus eat?  
nam nihil invitae tristis custodia prodest:  
quam peccare pudet, Cynthia, tuta sat est. 40

The hand which first designed licentious panels, put  
in decent houses dubious scenes,  
corrupted innocence in young girls' eyes, refused  
to leave obscured his wickedness —  
may he be blinded, groan, whose handiwork has bared  
the rites of secret happiness.  
Before, the times went unembarrassed by such figures,  
walls without obscenities,  
but now, unmerited, the spider shrouds the temple,  
grass grows on forsaken gods.

Whom can I set to guard your door, ensuring feet  
unfriendly to me do not cross?  
But watch is futile if the girl is loath: the shame  
of sinning makes my Cynthia safe.

Notes

## VII

Nos uxor numquam, numquam seducet amica: semper amica mihi, semper et uxor eris.	6.41
gavisa's certe sublatam, Cynthia, legem, qua quondam edicta flêmus uterque diu, ni nos divideret: quamvis diducere amantes non queat invitos Iuppiter ipse duos.	7.1
'at magnus Caesar.' sed magnus Caesar in armis: devictae gentes nil in amore valent.	5
nam citius paterer caput hoc discedere collo quam possem nuptae perdere more faces, aut ego transirem tua limina clausa maritus, respiciens udis prodiva luminibus.	10
a mea tum qualis caneret tibi tibia somnos, tibia funesta tristior illa tuba! unde mihi patriis natos praebere triumphis? nullus de nostro sanguine miles erit.	
quod si vera meae comitarem castra puellae, non mihi sat magnus Castoris iret equus.	15
hinc etenim tantum meruit mea gloria nomen, gloria ad hibernos lata Borysthenidas.	
tu mihi sola places: placeam tibi, Cynthia, solus: hic erit et patrio nomine pluris amor.	20

## 7. A Law Withdrawn

No wife shall ever part us, nor seductive friend:  
forever you'll be both to me.

How glad you'll be that edict's been annulled, when, Cynthia,  
its announcement made us weep  
for fear of parting. Still, great Jove himself can't sever  
lovers who don't wish to go.

'Caesar's mighty', but in might of arms. Subduing  
nations counts for nought in love.

I'd sooner let my head be struck from neck than waste  
bright nuptial torches on a bride,  
or pass as husband your shut door and, turning back,  
observe, damp-eyed, what I'd betrayed.

How would that wedding flute have come to you in dreams  
but as the trumpet note of death!  
How could I furnish offspring for my country's triumphs?  
Never soldier from our blood.

The one true camp I'd follow is my girl's, for which  
great Castor's horse would not suffice.  
From her my name has earned renown, a glory carried  
to the wintry Scythians.

Cynthia: you're my joy, as I am yours: a love  
I count as more than country's name.

Notes

## VIII

Eripitur nobis iam pridem cara puella:

et tu me lacrimas fundere, amice, vetas?

nullae sunt inimicitiae nisi amoris acerbae:

ipsum me iugula, lenior hostis ero.

possum ego in alterius positam spectare lacerto? 5

nec mea dicetur, quae modo dicta meast?

omnia vertuntur: certe vertuntur amores:

vinceris a vincis, haec in amore rotast.

magni saepe duces, magni cecidere tyranni, 10

et Thebae steterunt altaque Troia fuit.

munera quanta dedi vel qualia carmina feci!

illa tamen numquam ferrea dixit 'amo.'

ergo ego tam multos nimium temerarius annos,

improba, qui tulerim teque tuamque domum?

ecquandone tibi liber sum visus? an usque 15

in nostrum iacies verba superba caput?

sic igitur prima moriere aetate, Properti?

sed morere; interitu gaudeat illa tuo!

exagitet nostros Manis, sectetur et umbras,

insultetque rogis, calcet et ossa mea! 20

quid? non Antigoniae tumulo Boeotius Haemon

corrui ipse suo saucius ense latus,

et sua cum miserae permiscuit ossa puellae,

qua sine Thebanam noluit ire domum?

sed non effugies: mecum moriaris oportet; 25

hoc eodem ferro stillet uterque cruor.

quamvis ista mihi mors est inhonesta futura:

mors inhonesta quidem, tu moriere tamen.

## 8. Robbed

So, now I'm robbed of one I've all too dearly loved,  
you tell me, friend: forgo your tears?

No enmities rank worse than those of love: try murdering  
me: I'd make a friendlier foe.

Must I now smile to see her in some other's arms,  
that one called mine, or was till now?

All changes. Love the most. You win, you lose: so spin  
your prospects in love's fortune wheel.

Great kings have fallen, often, generals too. Both Thebes  
and well-defended Troy are dust.

What gifts and words I gave her, but the iron-hearted  
never has declared her love.

My dubious one, I've been too rash, too happy  
helping you and your affairs:  
you never treated me as free, but one to cast  
your wild aspersions in his face.

Ah well, Propertius, you die too young. But die  
and let that girl rejoice you're gone,  
attack your ghost, pursue your shade, insult your funeral  
fire and trample on your bones.

Was not Antigone by Haemon at her tomb  
undone the same? He stabbed himself  
and did not mix his bones with that poor girl's: in Thebes  
without her he could find no home.

But you will not escape, but die with me, your blood  
and mine will drip from this same sword,  
undoubtedly a shameful death, but death the same,  
and one that you must also share.

ille etiam abrepta desertus coniuge Achilles  
cessare in Teucris pertulit arma sua. 30  
viderat ille fuga, stratos in litore Achivos,  
fervere et Hectorea Dorica castra face;  
viderat informem multa Patroclon harena  
porrectum et sparsas caede iacere comas,  
omnia formosam propter Briseida passus: 35  
tantus in erepto saevit amore dolor.  
at postquam sera captivast reddita poena,  
fortem illum Haemoniis Hectora traxit equis.  
inferior multo cum sim vel matre vel armis,  
mirum, si de me iure triumphat Amor? 40

The great Achilles, robbed of bride, refused to fight,  
at Trojans did not threaten arms.  
He saw the fleeing Greeks cut down along the shore  
their camp ablaze with Hector's torch,  
and viewed, stretched out on sand, the corpse of Patrocles,  
the mangled body, blood-caked hair,  
all these denied for finely formed Brīsēis' sake:  
such pain when love is snatched away.  
But when at last the captive was restored, he dragged  
brave Hector from his horses' hooves.  
And since I cannot rival him in birth or fame,  
why wonder Amor conquers me?

Notes

## IXA

Iste quod est, ego saepe fui: sed fors et in hora  
hoc ipso eiecto carior alter erit.

Penelope poterat bis denos salva per annos  
vivere, tam multis femina digna procis;  
coniugium falsa poterat differre Minerva, 5  
nocturno solvens texta diurna dolo;  
visura et quamvis numquam speraret Ulixem,  
illum exspectando facta remansit anus.  
nec non exanimem amplectens Brīsēis Achillem  
candida vesana verberat ora manu; 10  
et dominum lavit maerens captiva cruentum,  
appositum flavis in Simoenta vadis,  
foedavitque comas, et tanti corpus Achilli  
maximaque in parva sustulit ossa manu;  
cum tibi nec Peleus aderat nec caerulea mater, 15  
Scyria nec viduo Deidamia toro.  
tunc igitur veris gaudebat Graecia nuptis,  
tunc etiam caedes inter et arma pudor.

at tu non una potuisti nocte vacare,  
impia, non unum sola manere diem! 20  
quid si longinquos retinerer miles ad Indos, 29  
aut mea si staret navis in Oceano? 30  
quin etiam multo duxistis pocula risu:  
forsitan et de me verba fuere mala.  
hic etiam petitur, qui te prius ante reliquit:  
di faciant, isto capta fruare viro!  
haec mihi vota tuam propter suscepta salutem, 25  
cum capite hoc Stygiae iam poterentur aquae,  
et lectum flentes circum staremus amici?  
hic ubi tum, pro di, perfida, quisve fuit?

## 9A. Not Another Penelope

What man he is I've often been: an hour may see  
him jilted and another found.

Penelope held honour safe for twenty years,  
and so was worth her many suitors,  
Minerva's skill delayed that marriage, loosening nightly  
by deceit what day had won.

She never thought again to see her Ulysses,  
but still she hoped and aged for him.

Briseis clasped the dead Achilles, beat with frenzied  
hands her lovely love-blانched face,  
and sadly, as a captive, washed her bloodied master  
in the Simois' sandy shallows.

She tore her hair, and with her tiny hands she carried  
the huge burnt bones of great Achilles.

No Peleus to help, or sea-blue mother, Scyros  
Deidamia with widow's bed.

But Greece rejoiced in faithful wives, as they through slaughter  
kept a common decency.

But you, you wretch, won't tolerate one empty night,  
nor stay unhitched a single day.

Suppose I were a soldier distant in the Indies,  
or on a ship held up at sea?

The pair of you drained cups with raucous laughter, treating  
me to ridicule no doubt,

and you consorting even with the one who left you:  
take full joy of his false ways!

Was this the recompense for vows I made, for health  
when Styx was lapping at your head?

And when your friends in tears stood round your bed, where was  
that man, you wretch, and what to you?

sed vobis facilest verba et componere fraudes: 31  
hoc unum didicit femina semper opus.  
non sic incerto mutantur flamine Syrtes,  
nec folia hiberno tam tremefacta Noto,  
quam cito feminea non constat foedus in ira, 35  
sive ea causa gravis sive ea causa levis.

nunc, quoniam ista tibi placuit sententia, cedam:  
tela, precor, pueri, promite acuta magis,  
figite certantes atque hanc mihi solvite vitam!  
sanguis erit vobis maxima palma meus. 40  
sidera sunt testes et matutina pruina  
et furtim misero ianua aperta mihi,  
te nihil in vita nobis acceptius umquam:  
nunc quoque erit, quamvis sis inimica, nihil. 45  
nec domina ulla meo ponet vestigia lecto:  
solus ero, quoniam non licet esse tuum.  
atque utinam, si forte pios eduximus annos,  
ille vir in medio fiat amore lapis!

But words come tripping off with simple fabrications,  
a trade that every woman learns.

Not more do Syrtes alter with the winds, or leaves  
are tossed about by winter storms,  
than promises are shattered by a women's anger,  
cause be weighty, cause be light.

Since, very well, this course is settled, I will yield:  
bring out, Amor, your keener darts.

Compete in loosing them. Go on, cut down this life:  
my blood will be your greatest prize.

As stars are witnesses, and frost on mornings, as  
my trembling self slipped through your door,  
no one in life has been so dear, nor ever could be,  
heartlessly although you act.

No other mistress steps into my bed, for if  
it won't be you I lie alone.

But if I've given years of faithfulness, may he  
in love's exertions turn to stone!

Notes

IXB

non ob regna magis diris cecidere sub armis

Thebani media non sine matre duces,  
quam, mihi si media liceat pugnare puella,  
mortem ego non fugiam morte subire tua.

## 9B. Fighting for Cynthia (Fragment)

No more than Theban princes slain to reach the throne,  
for all their mother parted them,  
would I, in fighting you, regret my death, if only  
dying took you with me too.

Notes

# X

Sed tempus lustrare aliis Heliconae choreis,  
et campum Haemonio iam dare tempus equo.  
iam libet et fortis memorare ad proelia turmas  
et Romanae mei dicere castra ducis.  
quod si deficient vires, audacia certe 5  
laus erit: in magnis et voluisse sat est.

aetas prima canat Veneres, extrema tumultus:  
bella canam, quando scripta puella meast.  
nunc volo subducto gravior procedere vultu,  
nunc aliam citharam me mea Musa docet. 10  
surge, anima, ex humili; iam, carmine, sumite vires;  
Pierides, magni nunc erit oris opus.

iam negat Euphrates equitem post terga tueri  
Parthorum et Crassos se tenuisse dolet:  
India quin, Auguste, tuo dat colla triumpho, 15  
et domus intactae te tremit Arabiae;  
et si qua extremis tellus se subtrahit oris,  
sentiat illa tuas postmodo capta manus!

haec ego castra sequar; vates tua castra canendo  
magnus ero: servent hunc mihi fata diem! 20  
at caput in magnis ubi non est tangere signis,  
ponitur his imos ante corona pedes;  
sic nos nunc, inopes laudis conscendere currum,  
pauperibus sacris vilia tura damus.

nondum etiam Ascræos norunt mea carmina fontis, 25  
sed modo Permessi flumine lavit Amor.

## 10. Praise of Augustus

It's time to circle Helicon with other dances,  
    give Haemonian horse its field,  
I'm minded to record the squadrons keen on battle,  
    tell the Roman camp my chief.  
And should I fail, my courage brings its commendation:  
    wishing great things is enough.

Let first of ages sing to Venus, last to conflict:  
    mine is praised, I turn to war.  
I wish to step out with a grave expression, now  
    my Muse provides another lyre.  
Rise, my spirit. Let my humble song take strength:  
    my Muse will have its loftier voice.

No more Euphrates guards the Parthian horseman's back,  
    though grieves it holds the Crassi still.  
India bows its neck, Augustus, to your triumph,  
    spared Arabia quakes at you.  
If any land retreat to distant shores, conceive  
    it grasped already by your hand!

Your camp I'll follow, grown the poet in your praising:  
    fate record this day for me!  
Just as we may not reach the head of towering statues,  
    but place a garland at their feet,  
so I who cannot climb to heights of praise, may bring  
    this incense of a poor man's rites.  
No Ascrea fountains are my poems, but still the songs  
    that love dips in Permessus springs.

Notes

## XI

scribant de te alii vel sis ignota licebit:

    laudet, qui sterili semina ponit humo.

omnia, crede mihi, tecum uno munera lecto

    auferet extremi funeris atra dies;

et tua transibit contemnens ossa viator,

    nec dicet 'cinis hic docta puella fuit.'

## 11. To Cynthia: A Threat

While others write about you, or you stay unknown,  
your worth is sown in barren soil.  
All your gifts, believe me, will on some dark day  
to funeral be carried off,  
and someone passing by your grave will never care  
how skilled a girl is in this dust.

Notes



## 12. Picture of Love

Whoever painted Amor as a boy, did he  
not show, you think, a wondrous skill?  
The first to see that lovers act so childishly,  
with great things lost in trifling quarrels.  
Undeceived, he added fluttering wings: a god  
that's blown around the human heart.  
For like the waves we're tossed in all directions, with  
a wind that ever shifts its quarter.  
And in his hand, deservedly, he holds barbed arrows,  
Cnossus quiver on his shoulder,  
to strike when we feel safe, the foe unseen, but take  
the wound that none recovers from.

In me will stay his darts and boyish looks, but he  
most certainly has lost his wings.  
On no occasion does he leave my breast, but with  
my blood must wage incessant war.  
What pleasure comes from living in a drained-out corpse?  
For shame, transfer your darts elsewhere.  
Try your poisons on the one intact, not me,  
who is a shadow of himself.  
For if you kill me, who's to celebrate (though slight,  
my Muse still brings you great renown),  
who'll tell of girl's dark eyes, her face, her hands, or how  
seductively her footsteps fall?

Notes

### XIII

Non tot Achaemeniis armantur etrusca sagittis  
    spicula quot nostro pectore fixit Amor.  
hic me tam gracilis vetuit contemnere Musas,  
    iussit et Ascraeum sic habitare nemus,  
non ut Pieriae quercus mea verba sequantur,                     5  
    aut possim Ismaria ducere valle feras,  
sed magis ut nostro stupefiat Cynthia versu:  
    tunc ego sim Inachio notior arte Lino.

non ego sum formae tantum mirator honestae,  
    nec si qua illustris femina iactat avos:                     10  
me iuuet in gremio doctae legisse puellae,  
    auribus et puris scripta probasse mea.  
haec ubi contigerint, populi confusa valeto  
    fabula: nam domina iudice tutus ero.  
quae si forte bonas ad pacem verterit aures,                     15  
    possum inimicitias tunc ego ferre Iovis.

quandocumque igitur nostros mors claudet ocellos,  
    accipe quae serves funeris acta mei.  
nec mea tunc longa spatietur imagine pompa  
    nec tuba sit fati vana querela mei;                     20  
nec mihi tunc fulcro sternatur lectus eburno,  
    nec sit in Attalico mors mea nixa toro.  
desit odoriferis ordo mihi lancibus, adsint  
    plebei parvae funeris exsequiae.  
sat mea, sat magnast, si tres sint pompa libelli,                     25  
    quos ego Persephoniae maxima dona feram.

tu vero nudum pectus lacerata sequeris,  
    nec fueris nomen lassa vocare meum,  
osculaque in gelidis pones suprema labellis,  
    cum dabitur Syrio munere plenus onyx.                     30

### 13. Foreseeing his Funeral

Susa's not more thick with ancient Parthian flights  
than love has packed into this heart.

I should not scorn the slender Muse, but was to live,  
as I still do, in Ascra's grove.

My words should lead no Pierian oaks, nor draw the beasts  
along the valley of Ismarus,  
but in my verse enrapture Cynthia, and be famed  
beyond the Callimachean Linus.

I'd not be drawn by worthy looks, or women pure  
in their illustrious ancestry,  
but, joyful in the lap of one instructed girl,  
would read to her approving ear.

In consequence, I'd leave the chatter of the crowds,  
adopting mistress as my judge,  
and find that, if she turn a friendly ear to peace,  
I should withstand Jove's enmity.

Whenever death shall come at last to seal the lids,  
I would ask my funeral  
be not one endless cortège of ancestral gods,  
or empty trumpeting at death,  
or bier that's borne on ivory posts, the corpse stretched out  
on couch-inlaid Attalic gold,  
or row of perfume dishes, but of rites that mark  
a plain but decent burial —  
and adequate if to Persephone be borne  
my worthiest gift of three small books

Following, you may be tearing at bared breasts,  
howling endlessly my name,  
be quick to press my ice-cold lips as the Syrian myrrh  
is broken from its onyx jar.

deinde, ubi suppositus cinerem me fecerit ardor  
accipiat Manes parvula testa meos,  
et sit in exiguo laurus super addita busto,  
quae tegat exstincti funeris umbra locum,  
et duo sint versus: 'qui nunc iacet horrida pulvis, 35  
unius hic quondam servus amoris erat.'

nec minus haec nostri notescet fama sepulcri,  
quam fuerant Pthii busta cruenta viri.  
tu quoque si quando venies ad fata, memento  
hoc iter: ad lapides cana veni memores. 40  
interea cave sis nos aspernata sepultos:  
non nihil ad verum conscia terra sapit.

atque utinam primis animam me ponere cunis  
iussisset quaevis de Tribus una Soror!  
nam quo tam dubiae servetur spiritus horae? 45  
Nestoris est visus post tria saecula cinis:  
qui si longaevae minuisset fata senectae  
saucius Iliacis miles in aggeribus,  
non ille Antilochi vidisset corpus humari,  
diceret aut 'o mors, cur mihi sera venis?' 50

tu tamen amisso non numquam flebis amico:  
fas est praeteritos semper amare viros.  
testis, cui niveum quondam percussit Adonin  
venantem Idalio vertice durus aper,  
illis formosum lavissee paludibus; illic 55  
diceris effusa tu, Venus, isse coma.

sed frustra mutos revocabis, Cynthia, Manes:  
nam mea qui poterunt ossa minuta loqui?

If so, when fire beneath burns all to ash, receive  
my ghost in its receptacle,  
and plant a shading laurel to protect the spot  
the pyre flamed out, and let there be  
two verses: 'here lies one of horrid dust who was  
a slave before a single passion.'

Not less will be the glory of my sepulchre  
than that, blood-stained, of great Achilles,  
and you, grey-haired and near the end, can take the path  
that comes to my memorial stones.  
Till then, do not insult my resting place, for earth  
has consciousness and senses truth.

Though better had it been if one of those Three Sisters  
cut my life when in the cradle  
than to an unknown end had drawn out breath, remember  
three whole generations passed before  
Nestor's pyre was lit, though had his fated age  
been met by guard on Troy's walls  
he'd not have seen his son Antilochus interred,  
nor cried out: 'Death, why come so slow?'

So you, for friends must sometime weep: the gods require  
we care for those who've gone before.

Witness that fierce wild boar which felled the white Adonis  
hunting on Idalian heights:  
and he so handsome, Venus washed him in the marshes,  
wandering thence with hair undone.

In vain will you call, Cynthia, to my unanswering shade:  
what speech can come from these small bones?

Notes

## XIV

Non ita Dardanio gavisus, Atrida, triumpho's,  
cum caderent magnae Laomedontis opes;  
nec sic errore exacto laetatus Ulixes,  
cum tetigit carae litora Dulichiae;  
nec sic Electra, salvum cum aspexit Oresten, 5  
cuius falsa tenens fleverat ossa soror;  
nec sic incolumem Minois Thesea vidit,  
Daedalium lino cui duce rexit iter;  
quanta ego praeterita collegi gaudia nocte:  
immortalis ero, si altera talis erit. 10

nec mihi iam fastus opponere quaerit iniquos, 13  
nec mihi ploranti lenta sedere potest. 14  
at dum demissis supplex cervicibus ibam, 11  
dicebar sicco vilior esse lacu.  
atque utinam non tam sero mihi nota fuisset 15  
condicio! cineri nunc medicina datur.  
ante pedes caecis lucebat semita nobis:  
scilicet insano nemo in amore videt.  
hoc sensi prodesse magis: contemnite, amantes!  
sic hodie veniet, si qua negavit heri. 20

pulsabant alii frustra dominamque vocabant:  
mecum habuit positum lenta puella caput.  
haec mihi devictis potior victoria Parthis,  
haec spolia, haec reges, haec mihi currus erunt.  
magna ego dona tua figam, Cytherea, columna, 25  
taleque sub nostro nomine carmen erit:  
HAS PONO ANTE TVAS TIBI, DIVA, PROPERTIVS AEDEM  
EXUVIAS, TOTA NOCTE RECEPTUS AMANS.  
nunc a test, mea lux, veniatne litora navis  
servato, an mediis sidat onusta vadis. 30  
quod si forte aliqua nobis mutabere culpa,  
vestibulum iaceam mortuus ante tuum!

## 14. The Poet's Triumph

Not so rejoiced Atrides at his Trojan triumph,  
Laomedon from greatness felled,  
or Ulysses exult, all wanderings past, to reach  
the shores of his dear Ithaca,  
nor so Electra with Orestes safe, despite  
sad sister's tears at his false bones.  
nor Minos' daughter with her Theseus unharmed  
by thread returned from that dark maze:  
their joys were nought to mine on this past night: I am  
immortal if another come.

No longer am I met with undue scorn, nor is  
she unaffected by my tears,  
though while I crept as suppliant with neck bent low  
she called me reservoir run dry.  
If only I had known the path before, for now  
the medicine is for a corpse.  
The way was clear beneath my feet, but I was blind:  
in lover's madness none can see.  
So show no interest, lovers: when the day obtains  
what she denied but yesterday.

While others called for her and named her mistress, she,  
unmoved, had laid her head by mine,  
For me a greater victory than to conquer Parthians,  
spoil and king, triumphal chair.

Rich offerings I'll put at Cytherea's column,  
and with these words beneath my name:

THESE GIFTS PROPETIUS OFFERS, GODDESS, WHO IS MADE  
A WELCOME LOVER ONE WHOLE NIGHT.

Decide, my love, if overladen, now the ship  
come safe to shore or strike the shallows,  
but should a something alter you through fault of mine,  
then were I dead before your door.

## XV

O me felicem! o nox mihi candida! et o tu  
lectule deliciis facte beate meis!  
quam multa apposita narrâmus verba lucerna,  
quantaque sublato lumine rixa fuit!  
nam modo nudatis mecum est luctata papillis, 5  
interdum tunica duxit operta moram.  
illa meos somno lapsos patefecit ocellos  
ore suo et dixit 'sicine, lente, iaces?'  
quam vario amplexu mutamus bracchia! quantum  
oscula sunt labris nostra morata tuis! 10

non iuvat in caeco Venerem corrumpere motu:  
si nescis, oculi sunt in amore duces.  
ipse Paris nuda fertur periisse Lacaena,  
cum Menelaëo surgeret e thalamo;  
nudus et Endymion Phoebi cepisse sororem 15  
dicitur et nudus concubuisse deae.

quod si pertendens animo vestita cubaris,  
scissa veste meas experiere manus:  
quin etiam, si me ulterius provexerit ira,  
ostendes matri bracchia laesa tuae. 20  
necdum inclinatae prohibent te ludere mammae:  
viderit haec, si quam iam peperisse pudet.

dum nos fata sinunt, oculos satiemus amore:  
nox tibi longa venit, nec reditura dies.  
atque utinam haerentis sic nos vincire catena 25  
velles, ut numquam solveret ulla dies!  
exemplo iunctae tibi sint in amore columbae,  
masculus et totum femina coniugium.  
errat, qui finem vesani quaerit amoris:  
verus amor nullum novit habere modum. 30  
terra prius falso partu deludet arantis,  
et citius nigros Sol agitabit equos,

## 15: Love's Ecstasy

O happy me! O night of radiance, and you,  
sweet bed that's strewn with such delights!  
What declarations when the lamp was lit, what fights  
and tussles when the light was doused!  
With breasts undone she teased me as we wrestled: then,  
with clothes drawn up, she feigned delay.  
Her breath fell on my eyelids thick with sleep: she hissed,  
'Is this the way you finish, sluggard?'  
Such length of arms' embraces as we changed positions,  
kisses lengthening on the lips!

No pleasure comes from sightless acts, and you must know  
that eyes go forward in desire,  
as Paris found who met the Spartan naked, coming  
from the bed of Menelaus,  
as splendidly undone was chaste Diana, where  
Endymion as naked lay.

So do not come to bed still wearing clothes, or my  
delirious hands will rip them off.  
Avoid the further angering me, or your bruised arms  
will bear their witness to your mother.  
Allow no loosened breasts prevent our playing, look  
for shame to those who've given birth.

Let's feast our eyes with lover's scenes: for days bring on  
the night from which no day returns,  
and pray that we ever are like this, bound in chains  
that none at daybreak can undo,  
and close as murmuring doves are, that is man and woman  
one and so completely joined.  
Who looks for limit to love's madness finds no end,  
for love will never have enough.  
And sooner earth betray the farmer with false crops,  
or jet-black horses draw the sun,

fluminaque ad caput incipient revocare liquores,  
aridus et sicco gurgite piscis erit,  
quam possim nostros alio transferre dolores: 35  
huius ero vivus, mortuus huius ero.

quod mihi si interdum talis concedere noctes  
illa velit, vitae longus et annus erit.  
si dabit et multas, fiam immortalis in illis:  
nocte una quivis vel deus esse potest. 40  
qualem si cuncti cuperent decurrere vitam  
et pressi multo membra iacere mero,  
non ferrum crudele neque esset bellica navis,  
nec nostra Actiacum verteret ossa mare,  
nec totiens propriis circum oppugnata triumphis 45  
lassa foret crinis solere Roma suos.  
haec certe merito poterunt laudare minores:  
laeserunt nullos proelia nostra deos.

tu modo, dum lucet, fructum ne desere vitae!  
omnia si dederis oscula, pauca dabis. 50  
ac veluti folia arentis liquere corollas,  
quae passim calathis strata natare vides,  
sic nobis, qui nunc magnum spiramus amantes,  
forsitan includet crastina fata dies.

or streams call waters back to source, or deeps dry up  
and leave their fish in cindery earth,  
than I should think to loan my love-pains to another:  
hers in life, and in my death.

Grant she give me such a few more times: a year  
with these would serve me for a life.

Grant she give me many of such nights, from each  
I am more godlike than before.

Grant that everyone so run through life, their limbs  
be weighted down as though with wine —  
there'd be no blows from daggers, nor from ships of war  
would bones be tossed to Actium's deeps,  
nor Rome attacked by its own triumphs, shown forever  
grieving with its hair undone.

Posterity would surely raise their cups to us  
who did not injure any gods.

You give, in glory of our loving, all your kisses,  
yet those kisses are but few.

As petals wither from the garlands, fall in cups  
and drift at loss there listlessly,  
so we, who fill ourselves with lovers' breath, may find  
tomorrow's day shut in by fate.

Notes

## XVI

Praetor ab Illyricis venit modo, Cynthia, terris,  
maxima praeda tibi, maxima cura mihi.  
non potuit saxo vitam posuisse Cerauno?  
a, Neptune, tibi qualia dona darem!  
nunc sine me plena fiunt convivium mensa, 5  
nunc sine me tota ianua nocte patet.  
quare, si sapis, oblatas ne desere messis  
et stolidum pleno vellere carpe pecus;  
deinde, ubi consumpto restabit munere pauper,  
dic alias iterum naviget Illyrias! 10  
Cynthia non sequitur fascis nec curat honores,  
semper amatorum ponderat una sinus.  
semper in Oceanum mittit me quaerere gemmas, 17  
et iubet ex ipsa tollere dona Tyro. 18

at tu nunc nostro, Venus, o succurre dolori, 13  
rumpat ut assiduis membra libidinibus!  
ergo muneribus quivis mercatur amorem? 15  
Iuppiter, indigna merce puella perit.  
atque utinam Romae nemo esset dives, et ipse  
straminea posset dux habitare casa! 20  
numquam venales essent ad munus amicae,  
atque una fieret cana puella domo;  
numquam septenas noctes seiuncta cubares,  
candida tam foedo bracchia fusa viro,  
non quia peccarim (testor te), sed quia vulgo 25  
formosis levitas semper amica fuit.

barbarus exutis agitat vestigia lumbis,  
et subito felix nunc mea regna tenet!  
nullane sedabit nostros iniuria fletus? 31  
an dolor hic vitiis nescit abesse tuis?

## 16. Praetor Back from Illyria

Returned, the praetor, from Illyrian lands, it's, Cynthia,  
spoils for you, deep cares for me.  
Could not Ceraunian rocks have drowned him, when what gifts,  
great Neptune, I'd be paying you!  
High feasts and partying, though I'm not there. The door  
that's never closed is shut to me.  
Be sensible, and reap this offered harvest, pluck  
the wool from off this foolish sheep,  
and when his gifts are gone and he's a pauper, tell  
him sail to reach a new Illyria.  
Cynthia needs no offices or honours, weighs  
up carefully her lover's purse.  
To seas I'm always being sent to look for pearls,  
from Tyre commanded: bring a gift.

Relieve me, Venus, of my sorrow: rupture that  
inveterate organ of his lust.  
Can love be bought? Ah, Jupiter, for such unworthy  
merchandise my girl is sacked.  
I wish that Rome had no rich men, that even house  
our leader holds were made of straw.  
No girl would ever sell herself for gifts, but grow  
to old age in a single house.  
Never would you sleep away for seven nights,  
white arms around so foul a man.  
And not because I've been untrue — I swear — but girls  
so beautiful can be as fickle.

Some foreigner can prance around with undone loins,  
and next, successful, rule my realms.  
Will none of your offences end my tears, can't pain  
be sometime absent from your sins?

tot iam abiere dies, cum me nec cura theatri  
nec tetigit Campi, nec mea mensa iuvat.  
at pudeat! certe pudeat, nisi forte, quod aiunt, 35  
turpis amor surdis auribus esse solet.  
cerne ducem, modo qui fremitu complevit inani  
Actia damnatis aequora militibus:  
hunc infamis arnor versis dare terga carinis  
iussit et extremo quaerere in orbe fugam. 40  
Caesaris haec virtus et gloria Caesaris haec est:  
illa, qua vicit, condidit arma manu.

sed quascumque tibi vestis, quoscumque smaragdos,  
quosve dedit flavo lumine chrysolithos,  
haec videam rapidas in vanum ferre procellas: 45  
quae tibi terra, velim, quae tibi fiat aqua.

aspice quid donis Eriphyla invenit amari, 29  
arserit et quantis nupta Creusa malis. 30  
non semper placidus periuros ridet amantis  
Iuppiter et surda neglegit aure preces.  
vidistis toto sonitus percurrere caelo,  
fulminaque aethera desiluisse domo: 50  
non haec Pleiades faciunt neque aquosus Orion,  
nec sic de nihilo fulminis ira cadit;  
periuras tunc ille solet punire puellas,  
deceptus quoniam flevit et ipse deus.

quare ne tibi sit tanti Sidonia vestis, 55  
ut timeas, quotiens nubilus Auster erit.

How many days since I enjoyed the stage or Campus,  
took some pleasure in my food.

Shamed? I should be, but such disgraceful love, it's said,  
is often furnished with deaf ears.

Note the blustering general who has lately crowded  
Actium's bay with doomed battalions:

base love required him turn his ships to flight and flee  
for refuge to the world's far ends.

Caesar's glory had its virtue: hand that conquered  
later also sheathed the sword.

Whatever clothes he's given you, the emeralds  
or topazes with golden rays,

I hope to see them swept to nothing by the winds  
and turned to water or to clay.

See the bitterness from Eriphyle's gifts,  
the pain as wed Creusa burned.

Not always nonchalant is Jove to perjured lovers,  
nor turns a deaf ear to their prayers.

You've heard his thunder roll across the sky, his lightning  
fork down from its heavenly home.

No Pleiades or watery Orion does this:  
lightning's anger has its cause.

It's faithless girls he punishes, since, though a god,  
he weeps the same to be deceived.

Make not so much of Sidon gowns that you should fear  
each time the south wind comes with clouds.

Notes

## XVIII A

quid mea si canis aetas candesceret annis, et faceret scissas languida ruga genas?	5
at non Tithoni spernens Aurora senectam desertum Eoa passa iacere domost:	
illa deos currum conscendens dixit iniquos, invitum et terris praestitit officium.	13 14
illum saepe suis descedens fovit in ulnis quam prius adiunctos sedula lavit equos; illum ad vicinos cum amplexa quiesceret Indos, maturus iterum est questa redire dies;	9
cui maiora senis Tithoni gaudia vivi, quam gravis amisso Memnone luctus erat. cum sene non pudit talem dormire puellam et canae totiens oscula ferre comae.	15
at tu etiam iuvenem odisti me, perfida, cum sis ipsa anus haud longa curva futura die.	20
quin ego deminuo curam, quod saepe Cupido huic malus esse solet, cui bonus ante fuit.	

## 18A. Young Love Rebuffed

Suppose my time of life were topped with greying hair  
and weary creases wrinkled cheeks?

Aurora did not spurn the aged Tithonus, leave  
him lying in the halls of dawn,

She called the gods unjust in mounting chariot,  
and willed her duty to the earth.

Descending, she would warm him with her arms before  
attending to her horses' needs.

Him she clasped while resting close to Indian lands,  
complained the day returned too soon.

Far more her joy that old Tithonus was alive  
than heavy grief when Memnon died.

That girl was not ashamed to sleep with age, nor heap  
her kisses on his hoary head.

You, faithless one, who hate me for my youth, will be  
a stooping crone at no great date.

But cares diminish when I think how often Cupid  
frowns where he has smiled before.

Notes



## 18B. Painted Cheeks

In madness you would imitate the Britons, add  
a foreign brilliance to your cheeks?

Beauty's best as nature made it: Belgic hues  
do not become a Roman face.

If someone's stained her forehead with an azure dye  
is azure beauty then in fashion?

In Hades woe betide the simpleton who cheats  
by dying hair some silly colour!

Desist! You're lovely as you are, enough for me  
if you will come to visit often.

You have no brother or a son: let me alone  
be brother and a son to you.

And let your natural face keep always guard, and do  
not sit with face that's over-rouged.

And since I trust all gossip, do not sin, for rumour  
leaps across both land and sea.

Notes

## XIX

Etsi me invito discedis, Cynthia, Roma,  
laetor quod sine me devia rura coles.  
nullus erit castis iuvenis corruptor in agris,  
qui te blanditiis non sinat esse probam;  
nulla neque ante tuas orietur rixa fenestras, 5  
nec tibi clamatae somnus amarus erit.

sola eris et solos spectabis, Cynthia, montes  
et pecus et finis pauperis agricolae.  
illic te nulli poterunt corrumpere ludi,  
fanaque peccatis plurima causa tuis. 10  
illic assidue tauros spectabis arantis,  
et vitem docta ponere falce comas;  
atque ibi rara feres inculto tura sacello,  
haedus ubi agrestis corruet ante focos;  
protinus et nuda choreas imitabere sura; 15  
omnia ab externo sint modo tuta viro.

ipse ego venabor: iam nunc me sacra Dianae  
suscipere et Veneris ponere vota iuvat.  
incipiam captare feras et reddere pinu  
cornua et audacis ipse monere canes; 20  
non tamen ut vastos ausim temptare leones  
aut celer agrestis comminus ire sues.  
haec igitur mihi sit lepores audacia mollis  
excipere et structo fallere avem calamo,  
qua formosa suo Clitumnus flumina luco 25  
integit, et niveos abluit unda boves.

tu quotiens aliquid conabere, vita, memento  
venturum paucis me tibi Luciferis.  
hic me nec solae poterunt avertere silvae,  
nec vaga muscosis flumina fusa iugis, 30  
quin ego in assidua mutem tua nomina lingua:  
absenti nemo non nocuisse velit.

## 19. Cynthia in the Country

You're leaving Rome against my wishes, Cynthia, though  
I'm glad it's for some country spot.

The simple fields will hide no young seducers, none  
whose blandishments make women err.

No ugly brawl outside your windows, sleep disturbed  
by voices brandishing your name.

Lonely you will be, and look on sad-faced mountains,  
flocks and at poor peasants' fields.

No festivals can there corrupt you, nor will temples,  
sources often of your sins.

You can watch the oxen ploughing, vine withdraw  
her foliage from the sickle's skill,  
throw scattered incense on some crude-built altar, have  
the kid dispatched at rural shrine.

And you may hitch your dress at once, go dancing, knowing  
no male look can threaten you.

I myself will hunt, adopt Diana's rites,  
but pay my vows of Venus too.

I'll hunt wild beasts, and hang their antlers in the pines,  
my horn will urge on boisterous hounds.

Of course I shall not dare the monstrous lions  
or challenge wild boars to their face:

enough for me to catch the timid hare or take  
a bird with jointed fowling stick

where the Clitumnus clothes itself in wholesome glade  
and snowy waters wash the cattle.

My love, as often as you think up mischief, know  
I'm coming but a few dawns hence.

No silent woods will put me off, nor will the waters  
tumbling over mossy ledge,

for fear your name attract a wooing tongue, and take  
advantage of you while I'm gone.



## 20. Faithful for Ever

Why grieve as the abducted Brīsēis wept  
or as enslaved Andromache?

Why would you weary gods, my wild one, talk of my  
unfaithfulness, my broken faith?

Not so the fatal bird of Attica complained  
among the Cecrops leaves at night,  
nor did Niobe's tears, whose pride brought twelve to death,  
rain down the grieving Sipylus.

Knots of bronze may bind my arms, but should your limbs  
be shut in Dānaë's house,  
to reach you I would burst those fetters, overleap  
those barricading iron walls.

Whatever gossip says I shall not hear, but you  
must never doubt my seriousness.

By father and my mother's bones — if I be false  
let their sad ashes weigh on me —

I swear I'm yours until the final darkness, to  
the day when death shall take us both.

But if renown and beauty cannot hold me true,  
then mildness in your bondage might.

The moon already seven times has run its course  
since streets have talked of you and me.

Your door has not been closed to me in all that time,  
nor access to your bed denied,

nor has a night been gained with costly gifts, but won  
from that great kindness of your heart.

It's me alone you wanted though so many sought you:  
faithfulness I don't forget.

tum me vel tragicae vexetis Erinyes, et me  
    inferno damnes, Aeace, iudicio, 30  
atque inter Tityi volucris mea poena vagetur,  
    tumque ego Sisyphio saxa labore geram!  
nec tu supplicibus me sis venerata tabellis:  
    ultima talis erit quae mea prima fides.  
hoc mihi perpetuo laus est, quod solus amator 35  
    nec cito desisto nec temere incipio.

But, should I do so, may the tragic Furies harass,  
    Aeacus judge me cursed in hell,  
and may I wander, punished by the Tityos vultures,  
    carry rocks as Sisyphus.  
But don't pursue me with your letters, what devotion  
    was continues to the end.  
Perpetually this fame: your single lover, not  
    in haste to end or lightly start.

Notes

## XXI

Ah quantum de me Panthi tibi pagina finxit,  
tantum illi Pantho ne sit amica Venus!  
sed tibi iam videor Dodona verior augur?  
uxorem ille tuus pulcher amator habet!  
tot noctes periere: nihil pudet? aspice, cantat  
liber: tu nimium credula, sola iaces. 5

et nunc inter eos tu sermo's, te ille superbus  
dicit se invito saepe fuisse domi.  
dispeream, si quicquam aliud quam gloria de te  
quaeritur: has laudes ille maritus habet.  
Colchida sic hospes quondam decepit Iason: 10  
eiectast (tenuit namque Creusa) domo.  
sic a Dulichio iuvenest elusa Calypso:  
vidit amatorem pandere vela suum.

ah nimium faciles aures praebere puellae, 15  
discite desertae non temere esse bonae!  
huic quoque, qui restet, iam pridem quaeritur alter:  
experta in primo, stulta, cavere potes.  
nos quocumque loco, nos omni tempore tecum  
sive aegra pariter sive valente sumus. 20

## 21. Panthus dupes Cynthia

For all the pages Panthus damned me with, may Venus  
equally be not his friend.

A better augur than Dodona, am I not?

Your handsome lover's taken wife.

What nights you lost! What shame! He crows about it: you,  
too credulous, must lie alone.

You're talk between the two, and boastfully he says  
you came too often to his house.

He aimed, if I'm not damned, to triumph over you:  
such honours has this husband won.

So Jason, once her guest, deceived the Colchis girl,  
and for Creūsa threw her out.

So was Calypso cheated by the young Dulichian,  
watched her lover spread his sails.

So girls abandoned, quick to lend an ear, should learn  
not to rashly give themselves.

A second's sought as though he'll stay, though, once caught out,  
the foolish one should have more care.

Yet we are always with you, at all times you choose,  
or place, in sickness or in health.

Notes

## XXII

Scis here mi multas pariter placuisse puellas;  
scis mihi, Demophoon, multa venire mala.  
nulla meis frustra lustrantur compita plantis;  
o nimis exitio nata theatra meo,  
sive aliquis molli diducit candida gestu 5  
bracchia, seu varios incinit ore modos!  
interea nostri quaerunt sibi vulnus ocelli,  
candida non tecto pectore si qua sedet,  
sive vagi crines puris in frontibus errant,  
Indica quos medio vertice gemma tenet. 10

quaeris, Demophoon, cur sim tam mollis in omnis? 13  
quod quaeris, 'quare' non habet ullus amor.  
cur aliquis sacris laniat sua bracchia cultris 15  
et Phrygis insanos caeditur ad numeros?  
uni cuique dedit vitium natura creato:  
mi fortuna aliquid semper amare dedit.  
me licet et Thamyrae cantoris fata sequantur,  
numquam ad formosas, inuide, caecus ero. 20

sed tibi si exilis videor tenuatus in artus,  
falleris: haud umquam est culta labore Venus.  
percontere licet: saepe experta puella  
officium tota nocte valere meum.  
quae si forte aliquid vultu mihi dura negarat, 11  
frigida de tota fronte cadebat aqua. 12

Iuppiter Alcmenae geminas requieverat Arctos, 25  
et caelum noctu bis sine rege fuit;  
nec tamen idcirco languens ad fulmina venit:  
nullus amor vires eripit ipse suas.  
quid? cum e complexu Briseidos iret Achilles,  
num fugere minus Thessala tela Phryges? 30  
quid? ferus Andromachae lecto cum surgeret Hector,  
bella Mycenaeae non timuere rates?  
ille vel classes poterant vel perdere muros:  
hic ego Pelides, hic ferus Hector ego.

## 22. One Girl is Not Enough

So many girls of late have charmed me equally,  
it causes grief, Demōphoön.

My feet can cross no street in vain: the theatre  
seems but made for my destruction  
if anyone should hold out bright and yielding arms,  
or from her mouth sing any tune.

My eyes, meanwhile, are seeking to be stung by any  
one that sits with breasts in view,  
or by the curls that wave about a healthy forehead,  
the vortex held by Indian jewel.

Demōphoön, you ask: why should I fall for them?  
Who frames that question knows not love.

Why does a man in madness of the Phrygian dancing,  
gash his arms and maim himself?

Each one's engendered with some natural fault, and mine's  
abandoning myself to love,  
and should the fate of Thamyras befall me, not  
to beauty, friend, would I be blind.

But you are wrong to think my limbs grow thin and weak,  
for Venus is no toil at all.

So ask: an expert girl has often found my duty  
serve her fully though the night,  
and if, by chance, her doubtful look would call a halt,  
cold sweat at once would flood my brow.

Alcmēna made Jove rest the double Bears, no king  
had rule of heaven for those two nights:  
but not too tired was he to wield his thunderbolt,  
for never love takes strength away.

Did, come from Brīsēis's arms, Achilles make  
the Trojans flee his spear the less?

And when fierce Hector left Andromache, was not  
Mycenae's fleet afraid of war?

As those destroying fleet or wall, in love I will  
be fierce as Hector or Achilles.

aspice uti caelo modo sol modo luna ministret: 35  
    sic etiam nobis una puella parumst.  
altera me cupidis teneat foveatque lacertis,  
    altera si quando non sinit esse locum;  
aut si forte ingrata meo sit facta cubili,  
    ut sciat esse aliam, quae velit esse mea! 40  
nam melius duo defendunt retinacula navim,  
    tutius et geminos anxia mater alit.

As first the sun and then the moon serve heaven, so  
one girl is not enough for us.

Another one may hold me in warmly in her arms  
the while a first refuse me place,  
and one that brings no gladness to my bed should know  
some other's waiting to be mine.

As ship is safer for its double cables, so  
an anxious mother nurtures twins.

Notes

## XVII

Aut si's dura, nega: sive's non dura, venito!	22.43
quid iuvat, heu, nullo pondere verba loqui?	
hic unus dolor est ex omnibus acer amanti,	22.45
speranti subito si qua venire negat.	
quanta illum toto versant suspiria lecto,	
cum recipi, quasi non noverit, ipsa vetat?	
et rursus puerum quaerendo audita fatigat,	
quem, quae scire timet, quaerere fata iubet.	22.50
mentiri noctem, promissis ducere amantem,	17.1
hoc erit infectas sanguine habere manus!	
nunc iacere e duro corpus iuvat, impia, saxo,	13
sumere et in nostram trita venena necem.	14
horum ego sum vates, quotiens desertus amaras	3
explevi noctes, fractus utroque toro.	
vel tu Tantalea moveare ad flumina sorte,	5
ut liquor arenti fallat ab ore sitim;	
vel tu Sisyphios licet admirere labores,	
difficile ut toto monte volutet onus;	
durius in terris nihil est quod vivat amante,	
nec, modo si sapias, quod minus esse velis.	10
quem modo felicem invidia maerente ferebant,	
nunc decimo admittor vix ego quoque die.	
nec licet in triviis sicca requiescere luna,	15
aut per rimosas mittere verba fores.	
quod quamvis ita sit, dominam mutare cavebo:	
tum flebit, cum in me senserit esse fidem.	
assiduae multis odium peperere querelae:	18.1
frangitur in tacito femina saepe viro.	
si quid vidisti, semper vidisse negato!	
aut si quid doluit forte, dolere nega!	

## 17. A Night Denied

Say no to be unkind: if not unkind, then come!

But what's the point of prattled words?

This is the lovers' worst of all sharp pains, to find  
his hopes of assignation dashed.

What sighs can keep him tossing on his bed, receiving  
not the girl but door shut fast.

Turned back, he tires the servant, importunes but knows  
disloyalties he dreads to have.

Those night-time promises that lead the lover on  
are bloodied as the murderer's hands.

Impious one, I'd hurl myself from some high cliff,  
or take a drug to bring on death,

foresee myself deserted, left with limbs to beat  
the empty portion of the bed.

You pity Tantalus beside his river, water  
running past to cheat his thirst,

at Sisyphus's labour you're aghast, the heavy  
load returning down the hill,

but none but lover leads so hard a life on earth,  
which no one sensible will want.

And I, the envied man called happy, am admitted  
currently one day in ten.

Nor can I lie with her on brilliant moonlit roads,  
or slip my message through her door.

But would I therefore change my mistress? Never: she  
will one day weep to find me true.

Complaints have brought their ills to many: often, though,  
kept silence wins a woman more.

Whatever you have seen, deny it — say, if hurt,  
you've never felt a touch of it.

## XXIII

Cui fugienda fuit indocti semita vulgi,  
ipsa petita lacu nunc mihi dulcis aquast.

ingenuus quisquam alterius dat munera servo,  
ut promissa suae verba ferat dominae?  
et quaerit totiens 'quaenam nunc porticus illam  
integit?' et 'campo quomovet illa pedes?' 5

deinde, ubi pertuleris, quos dicit fama labores  
Herculis, ut scribat 'muneris ecquid habes?'  
cernere uti possis vultum custodis amari,  
captus et immunda saepe latere casa? 10  
quam care semel in toto nox vertitur anno!  
a pereant, si quos ianua clausa iuvat!

haec modo pavonis caudae flabella superbae 24.11  
et manibus durae frigus habere pilae,  
et cupit interdum talos me poscere eburnos,  
quaeque nitent Sacra vilia dona Via.  
ah peream, si me ista movent dispendia, sed me  
fallaci dominae iam pudet esse iocum! 24.16

contra, reiecto quae libera vadit amictu,  
custodum et nullo saepta timore, placet.  
cui saepe immundo Sacra conteritur Via socco, 15  
nec sinit esse moram, si quis adire velit;  
differet haec numquam, nec poscet garrula, quod te  
astrictus ploret saepe dedisse pater,  
nec dicet 'timeo, propera iam surgere, quaeso:  
infelix, hodie vir mihi rure venit.' 20  
et quas Euphrates et quas mihi misit Orontes,  
me iuerint: nolim furta pudica tori;  
libertas quoniam nulli iam restat amanti:  
nullus liber erit, si quis amare volet.

## 23. In Praise of Call-Girls

I who fled plebeian paths now prize the water  
hailed up from a common trough.

What natural freeborn man will bribe another's slave  
to carry letters to his mistress,  
and ask again what portico will shade her, park  
her pretty feet will take today?

Or having laboured as did Hercules receive:

'You don't have any gift for me?'

Or, skulking to escape her guardian, be found  
inhabiting some filthy hovel?

And how expensive is one blissful night a year:  
a plague on those the locked door pleases.

This girl demands a fan of finest peacock feathers,  
to cool her hands on some cut gem,  
must ask me for some ivory dice, or glittering bauble  
sold along the Sacred Way.

In cost that's nothing to me, but I'm made to seem  
the plaything of a specious mistress.

The one I want will come with looks unveiled, is frank  
and unconcerned about her keepers,  
will tread the Sacred Way in well-worn sandals, speak  
her mind at once should any stop.

She will not put you off, nor weigh you down with costs  
to make your hard-pressed father weep.

Nor will she say, 'Be off. I'm scared. Alas, today  
my husband's coming from the country.'

Give what Orontes girls or from Euphrates send,  
and I'll forgo the sham intrigues.

And since no lover now stays free, a man who opts  
for love must give up liberty.

'tu loqueris, cum sis iam noto fabula libro  
et tua sit toto Cynthia lecta foro?' 24.1  
cui non his verbis aspergat tempora sudor?  
aut pudor ingenuis, aut reticendus amor  
quod si tam facilis spiraret Cynthia nobis, 24.5  
non ego nequitiae dicerer esse caput,  
nec sic per totam infamis traducerer urbem,  
ureret et quamvis, non mihi verba daret.  
quare ne tibi sit mirum me quaerere vilis:  
parcius infamant: num tibi causa levis? 24.10

'Fine talk from one made famous by a book, a Cynthia  
keenly savoured in the forum.'

'Who wouldn't wince at that? Well-bred: be shamed, or keep  
a silence on your love affairs.'

Had Cynthia showed such courtesy to me, I'd not  
be called the first of debauchees,

nor would be slandered through the city. I may be hurt  
by her but don't deceive myself.

Why wonder why I seek out worthless girls: they slander  
less, and that is cause enough.

Notes

## XXIV

Hoc erat in primis quod me gaudere iubebas? 24.17  
tam te formosam non pudet esse levem?  
una aut altera nox nondumst in amore peracta,  
et dicor lecto iam gravis esse tuo. 20  
me modo laudabas et carmina nostra legebas:  
ille tuus pennas tam cito vertit amor?  
durast quae multis simulatum fingit amorem, 47  
et se plus uni si qua parare potest. 48

contendat mecum ingenio, contendat et arte,  
in primis una discat amare domo:  
si libitum tibi erit, Lernaean pugnet ad hydras 25  
et tibi ab Hesperio mala dracone ferat,  
taetra venena libens et naufragus ebibat undas,  
et numquam pro te deneget esse miser:  
(quos utinam in nobis, vita, experiare labores!)  
iam tibi de timidis iste protervus erit, 30  
qui nunc se in tumidum iactando venit honorem:  
discidium vobis proximus annus erit.  
at me non aetas mutabit tota Sibyllae,  
non labor Alcidae, non niger ille dies.

tu mea compones et dices 'ossa, Properti, 35  
haec tua sunt: eheu tu mihi certus eras,  
certus eras eheu, quamvis nec sanguine avito  
nobilis et quamvis non ita dives eras.'  
nil ego non patiar, numquam me iniuria mutat:  
ferre ego formosam nullum onus esse puto. 40  
credo ego non paucos ista periisse figura,  
credo ego sed multos non habuisse fidem.  
parvo dilexit spatio Minoida Theseus,  
Phyllida Demophoon, hospes uterque malus.  
iam tibi Iasonia vectast Medea carina 45  
et modo servato sola relicta viro.

## 24. Everlasting Fidelity

So this especially makes me glad? You're not ashamed  
to be in beauty fickle too?

A night or two we had together, now you see  
me as encumbrance to your bed.

Just recently you praised me, read my poems: has  
your love already spread its wings?

How cruel is the woman feigning love for many,  
making up to more than one.

Let him contend with me in wit and art, but learn  
to keep love to a single house,  
be pleased to fight Lernaean hydras, fetch you apples  
from the Hesperides' dragon,  
to drink foul poisons cheerfully, or, shipwrecked, waves,  
forgo no anguish for your sake

(if only, loved one, you would put me to the test)  
yet soon the brave one turns the coward.

Although his boasts have brought him added honour, now  
the year that comes will see him go.

No Sibyl's lifetime changes me, nor do the works  
of Hercules, or day of death.

You'll gather my remains, and say, 'Here are your bones,  
Propertius, still fond of me,  
though true, alas, you had no noble birth, were even  
well endowed with earthly goods.'

Nothing I'll not suffer, nor shall count it curse  
to bear with one so beautiful.

Many no doubt have been taken with your beauty,  
but not, I think, have stayed so true.

Brief loved by Theseus the Minoan, Demōphoön  
his Phyllis: both were wicked guests.

You know Mēdēa , carried on her husband's boat,  
was left alone by him she saved.

noli nobilebus, noli conferre beatis:	49
vix venit, extremo qui legat ossa die.	50
hi tibi nos erimus: sed tu potius precor ut me demissis plangas pectora nuda comis.	

Forebear the high-born and the fortunate, scarce one  
at death will gather up our bones.

I'll be that man, but also ask: with undone hair  
and loosened breast you mourn for me.

Notes

## XXV

Cynthia nata meo pulcherrima cura, dolori,  
excludit quoniam sors mea saepe vehit,  
ista meis fiet notissima forma libellis,  
Calve, tua venia, pace, Catulle, tua.  
miles depositis annosus secubat armis, 5  
grandaevique negant ducere aratra boves,  
putris et in vacua requiescit navis harena,  
et vetus in templo bellica parma vacat:  
at me ab amore tuo deducet nulla senectus,  
sive ego Tithonus sive ego Nestor ero. 10

nonne fuit satius duro servire tyranno  
et gemere in tauro, saeve Perille, tuo?  
Gorgonis et satius fuit obdurescere vultu,  
Caucasias etiam si pateremur avis.  
sed tamen obsistam. teritur robigine mucro 15  
ferreus et parvo saepe liquore silex:  
at nullo dominae teritur sub crimine amor, qui  
restat et immerita sustinet aure minas.  
ultra contemptus rogat, et peccasse fatetur  
laesus, et invitis ipse redit pedibus. 20

tu quoque, qui pleno fastus assumis amore,  
credule, nulla diu femina pondus habet.  
an quisquam in mediis persolvit vota procellis.  
cum saepe in portu fracta carina natet?  
aut prius infecto deposcit praemia cursu, 25  
septima quam metam triverit axe rota?  
mendaces ludunt flatus in amore secundi:  
si qua venit sero, magna ruina venit.

## 25. Love's Frustrations

Cynthia, born most beautiful, and, to my grief,  
the one I'm most excluded from,  
my books shall make your figure known — I beg your pardon,  
Calvus, by your leave, Catullus.

Though old campaigner lays aside his arms, retired,  
and ox grown old gives up the plough,  
and ship lies rotting on an empty shore, and warrior's  
shield at peace is in the temple,  
old age shall not prevent me loving you, though I  
be old as Nestor or Tithonus.

It may be worse than serve a brutal tyrant, moan  
inside the bull of Perillus,  
or suffer petrification by the Gorgon, feed  
the vultures of the Caucasus,  
but yet I do not yield. Though sword turn rust in time,  
and constant waters wear down rock,  
abuse from mistress does not weaken love, which stays  
unmoved and deaf to menaces:  
a love which pleads when scorned, accepts the blame, and struck,  
again returns with unwilling feet.

How foolishly you pride yourself on love's fulfilment:  
women are not fixed for long.  
What man of sense renews his vows amid the tempest,  
ships round sunk although in port?  
Or claims the prize with race unwon, before the axle  
graze the post a seventh time?  
Fair winds in love deceive, a false success when what  
comes late may come with added fall.

tu tamen interea, quamvis te diligat illa,  
in tacito cohibe gaudia clausa sinu. 30  
namque in armore suo semper sua maxima cuique  
nescio quo pacto verba nocere solent.  
quamvis te persaepe vocet, semel ire memento:  
invidiam quod habet, non solet esse diu.  
at si saecula forent antiquis grata puellis, 35  
essem ego quod nunc tu: tempore vincor ego.  
non tamen ista meos mutabunt saecula mores:  
unus quisque sua noverit ire via.

at, vos qui officia in multos revocatis amores,  
quantus sic cruciat lumina vestra dolor! 40  
vidistis pleno teneram candore puellam,  
vidistis fuscam, ducit uterque color;  
vidistis quandam Argiva prodire figura,  
vidistis nostras, utraque forma rapit;  
illaque plebeio vel sit sandycis amictu: 45  
haec atque illa mali vulneris una viast.  
cum satis una tuis insomnia portet ocellis,  
una sat est cuivis femina multa mala.

Meanwhile, however much she love you, keep that joy  
shut up and silent in your breast,

for when a man has love he's predisposed to add  
some foolishness that hurts him most.

So if she's ever calling you, then go but once:  
the envy caused then will not last.

If days of old returned to please the girls, I'd be  
as you, but now must mark my age.

But modern ways won't change my character, and each  
must choose the path that suits him best.

But you who draw attention to so many loves,  
how sorely you disgrace our eyes!

You've seen a plump and tender fair-haired girl, or one  
of swarthier hue, and both attract.

You've seen some Argive creature and our native girls,  
and each full figure ravishes,  
and, clad in drab or crimson dress, both this and that  
are avenues for grievous hurt.

Since one alone can keep your eyes from slumber, one's  
enough and more bring many troubles.

Notes



## 26A. A Dream of Cynthia

In a dream you were, my darling, lifting weary  
arms against Ionian spray,  
confessing all the lies you ever told me, head  
weighed down with water-sodden hair  
as purple waves caught Helle, whom the golden ram  
transported on his fleecy back.

How I feared the sea would take your name, and passing  
mariners would weep for you.  
What did I urge on Neptune, Castor, brother and  
Leucōthoë, a goddess now.

Scarce fingertips above the waves, and near to death,  
you call my name repeatedly.  
If Glaucus had been blessed to see your eyes, you'd be  
a nymph now in the Ionian Sea.  
The Nereids would envy you: blond Nesaeë  
and the blue Cymōthoë.

Instead I saw a dolphin race to save you, one  
that carried Arion and his lyre,  
while I, who tried to hurl himself from off some rock,  
found vision shattered by the fear.

Notes



## 26B. A Man of Consequence: Fragment

Amazed so beautiful a girl becomes my slave,  
in Rome I'm seen a man of means,  
and neither Gyges' wealth, or Croesus's would make  
her say, 'Now, poet, quit my bed.'  
For, reading me, she says she hates the rich, no other  
girl so truly drawn to poetry.  
Faith helps much in love, as does persistence: he  
of many gifts has many loves.

Notes

## XXVIC

Heu, mare per longum mea cogitat ire puella,  
hanc sequar et fidos una aget aura duos. 30

unum litus erit sopitis unaque tecto  
arbor, et ex una saepe bibemus aqua;  
et tabula una duos poterit componere amantes,  
prora cubile mihi seu mihi puppis erit.

omnia perpetiar: saevus licet urgeat Eurus ; 35

velaque in incertum frigidus Auster agat;  
quicumque et venti miserum vexastis Ulixem  
et Danaûm Euboico litore mille rates;  
et qui movistis duo litora, cum rudis Argus  
dux erat ignoto missa columba mari. 40

illa meis tantum non umquam desit ocellis,  
incendat navem Iuppiter ipse licet.  
certe isdem nudi pariter iactabimur oris.  
me licet unda ferat, te modo terra tegat.

sed non Neptunus tanto crudelis amori, 45

Neptunus fratri par in amore Iovi:  
testis Amymone, latices dum ferret, in arvis  
compressa, et Lernae pulsa tridente palus.  
iam deus amplexus votum persolvit, at illi  
aurea divinas urna profudit aquas. 50

crudelem et Borean rapta Orithyia negavit:  
hic deus et terras et maria alta domat  
crede mihi, nobis mitescet Scylla, nec umquam  
alternante vacans vasta Charybdis aqua;  
ipsaque sidera erunt nullis obscura tenebris, 55  
purus et Orion, purus et Haedus erit.

quod mihi si ponenda tuo sit corpore vita,  
exitus hic nobis non inhonestus erit.

## 26C. A Voyage

My girl intends a long sea voyage. I'll follow her,  
one breeze to serve this faithful pair.  
We'll have one shore to sleep on, tree for shelter, drinking  
often at a single spring.  
One plank will serve us both as lovers, be the bed  
set out at prow or at the stern.

Nothing puts me off, not harsh East Wind, nor South  
so cold with sails blown who knows where,  
not winds that taunted Ulysses, the thousand ships  
of Greeks upon Euboea's shore,  
nor you that jarred two coasts, when dove was sent to guide  
the Argo through the foreign sea.  
And if she's never absent from my eyes, then Jove  
himself can set the ship on fire:  
both naked on the selfsame shore, the waves may bear  
me off if earth will cover you.

But Neptune's not so cruel to our affairs, but more  
like brother Jupiter in love.  
Amymōne pressed for water in the fields,  
the trident struck in Lerna's marsh.  
The god, embracing her, fulfilled his promise: heavenly  
waters issued from her golden urn.

Raped Orithyia did not find Boreas cruel:  
that god subdues both sea and land.  
Scylla softens for us, as does Charybdis,  
gaping with her ebb and flow.  
The stars will not be darkened by the night, and clear  
become Orion and the Kid.

And if my life were laid down in your arms, that's not  
a death that would dishonour us.

## XXVII

At vos incertam, mortales, funeris horam  
quaeritis, et qua sit mors aditura via;  
quaeritis et caelo Phoenicum inventa sereno,  
quae sit stella homini commoda quaeque mala!

seu pedibus Parthos sequimur seu classe Britannos, 5  
et maris et terrae caeca pericla latent;  
rursus et obiectum fles tu caput esse tumultu  
cum Mavors dubias miscet utrimque manus;  
praeterea domibus flammam domibusque ruinas,  
neu subeant labris pocula nigra tuis. 10

solus amans novit, quando periturus et a qua  
morte, neque hic Boreae flabra neque arma timet.  
iam licet et Stygia sedeat sub harundine remex,  
cernat et infernae tristia vela ratis:  
si modo clamantis revocaverit aura puellae,  
concessum nulla lege redibit iter. 15

## 27. Return from the Dead

Mortals search for their uncertain hour of ending,  
by what path their death will come,  
and in a cloudless sky of wise Phoenicians ask  
what star is good, what ill for man.

On foot the Parthians, in fleets the Britons: unseen  
by land or wave the perils come:  
again our capital may see unrest, you cry,  
and Mars brings battle lines both sides:  
or worse, a house may burn or fall: you worry lest  
some poisonous cup be brought to lips.

Only the lover knows just when and how he dies,  
and fears no arms or North-Wind's blast.  
Yet though he sit an oarsman in the Stygian reeds  
and gaze on dark sails of the underworld,  
a breath of his girl's voice will call him back, for all  
it is a path no law permits.

Notes

## XXVIII

Iuppiter, affectae tandem miserere puellae:  
tam formosa tuum mortua crimen erit.  
venit enim tempus, quo torridus aestuat aer,  
incipit et sicco fervere terra Cane.  
sed non tam ardoris culpast neque crimina caeli           5  
quam totiens sanctos non habuisse deos.  
hoc perdit miseras, hoc perdidit ante puellas:  
quidquid iurarunt, ventus et unda rapit.

num sibi collatam doluit Venus? illa peraeque  
prae se formosis invidiosa deast.                               10  
an contempta tibi Iunonis planta Pelasgae?  
Palladis aut oculos ausa negare bonos?  
semper, formosae, non nostis parcere verbis.  
hoc tibi lingua nocens, hoc tibi forma dedit.  
sed tibi vexatae per multa pericula vitae                       15  
extremo veniat mollior hora die.

Io versa caput primos mugiverat annos:  
nunc dea, quae Nili flumina vacca bibit.  
Ino etiam prima terris aetate vagatast:  
hanc miser implorat navita Leucothoën.                       20  
Andromede monstribus fuerat devota marinis:  
haec eadem Persei nobilis uxor erat.  
Callisto Arcadios erraverat ursa per agros:  
haec nocturna suo sidere vela regit.

quod si forte tibi properarint fata quietem,                       25  
ipsa, sepulturae facta beata tuae,  
narrabis Semelae, quo sis formosa periclo,  
credet et illa, suo docta puella malo;  
et tibi Maeonias omnis heroidas inter  
primus erit nulla non tribuente locus.                       30  
nunc, utcumque potes, fato gere saucia morem:  
et deus et durus vertitur ipse dies.

## 28. Cynthia III

Jupiter, have mercy on my girl who's sick,  
spare death in one so beautiful.

The season's come which writhes with heat, when earth begins  
to glow beneath the Dogstar's drought,  
but neither heat nor heaven's malignity are cause,  
but lack of reverence for the gods.

This ruins girls, and has before: whatever's vowed  
the wind and water sweep away.

Was Venus angry at comparisons, a goddess  
envious of all who shine?

Or have you scorned the bearing of the Argive Juno,  
found eyes of Pallas are not fine?

They do not watch their words, the beautiful, and this  
your hurtful words and looks have done.

But from the countless perils of a troubled life  
may mildness come at close of day.

Io, now a goddess, moaded as cow, and with  
her head transformed has drunk the Nile.

First Ino strayed on earth but as Leucōthoë  
the ships invoke her in distress.

Andromeda, a sacrifice to some sea monster,  
married noble Perseus.

Callisto, wandering Arcady as bear, became  
the stars to guide the ships by night.

If destiny should hasten you to rest, then you,  
made beautiful by burial,  
can tell your beauty's griefs to Semele, whose own  
misfortunes tell her yours are true.

Among the heroines of Homer, you'll be first,  
and none will not consent to this.

So bear as best you may through pain with fate, for god  
and day of death can both be changed.

deficiunt magico torti sub carmine rhombi, 35  
et iacet exstincto laurus adusta foco;  
et iam Luna negat totiens descendere caelo,  
nigraque funestum concinit omen avis.  
una ratis fati nostros portabit amores  
caerula in inferno velificata lacu. 40  
sed non unius, quaeso, miserere duorum!  
vivam, si vivet; si cadet illa, cadam.  
pro quibus optatis sacro me carmine damno:  
scribam ego 'per magnumst salva puella Iovem';  
ante tuosque pedes illa ipsa operata sedebit, 45  
narrabitque sedens longa pericla sua.  
hoc tibi vel poterit coniunx ignoscere Iuno: 33  
frangitur et Iuno, si qua puella perit. 34  
et tua, Persephone, maneat clementia, nec tu, 47  
Persephonaë coniunx, saevior esse velis.

sunt apud infernos tot milia formosarum:  
pulchra sit in superis, si licet, una locis! 50  
vobiscum Antiopest, vobiscum candida Tyro,  
vobiscum Europe nec proba Pasiphaë,  
et quot Creta tulit vetus et quot Achaia formas,  
et Thebae et Priami diruta regna senis:  
et quaecumque erat in numero Romana puella, 55  
occidit: has omnis ignis avarus habet.  
tu quoniam's, mea lux, magno dimissa periclo, 59  
munera Dianae debita redde choros, 60  
redde etiam excubias divae nunc, ante iuvencae;  
votivas noctes et mihi solve decem!

Spent the rhombus with the magic song: the laurel  
darkens on the burnt-out hearth.  
The moon declines to fall so often from the sky,  
and bird's dark note is ominous.  
One fated boat will carry both our loves, whose sails  
cross sombrely the lake of hell.  
But if you cannot pity one, then pity both:  
she lives, I live, if not I die.  
For such a blessing I will write a sacred poem:  
'through mighty Jove my girl is safe'.  
She'll sacrifice and at your feet will sit in worship,  
pour out stories of her troubles.  
And Juno will forgive your help, for even she  
relents to see a young girl die.  
And have, Persephone, your clemency maintained,  
nor let your consort be less kind.

How many beautiful must walk the world below:  
let one remain on earth above.  
You have Antiope, Europa, lovely Tyro,  
infamous Pasiphaë,  
the beauties Crete and Greece produced of old, and Thebes,  
and Priam's kingdom, long destroyed.  
Gone is every Roman girl of much account,  
all these the covetous fire consumed.  
Since you, my darling, have escaped great danger: pay  
Diana what you owe in dance,  
and worship one who once a heifer is a goddess:  
give to me ten votive nights.

Notes

## XXIXA

Hesterna, mea lux, cum potus nocte vagarer,  
nec me servorum duceret ulla manus,  
obvia nescio quot pueri, mihi turba, minuti,  
venerat (hos vetuit me numerare timor);  
quorum alii faculas, alii retinere sagittas, 5  
pars etiam visast vincla parare mihi.  
sed nudi fuerant. quorum lascivior unus  
'arripite hunc,' inquit, 'nam bene nostis eum.  
hic erat, hunc mulier nobis irata locavit.'  
dixit, et in collo iam mihi nodus erat. 10

hic alter iubet in medium propellere, at alter  
'intereat, qui nos non putat esse deos!  
haec te non meritum totas exspectat in horas:  
at tu nescio quam quaeris, inepte, fores.  
quae cum Sidoniae nocturna ligamina mitrae 15  
solverit atque oculos moverit illa gravis,  
afflabunt tibi non Arabum de gramine odores,  
sed quos ipse suis fecit Amor manibus.  
parcite iam, fratres, iam certos spondet amores;  
et iam ad mandatam venimus ecce domum.' 20

atque ita me iniecto dixerunt rursus amictu:  
'i nunc et noctes disce manere domi.'

## 29A. A Fantasy

Yesterday, my love, when wandering, lost in wine,  
without my band of slaves to lead me,  
a group of little boys came up, and in some number,  
(fear had stopped me counting them).

Some little torches held, some arrows, some  
I thought were making chains for me.

But they were naked. One more forward said, 'Arrest  
this man, you know him well enough.

He's here, the one the angry woman set us on.'

At which a noose went round my neck.

One went to push me in their midst, one added, 'Death  
to any thinking us not gods!

For you, who don't deserve it, she's been waiting up,  
but you, a fool, seek out of doors,

though when she loosens the Sidonian nightcap strings,  
and looks about with sleepy eyes,

it's not Arabian spices that will waft to you,  
but what love forms with his own hands.

Release him, brothers, now he pledges love is true;  
we're at the house we were to reach.'

And so they threw my mantle back to me, and said,  
'Now learn to stay at home of nights.'

Notes

## XXIXB

Mane erat, et volui, si sola quiesceret illa,  
visere: at in lecto Cynthia sola fuit.  
obstipui: non illa mihi formosior umquam 25  
visa, neque ostrina cum fuit in tunica,  
ibat et hinc castae narratum somnia Vestae,  
neu sibi neve mihi quae nocitura forent.  
qualis et Ischomache Lapithae genus heroine, 2.9  
Centauris medio grata rapina mero;  
Mercurio aut qualis fertur Boebeidos undis  
virgineum Brimo composuisse latus: 2.12  
talis visa mihi somno dimissa recenti.  
heu quantum per se candida forma valet! 30

'quid tu matutinus,' ait, 'speculator amicae?  
me similem vestris moribus esse putas?  
non ego tam facilis: sat erit mihi cognitus unus,  
vel tu vel si quis verior esse potest.  
apparent non ulla toro vestigia presso, 35  
signa volutantis nec iacuisse duos.  
aspice ut in toto nullus mihi corpore surgat  
spiritus admisso notus adulterio.'

dixit, et opposita propellens savia dextra  
prosilit in laxa nixa pedem solea. 40  
sic ego tam sancti custos deludor amoris:  
ex illo felix nox mihi nulla fuit.

## 29B. An Early Morning Visit

Morning then: to check she slept alone, I went:  
found Cynthia was alone in bed.

I stood entranced: she'd never seemed more lovely — no,  
not even in that crimson dress.

But she was off to tell her dreams to Vesta, lest  
they spoke of harm to her or me.

Like Ischomachē, heroic Lapiths' offspring,  
spoil of Centaurs at their feast,

or Brimo's virgin body by Boebeis waters,  
laid out there with Mercury,

so fresh, she seemed released from recent slumber:  
such power has beauty in itself!

'You keep an early watch on mistresses,' she said.

'You think I copy men like you?

I'm not of easy virtue but remain with one,  
a you or someone of more trust.

You'll find no marks are on the bed, nor is there sign  
that two have tussled here together.

No sign of heavy breathing fills my body, as  
admitting of adultery.'

So she spoke, and with her hand pushed past my kisses,  
stepping out with sandals loose.

I was a fool to guard such virtuous love, since when  
I've not been given one sweet night.

Notes

## XXXA

Num tu, dure, para Phrygias nunc ire per undas et petere Hyrcani litora rauca maris, spargere et alterna communis caede Penates et ferre ad patrios praemia dira Lares?	30B.19   30B.22
quo fugis ah demens? nullast fuga: tu licet usque ad Tanain fugias, usque sequetur Amor. non si Pegaseo vectaris in aëre dorso, nec tibi si Persei moverit ala pedes; vel si te sectae rapiant talaribus aurae, nil tibi Mercurii proderit alta via.	1   5
instat semper Amor supra caput, instat amanti, et gravis ipse super libera colla sedet. excubat ille acer custos et tollere numquam te patietur humo lumina capta semel . . .	   10
et iam si pecces, deus exorabilis illest si modo praesentis viderit esse preces.	

### 30A. Inescapable Love

You plan, hard-hearted man, to sail the Phrygian waves  
and reach the wild Hyrcanian shores,  
to daub the house-gods with each other's blood, bring back  
the dreadful trophies to our hearths?

Where can you run to, madman? There is no escape.

Love will follow to the Don.

Not, mounted, if you rode the air on Pegasus,  
or moved winged feet as Perseus,  
or cut the air with flying sandals, have the lofty  
path of Mercury assist.

Love soars on overhead: it bears down lover, presses  
halter on the freeborn neck.

He keeps his pointed watch as sentry, stops your eyes  
once caught from lifting off the ground.

But if you sin he'll listen to entreaties, should  
he see your prayers are quick to follow.

Notes

## XXXB

Ista senes licet accusent convivium duri:	13
nos modo propositum, vita, teramus iter.	
illorum antiquis onerantur legibus aures:	15
hic locus est in quo, tibia docta, sones,	
quae non iure vado Maeandri iacta natasti,	
turpia cum faceret Palladis ora tumor.	
una contentum pudeat me vivere amica?	23
hoc si crimen erit, crimen Amoris erit:	
mi nemo obiciat. libeat tibi, Cynthia, mecum	25
rorida muscosis antra tenere iugis.	
illic aspicias scopulis haerere Sorores	
et canere antiqui dulcia furta Iovis,	
ut Semelast combustus, ut est deperditus Io,	
denique ut ad Troiae tecta volarit avis.	30
quod si nemo exstat qui vicerit Alitis arma,	
communis culpae cur reus unus agor?	
nec tu Virginibus reverentia moveris ora:	
hic quoque non nescit quid sit amare chorus;	
si tamen Oeagri quaedam compressa figura	35
Bistoniis olim rupibus accubuit.	
hic ubi te prima statuent in parte choreae,	
et medius docta cuspide Bacchus erit,	
tum capiti sacros patiar pendere corymbos:	
nam sine te nostrum non valet ingenium.	40

### 30B. Live with Me

Let stern old men denounce our partying: my love,  
we'll keep the course we've started on.  
Their ears are burdened with old principles, but here's  
the place, skilled pipe, where you can play,  
for all that Pallas, by her puffed-up cheeks disgraced,  
once tossed you to Maeander's waves.

Must I be shamed by living with a single mistress?  
If that's a crime, the crime is love's.  
Let none object. I ask you, Cynthia, live with me  
in some moist cave in mossy hills.  
On rocks you'll see the Sisters singing, hear the ancient  
stories of deceiving Jove.  
Inflamed by Semele, destroyed by Io, how  
as bird he flew to Trojan homes.  
If none surmount the arms of that winged god, then why  
am I alone accused of fault?

Nor need you shock the Muses' modest faces, when  
their company knows much of love.  
For one of them, beside Bistonian rocks, beguiled  
by handsomeness, with Oeagrus lay.  
They'll set you in the forefront of their dancing, Bacchus  
in the middle with his thyrsus,  
and I will let myself be crowned with sacred ivy.  
My gift is empty lacking you.

Notes

XXXI – XXXII

Quaeris, cur veniam tibi tardior? aurea Phoebi  
porticus a magno Caesare aperta fuit.  
tota erat in spatium Poenis digesta columnis,  
inter quas Danai femina turba senis.  
hic quidam Phoebus visus mihi pulchrior ipso 31.5  
marmoreus tacita carmen hiare lyra;  
atque aram circum steterant armenta Myronis,  
quattuor artificis, vivida signa, boves.  
tum medium claro surgebat marmore templum,  
et patria Phoebus carius Ortygia: 31.10  
in quo Solis erat supra fastigia currus;  
et valvae, Libyci nobile dentis opus,  
altera deiectos Parnasi vertice Gallos,  
altera maerebat funera Tantalidos.  
deinde inter matrem deus ipse interque sororem 31.15  
Pythius in longa carmina veste sonat.

hoc utinam spatium loco, quodcumque vacabis, 32.7  
Cynthia! sed tibi me credere turba vetat,  
cum videt accensis devotam currere taedis  
in nemus et Triviae lumina ferre deae. 32.10  
qui videt, is peccat: qui te non viderit ergo, 32.1  
non cupiet: facti lumina crimen habent.  
nam quid Praenesti dubias, o Cynthia, sortis,  
quid petis Aeaei moenia Telegoni?  
cur ita te Herculeum deportant esseda Tibur? 5  
Appia cur totiens te via Lanuvium?  
scilicet umbrosis sordet Pompeia columnis 11  
porticus, aulaeis nobilis Attalicas,  
et platanis creber pariter surgentibus ordo, 15  
flumina sopito quaeque Marone cadunt,  
et leviter lymphis tota crepitantibus orbe  
cum subito Triton ore recondit aquam.

### 31-32. Cythia's Infidelities

Why so late? Apollo's golden porticoes  
been opened by our mighty Caesar.

A promenade with Punic columns, where were found  
old Danaus's throng of daughters.

Here marble gleamed, more truly Phoebus than himself,  
mouth open at a silent lyre,

and round the altar, Myron's herd — four cows were cut,  
in living witness to his work.

The centre saw a dazzling temple, dear to Phoebus  
as his own Ortygian home.

The pediment above displayed the sungod's chariot,  
with doors in Libyan ivory.

One showed the Gauls cast down from high Parnassus, one  
the Tantalids in funeral grief,

then long-robed deity of Pytho, flanked by mother  
and his sister, sung and played.

Here I'd ask you keep to in your leisure hours,  
though crowds prevent me trusting you,  
who see a Cynthia hurrying to the grove, or bearing  
torches to the crossroad goddess.

Who sees is drawn: who doesn't knows of no desire:  
it's eyes that make the guilty party.

Why seek Praeneste's oracles or, Cynthia,  
the walls that Telēgonus built?

Why chaise to Herculēan Tibur, Lanuvium,  
so often by the Appian Way?

Too dusty is the shade, you say, of Pompey's columns,  
despite the golden thread of awnings,

or thick-packed plane-trees rising evenly, and waters  
falling from the sleeping Maro,

or sound that splashes from the basin while the Triton  
pours out water from his mouth?

falleris, ista tui furtum via monstrat amoris:  
non urbem, demens, lumina nostra fugis!  
nil agis, insidias in me componis inanis,  
tendis iners docto retia nota mihi. 20  
sed de me minus est: famae iactura pudicae  
tanta tibi miserae, quanta meretur, erit.  
nuper enim de te nostras maledixit ad aures  
rumor, et in tota non bonus urbe fuit.

sed tu non debes inimicae credere linguae: 25  
semper formosis fabula poena fuit.  
non tua deprenso damnatast fama veneno:  
testis eris puras, Phoebe, videre manus.  
sin autem longo nox una aut altera lusu  
consumptast, non me crimina parva movent. 30  
Tyndaris externo patriam mutavit amore,  
et sine decreto viva reducta domumst.  
ipsa Venus fertur corrupta libidine Martis,  
nec minus in caelo semper honesta fuit.

quamvis Ida illam pastorem dicat amasse 35  
atque inter pecudes accubuisse deam,  
hoc et Hamadryadum spectavit turba sororum  
Silenique senes et pater ipse chori;  
cum quibus Idaeo legisti poma sub antro,  
supposita excipiens, Nai, caduca manu. 40

an quisquam in tanto stuprorum examine quaerit  
'cur haec tam dives? quis dedit? unde dedit?'  
o nimium nostro felicem tempore Romam,  
si contra mores una puella facit!  
haec eadem ante illam iam impune et Lesbia fecit: 45  
quae sequitur, certest invidiosa minus.  
qui quaerit Tatium veterem durosque Sabinos,  
hic posuit nostra nuper in urbe pedem.

You're wrong: these trips betray some secret love: it's not  
the city but my sight you flee.

But pointless are the snares you set, for I've been taught  
to see the feeble nets you spread.

That's nought to me, but still the loss of your good name  
will be as great as you deserve.

And lately rumours came to me, throughout the city,  
gossip of you none too good.

You will not listen to such scolding tongues, for ever  
scandal is the price of beauty,  
nor is there damning charge of having poisoned someone:

Phoebus says your hands are clean,  
and if a night or two have gone in dalliance,  
that's not a crime upsets me much.

Tyndaris' daughter, leaving home for foreign love,  
came back unharmed and uncondemned.

Though Venus yielded to her lust for Mars, the gods  
afforded her no less respect.

Ida says that though a goddess loved a shepherd,  
lay with him among the sheep,  
the crowd of sister Hamadryads saw, as did  
Sileni, and the chorus father,  
with whom the Naiads gathered Ida's valley apples,  
catching them with ready hands.

Can anyone with such debauchery demand,  
'Whence come such riches, who and why?'  
For Rome is all too happy in this modern age  
if one girl act unfashionably!  
Impunity has greeted Lesbia's acts before,  
so followers are less to blame,  
and man expecting Tattius or primal Sabines,  
has come but lately to our city.

tu prius et fluctus poteris siccare marinos,  
altaque mortali deligere astra manu, 50  
quam facere, ut nostrae nolint peccare puellae:  
hic mos Saturno regna tenente fuit,  
at cum Deucalionis aquae fluxere per orbem,  
et post antiquas Deucalionis aquas.  
dic mihi, quis potuit lectum servare pudicum, 55  
quae dea cum solo vivere sola deo?  
uxorem quondam magni Minois, ut aiunt,  
corrupit torui candida forma bovis;  
nec minus aerato Danaë circumdata muro  
non potuit magno casta negare Iovi. 60  
quod si tu Graias si tu's imitata Latinas,  
semper vive meo libera iudicio!

For sooner dry the waters of the ocean, pluck  
the stars down with a mortal hand  
than you will make the Roman girls averse to sin,  
or less so than in Saturn's reign.  
For when Deucalion's waters swamped the world, or after  
that Deucalion deluge ebbed,  
who then could keep his bed unsoiled, or be a goddess  
living with a single god?  
They say the wife of mighty Minos was seduced  
by power of whiteness in an ox,  
and Dānaë, shut up in brazen walls, had not  
the virtue to resist great Jove.  
So you who'd imitate the Greek and Roman women,  
live for ever as you wish!

Notes

### XXXIIIA

Tristia iam redeunt iterum sollemnia nobis:

Cynthia iam noctes est operata decem.

atque utinam pereant, Nilo quae sacra tepente  
misit matronis Inachis Ausoniis!

quae dea tam cupidos totiens divisit amantis, 5  
quaecumque illa, suis semper amara fuit.

tu certe Iovis occultis in amoribus, Io,  
sensisti multas quid sit inire vias,  
cum te iussit habere puellam cornua Iuno  
et pecoris duro perdere verba sono. 10

a quotiens quernis laesisti frondibus ora,  
mandisti et stabulis arbuta pasta tuis!

an, quoniam agrestem detraxit ab ore figuram  
Iuppiter, idcirco facta superba dea's?  
an tibi non satis est fuscis Aegyptus alumnis? 15  
cur tibi tam longa Roma petita via?

quidve tibi prodest viduas dormire puellas?  
sed tibi, crede mihi, cornua rursus erunt,  
aut nos e nostra te, saeva, fugabimus urbe:  
cum Tiberi Nilo gratia nulla fuit. 20

at tu, quae nostro, nimium pia, causa dolori's,  
noctibus his vacui, ter faciamus iter.

### 33A. Isis

Once again to spite me come the dismal rites  
with Cynthia worshipping these whole ten nights.  
Damn the ways of warm Nile on our matrons which  
the daughter of Inachus sent.

The goddess has so often parted fervent lovers:  
whomsoever, always harsh.

And Io, in your secret love of Jove, you learnt  
the pain of travelling many paths  
when Juno ordered you, a girl, to put on horns,  
make speech the lowing of a cow:  
how often did you chafe your mouth with leaves of oak  
or chew on arbuté in your stall!

Did Jove, who took the rustic aspects from your features,  
make you then a haughty goddess?

Or Egypt's swarthy children weren't enough, that you  
must journey this long way to Rome?

How can it matter that your girls must slumber chaste?

Believe me, you will grow new horns,  
or we'll evict you, cruel creature, from our city:  
Nile and Tibur never mixed.

But you whose piety has caused this grief, when free,  
must three times let me take love's path.

Notes

### XXXIIIB

Non audis et verba sinis mea ludere, cum iam  
flectant Icarii sidera tarda boves.  
lenta bibis: mediae nequeunt te frangere noctes? 25  
an nondumst talos mittere lassa manus?

a pereat, quicumque meracas repperit uvas  
corrumpitque bonas nectare primus aquas!  
Icare, Cecropiis merito iugulate colonis,  
pampineus nosti quam sit amarus odor! 30  
tuque o Eurytion vino Centaure peristi,  
nec non Ismario tu, Polypheme, mero.  
vino forma perit, vino corrumpitur aetas,  
vino saepe suum nescit amica virum.

me miserum, ut multo nihil est mutata Lyaeo! 35  
iam bibe: formosa's: nil tibi vina nocent,  
cum tua praependent demissae in pocula sertae,  
et mea deducta carmina voce legis.

largius effuso madeat tibi mensa Falerno,  
spumet et aurato mollius in calice. 40

### 33B. Still More Wine

You hear no words, but let me play, though still the stars  
are turned by Icarus's oxen.

You go on drinking. Midnight doesn't wear you down:  
you are not tired of throwing dice?

Damn whoever found the undiluted grape,  
spoiled water's purity with wine.

Rightly Athens' farmers killed you, Icarus:  
you learnt the bitter smell of vine.

From grape the centaur died, Eurytion: Ismarus  
wine killed Polyphemus too.

For wine wrecks looks, and undoes youth, and often makes  
the mistress ignorant of her man.

Unhappily for me, she's not affected. Well,  
drink on my lovely, there's no harm.

Your hair in loosened garlands drapes the cup, your voice  
has gathered up at length my poems.

So let the table flood with more Falernian, and foam  
more gently in your golden cup.

Notes

## XXXIIIC

. . . semper in absentis felicior aestus amantis:	43
elevat assiduos copia longa viros.	44
nulla tamen lecto recipit se sola libenter:	41
est quiddam, quod vos quaerere cogat Amor.	42

### 33C. Absence: Fragment

Passion helps the absent lover: long persistence  
weakens one who's ever there.

No woman gladly goes to bed alone, for Amor  
gives us something all must seek.

Notes

## XXXIV

Cur quisquam faciem dominae iam credat amico?

sic erepta mihi paene puella meast.

expertus dico, nemost in amore fidelis:

formosam raro non sibi quisque petit.

polluit ille deus cognatos, solvit amicos, 5

et bene concordis tristia ad arma vocat.

hospes in hospitium Menelao venit adulter;

Colchis et ignotum nempe secuta virum.

Lynceu, tune meam potuisti, perfide, curam

tangere? nonne tuae tum cecidere manus? 10

quid si non constans illa et tam certa fuisset?

posses in tanto vivere flagitio?

tu mihi vel ferro pectus vel perde veneno:

a domina tantum te modo tolle mea.

te dominum vitae, te corporis esse licebit, 15

te socium admitto rebus, amice, meis:

lecto te solum, lecto te deprecor uno:

rivalem possum non ego ferre Iovem.

ipse meas solus quod nil est, aemulor umbrae,

stultus et in nulla saepe timore tremo. 20

una tamen causast, qua crimina tanta remitto,

errabant multo quod tua verba mero.

sed numquam vitae fallat me ruga severae:

omnes iam norunt quam sit amare bonum.

Lynceus ipse meus seros insanit amores! 25

serum te nostros laetor adire deos.

quid tua Socraticis tibi nunc sapientia libris

proderit aut rerum dicere posse vias?

aut quid Cretaei tibi prosunt carmina plectri?

nil iuvat in magno vester amore senex. 30

tu satius Musam leviozem imitere Philitae

et non inflati somnia Callimachi.

### 34. To Lynceus

Who'd now entrust a well-made mistress to a friend?

My own was near to snatched away.

Experience proves that none's dependable in love,  
but wants the beauty for himself.

That god pollutes relations, undoes friends, and calls  
to arms those linked in harmony.

Whom Menelaus took in proved adulterer,  
unknown the man Mēdēa followed.

How could you bear, false Lynceus, to touch my girl:  
did not the life forsake your hands?

Suppose she had not proved so staunch and faithful: such  
disgrace you could have lived on through?

Destroy my body if you wish with a blade or poison;  
from my mistress stay away.

You may be comrade of my soul and body, have  
the stewardship of all I own,

but bed alone I ask forbearance on, for Jove  
himself I cannot bear as rival:

I'm jealous by myself of my own shadow, often  
tremble foolishly at nought.

There is good reason to remit your crime, however:

wine had caused your words to stray,

but looks of your ascetic life will never fool me,  
now all know how good love is.

Lynceus too, at this late hour, is mad with love!

I'm pleased that you address our gods.

In what resides the wisdom of Socratic books,  
to know the workings of the world,

or have the music of the Cretan's stories, when  
your ancient is no help to love?

Better imitate the muse of slight Philetas,  
dream as simple Callimachus,

nam cursus licet Aetoli referas Acheloi,  
 fluxerit ut magno fractus amore liquor,  
 atque etiam ut Phrygio fallax Maeandria campo 35  
 errat et ipsa suas decipit unda vias,  
 qualis et Adrasti fuerit vocalis Arion,  
 tristis ad Archemori funera victor equus:  
 non Amphiareae prosint tibi fata quadrigae  
 aut Capanei magno grata ruina Iovi. 40  
 desine et Aeschyleo componere verba coturno,  
 desine, et ad mollis membra resolve choros.

incipe iam angusto versus includere torno,  
 inque tuos ignis, dure poeta, veni.  
 tu non Antimacho, non tutior ibis Homero: 45  
 despicit et magnos recta puella deos.  
 harum nulla solet rationem quaerere mundi, 51  
 nec cur fraternis Luna laboret equis,  
 nec si post Stygias aliquid restabimus undas,  
 nec si consulto fulmina missa tonent. 54

sed non ante gravis taurus succumbit aratro, 47  
 cornua quam validis haeserit in laqueis,  
 nec tu tam duros per te patieris amores:  
 trux tamen a nobis ante domandus eris. 50  
 aspice me, cui parva domi fortuna relictast 55  
 nullus et antiquo Marte triumphus avi,  
 ut regnem mixtas inter conviva puellas  
 hoc ego, quo tibi nunc elevor, ingenio!

me iuuet hesternis positum languere corollis,  
 quem tetigit iactu certus ad ossa deus. 60  
 Actia Vergilium cordi sit litora Phoebi,  
 Caesaris et fortis dicere posse rates,  
 qui nunc Aeneae Troiani suscitatur arma  
 iactaque Lavinis moenia litoribus.  
 cedite, Romani scriptores, cedite, Grai! 65  
 nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade.

tell the course of the Aetolian Achelous,  
waters freed by power of love,  
or of Maeander wandering through the Phrygian plain  
deceiving its own courses there,  
or talking Arion, Adrastus's, the horse that won  
Archēmorus's funeral games,  
or Amphiaraus' chariot's fate, the death that pleased  
our mighty Jove: Capaneus's.  
Then no more gather words for Aeschylus's buskin:  
loose your limbs in supple dance.

Start turning verses on a narrow lathe, come close,  
hard-hearted one, to what you feel.  
You'll be no safer than Antimachus or Homer:  
beauties turn down mighty gods.  
Name girls who sought the secrets of the world, or why  
Moon laboured with her brother's horse,  
or what survives of us beyond the River Styx,  
if thunderbolts could have good cause.

The stubborn ox will never yield to ploughing till  
its horns be fastened in a noose,  
nor will you gladly take the hurts of love until,  
though wild, you are subdued by me.  
See, with little wealth at home, or ancestor  
who won his triumph in past wars,  
I reign among the banquet of the girls, and for  
the very gifts that you despise.

I'm garlanded by yesterdays because the god  
of sharpest aim has pierced my bone.  
Let Virgil sing of Phoebus guarding Actian shore,  
or Caesar's mighty fleet that brings  
to life now warriors of Troy's Aenēās, walls  
he founded on the Lavine shore.  
Make way, you Roman authors, and you Greeks, far greater  
than the Iliad is born.

tu canis Ascraei veteris praecepta poetae, quo seges in campo, quo viret uva iugo.	77
tale facis carmen docta testudine quale Cynthus impositis temperat articulis.	80
tu canis umbrosi subter pineta Galaesi Thyrsin et attritis Daphnin harundinibus, utque decem possint corrumpere mala puellas missus et impressis haedus ab uberibus.	67 70
felix, qui vilis pomis mercaris amores! huic licet ingratae Tityrus ipse canat. felix intactum Corydon qui temptat Alexin agricolae domini carpere delicias! quamvis ille sua lassus requiescat avena, laudatur facilis inter Hamadryadas.	75
non tamen haec ulli venient ingrata legenti, sive in amore rudis sive peritus erit. nec minor hic animis, ut sit minor ore, canorus anseris indocto carmine cessit olor.	81
haec quoque perfecto ludebat Iasone VARRO, Varro Leucadiae maxima flamma suae; haec quoque lascivi cantarunt scripta CATULLI, Lesbia quâs ipsa notior est Helena; haec etiam docti confessast pagina CALVI, cum caneret miserae funera Quintiliae. et modo formosa quam multa Lycoride GALLUS mortuus inferna vulnera lavit aqua!	85 90
Cynthia quin vivet versus laudata PROPERTI, hos inter si me ponere Fama volet.	

You sing the precepts of the Ascran bard, what soil  
is good for corn, what hill for grapes.  
You make such music as the Cythian allows,  
with skilful hands you touch the lyre,  
and sing to well-worn reeds of Thyrsis and of Daphnis,  
shaded by Galaesus' pines,  
of how ten apples or an unweaned kid is gift  
sufficient to seduce the girls.

Happy you who purchase love with apples, give  
cold Tityrus his leave to sing!  
Happy Corydon who seeks to win the fresh Alexis,  
darling of his rustic master!  
Though weary he may be and rest from piping, still  
compliant nymphs repeat his name.

Such songs enrapture any reader, whether new  
to love or long accomplished.  
The tuneful swan descending to a lesser style  
has not disgraced himself as goose.

Such tunes did VARRO venture with his Jason done,  
Leucadia his greatest flame.  
Much the same the wild CATULLUS sung, to make his Lesbia  
better known than Helen was.  
A fervour also shown by learned CALVUS singing  
sad at his Quintilia's death.  
And lately GALLUS, by Lycoris wounded, bathed  
by waters of the underworld.

So shall PROPERTIUS in verse make Cynthia live  
if Fame will make me one of these.

Notes

# LIBER TERTIUS

I

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae,  
in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus.  
primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos  
Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros.  
dicite, quo pariter carmen tenuastis in antro 5  
quove pede ingressi? quamve bibistis aquam?

ah valeat, Phoebum quicumque moratur in armis!  
exactus tenui pumice versus eat,  
quo me Fama levat terra sublimis, et a me  
nata coronatis Musa triumphat equis, 10  
et mecum in curru parvi vectantur Amores,  
scriptorumque meas turba secuta rotas.  
quid frustra immissis mecum certatis habenis?  
non datur ad Musas currere lata via.

multi, Roma, tuas laudes annalibus addent, 15  
qui finem imperii Bactra futura canent.  
sed, quod pace legas, opus hoc de monte Sororum  
detulit intacta pagina nostra via.  
mollia, Pegasides, date vestro sarta poetae:  
non faciet capiti dura corona meo. 20

at mihi quod vivo detraxerit invida turba,  
post obitum duplici fenore reddet Honos;  
omnia post obitum fingit maiora vetustas:  
maius ab exsequiis nomen in ora venit.

nam quis equo pulsas abiegnos nosceret arces, 25  
fluminaque Haemonio comminus isse viro,  
Idaeum Simoenta Iovis cum prole Scamandro,  
Hectora per campos ter maculasse rotas?

# BOOK THREE

## 1. Invocation

Shades of Callimachus, Cōan rites of Philetas,  
grant me entry to your grove.

I am the first, priest of the clear fount, bringing to Italian  
sacraments a Greek song.

What grotto thinned your song, what foot was entered on,  
what water have you drunk?

No more you'll wheedle Phoebus into war: my verse  
is pumiced to exact perfection,  
and will by fate be lifted up: you'll find me flower-  
hung above triumphal horse,  
and little Cupids there will ride with me, a throng  
of writers bustling at my wheels.

Why would you urge your horse to race with me? There is  
no wide road reaching to the Muses.

Many, Rome, will add new honours to your annals,  
enlarge your bounds to Bactria,  
but what to read in peaceful times, a page brought down  
unsullied from the Sister's mount?

Be careful of the bays you give, Pegasid daughters:  
no epic crown will suit my head.

What envious crowds in life deny me, fame will pay  
with doubled interest afterwards.

If age will bring its approbation, so my name  
at death is greater on men's lips.

Else who would know the walls pulled down by fir-wood horse,  
Achilles' tussle with the rivers,  
Ida's Simois with Scamander, Jove's son, Hector  
three times fouled by chariot wheels,

Deiphobumque Helenumque et Pulydamantis in armis  
qualemcumque Parim vix sua nosset humus. 30

exiguo sermone fores nunc, Ilion, et tu  
Troia bis Oetaei numine capta dei.

nec non ille tui casus memorator Homerus  
posteritate suum crescere sensit opus;  
meque inter seros laudabit Roma nepotes: 35

illum post cineres auguror ipse diem.  
ne mea contempto lapis indicet ossa sepulcro  
provisumst Lycio vota probante deo.

Dēiphobus and Hēlenus, Polỹdamas' armour  
Paris awkwardly had donned?  
Unheard of. Little matter Ilium, or Troy  
twice taken by the Oetaean god.

And Homer, who has told your fate, has doubtless seen  
his reputation grow with time.  
So will I live to have my future day in Rome,  
and prophecy, though I be ash,  
still cared for will be stone that marks my bones: so hears  
the Lycian god and promises.

Notes

II

Carminis interea nostri redeamus in orbem,  
gaudeat ut solito tacta puella sono.

Orphea delenisse feras et concita dicunt  
flumina Threicia sustinuisse lyra;  
saxa Cithaeronis Phoebeam agitata per artem 5  
sponte sua in muri membra coisse ferunt;  
quin etiam, Polypheme, fera Galatea sub Aetna  
ad tua rorantis carmina flexit equos:  
miremur, nobis et Baccho et Apolline dextro,  
turba puellarum si mea verba colit? 10

quod non Taenariis domus est mihi fulta columnis,  
nec camera auratas inter eburna trabes,  
nec mea Phaeacas aequant pomaria silvas,  
non operosa rigat Marcus antra liquor;  
at Musae comites et carmina cara legenti, 15  
nec defessa choris Calliopea meis.  
fortunata, meo si qua's celebrata libello!  
carmina erunt formae tot monumenta tuae.

nam neque pyramidum sumptus ad sidera ducti,  
nec Iovis Elei caelum imitata domus, 20  
nec Mausolei dives fortuna sepulcri  
mortis ab extrema condicione vacant.  
aut illis flamma aut imber subducet honores,  
annorum aut tacito pondere victa ruent.  
at non ingenio quaesitum nomen ab aevo 25  
excidet: ingenio stat sine morte decus.

## 2. Power of Song

Returning meanwhile to our verse: a round to please  
my girl with a familiar song.

They say that Orpheus tamed ferocious beasts and stilled  
swift rivers with his Thracian lyre,  
Apollo's music stirred the rocks of Cithaeron  
that by themselves built up a wall,  
at Etna Galatēa reigned her dripping horse  
to hear your pipings, Polyphemus.  
What wonder Bacchus and Apollo show me favour,  
crowds of girls pay court to me?

My house has not its pillars of Taenarian marble,  
gilded arching, ivory beams.  
I have no fruit trees as Phaeācian orchards, grottos  
man-made by the Marcian stream,  
but words find readers, Muses help: Calliōpe  
never tired to dance my song.  
Contented anyone who's gloried in my book:  
each line will make their beauty last.

Not costly pyramids that reach to stars, nor Jove's  
great Elis temple like to heaven,  
nor that rich tomb, so blest, of Mausolus, revokes  
the contract death will make with each.  
Fire and rain efface their splendour, or the years  
suppress them with their silent weight,  
but fame my genius has won will never perish,  
nor its glory meet with death.

Notes



### 3. Poet's Vision

I dreamt that, lying in soft shade of Helicon,  
    where flowed the fount of Pegasus,  
I could recount to lyre's accompaniment the deeds  
    of Alba's kings: a mighty task.  
I'd put my small lips to that potent spring (from which  
    parched father Ennius once drank  
and sang of Curian brothers, of Horatii spears,  
    Aemilius trophies brought by ship,  
of Fabius' stratagems, of Cannae's fearful battle,  
    gods that answer pious prayers,  
the Lares, too, that drove off Hannibal from Rome  
    and Jove who saved with cackling geese)  
when Phoebus saw me from the sacred grove, and, leaning  
    golden lyre on cavern, said:

'What is this stream to you, demented one? Who asked  
    you take on such heroic song?

It's not from here, Propertius, your fame will come:  
    small wheels are suited to soft grass.

Your book must lie about some bench, for girl to read  
    who's waiting, lonely, for her man.

Why have you left the given circuit? Genius  
    should not be gravely burdened down.'

'One oar on wave, one scraping sand — they'll keep you safe:  
    in midsea lurk the greatest storms',  
he said, with ivory quill directing me to where  
    a new path crossed the mossy floor.

Here was a grotto, green, and lined with pebbles. Drums  
    were hanging from the hollowed pumice:  
the Muse's instruments with image of Silenus,  
    pipes of the Arcadian Pan,  
and doves of lady Venus, which I love, were dipping  
    red beaks in the Gorgon's pool.

diversaeque novem sortitae iura Puellae  
    exercent teneras in sua dona manus:  
haec hederas legit in thyrsos, haec carmina nervis         35  
    aptat, at illa manu textit utraque rosam.  
e quarum numero me contigit una dearum  
    (ut reor a facie, Calliopea fuit):

'contentus niveis semper vectabere cyncnis,  
    nec te fortis equi ducet ad arma sonus.                 40  
nil tibi sit rauco praeconia classica cornu  
    flare, nec Aonium tingere Marte nemus;  
aut quibus in campis Mariano proelia signo  
    stent et Teutonicas Roma refringat opes,  
barbarus aut Suebo perfusus sanguine Rhenus             45  
    saucia maerenti corpora vectet aqua.  
quippe coronatos alienum ad limen amantes  
    nocturnaeque canes ebria signa fugae,  
ut per te clausas sciat excantare puellas,  
    qui volet austeros arte ferire viros.'                 50  
taliam Calliope, lymphisque a fonte petitis  
    ora Philitea nostra rigavit aqua.

Nine Maidens, each of different spheres, were laying  
gentle hands on their own gifts.

One gathers ivy for the thyrsi, one adjusts  
her song to lyre, one plaits the roses,  
and one of those nine goddesses put hands on me:  
(Calliōpe, or so it seemed).

'Happily you'll ride on snow-white swans: no sound  
of warhorse forces you to arms.

No task of yours to sound the strident trumpet call,  
or drench with blood Aonian groves.

Ignore the fields of battle under Marius' flag,  
where Rome beats back Teutonic power,

or where the barbarous Rhine was swelled with Swabian blood,  
torn bodies borne in that sad flood.

You'll sing of lovers garlanded at other's door,  
of midnight meetings' drunken tokens,

help those whose charm draws out the locked-up women, cheats  
their austere husbands' scrutiny.'

Calliōpe thus wet my lips with water from  
the fountain that Philetas drank.

Notes

## IV

Arma deus Caesar dices meditatur ad Indos,  
et freta gemmiferi findere classe maris.  
magna, viri, merces: parat ultima terra triumphos;  
Tigris et Euphrates sub tua iura fluent;  
sera, sed Ausoniis veniet provincia virgis; 5  
assuescent Latio Partha tropaea Iovi.  
ite agite, expertae bello, date linthea, prorae,  
et solitum, armigeri, ducite munus, equi!  
omina fausta cano. Crassos clademque piate!  
ite et Romanae consulite historiae! 10

Mars pater, et sacrae fatalia lumina Vestae,  
ante meos obitus sit precor illa dies,  
qua videam spoliis oneratos Caesaris axes,  
et subter captos arma sedere duces, 18  
tela fugacis equi et bracati militis arcus, 17  
ad vulgi plausus saepe resistere equos, 14  
inque sinu carae nixus spectare puellae 15  
incipiam et titulis oppida capta legam!  
ipsa tuam serva prolem, Venus: hoc sit in aevum, 19  
cernis ab Aenea quod superesse caput. 20

praeda sit haec illis, quorum meruere labores:  
me sat erit Sacra plaudere posse Via.

## 4. Indian War

Divine Augustus plans an Indian war, his navy  
cleaving through that sea of gems.

The furthest lands prepare their triumphs. Tigris and  
Euphrates at your bidding flow,  
and joined, if late, to Italy, with Parthian gods  
accommodating Jupiter.

Depart, war-hardened prows, unfurl you sails, and horses,  
hence to your accustomed task.

All augurs well. Revenge the Crassii defeat,  
and serve our Roman annals well.

Father Mars and fatal lights of sacred Vesta,  
let me see before my death

great Caesar's chariot heaped high with spoils, the captive  
chieftains sat beneath their arms,  
the shafts from fleeing horsemen, bows of trousered riders,  
horses halted by applause,  
when leaning on the bosom of my girl I'll gaze  
at captured cities' spectacle.

Venus, guard your line. Let he who's seen descending  
from Aenēās live forever.

Be theirs the booty who have earned it: mine to share  
their triumph on the Sacred Way.

Notes

## V

Pacis Amor deus est, pacem veneramur amantes:

sat mihi cum domina proelia dura mea.

nec mihi mille iugis Campania pinguis aratur, 5

nec bibit e gemma divite nostra sitis,

nec tamen invisio pectus mihi carpitur auro, 3

nec mixta aera paro clade, Corinthe, tua. 6

o prima infelix fingenti terra Prometheo!

ille parum caute pectoris egit opus.

corpora disponens mentem non vidit in arte:

recta animi primum debuit esse via. 10

nunc maris in tantum vento iactamur, et hostem

quaerimus, atque armis nectimus arma nova.

haud ullas portabis opes Acherontis ad undas:

nudus in inferna, stulte, vehere rate.

victor cum victo pariter miscetur in umbris: 15

consule cum Mario, capte Iugurtha, sedes.

Lydus Dulichio non distat Croesus ab Iro:

optima mors, carpta quae venit ante die.

me iuvat in prima coluisse Helicon a iuventa

Musarumque choris implicuisse manus; 20

me iuvat et multo mentem vincere Lyaeo,

et caput in verna semper habere rosa.

atque ubi iam Venerem gravis interceperit aetas,

sparserit et nigras alba senecta comas,

tum mihi naturae libeat perdiscere mores, 25

quis deus hanc mundi temperet arte domum,

qua venit exoriens, qua deficit, unde coactis

cornibus in plenum menstrua luna redit,

unde salo superant venti, quid flamine captet

Eurus, et in nubes unde perennis aqua; 30

## 5. God of Peace

Amor's god is peace, and peace we lovers prize.

Enough hard tussles with my mistress.

No thousand oxen plough my rich Campanian fields,  
no jewelled goblets sate my thirst,  
nor do I covet hateful gold, nor gather bronzes  
fired by your destruction, Corinth.

How ill Prometheus arranged our primal clay!

He made man's reason carelessly.

In shaping flesh he overlooked the mind, the spirit  
needing first a path made straight.

We're blown by winds far out to sea; we search for foes,  
link wars to wars we have concluded.

You'll bring no wealth to Acheron but, fool, be naked,  
borne on that infernal boat.

As shades the victor and the vanquished: seized Jugurtha  
sits with consul Marius.

Croesus is close to Irus, and that death comes best  
when life itself has been enjoyed.

I'm happy to have worshipped Helicon in youth,  
joined hands with Muses for their dance.

I'm happy now to fill my head with wine, and wear  
the springtime garlands of the rose.

And when the weight of years have vanquished love, and white  
old age will speckle my black hair,

I'll let my fancy turn to learning nature's ways,  
the god who rules his earthly house:

how comes the moon to rising, how she wanes, and how  
her monthly horns return to full,

how winds control the sea, what Eurus seeks, whence comes  
perpetual water for the clouds.

sit ventura dies mundi quae subruat arces,  
    purpureus pluvias cur bibit arcus aquas,  
aut cur Perrhaebi tremuere cacumina Pindi,  
    solis et atratis luxerit orbis equis,  
cur serus versare boves et plaustra Bootes,                     35  
    Pleiadum spisso cur coit igne chorus,  
curve suos fines altum non exeat aequor,  
    plenus et in partes quattuor annus eat;

sub terris sint iura deûm et tormenta reorum,  
    num rota, num scopuli, num sitis inter aquas,                     42  
aut Alcmaeoniae furiae aut ieiunia Phinei,  
    Tisiphones atro si furit angue caput,                     40  
num tribus infernum custodit faucibus antrum  
    Cerberus, et Tityo iugera pauca novem,  
an ficta in miseras descendit fabula gentes,                     45  
    et timor haud ultra quam rogos esse potest.

exitus hic vitae superet mihi: vos, quibus arma  
    grata magis, Crassi signa referte domum.

If day will come to end the universe, and why  
the coloured bow drinks up the rain,  
why Pindus peaks in Thessaly are shaken, why  
the sun's orb mourns, his horses black,  
Boötes slow to turn his ox and wagons, why  
the Pleiades collect in flames,  
and why the deep sea never overstep its limits,  
the year consist of just four parts.

If gods in hell will punish sinners: the wheel, the rock,  
unending thirst in water's midst,  
Alcmaeon's furies, Phineus' fast, Tisiphonë  
have hair a writhing of black snakes.  
If Cerberus preserves hell's cave with his three throats,  
nine acres serve for Tityos.  
If all's a made-up story to torment poor man  
who need not fear beyond the grave.

Such is my closing lifetime's task, but you in war  
must bring the Crassus standards home.

Notes

## VI

Dic mihi de nostra quae sensisti vera puella: sic tibi sint dominae, Lygdame, dempta iuga. omnis enim debet sine vano nuntius esse,	5
maiolemque metu servus habere fidem. nunc mihi, si qua tenes, ab origine dicere prima incipere: suspensis auribus ista bibam.	
num me laetitia tumefactum fallis inani,	3
haec referens, quae me credere velle putas?	4
 sicin eram incomptis vidisti flere capillis? illius ex oculis multa cadebat aqua?	10
nec speculum in strato vidisti, Lygdame, lecto, scriniaque ad lecti clausa iacere pedes,	14
ac maestam teneris vestem pendere lacertis? ornabat niveas nullane gemma manus?	12
tristis erat domus, et tristes sua pensa ministrae carpebant, medio nebat et ipsa loco, umidaque impressa siccabat lumina lana, rettulit et querulo iurgia nostra sono?	15
 'haec te teste mihi promissast, Lygdame, merces? est poena et servo rumpere teste fidem.	20
ille potest nullo miseram me linqere facto, et qualem nolo dicere habere domi? gaudet me vacuo solam tabescere lecto? si placet, insultet, Lygdame, morte mea.	
non me moribus illa, sed herbis improba vicit staminea rhombi ducitur ille rota.	25
 'illum turgentis sanie portenta rubetae et lecta exsuctis anguibus ossa trahunt, et strigis inventae per busta iacentia plumae, cinctaque funesto lanea vitta toro.	30

## 6. Request to Slave Lygdamus

Say what you've noticed of our mistress, Lygdamus,  
and have her yoke on you undone.

No messenger should bear false witness, and a slave  
in fear commands the greater faith.

Everything, and from the start, when gratefully  
I'll drink your words in with wide ears,  
but don't deceive or fill me with false joy, supposing  
what it is I wish to hear.

You saw her weeping, truly, with her hair undone  
and water streaming from her eyes?

No mirror on the coverlet and, Lygdamus,  
the toilet box at foot lay locked?

Her dress hung sadly from her gentle arms, there was  
no jewel adorning snow-white hands?

The house was sad, as were the servants plucking wool,  
the which with them she also spun?

That wool she dabbed on eyes to dry them, all the while  
reproaching me in plaintive tones?

'You weren't put up to this, for, Lygdamus, a slave's  
false witness bears harsh penalty.

This man who's cast me off when I did nothing, keeps  
I won't say what within his house,  
would have me wasting in an empty bed, be pleased  
to note my ending, Lygdamus.

She won me not by manners but vile herbs, and he  
is caught by thread-drawn rhombus wheel.

'He's lured by magic powers of toads, their swelled-up pus,  
the desiccated bones of snakes,  
and screech-owl's feathers found in recent tombs, and wooden  
fillets snatched from funeral bier.

si non vana canunt mea somnia, Lygdame, testor,  
poena erit ante meos sera sed ampla pedes;  
putris et in vacuo texetur aranea lecto:  
noctibus illorum dormiet ipsa Venus.'

quae tibi si veris animis est questa puella, 35  
hac eadem rursus, Lygdame, curre via,  
et mea cum multis lacrimis mandata reporta,  
iram, non fraudes esse in amore meo,  
me quoque consimili impositum torrerier igni:  
iurabo bis sex integer esse dies. 40  
quod mihi si e tanto felix concordia bello  
extiterit, per me, Lygdame, liber eris.

If dreams come true he'll pay in late but added pain,  
and, Lygdamus, lie at my feet.  
his empty bed be draped with dusty cobwebs, Venus  
snore throughout their nights together.'

But if that girl complained in all sincerity  
then run on back by the same route,  
and to her weeping, Lygdamus, say that my love  
has room for rage but not deceit,  
that I am roasted on a fire like hers, and swear  
I have been chaste these past twelve nights.  
If peace arise from war, and in my power, then  
Lygdamus, you shall be free.

Notes

## VII

Ergo sollicitae tu causa, pecunia, vitae!  
per te immaturum mortis adimus iter;  
tu vitiis hominum crudelia pabula praebes;  
semina curarum de capite orta tuo.  
tu Paetum ad Pharios tendentem lintea portus 5  
obruis insano terque quaterque mari.  
nam dum te sequitur, primo miser excidit aevo  
et nova longinquis piscibus esca natat. 8

quod si contentus patrio bove verteret agros, 43  
verbaque duxisset pondus habere mea,  
viveret ante suos dulcis conviva Penates, 45  
pauper, at in terra nil nisi fleret opes.  
noluit hoc Paetus, stridorem audire procellae  
et duro teneras laedere fune manus,  
sed thyio thalamo aut Oricia terebintho  
effultum pluma versicolore caput. 50

hunc parvo ferri vidit nox improba ligno, 53  
et miser invisam traxit hiatus aquam;  
huic fluctus vivo radicitus abstulit unguis: 51  
Paetus ut occideret, tot coiere mala.  
flens tamen extremis dedit haec mandata querelis 55  
cum moribunda niger clauderet ora liquor:

'di maris Aegaei quos sunt penes aequora, venti,  
et quaecumque meum degravat unda caput,  
quo rapitis miseros primae lanuginis annos?  
attulimus longas in freta vestra comas. 60  
ah miser alcyonum scopulis affligar acutis!  
in me caeruleo fuscina sumpta deost.  
at saltem Italiae regionibus evehat aestus:  
hoc de me sat erit si modo matris erit.'

## 7. Elegy for Paetus

How much can money vex us with a troubled life,  
and urge us on to early death.

What cruel nourishment you furnish for men's faults,  
and from your head sow many cares.

For you was Paetus three times whelmed, a fourth by seas,  
with sails set for the Pharos harbour;

he lost that first bright flush of youth; his body floats  
as novel food for distant fish.

But had he been content to plough his father's fields  
and deem my words to carry weight,  
he would have lived to dine before his household gods,  
if poor then poor in his own fields.

That's not for Paetus, though: he'd chase the howling storm  
and hurt soft hands upon the ropes,  
have bed of cedar, Orician terebinth, his head  
to rest on iridescent down.

The dark night saw him holding to a narrow spar,  
and gulping down the hateful water,  
and while he lived the sea tore out his nails: so many  
ills combined for Paetus' death.

How tearfully he gave his last instructions as  
dark waters closed his lips at death:

'Aegean gods, whose power must rule the sea, you wind  
and waves that overwhelm my head,  
why would you snatch away the bloom of youth; I brought  
but uncut hair to meet your waves.

I shall be dashed on jagged rocks where seagulls nest,  
meet trident of the deep-sea god.

Enough if tides disgorge me on the Latin coast  
and have my body find my mother.'

subtrahit haec fantem torta vertigine fluctus;	65
ultima quae Paeto voxque diesque fuit.	66
Paete, quid aetatem numeras? quid cara natanti	17
mater in ore tibist? non habet unda deos.	18
et mater non iusta piaae dare debita terrae	9
nec pote cognatos inter humare rogos,	10
sed tua nunc volucres astant super ossa marinae,	
nunc tibi pro tumulo Carpathium omne marest.	
infelix Aquilo, raptae timor Orithyiae,	
quae spolia ex illo tanta fuere tibi?	
aut quidnam fracta gaudes, Neptune, carina?	15
portabat sanctos alveus ille viros.	
o centum aequoreae Nereo genitore puellae,	67
et tu, materno tacta dolore, Theti;	68
vos decuit lasso supponere bracchia mento:	
non poterat vestras ille gravare manus.	
reddite corpus, aquae! positast in gurgite vita;	25
Paetum sponte tua, vilis harena, tegas;	
et quotiens Paeti transibit nauta sepulcrum,	
dicat 'et audaci tu timor esse potes.'	
ite, rates curvate et leti texite causas:	
ista per humanas mors venit acta manus.	30
terra parum fuerat fatis, adiecimus undas:	
fortunae miseris auximus arte vias.	
ancora te teneat, quem non tenuere penates?	
quid meritum dicas, cui sua terra parumst?	
ventorumst, quodcumque paras: haud ulla carina	35
consenuit, fallit portus et ipse fidem.	
nam tibi nocturnis ad saxa ligata procellis	19
omnia detricto vincula fune cadunt.	
sunt Agamemnonias testantia litora curas,	
quae notat Argynni poena Athamantiadae.	
[hoc iuvene amisso classem non solvit Atrides,	
pro qua mactatast Iphigenia mora.]	24

And, as he spoke, a whirling vortex sucked him down,  
his final day and speech it was.

Why, Paetus, count your years or, drifting, call on mother?

The waters here know nought of gods,  
nor can your mother grant due funeral rites,  
inter your ashes with your kin's.

The wheeling seabirds hover on your bones, the whole  
Carpathian sea becomes your tomb.

Ill-omened North Wind, curse of raped Orithyia, what  
great booty did you get from him?

Why, Neptune, would you gladly shatter that ship's keel  
when those aboard were pious men?

O hundred sea nymphs, daughters of Nereus, Thetis,  
you have felt a mother's grief,  
and should have placed a hand beneath his chin when weary,  
not one heavy in your hands.

Return his body, waves: you had his life. Shroud Paetus  
willingly, you worthless sands,  
and let the sailor passing Paetus' tomb remark,  
'From you the bravest learn to fear.'

Go, fashion-swelling ships and their destruction's net:  
his death was wrought by human hands.

As if the land were not enough, our skill has made  
the sea a path to cruel fate.

Should anchor hold when household gods cannot? Is this  
what one who quits his home deserves?

Whatever's built must bend to winds: no ship will die  
of age or at the harbour wall.

Though ties be fastened to the rocks, nocturnal tempest  
frays the cables, breaks them loose.

Shores have witnessed Agamemnon's pain, the fate  
of Athamantiad Argynnus

[whose death delayed the fleet of Agamemnon, caused  
Iphigenia's sacrifice.]

natura insidians pontum substravit avaris:  
ut tibi succedat, vix semel esse potest.  
saxa triumphalis fregere Capherea puppes,  
naufraga cum vasto Graecia tracta salost. 40  
paulatim sociûm iacturam flevit Ulixes,  
in mare cui soliti non valuere doli. 42  
at tu, saeve Aquilo, numquam mea vela videbis: 71  
ante fores dominae condar oportet iners.

Nature spreads the sea to catch the greedy: rarely  
more than once there comes success.

Caphereus rocks destroyed the conqueror's fleet, the Greeks  
were scattered, to their shipwreck lost.

And one by one the weeping Ulysses lost friends:  
his mind could not control the waves.

But you, North Wind will never see my sails: I'm bound  
to sink before my mistress' door.

Notes

## VIII

Dulcis ad hesternas fuerat mihi rixa lucernas  
vocis et insanae tot maledicta tuae.  
tu vero nostros audax invade capillos 5  
et mea formosis unguibus ora nota,  
tu minitare oculos subiecta exurere flamma,  
fac mea rescisso pectora nuda sinu!  
cum furibunda mero mensam propellis et in me 3  
proicis insana cymbia plena manu, 4  
nimirum veri dantur mihi signa caloris:  
nam sine amore gravi femina nulla dolet. 10

quae mulier rabida iactat convicia lingua,  
haec Veneris magnae volvitur ante pedes.  
custodum grege seu circa se stipat euntem,  
seu sequitur medias, maenas ut icta, vias,  
seu timidam crebro dementia somnia terrent, 15  
seu miseram in tabula picta puella movet,  
his ego tormentis animi sum verus haruspex,  
has didici certo saepe in amore notas.  
non est certa fides, quam non in iurgia vertas:  
hostibus eveniat lenta puella meis. 20

in morso aequales videant mea vulnera collo:  
me doceat livor mecum habuisse meam.  
aut in amore dolere volo aut audire dolentem,  
sive meas lacrimas sive videre tuas,  
tecta superciliis si quando verba remittis, 25  
aut tua cum digitis scripta silenda notas.  
odi ego quos numquam pungunt suspiria somnos:  
semper in irata pallidus esse velim.

dulcior ignis erat Paridi, cum Graia per arma  
Tynaridi poterat gaudia ferre suae: 30  
dum vincunt Danaï, dum restat barbarus Hector,  
ille Helenae in gremio maxima bella gerit.

## 8. Lamp-lit Brawl

What fun the lamp-lit contretemps we had last night,  
that roused the fierceness of your tongue.

Come, be bold about it, yank my hair, and with  
your pretty nails strike at my face.

Make threats to bring a flame and burn my eyeballs out,  
rip off my clothes and strip me bare.

Yes, crazed with wine, upturn the table, hurl the spilling  
wine cups with full force at me.

For this authenticates to me the truest fire:  
no woman hurts unless in love.

Now she who spat out insults with a raving tongue  
is rolling at the feet of Venus,  
and whether she's constrained by guards, or in the high street  
dancing as a mad bacchante,  
or nightmares make her lose her mind, or some girl's portrait  
pitch her into misery —  
all these are torments I can read, indeed have learnt  
they often prove a love is true.

No certainty in this that cannot quarrel: give  
my enemies a placid girl.

Let rivals marvel at the love-bites on the neck,  
bruises showing who I had.  
I wish to wallow in love's hurts, or feel another's,  
suffer in my tears or yours,  
to read the message hidden in the twitch of eyebrow,  
the silence that your finger bids.  
Vile be sleep that has no sighing, cursed no pallor  
brought on by an angry girl.

Sweet were Paris' feelings when his love of Helen  
drove him on against the Greeks,  
and though they still advanced and Hector fought, he had  
the greater strife in Helen's arms.

aut tecum aut pro te mihi cum rivalibus arma  
semper erunt: in te pax mihi nulla placet.  
gaude, quod nullast aequae formosa: doleres,  
si qua foret: nunc sis iure superba licet.

35

at tibi, qui nostro nexisti retia lecto,  
sit socer aeternum nec sine matre domus!  
cui nunc si qua datast furandae copia noctis,  
offensa illa mihi, non tibi amica, dedit.

With you I'll make an endless war, or with your rivals:

I shall never sue for peace.

Be glad that none's so beautiful, or you'd be crossed,

but, as it is, you're justly proud.

May you, who've snared my bed, so never lack her father,

may her mother plague your house!

And should you steal a night that's mine, it's not because

she loves you but is vexed with me.

Notes

## IX

Maecenas, eques Etrusco de sanguine regum,  
intra fortunam qui cupis esse tuam,  
quid me scribendi tam vastum mittis in aequor?  
non sunt apta meae grandia vela rati.  
turpest, quod nequeas, capiti committere pondus 5  
et pressum inflexo mox dare terga genu.  
omnia non pariter rerum sunt omnibus apta,  
palma nec ex aequo ducitur ulla iugo.

gloria Lysippost animosa effingere signa;  
exactis Calamis se mihi iactat equis; 10  
in Veneris tabula summam sibi poscit Apelles;  
Parrhasius parva vindicat arte locum;  
argumenta magis sunt Mentoris addita formae;  
at Myos exiguum flectit acanthus iter;  
Phidiacus signo se Iuppiter ornat eburno; 15  
Praxitelen propria vendit ab urbe lapis.  
est quibus Eleae concurrit palma quadrigae,  
est quibus in celeris gloria nata pedes;  
hic satus ad pacem, hic castrensibus utilis armis:  
naturae sequitur semina quisque suae. 20

at tua, Maecenas, vitae praecepta recepi,  
cogor et exemplis te superare tuis.  
cum tibi Romano dominas in honore secures  
et liceat medio ponere iura foro;  
vel tibi Medorum pugnacis ire per hastas, 25  
atque onerare tuam fixa per arma domum;  
et tibi ad effectum vires det Caesar, et omni  
tempore tam faciles insinuentur opes;  
parcis et in tenuis humilem te colligis umbras:  
velorum plenos subtrahis ipse sinus. 30  
crede mihi, magnos aequabunt ista Camillos  
iudicia, et venies tu quoque in ora virûm.

## 9. Maecenas

Maecēnas, knight descended from Etruscan kings, you keep  
within the limits of your station.

Why would you launch my writings on so vast an ocean?

Swelling sails don't suit my boat.

What good to force your head take on a heavy weight  
if knees must totter and give way?

Not everything is fitted to all strengths, nor can  
this palm be won from height of that.

Lŷsippus carves his breathing sculptures, where Calamis  
makes me marvel at his horse.

Apelles painting Venus touches highest art,

Parrhasius has miniatures,

narratives are Mentor's special form: in Mys

acanthus winds a slender path.

Phīdiās has ivory for his Jove; his city's

marble boasts Praxiteles.

Some the Olympic chariot race will win, and some  
will speed on foot to take the prize.

This one is born for peace, as that to handle arms:

his seeds say what he's suited for.

But now accepting your own rules of life, Maecēnas,

I must rise to your own way.

With Roman magistrates you place imperial axes,

in the Forum lay down laws,

could pass between the bristling ranks of Parthian spears

and hang their trophies in your house.

Though Caesar gives you strength to work your will, and wealth

at all times comes so readily,

you check yourself, returning to the modest shadows,

furling grandeur in your sails.

In this you equal wisdom of the great Camillus:

too a name to live with men

non ego velifera tumidum mare findo carina:	35
tota sub exiguo flumine nostra morast.	
non flebo in cineres arcem sedisse paternos	
Cadmi, nec semper proelia clade pari;	
nec referam Scaeas et Pergama, Apollinis arces,	
et Danaûm decimo vere redisse rates,	40
moenia cum Graio Neptunia pressit aratro	
victor Palladiae ligneus artis equus.	
inter Callimachi sat erit placuisse libellos	
et cecinisse modis, Coë poeta, tuis.	
haec urant pueros, haec urant scripta puellas	45
meque deum clament et mihi sacra ferant!	
te duce vel Iovis arma canam caeloque minantem	
Coeum et Phlegraeis Eurymedonta iugis;	
eductosque pares silvestri ex ubere reges,	51
ordiar et caeso moenia firma Remo,	50
celsaque Romanis decerpta palatia tauris,	49
crescet et ingenium sub tua iussa meum;	52
prosequar et currus utroque ab litore ovantis,	
Parthorum astutae tela remissa fugae,	
claustraque Pelusi Romano subruta ferro,	55
Antonique gravis in sua fata manus.	
mollia tu coeptae fautor cape lora iuventae,	
dexteraque immissis da mihi signa rotis.	
hoc mihi, Maecenas, laudis concedis, et a test	
quod ferar in partis ipse fuisse tuas.	60

I don't divide the swelling waves with the sail-borne keel,  
but shelter in a tiny stream,  
nor do I mourn Thebe's fall upon the fathers' ashes,  
slaughter not so even-sided,  
nor tell of Scaean gates, Pergama, Apollo's forts,  
the tenth-year spring Greeks ships returned,  
nor Pallas's great wooden horse, that Grecian plot  
which ploughed and levelled Neptune's walls.  
Enough to gratify the Callimachus readers:  
sing your metre, Cōan poet,  
that verse of mine enthuse young men and girls, that they  
proclaim me god and worship me!

You lead. I'll sing of Jove, Eurỹmedon and Coeus  
threatening gods from Phlegra hills.  
I'll tell of that first pair brought up on wild beast's teat,  
the walls that rose with Remus slain,  
how lofty Palatine was grazed by Roman bulls,  
my powers performing your commands  
to celebrate the chariots racing shore to shore,  
and Parthian's backward shooting darts,  
Pelusium bastions quelled by Roman sword, dread hand  
of Anthony that brought his death.

Take up the reins as patron of my youthful work,  
speed on those chariot wheels of mine.  
Such glory as I have, you've given me, Maecēnas:  
by your doing one of yours.

Notes

## X

Mirabar, quidnam visissent mane Camenae,  
ante meum stantes sole rubente torum.  
natalis nostrae signum misere puellae  
et manibus faustos ter crepuere sonos.

transeat hic sine nube dies, stent aëre venti, 5  
ponat et in sicco molliter unda minas.  
aspiciam nullos hodierna luce dolentis,  
et Niobae lacrimas supprimat ipse lapis;  
alcyonum positis requiescant ora querelis;  
increpet absumptum nec sua mater Ityn. 10

tuque, o cara mihi, felicibus edita pennis,  
surge et poscentis iusta precare deos.  
at primum pura somnum tibi discute lympha,  
et nitidas presso pollice finge comas;  
dein qua primum oculos cepisti veste Properti 15  
indue, nec vacuum flore relinque caput;  
et pete, qua polles, ut sit tibi forma perennis,  
inque meum semper stent tua regna caput.

inde coronatas ubi ture piaveris aras,  
luxerit et tota flamma secunda domo, 20  
sit mensae ratio, noxque inter pocula curret,  
et crocino nares murreus ungat onyx.  
tibia continuis succumbat rauca choreis,  
et sint nequitiae libera verba tuae,  
dulciaque ingratos adimant convivia somnos; 25  
publica vicinae perstrepat aura viae:  
sit sortes nobis talorum interprete iactu,  
quem gravius pennis verberet ille puer.

## 10. Cynthia's Birthday

I wondered why the Muses paid a morning visit  
to my couch when sun rose red.

It was to mark the birthday of my girl: three times  
propitiously they clapped their hands.

So let the day not have a cloud, the winds be stilled,  
the shore unthreatened by the wave.

Let none I see be grieving: may the very rock  
that Niobe was now stifle tears,  
no halcyons complain but settle, Itys' mother  
no more weep for her dead son.

And you, my dearest, born with such contenting omens,  
rise and do what gods demand.

Let purest water rinse off sleep, and with your fingers  
pile up high your shining hair.

Put on the dress that won Propertius, make sure  
your head not lack its wreath of flowers,  
and pray your looks endure for ever, sovereignty  
you have with me may never fail.

Then offer incense at the flowered altars, with  
the flame auspicious through the house,  
then think of food, of night sped on by drink, the scent  
of saffron opened from a jar.

Let pipe grow hoarse and give out with the constant dancing,  
the candid words becoming sweet,  
and by that argument put off unwanted sleep,  
raise noise to wake up neighbouring streets.

Let's cast our fortunes with the dice; which one of us  
the boy beats harder with his wings.

cum fuerit multis exacta trientibus hora,  
noctis et instituet sacra ministra Venus,  
annua solvamus thalamo sollemnia nostro,  
natalisque tui sic peragamus iter.

When many cups have emptied out the hours, and Venus  
waits the offices of night,  
then on your bed renew our annual celebration,  
and complete your birthday rites.

Notes

## XI

Quid mirare, meam si versat femina vitam  
et trahit addictum sub sua iura virum,  
criminaque ignavi capitis mihi turpia fingis,  
quod nequeam fracto rumpere vincla iugo?  
ventorum melius praesagit navita morem, 5  
vulneribus didicit miles habere metum.  
ista ego praeterita iactavi verba iuventa:  
tu nunc exemplo disce timere meo.

Colchis flagrantis adamantina sub iuga tauros  
egit et armigera proelia sevit humo, 10  
custodisque feros clausit serpentis hiatus,  
iret ut Aesonias aurea lana domos.  
ausa ferox ab equo quondam oppugnare sagittis  
Maeotis Danaûm Penthesilea rates;  
aurea cui postquam nudavit cassida frontem, 15  
vicit victorem candida forma virum.  
Omphale in tantum formae processit honorem,  
Lydia Gygaeo tincta puella lacu,  
ut, qui pacato statuisset in orbe columnas,  
tam dura traheret mollia pensa manu. 20  
Persarum statuit Babylona Semiramis urbem,  
ut solidum cocto tolleret aggere opus,  
et duo in adversum mitti per moenia currus  
nec possent tacto stringere ab axe latus;  
duxit et Euphraten medium, quam condidit, arcis, 25  
iussit et imperio subdere Bactra caput.  
nam quid ego heroas, quid raptem in crimina divos?  
Iuppiter infamat seque suamque domum.

quid, modo quae nostris opprobria nexerit armis,  
et, famulos inter femina trita suos, 30  
coniugii obsceni pretium Romana poposcit  
moenia et addictos in sua regna Patres?

## 11. Female Power

Why wonder that a woman governs life, and draws  
a man in bondage to her power?

Why bring the shameful coward's charge, that I lack strength  
to throw off bonds and break the yoke?

The sailor scents the temper of the winds, a soldier  
has his wounds to teach him fear.

Such words as yours I used to utter in my youth:  
now learn from me and be afraid.

Mēdēa forced fire-breathing bulls beneath her yoke  
and sowed the earth with warriors:  
she shut the fierce jaws of the guardian serpent, sent  
the Golden Fleece to Aeson's halls.

On horseback fierce Penthesilea from Maeotis  
struck the Greek ships with her arrows,  
but when the golden helm was lifted back her beauty  
conquered her male conqueror.

The Lydian Omphale who bathed in Gyges' Lake  
won such honour for her figure  
that he who set up pillars round a world subdued  
must put brute hands to carding wool.

Semīramis constructed Persian Babylon  
with solid walls of brick so wide  
two chariots round the ramparts found their axles passed  
each other freely, did not touch.

Euphrates, too, she channelled through the city, bid  
great Bactria bow its head to her.

Why drag in charges on the gods and heroes? Jove  
defames himself and his whole house.

What of her who late reproached our arms, a woman  
pleasured in the thighs of slaves,  
who wanted, as the price of her foul union, power  
on Senate and the walls of Rome?

noxia Alexandria, dolis aptissima tellus,  
 et totiens nostro Memphi cruenta malo,  
 tris ubi Pompeio detraxit harena triumphos, 35  
 tollet nulla dies hanc tibi, Roma, notam.  
 issent Phlegraeo melius tibi funera campo,  
 vel tua si socero colla daturus eras.  
 scilicet incesti meretrix regina Canopi,  
 una Philippeo sanguine adusta nota, 40  
 ausa Iovi nostro latrantem opponere Anubim,  
 et Tiberim Nili cogere ferre minas,  
 Romanamque tubam crepitanti pellere sistro,  
 baridos et contis rostra Liburna sequi,  
 foedaque Tarpeio conopia tendere saxo, 45  
 iura dare et statuas inter et arma Mari!  
 quid nunc Tarquinii fractas iuvat esse secures,  
 nomine quem simili vita superba notat,  
 si mulier patienda fuit? cane, Roma, triumphum  
 et longum Augusto salva precare diem! 50  
 fugisti tamen in timidi vaga flumina Nili:  
 nec cepere tuae Romula vincla manus.  
 bracchia spectasti sacris admorsa colubris,  
 et trahere occultum membra soporis iter.  
 'Non hoc, Roma, fui tanto tibi cive verenda!' 55  
 dixit et assiduo lingua sepulta mero.

septem urbs alta iugis, toto quae praesidet orbi,  
*stat non humana deicienda manu.* 58  
 haec di condiderunt, haec di quoque moenia servant: 65  
 vix timeat salvo Caesare Roma Iovem.  
 nunc ubi Scipiadae classes, ubi signa Camilli,  
 aut modo Pompeia, Bospore, capta manu? 68  
 Hannibalis spolia et victi monumenta Syphacis,  
 et Pyrrhi ad nostros gloria fracta pedes? 60

Harmful Alexandria, treacherous, and Memphis,  
bloodstained often to our cost,  
whose sands robbed Pompey of three triumphs: Rome, no day  
obliterates this infamy.

Better Phlegraeon fields had seen your death, or to  
your father-in-law had bowed the neck.

True, the whore-queen of incestuous Canopus,  
infamy of Philip's line,

dared pit the barking Anubis against our Jove,  
have Tiber threatened by the Nile,

would drive out Roman trumpet with the rattling sistrum,  
chase our prows with pole-moved barge,

enclose with slack mosquito nets the Tarpeian rock,  
and judge before our Marius.

What profit to have broken Tarquin's axes, proved  
superb in arrogance and name

if woman rule us? Rome: sing out your triumph. Pray  
unharm'd Augustus have long life.

You fled to outlets of the craven Nile, to there  
escape the Roman manacles,

but saw the sacred asps attack, and had your limbs  
accept the hidden path to sleep.

'You need not fear with such a citizen', so said  
the tongue that babbled in its wine.

Set high on seven hills above the earth, the city  
*stands no human hands depose.*

These walls that gods have founded gods protect, and Rome  
will fear no Jove while Caesar lives.

What now are Scipio's fleet, Camillus' standards, Pompey's  
capture of the Bosphorus?

Or spoils of Hannibal, of conquered Syphax, Pyrrhus'  
glory shattered at our feet?

Curtius expletis statuit monumenta lacunis,  
admisso Decius proelia rupit equo,

Cocclitis abscissos testatur semita pontes,  
est cui cognomen corvus habere dedit:

Leucadius versas acies memorabit Apollo:  
tanti operis bellum sustulit una dies.

69

70

at tu, sive petes portus seu, navita, linques,  
Caesaris in toto sis memor Ionio.

Curtius' farewell was to fill a chasm, Decius  
on horse to break the battle line.

The path of Cocles still records a bridge's fall,  
and hero has a raven name.

Leucadian Apollo put a host to flight, one day  
of battle ended endless war.

So when you make for port or leave it, sailor: brood  
on Caesar through the Ionian Sea.

Notes

## XII

Postume, plorantem potuisti linquere Gallam,  
miles et Augusti fortia signa sequi?  
tantine ulla fuit spoliati gloria Parthi,  
ne faceres Galla multa rogante tua?  
si fas est, omnes pariter pereatis avari, 5  
et quisquis fido praetulit arma toro!

tu tamen iniecta tectus, vesane, lacerna  
potabis galea fessus Araxis aquam.  
illa quidem interea fama tabescet inani,  
haec tua ne virtus fiat amara tibi, 10  
neve tua Medae laetentur caede sagittae,  
ferreus armato neu cataphractus equo,  
neve aliquid de te flendum referatur in urna:  
sic redeunt, illis qui cecidere locis.

ter quater in casta felix, o Postume, Galla! 15  
moribus his alia coniuge dignus eras.  
quid faciet nullo munita puella timore,  
cum sit luxuriae Roma magistra suae?  
sed securus eas: Gallam non munera vincent,  
duritiaeque tuae non erit illa memor. 20  
nam quocumque die salvum te fata remittent,  
pendebit collo Galla pudica tuo.

Postumus alter erit miranda coniuge Ulixes:  
non illi longae tot nocuere morae,  
castra decem annorum, et Ciconum mors, Ismara capta, 25  
exustaeque tuae nox, Polypheme, genae,  
et Circae fraudes, lotosque herbaeque tenaces,  
Scyllaque et alternas scissa Charybdis aquas,  
Lampeties Ithacis veribus mugisse iuencos  
(paverat hos Phoebo filia Lampetie), 30

## 12. Gallas's Fidelity

How could you, Postumus, leave Galla weeping, take  
Augustus's brave flag to war?

What was the fame in conquering Parthia when your Galla  
begged so many times you stay?

Forgive me: greedy men should come to grief when favouring  
arms to faithful marriage bed.

Madman: worn out, with a cloak for hood, you'll drink  
Araxes water from a helmet,  
while she will waste away in empty rumours, fearing  
your brute courage cause your death,  
your blood will gladden Parthian bowman, or the iron-  
clad cataphract on armoured horse,  
and leave her mourning something left of you in urn,  
for so from there the dead return.

Postumus, when three or four times blessed with Galla's faith,  
your ways don't merit such a wife.

What will a girl do lacking her protector, Rome  
so prompt to teach licentious ways?

But rest your fears, for Galla will not take the bribe,  
nor will remember stubbornness:  
whenever fate will send you safely back, a faithful  
Galla's arms will hug your neck.

Postumus, a second Ulysses with such  
a marvellous wife. Delayed, unharmed  
for ten long years: Ismara's capture, Cicones'  
death and Polyphemus blinded.

Snares of Circe, lotus and restraining herbs,  
Scylla and Charybdis threats.

Lampetie's bulls that roared on spits of Ithacans  
(his daughter pastured them for Phoebus),

et thalamum Aeaeae flentis fugisse puellae,  
totque hiemis noctes totque natasse dies,  
nigrantisque domos animarum intrasse silentum,  
Sirenum surdo remige adisse lacus,  
et veteres arcus leto renovasse procorum,  
errorisque sui sic statuisse modum.

35

nec frustra, quia casta domi persederat uxor.  
vincit Penelopes Aelia Galla fidem.

Aeaea's weeping queen, whose marriage room he fled.

Long days and nights of storm he swam,  
and entered dark halls of the silent dead; was rowed  
by oarsman, deaf, to thwart the Sirens,  
and brought new life to his old bow by killing suitors,  
all his wanderings ending here.

And not in vain. His wife stayed true. Aelia Galla's  
faith outdoes Penelope's.

Notes

### XIII

Quaeritis, unde avidis nox sit pretiosa puellis,  
et Venere exhaustae damna querantur opes.

certa quidem tantis causa et manifesta ruinis:  
luxuriae nimium libera facta viast.

Inda cavis aurum mittit formica metallis, 5  
et venit e Rubro concha Erycina salo,  
et Tyros ostrinos praebet Cadmea colores,  
cinnamon et multi pistor odoris Arabs.

haec etiam clausas expugnant arma pudicas  
quaeque gerunt fastus, Icarioti, tuos. 10  
matrona incedit census induta nepotum  
et spolia opprobrii nostra per ora trahit.  
nullast poscendi, nullast reverentia dandi,  
aut si quast, pretio tollitur ipsa mora.

felix Eois lex funeris una maritis, 15  
quos Aurora suis rubra colorat equis!  
namque ubi mortifero iactast fax ultima lecto,  
uxorum fuis stat pia turba comis,  
et certamen habent leti, quae viva sequatur  
coniugium: pudor est non licuisse mori. 20  
ardent victrices et flammae pectora praebent,  
imponuntque suis ora perusta viris.  
hoc genus infidum nuptarum, hic nulla puella  
nec fida Euadne nec pia Penelope.

felix agrestum quondam pacata iuventus, 25  
divitiae quorum messis et arbor erant!  
illis munus erat decussa Cydonia ramo,  
et dare puniceis plena canistra rubis,  
nunc violas tondere manu, nunc mixta referre  
lilia vimineos lucida per calathos, 30  
et portare suis vestitas frondibus uvas  
aut variam plumae versicoloris avem.

### 13. Noble Savages

You ask why nights are costly, girls are greedy, wealth  
consumed by love complains of loss.

All too certain is that ruin's cause: the path  
of luxury is now too free.

The ant of India sends its gold from open workings,  
Red Sea shell that Venus shed,  
Cadmean Tyre its crimson hue, and Arab traders  
pound the scent of cinnamon.

Such arms can conquer all withdrawn and chaste, as yours  
is, prouder than Penelope.

The matron walks in fortunes of her spendthrift lovers:  
infamy before our eyes.

No shame in asking, none in giving: all her scruples  
smoothly settled for a price.

Happy the funeral practice of the eastern husbands,  
skins there dyed with dawn's red glow,  
With last torch cast upon the husband's bier, a band  
of loyal wives appears with unkempt hair,  
and they compete for death, to follow husband living:  
shame on those who cannot die.

In giving bare breasts to the flame the victors glory,  
lay their burnt lips on their man.

Our clan of brides is faithless: none would play the true  
Evadne or Penelope.

Happy the country youth of those far days, where riches  
grew from harvest and the trees,  
to them a gift was quinces shaken from the bough,  
and panniers full of bramble-berries,  
and violets plucked by hand, and gathered lilies mixed  
and shining through their wicker baskets,  
and carried grapes still wrapped in their own leaves, or some  
pied bird with varicoloured plumes.

his tum blanditiis furtiva per antra puellae  
oscula silvicolis empta dedere viris.  
hinnulei pellis stratos operibat amantes, 35  
altaque nativo creverat herba toro,  
pinus et incumbens laetas circumdabat umbras;  
nec fuerat nudas poena videre deas.

corniger atque adeo vacuum pastoris in aulam  
dux aries saturas ipse reduxit oves; 40  
dique deaeque omnes, quibus est tutela per agros,  
praebebant vestri verba benigna foci:  
'et leporem, quicumque venis, venaberis, hospes,  
et si forte meo tramite quaeris avem:  
et me Pana tibi comitem de rupe vocato, 45  
sive petes calamo praemia, sive cane.'

at nunc desertis cessant sacraria lucis:  
aurum omnes victa iam pietate colunt.  
auro pulsa fides, auro venalia iura,  
aurum lex sequitur, mox sine lege pudor. 50

torrida sacrilegum testantur limina Brennum,  
dum petit intonsi Pythia regna dei:  
at mox laurigero concussus vertice diras  
Gallica Parnasus sparsit in arma nives.  
te scelus accepto Thracis Polymestoris auro 55  
nutrit in hospitio non, Polydore, pio.  
tu quoque ut auratos gereres, Eriphyla, lacertos,  
delapsis nusquamst Amphiaraüs equis.  
proloquar (atque utinam patriae sim verus haruspex!):  
frangitur ipsa suis Roma superba bonis. 60

In secret clearings of the woods the girls would offer  
kisses which their courtship bought.

The fawn's pelt gave its comfort to recumbent lovers,  
deep grass formed a natural bank,  
and pine tree leant and gladly shaded them, no crime  
it was to see a goddess bare.

A full-horned ram itself led back the well-fed ewes  
to homestead empty of the shepherd,  
and gods and goddesses protecting fields provided  
words of kindness on the altars:

'Such guests who come to hunt the hare along my paths,  
or seek for any bird, or bring  
the rod or hound, can always summon me from crags  
as Pan to be your true companion.'

But now the shrines are empty, groves deserted: gold  
is worshipped, piety dismissed.

Gold has banished faith and buys all judgements: gold's  
now law, and conscience follows suit.

Charred gate shows Brennus sinful. He attacked the Pythian  
kingdom of the unshorn god,  
but Mount Parnassus shook its laurelled peak and snowed  
destruction on the Gallic host.

For gold vile Polymestor took in Polydorus,  
proving an impious host.

For golden Eriphyla's bracelets, Amphiaraus  
sank with horse into the earth.

I shall declare (may country know its truthful seer)  
proud Rome's destroyed by its own wealth.

certa loquor, sed nulla fides; neque vilia quondam  
verax Pergameis maenas habenda mali:  
sola Parim Phrygiae fatum componere, sola  
fallacem Troiae serpere dixit equum.  
ille furor patriae fuit utilis, ille parenti:  
expertast veros irrita lingua deos.

My words are not believed: no more Cassandra's, though  
she spoke of ill for Pergamum.

Alone she warned that Phrygia's ruin was Paris; drawn  
false horse was treacherous to Troy:

a needful frenzy for her land and father, showing,  
vain though tongues be, gods speak true.

Notes

## XIV

Multa tuae, Sparte, miramur iura palaestrae,  
sed mage virginei tot bona gymnasii,  
quod non infamis exercet corpore ludos  
inter luctantis nuda puella viros,  
cum pila velocis fallit per bracchia iactus, 5  
increpat et versi clavis adunca trochi,  
pulverulentaque ad extremas stat femina metas,  
et patitur duro vulnera pancratis:  
nunc ligat ad caestum gaudentia bracchia loris,  
missile nunc disci pondus in orbe rotat, 10  
et modo Taygeti, crinis aspersa pruina, 15  
sectatur patrios per iuga longa canes: 16  
gyrum pulsat equis, niveum latus ense revincit,  
virgineumque cavo protegit aere caput,  
qualis Amazonidum nudatis bellica mammis  
Thermodontiacis turba lavatur aquis;  
qualis et Eurotae Pollux et Castor harenis, 17  
hic victor pugnis, ille futurus equis,  
inter quos Helene nudis capere arma papillis  
fertur nec fratres erubuisse deos. 20  
lex igitur Spartana vetat secedere amantes,  
et licet in triviis ad latus esse suae,  
nec timor aut ullast clausae tutela puellae,  
nec gravis austeri poena cavenda viri.  
nullo praemisso de rebus tute loquaris 25  
ipse tuis: longae nulla repulsa morae.  
nec Tyriae vestes errantia lumina fallunt,  
est neque odoratae cura molesta comae.  
at nostra ingenti vadit circumdata turba,  
nec digitum angustast inseruisse via; 30  
nec quae sit facilis nec quae sit acerba roganti  
invenias: caecum versat amator iter.  
quod si iura fores pugnasque imitata Laconum,  
carior hoc esses tu mihi, Roma, bono.

## 14. Admiration for Sparta

We love the rules of your athletics, Sparta, see  
your wisdom training virgin girls.

No ill-repute derives from contact games: a girl  
there naked with the wrestling men  
makes ball curve swiftly hand to hand, and has  
a bent stick strike the rolling hoop.

She stands, a dusty woman at the final lap,  
and bruised in the pancratium.

She binds her gloves to arms that welcome thongs, and swings  
around the whirling discus weight.

With hoarfrost-sprinkled hair on Tāygetus she takes  
the ridges with her father's hounds.

She races horse, puts sword to snowy hip, has helmet  
guard her maiden's head with bronze.

She is as Amazons, fierce breasts undone  
to bathe in swift Thermōdon streams,  
or those famed twins upon Eurōtas banks: with fists  
would Pollux win, with horse would Castor —  
there would topless Helen brandish arms, nor blush  
before her godlike brothers' gaze.

The Spartan ways require no lover keep a silence,  
nor prohibit crossroad tryst.

No guard is needed on a girl indoors, nor harsh  
the vengeance from a husband crossed.

Nor need you send her messengers but speak your mind:  
rebuff involving no delay.

No Tyrian cloths confuse the eyes, nor are you foiled  
by barricades of scented hair.

But ours when promenading walk in crowds  
so close a finger cannot reach,  
nor can you tell which girls are willing, which deceive:  
in dark the lover gropes his way.

So Rome: if you had copied Sparta laws and bouts  
I'd be more pleased with you, and blessed.

## XV

Sic ego non ullos iam norim in amore tumultus  
nec veniat sine te nox vigilanda mihi,  
ut mihi praetexti pudor est relevatus amictus  
et data libertas noscere amoris iter,  
illa rudis animos per noctes conscia primas 5  
imbuit, heu nullis capta Lycinna datis!

tertius (haud multo minus est) cum ducitur annus,  
vix memini nobis verba coisse decem.  
cuncta tuus sepelivit amor, nec femina post te  
ulla dedit collo dulcia vincla meo. 10

testis erit Dirce tam vano crimine saeva,  
Nycteos Antiopen accubuisse Lyco.  
ah quotiens pulchros vulsit regina capillos,  
molliaque immitis fixit in ora manus!  
ah quotiens famulam pensis oneravit iniquis, 15  
et caput in dura ponere iussit humo!  
saepe illam immundis passast habitare tenebris,  
vilem ieiunae saepe negavit aquam.

Iuppiter, Antiopae nusquam succurris habenti  
tot mala? corrumpit dura catena manus. 20  
si deus es, tibi turpe tuam servire puellam:  
invocet Antiope quem nisi vincta Iovem?  
sola tamen, quaecumque aderant in corpore vires,  
regalis manicas rupit utraque manu.  
inde Cithaeronis timido pede currit in arces. 25  
nox erat, et sparso triste cubile gelu.

## 15. Story of Dirce

In truth, I do not seek out lovers' battles, wish  
to lie awake there, lacking you.  
When curb of boyhood's garb was lifted from me, I  
was free to learn the ways of love,  
and she who led my heart on those first nights, Lycinna,  
was not gained by any gift.

Three years, or scarcely less, have passed, and I remember  
not ten words of what we said.  
Your love was buried everything, no woman since  
has hung sweet chains about my neck.

Witness Dirce, savage at the untrue charge  
that Lycus won Antiope.  
How often did the queen yank out her hair, or scratch  
that tender face with angry nails,  
or load her servant down with unjust tasks, and make  
her lay her head on stony ground,  
how often have her live in foulest dark, as much  
deny her thirst the merest drop.

Why could not Jove have sought to aid Antiope  
when hard the chains that bind her arm?  
How wrong for god to leave his girl a slave: to whom  
but Jove could then this poor girl turn?  
Unaided, summoning her strength, she burst the fetters  
the queen had fastened on her hands;  
with fearful steps she scaled the heights of Cithaeron:  
how dark it was, her couch had frost.

saepe vago Asopi sonitu permota fluentis  
credebat dominae pone venire pedes.  
et durum Zethum et lacrimis Amphiona mollem  
expertast stabulis mater abacta suis. 30  
ac veluti, magnos cum ponunt aequora motus,  
Eurus et adversus desinit ire Noto,  
litore sollicito sonitus rarescit harenae,  
sic cadit inflexo lapsa puella genu.

sera, tamen pietas: natis est cognitus error. 35  
digne Iovis natos qui tueare senex,  
tu reddis pueris matrem; puerique trahendam  
vinxerunt Dircen sub trucis ora bovis.  
Antiope, cognosce Iovem: tibi gloria Dirce  
ducitur in multis mortem habitura locis. 40  
prata cruentantur Zethi, victorque canebat  
paeana Amphion rupe, Aracynthe, tua.

at tu non meritam parcas vexare Lycinnam:  
nescit vestra ruens ira referre pedem.  
fabula nulla tuas de nobis concitet aures; 45  
te solam et lignis funeris ustus amem.

Much scared by Asopus's sounding stream, she thought  
her mistress followed hard behind.

The mother, driven out from home, found Zethus harsh  
but at her tears Amphion soft,  
and just as seas abate their mighty conflicts, East Wind  
no more battling with the South,  
and howling of the sand subsides, so this poor woman  
sank on bended knees and fell.

Though late in filial dues, the sons knew fault. Old man,  
fit guardian for the sons of Jove,  
you give the mother to her boys, who then bind Dirce,  
drag her under some fierce bull.

Antiope: you see the hand of Jove, and Dirce  
meets her death in many spots.

The Zethus fields are drenched in blood; Amphion sings  
success on Aracynthus crags.

So cease from harassing Lycinna: women need  
to put their temper in retreat.

No gossip meets your ears, and at my final flame  
it's you alone that I shall love.

Notes

## XVI

Nox media, et dominae mihi venit epistula nostrae:

Tibure me missa iussit adesse mora,  
candida qua geminas ostendunt culmina turre,  
et cadit in patulos nympha Aniena lacus.  
quid faciam? obductis committam mene tenebris 5  
ut timeam audacis in mea membra manus?  
at si distulero haec nostro mandata timore,  
nocturno fletus saevior hoste mihi.  
peccaram semel, et totum sum pulsus in annum:  
in me mansuetas non habet illa manus. 10

nec tamen est quisquam, sacros qui laedat amantes:

Scironis medias his licet ire vias.  
quisquis amator erit, Scythicis licet ambulet oris,  
nemo adeo ut feriat barbarus esse volet.  
sanguine tam parvo quis enim spargatur amantis 19  
improbus, et cuius sit comes ipsa Venus? 20  
luna ministrat iter, demonstrant astra salebras, 15  
ipse Amor accensas praecutit ante faces,  
saeva canum rabies morsus avertit hiantis:  
huic generi quovis tempore tuta viast.

quod si certa meos sequerentur funera cursus, 21  
tali mors pretio vel sit emenda mihi.

afferet haec unguenta mihi sertisque sepulcrum  
ornabit custos ad mea busta sedens.

di faciant, mea ne terra locet ossa frequenti 25  
qua facit assiduo tramite vulgus iter!

post mortem tumuli sic infamantur amantum.

me tegat arborea devia terra coma,  
aut humer ignotae cumulis vallatus harenae:  
non iuvat in media nomen habere via. 30

## 16. Midnight Summons

Midnight brings a letter from my mistress: meet me  
by the Tibur's banks at once  
where waterfalls turn twin hills white, the Anio  
descending into spreading pools.  
What shall I do? Submit myself to ruffian hands  
that may in darkness hurt my person?  
But if I disobey through fear, her tantrums wound  
me worse than some nocturnal foe.  
I erred the once, and was rejected one whole year:  
to me her hands are never kind.

And who would harass sacred lovers? They can take  
the central path down Sciron's road.  
Whatever lover walks the Scythian shores, there's none  
so barbarous as bring him harm.  
What rogue would shed the drop of blood a lover has,  
accompanied by Venus too?  
Moon lights the way, the constellations show up ruts,  
and Love in front waves flaming brands.  
The savage watchdog turns aside his gaping jaws:  
such personages travel safe.

But if the journey brought a funeral, a death  
like that is surely worth the price.  
She'd bring me unguents, would deck my grave with flowers,  
and at my tomb be guardian.  
But God forbid she put my bones some busy place,  
some thoroughfare where all men pass,  
for so are lovers desecrated after death.  
Some secluded place with trees  
is preferable, or nameless heap of sand, and not  
mid-highways that can never please.

## XVII

Nunc, o Bacche, tuis humiles advolvimur aris:  
da mihi pacato vela secunda, pater.  
tu potes insanae Veneris compescere flatus,  
curarumque tuo fit medicina mero.  
per te iunguntur, per te solvuntur amantes: 5  
tu vitium ex animo dilue, Bacche, meo.

te quoque enim non esse rudem testatur in astris  
lyncibus ad caelum vecta Ariadna tuis.  
hoc mihi, quod veteres custodit in ossibus ignes,  
funera sanabunt aut tua vina malum. 10  
semper enim vacuos nox sobria torquet amantes;  
spesque timorque animos versat utroque modo.

quod si, Bacche, tuis per fervida tempora donis  
accersitus erit somnus in ossa mea,  
ipse seram vites pangamque ex ordine colles, 15  
quos carpant nullae me vigilante ferae.  
dum modo purpureo spument mihi dolia musto,  
et nova pressantis inquinet uva pedes,  
quod superest vitae per te et tua cornua vivam,  
virtutisque tuae, Bacche, poeta ferar. 20

dicam ego maternos Aetnaeo fulmine partus,  
Indica Nysaeis arma fugata choris,  
vesanumque nova nequiquam in vite Lycurgum,  
Pentheos in triplicis funera rapta greges,  
curvaque Tyrrhenos delphinum corpora nautas 25  
in vada pampinea desiluisse rate,  
et tibi per mediam bene olentia flumina Diam,  
unde tuum potant Naxia turba merum.

candida laxatis onerato colla corymbis  
cinget Bassaricas Lydia mitra comas, 30

## 17. Homage to Bacchus

As humbly bent before your shrine, now, father Bacchus,  
give me peace and prospering sails.

For you can quell the raging passions; in your draught  
a lover's grievings find their balm.

Through you will lovers meet and lovers part: wash out  
the mischief, Bacchus, from my mind.

You know all this, had Ariadne up to heaven  
carried on your lynx-drawn way.

This sin that's burned for long within my bones is cured  
by death alone or with your wine.

An empty night forever tortures sober lovers,  
hope and dread pull either way.

But Bacchus: if you'll bring good slumber to my bones  
through temples glowing with your gifts,  
then I will pattern hills with rows of vines, keep watch  
that no wild beast shall injure them.

But let my vats be filled with purple must, the feet  
be stained by treading yet more fruit.

I'll spend what life is left me honouring horns and you:  
the poet, Bacchus, of your powers.

I'll tell how mother bore you after Etna's lightning,  
Indians felled by Nysa dancers.

Lycurgus raving over vine, how Pentheus' corpse  
was three ways torn by Maenad bands,

how Tuscan sailors bent to dolphin's bodies, fleeing  
vine-clad ship to reach the waves,

how from your streams, sweet smelling through the land of Dia,  
Naxos people take their wine.

Your neck that's white I'll dress with trailing ivy clusters,  
Lydian-turban crown your hair:

levis odorato cervix manabit olivo,  
et feries nudos veste fluente pedes.  
mollia Dircaeae pulsabunt tympana Thebae,  
capripedes calamo Panes hiante canent,  
vertice turrigero iuxta dea magna Cybebe 35  
tundet ad Idaeos cymbala rauca choros.

ante fores templi, cratera antistes et auro  
libatum fundens in tua sacra merum,  
haec ego non humili referam memoranda coturno,  
qualis Pindarico spiritus ore tonat: 40  
tu modo servitio vacuum me siste superbo,  
atque hoc sollicitum vince sopore caput.

your throat will stream with perfumed oil, Bassareus,  
bare feet will part the flowing robe.

Dirce's Thebes will shake the pulsing tambourine  
and goat-foot Pans shrill out their pipes,  
and Cŷbele the great, much turreted, will clash  
her cymbals in Idaean dance.

Before the temple doors I'll stand as priest and pour  
libations from a golden cup.

I'll hymn the themes, not shyly but with buskin strain,  
in voice that Pindar thundered out,  
if you but free me from a proud enslavement, pour  
your slumber on my troubled head.

Notes

## XVIII

Clausus ab umbroso qua tundit pontus Averno

fumida Baiarum stagna tepentis aquae,  
qua iacet et Troiae tubicen Misenus harena,  
et sonat Herculeo structa labore via;

hic ubi, mortalis dexter cum quaereret urbes, 5  
cymbala Thebano concrepuere deo —

at nunc invisae magno cum crimine Baiae,  
quis deus in vestra constitit hostis aqua? —

Marcellus Stygias vultum demisit in undas,  
errat et inferno spiritus ille lacu. 10

quid genus aut virtus aut optima profuit illi  
mater, et amplexum Caesaris esse focos?

aut modo tam pleno fluitantia vela theatro,  
et per maternas omnia gesta manus?

occidit, et misero steterat vicesimus annus: 15  
tot bona tam parvo clausit in orbe dies.

i nunc, tolle animos et tecum finge triumphos,  
stantiaque in plausum tota theatra iuvent;

Attalicas supera vestes, atque ostra smaragdis  
gemmea sint Indis: ignibus ista dabis. 20

sed tamen huc omnes, huc primus et ultimus ordo:  
est mala, sed cunctis ista terenda viast.

exoranda canis tria sunt latrantia colla,  
scandendast torvi publica cumba senis.

nec forma aeternum aut cuiquamst fortuna perennis: 2.28.56  
longius aut propius mors sua quemque manet. 2.28.58

ille licet ferro cautus se condat et aere, 25  
mors tamen inclusum protrahit inde caput.

Nirea non facies, non vis exemit Achillem,  
Croesum aut, Pactoli quas parit umor, opes.

at tibi nauta, pias hominum quo traicit umbras, 31  
huc animae portet corpus inane tuae:

qua Siculae victor telluris Claudius et qua  
Caesar, ab humana cessit in astra via.

## 18. Elegy for Marcellus

Where sea locked out of shadowy Avernus beats  
on steaming pools of Baiae,  
and sand inters the Trojan trumpeter Misenus,  
Hercules's causeway roars,  
the cymbals clashed to greet the god of Thebes, who toured  
propitiously our mortal towns:  
now hated, Baiae, for your dreadful crime, what hostile  
deity has stemmed your flow?  
Marcellus drops his gaze to see the Styx, and round  
the dreaded lake his spirit flits.

What help his birth or excellence or noble mother,  
union with Caesar's hearth,  
the awnings of the theatre lately thronged, and all  
the aid a mother's hand can give?  
He died. The twentieth year stopped still for that poor boy:  
such good compressed in that short span.  
Indulge your spirits, dream of triumphs, see the theatres  
rising to their feet to cheer,  
wear cloths of Attalus thick sewn with Indian gems:  
all these you'll give up to the flames.

For here at last comes everyone, both high and low,  
an evil path that all must tread,  
assuage the three heads of the barking god, and with  
the grim old man be common freight.  
For none will beauty last, or fortune hold, and death  
that's soon or late is end for all,  
and though the cautious wall himself in steel or bronze,  
yet death regardless drags him out.  
No help Nireus looks, Achilles might, nor Croesus wealth  
the waters of Pactōlus bear.

But let the ferryman who carries righteous shades  
transport the body, not the soul:  
in Claudius conquering Sicily, in Caesar's might,  
soul leaves men's pathways for the stars.

## XIX

Obicitur totiens a te mihi nostra libido:

crede mihi, vobis imperat ista magis.

vos, ubi contempti rupistis frena pudoris,

nescitis captae mentis habere modum.

flamma per incensas citius sedetur aristas, 5

fluminaque ad fontis sint reditura caput,

et placidum Syrtes portum et bona litora nautis

praebeat hospitio saeva Malea suo,

quam possit vestros quisquam reprehendere cursus

et rabidae stimulos frangere nequitiae. 10

testis, Cretaei fastus quae passa iuveni

induit abiegnae cornua falsa bovis;

testis Thessalico flagrans Salmonis Enipeo,

quae voluit liquido tota subire deo.

crimen et illa fuit, patria succensa senecta 15

arboris in frondes condita Myrrha novae.

nam quid Medae referam, quo tempore matris

iram natorum caede piavit amor?

quidve Clytaemestrae, propter quam tota Mycenis

infamis stupro stat Pelopea domus? 20

tuque, o, Minoa venumdata, Scylla, figura

tondes purpurea regna paterna coma.

hanc igitur dotem virgo desponderat hosti!

Nise, tuas portas fraude reclusit amor.

at vos, innuptae, felicius urite taedas: 25

pendet Cretaea tracta puella rate.

non tamen immerito Minos sedet arbiter Orci:

victor erat quamvis, aequus in hoste fuit.

## 19. Women's Lust

Though much you task me with men's wantonness, in truth  
it's lust commands you women more,  
Once gone is decency and its restraints, you lose  
all means for mind to rein you back.

Far less than flames in cornfield fired be self-extinguished,  
streams run back to fountainhead,  
or Syrtes give safe anchorage, Malēa show  
the sailor welcome to its shores,  
can man restrict your zeal, or quell the rabid  
wantonness that drives you on.

Witness she who put on timber horns but drew  
indifference from the Cretan bull,  
Salmoneus' daughter sought Enipeus,  
but melted to the water god.  
Inflamed for father, Myrrha, that reproach on women,  
merged with leaves in new-made tree.

And need I add Mēdēa , where a mother's love  
to soften anger slew her own?  
Or Clytemnestra's sin, by which all Pelop's house  
stand guilty of adultery?  
Or Scylla, shearing off the lock from father's realms,  
you sold to Minos for his beauty?

Such, Nissus, was the dowry girl awarded foe:  
deceitful love unlocked the gate.  
But you, unwed, need happier torches: Cretan ship  
wave-hauls the girl across the sea.  
Deservedly does Minos judge the underworld:  
he won, but fairly treated foe.

Notes

## XX

Credis eum iam posse tuae meminisse figurae,  
vidisti a lecto quem dare vela tuo?  
durus, qui lucro potuit mutare puellam!  
tantine, ut lacrimas, Africa tota fuit?

at tu stulta adeo's? tu fingis inania verba: 5  
forsitan ille alio pectus amore terat.  
est tibi forma potens, sunt castae Palladis artes,  
splendidaque a docto fama refulget avo,  
fortunata domus, modo sit tibi fidus amicus.  
fidus ero: in nostros curre, puella, toros! 10

nox mihi prima venit! primae da tempora nocti! 13  
longius in primo, Luna, morare toro. 14  
tu quoque, qui aestivos spatiosius exigis ignes, 11  
Phoebe, moraturae contrahe lucis iter. 12

quam multae ante meis cedent sermonibus horae 19  
dulcia quam nobis concitet arma Venus! 20  
foedera sunt ponenda prius signandaque iura 15  
et scribenda mihi lex in amore novo.  
haec Amor ipse suo constringet pignora signo:  
testis sidereae torta corona deae.

namque ubi non certo vincitur foedere lectus, 21  
non habet ultores nox vigilanda deos,  
et quibus imposuit, solvit mox vincla libido:  
contineant nobis omina prima fidem.

ergo, qui tactis haec foedera ruperit aris, 25  
pollueritque novo sacra marita toro,  
illi sint quicumque solent in amore dolores,  
et caput argutae praebeat historiae,  
nec flenti dominae patefiant nocte fenestrae:  
semper amet, fructu semper amoris egens. 30

## 20. Love Contract

You think he still recalls your beauty, do you: one  
who sailed off from your very bed?

A callous man who gave up girl for gain: was worth  
all Africa the tears you wept?

How foolishly you placed your trust in empty vows:  
another love now warms his breast.

You have great beauty, skills of spotless Pallas, fame  
from grandsire's great renown:

how blessed your house is, had you only faithful lover:  
girl, I'm true, run to my bed!

First night of love arrives! Make long that night, and let  
the moonlight linger on our bed.

And you too, Phoebus, fierce with summer fires, cut short  
the leisured journey out of day.

How many sessions must we give to talking till  
sweet Venus calls us to her war?

But first come terms and oaths, and treaties signed  
contracting this new love of mine,

for Love will mark these pledges with his signet ring  
and wreath of stars shall witness them.

For if a union is not bound by settled terms  
no gods avenge for wakeful nights,  
mere lust will soon undo the personal bond: so make  
first omens vouch for lasting faith.

May he who touches altars but revokes those terms,  
and soils it with some other's bed,

experience all the sorrows customary to love  
and lie exposed to vengeful tales,

and, weeping, find his mistress' windows shut at night:  
compelled to love but lack its fruit.

Notes

## XXI

Magnum iter ad doctas proficisci cogor Athenas  
ut me longa gravi solvat amore via.  
crescit enim assidue spectando cura puellae:  
ipse alimenta sibi maxima praebet amor.  
omnia sunt temptata mihi, quacumque fugari 5  
posset: at ex omni me premit ipse deus.  
vix tamen aut semel admittit, cum saepe negarit:  
seu venit, extremo dormit amicta toro.

unum erit auxilium: mutatis Cynthia terris  
quantum oculis, animo tam procul ibit amor. 10  
nunc agite, o socii, propellite in aequora navem,  
remorumque pares ducite sorte vices,  
iungiteque extremo felicia lintea malo:  
iam liquidum nautis aura secundat iter.  
Romanae turres et vos valeatis, amici, 15  
qualiscumque mihi tuque, puella, vale!

ergo ego nunc rudis Hadriaci vehar aequoris hospes,  
cogar et undisonos nunc prece adire deos.  
deinde per Ionium vectus cum fessa Lechaeo  
sedarit placida vela phaselus aqua, 20  
quod superest, sufferre, pedes, properate laborem,  
Isthmos qua terris arcet utrumque mare.  
inde ubi Piraei capient me litora portus,  
scandam ego Theseae bracchia longa viae.  
illic vel stadiis animum emendare Platonis 25  
incipiam aut hortis, docte Epicure, tuis;  
persequar aut studium linguae, Demosthenis arma,  
libaboque tuos, culte Menandre, sales;  
aut certe tabulae capient mea lumina pictae,  
sive ebore exactae, seu magis aere, manus. 30

et spatia annorum et longa intervalla profundi  
lenibunt tacito vulnera nostra sinu:  
seu moriar, fato, non turpi fractus amore;  
atque erit illa mihi mortis honesta dies.

## 21. Only Remedy

So I must take this lengthy jaunt to learned Athens,  
free myself from love's long yoke.

Amor, in seeing her, but grows the more oppressive,  
starts to feed upon itself.

All ways I've tried to conquer him, but still he presses,  
sleeplessly the god persists.

She hardly sees me now, says no, or in her clothes  
will hug the far side of the bed.

My one recourse is changing countries, Cynthia then  
as far from mind as from our eyes.

Come now, my friends, propel our ship on through the waves,  
draw lots in pairs for turns at oar.

Hoist welcome sails on topmost mast; already winds  
speed sailors on their watery path.

To towers of Rome, and friends, and you my girl, however  
you may be, I say farewell!

I come, a raw guest on the Adriatic, meeting  
the gods of roaring waves with prayers,  
yet with the Ionian crossed, my ship can rest worn sails  
in placid seas of Lechaeum.

So hasten, feet, on hardships that remain, where Isthmus  
beats off sea from either side,

but when Piraeus' shores receive me I shall tread  
long arms of walls that Theseus built.

In Plato's porticos I'll start my mind's improvement,  
try your grounds, sage Epicurus.

I'll study languages that armed Demosthenes,  
and taste your wit, refined Menander,

at least some paintings will attract my eye, works framed  
in ivory, or, better, bronze.

Both time and that far-sundering sea will ease my wounds  
that fester silent in the breast,

and if I die, it will be fate, not ill-stared love,  
a day that's not dishonourable.

## XXII

Frigida tam multos placuit tibi Cyzicus annos,  
Tulle, Propontiaca qua fluit isthmus aqua,  
Dindymis et sacra fabricata in vite Cybebe,  
raptorisque tulit quae via Ditis equos?

si te forte iuvant Helles Athamantidos urbes, 5  
nec desiderio, Tulle, movere meo,  
si tibi olorigeri visendast ora Caystri, 15  
et quae serpentis temperat unda vias; 16  
tu licet aspicias caelum omne Atlanta gerentem,  
sectaque Persea Phorcidos ora manu,  
Geryonis stabula et luctantum in pulvere signa  
Herculis Antaeique, Hesperidumque choros; 10  
tuque tuo Colchum propellas remige Phasim,  
Peliacaeque trabis totum iter ipse legas,  
qua rudis Argoa natat inter saxa columba  
in faciem prorae pinus adacta novae:  
omnia Romanae cedent miracula terrae. 17  
natura hic posuit, quidquid ubique fuit.

armis apta magis tellus quam commoda noxae:  
Famam, Roma, tuae non pudet historiae. 20  
nam quantum ferro tantum pietate potentes  
stamus: victricis temperat ira manus.

hic, Anio Tiburne, fluis, Clitumnus ab Umbro  
tramite, et aeternum Marcius umor opus,  
Albanus lacus et foliis Nemorensis abundans, 25  
potaque Pollucis nympha salubris equo.

at non squamoso labuntur ventre cerastae,  
Itala portentis nec furit unda novis;  
non hic Andromedae resonant pro matre catenaee,  
nec tremis Ausonias, Phoebe fugate, dapes, 30

## 22. In Praise of Italy

Has cool Cyzicus called these many years, then, Tullus:  
isthmus on Propontis waters,  
where Cŷbele of Dindymon in vine-wood stands  
by road that Dis's plunderers took?

Perhaps the Athamantid Helle cities please  
without there being thought of me.  
You'll visit too the bank of Cayster, home of swans,  
where water has a winding course.  
You'll gaze at Atlas bearing up the whole of heaven,  
Gorgon's head that Perseus severed,  
Gēryon, dust of Hercules-Antaeus contests,  
places Hesperides danced,  
or take the oars on Colchian Phasis, mimic course  
the Pelion-timbered vessel took,  
when, after dove was sent ahead, the pine-hewn vessel  
found its passage through the rocks.  
Such wonders shall be Roman, and whatever's best  
will be as nature put it here.

It is a land more fit for war than crime, though Fame  
is not embarrassed for you, Rome.  
As much through piety as sword we find our strength,  
and victory sees our anger stayed.

Here's Anio, Clitumnus from the Umbrian upland,  
Marcian conduit built to last,  
the Alban Lake, and Nemi's, thick with leaves, the healing  
spring where horse of Pollux drank.

Here no horned asps slide on scaly bellies, nor  
Italian waters seethe with omens,  
no chains will rattle for a mother's crime, nor banquet  
make the sun-god turn away.

nec cuiquam absentes arserunt in caput ignes  
exitium nato matre movente suo;  
Pentheia non saevae venantur in arbore Bacchae,  
nec solvit Danaas subdita cerva rates;  
cornua nec valuit curvare in paelice Iuno 35  
aut faciem turpi dedecorare bove; . . .  
arboreasque cruces Sinis, et non hospita Grais  
saxa, et curtatas in fera fata trabes.

haec tibi, Tulle, parens, haec est pulcherrima sedes,  
hic tibi pro digna gente petendus honos, 40  
hic tibi ad eloquium cives, hic ampla nepotum  
spes et venturae coniugis aptus amor.

No far-off fires have burned for victim's death, as mother  
urges death on her own son,  
nor hunted wild Bacchantes Pentheus through tree,  
switched hind releasing Dānaë ships,  
nor Juno, planting curved horns on a rival's head,  
disgracing features with a cow's,  
no Sinis tree of execution, Greeks' harsh rocks,  
or shortened planks for cruel death.

Your motherland and home, where, Tullus, you should seek  
high office as reflects your birth,  
with citizens awaiting eloquence and children,  
proper love from wife to be.

Notes

## XXIII

Ergo tam doctae nobis periire tabellae,  
scripta quibus pariter tot periire bona!  
has quondam nostris manibus detriverat usus,  
qui non signatas iussit habere fidem.  
illae iam sine me norant placare puellas, 5  
et quaedam sine me verba diserta loqui.  
non illas fixum caras effecerat aurum:  
vulgari buxo sordida cera fuit.  
qualescumque mihi semper mansere fideles,  
semper et effectus promeruerunt bonos. 10

forsitan haec illis fuerunt mandata tabellis:  
'irascor, quoniam's, lente, moratus heri.  
an tibi nescio quae visast formosior? an tu  
non bona de nobis crimina ficta iacis?'  
aut dixit: 'venies hodie, cessabimus una: 15  
hospitium tota nocte parabit Amor,'  
et quaecumque volens reperit non stulta puella  
garrula, cum blandis dicitur hora dolis.  
me miserum, his aliquis rationem scribit avarus  
et ponit duras inter ephemeridas! 20

quas si quis mihi rettulerit, donabitur auro:  
quis pro divitiis ligna retenta velit?  
i puer, et citus haec aliqua propone columna,  
et dominum Esquiliis scribe habitare tuum.

## 23. Lost Tablets

They're gone, our expert writing tablets: with them too  
much splendid writing has been lost.

Long usage at my hands had worn them down, but told them  
though unsealed to stand as mine.

By now they'd learned to calm the girls when I was gone,  
and how to polish sentences.

It was not golden clasps that made them precious: they  
were dirty wax in common wood,  
but still they served me faithfully, and ever gave  
deservedly the best effects.

Perhaps these words appeared, 'You failed me yesterday.  
I'm angry you have stayed away.

Some prettier creature, is it, who has caught your eye  
and now you're slandering my name?'

Perhaps she wrote, 'Please come today, spend time, and Love  
will give you lodging one whole night.'

And all the witty things a girl will find to talk of  
when the gentle hour is come.

I fear some miser fills them with accounts, and files  
them with his other soulless ledgers.

There's gold for anyone who'll give them back, for who  
would opt for wood in place of wealth?

Go, boy, and post this on some pillar; add your master  
lives upon the Esquiline.

Notes

## XXIV-XXV

Falsast ista tuae, mulier, fiducia formae,  
olim oculis nimium facta superba tuis.  
noster amor talis tribuit tibi, Cynthia, laudes:  
versibus insignem te pudet esse meis.  
mixtam te varia laudavi saepe figura, 5  
ut, quod non esses, esse putaret amor;  
et color est totiens roseo collatus Eoo,  
cum tibi quaesitus candor in ore foret:

quod mihi non patrii poterant avertere amici,  
eludere aut vasto Thessala saga mari, 10  
hoc ego non ferro, non igne coactus, at ipsa  
naufragus Aegaea (vera fatebor) aqua.  
correptus saevo Veneris torrebar aëno;  
vinctus eram versas in mea terga manus.  
ecce coronatae portum tetigere carinae, 15  
traiectae Syrtes, ancora iacta mihist.

nunc demum vasto fessi resipiscimus aestu,  
vulneraque ad sanum nunc coiere mea.  
Mens Bona, si qua dea's, tua me in sacraria dono!  
exciderunt surdo tot mea vota Iovi. 20  
risus eram positus inter convivia mensis, 25.1  
et de me poterat quilibet esse loquax.  
quinque tibi potui servire fideliter annos:  
ungue meam morso saepe querere fidem.  
nil moveor lacrimis: ista sum captus ab arte; 5  
semper ab insidiis, Cynthia, flere soles.  
flebo ego discedens, sed fletum iniuria vincit:  
tu bene conveniens non sinis ire iugum.  
limina iam nostris valeant lacrimantia verbis,  
nec tamen irata ianua fracta manu. 10

## 24-25. Farewell to Cynthia

Woman: looks have brought you too much confidence,  
of splendid eyes you're over-proud.

Our love has made you so renowned, that I'm ashamed  
to think my verse built up your name.

In truth my words were made of others' charms, and you  
are other than what love supposed.

I've often weighed your features with the rosy dawn,  
when white was what your face would show.

What friends and kin could not avert, nor Thessalian  
witchcraft oceans wash away,

I brought upon myself, in truth, and not in fire or sword,  
but shipwrecked in Aegean passion.

So Venus caught and held me in her roasting cauldron,  
hands tight fastened at my back,

but now my ship is garlanded and come to port,  
the sandbanks passed, and anchor dropped.

Of that wild surge I've wearied, gained my sanity:  
my wounds at last are closed and healed.

Good Sense, if you're a goddess, you I worship. Many  
vows were left by Jove unheard.

I used to be the laughing stock when food was laid  
and anyone could talk of me.

But five years' faithful service having passed, you'll bite  
your nails and miss my constancy.

Your tears won't work, those strategems that, Cynthia,  
you vilely used to get your way.

In grief I go, but injury outlasts the tears,  
and you have wrecked this well-yoked pair.

Farewell the threshold of my grievances, that door  
my fists, though vexed, did not break down.

at te celatis aetas gravis urgeat annis,  
et veniat formae ruga sinistra tuae!  
vellere tum cupias albos a stirpe capillos,  
iam speculo rugas increpitante tibi,  
exclusa inque vicem fastus patiare superbos,  
et quae fecisti facta queraris anus!  
has tibi fatalis cecinit mea pagina diras:  
eventum formae disce timere tuae!

May age oppress you with dissembled years, and ugly  
wrinkles come to blight your looks,  
that you will wish to tear out white hair by the roots  
as though the mirror chided you.  
Scorned, rejected, now a crone complain that as  
you acted on is done to you.  
Such are the fatal curses that my page foresees:  
so learn to dread how beauty ends.

Notes

# LIBER QUARTUS

IA

Hoc, quodcumque vides, hospes, qua maxima Romast,  
ante Phrygem Aenean collis et herba fuit;  
atque ubi Navali stant sacra Palatia Phoebos,  
Euandri profugae concubuerunt boves.  
fictilibus crevere deis haec aurea templa, 5  
nec fuit opprobrium facta sine arte casa;  
Tarpeiusque Pater nuda de rupe tonabat,  
et Tiberis nostris advena bubus erat.  
qua gradibus domus ista Remi se sustulit olim  
unus erat fratrum maxima regna focus. 10  
Curia, praetexto quae nunc nitet alta senatu,  
pellitos habuit, rustica corda, Patres.  
bucina cogebat priscos ad verba Quirites:  
centum illi in prati saepe senatus erat.  
nec sinuosa cavo pendebant vela theatro, 15  
pulpita sollemnis non oluere crocos.  
nulli cura fuit externos quaerere divos,  
cum tremere patrio pendula turba sacro,  
annuaque accenso celebrante Parilia faeno,  
qualia nunc curto lustra novantur equo. 20  
Vesta coronatis pauper gaudebat asellis,  
ducebant macrae vilia sacra boues.  
parva saginati lustrabant compita porci,  
pastor et ad calamos exta litabat ovis.  
verbera pellitus saetosa movebat arator, 25  
unde licens Fabius sacra Lupercus habet.  
nec rudis infestis miles radiabat in armis:  
miscabant usta proelia nuda sude.

# BOOK FOUR

## 1.a. Early Rome

Stranger, what you see as mighty Rome was grass  
and hill before Aenēās came.

Where Naval Phoebus sanctifies the Palatine,  
Evander's cattle lay at rest.

To gods of earthenware were first these golden temples,  
simple huts no cause for shame.

Tarpeian Jupiter resounded from bare rock,  
unknown our cattle to the Tiber.

At Remus's, the house that soars with flights of steps,  
one hearth was all the brother had.

The lofty Curia adorned with Senate robes  
housed rustic fathers dressed in skins.

A horn would summon those old citizens to talk,  
a hundred in a field made senate.

No cavernous theatre yawned with billowing drapes, nor came  
there ritual saffron from the stage.

No one concerned himself with foreign gods when all  
might tremble at their father's rites.

Yearly was the burning straw of Pales we  
now bless with docking of a horse.

Poor Vesta had but flower-hung mules, and scrawny cattle  
led the way to sacrifice.

To humble crossroad shrines came fatted pigs, and reeds  
made pipes as herdsmen offered sheep.

The skin-clad ploughman waved his hirsute lash, whence rose  
the rite of Fabian Lupercus.

Nor did rough soldiers fight in gleaming arms, but had  
no armour, fought with fire-sharp sticks.

prima galeritus posuit praetoria Lycmon,  
 magnaue pars Tatio rerum erat inter oves. 30  
 hinc Titius Ramnesque viri Luceresque Soloni,  
 quattuor hinc albos Romulus egit equos.  
 quippe suburbanae parva minus urbe Bouillae  
 tunc ibi Fidenas longa erat isse via.  
 et stetit Alba potens, albae suis omine nata, 35  
 et, qui nunc nulli, maxima turba Gabi.  
 nil patrium nisi nomen habet Romanus alumnus:  
 sanguinis altricem non pudet esse lupam.

huc melius profugos misisti, Troia, Penates;  
 heu quali vectast Dardana puppis ave, 40  
 arma resurgentis portans victricia Troiae! 47  
 felix terra tuos cepit, Iule, deos, 48  
 iam bene spondebant tunc omina, quod nihil illos  
 laeserat abiegni venter apertus equi,  
 cum pater in nati trepidus cervice pependit,  
 et veritast umeros urere flamma pios.  
 hinc animi venere Deci Brutique secures, 45  
 vexit et ipsa sui Caesaris arma Venus,  
 si modo Avernalis tremulae cortina Sibyllae 49  
 dixit Aventino rura pianda Remo, 50  
 aut si Pergameae sero rata carmina vatis  
 longaeuum ad Priami vera fuere caput:  
 'dicam: Troia, cades et Troica Roma resurges! 87  
 et maris et terrae regna superba cano. 88  
 vertite equum, Danai! male vincitis! Ilia tellus  
 vivet, et huic cineri Iuppiter arma dabit.'

The skin-capped Lycmon first set up the captain's tent,  
the wealth of Tattius being sheep.

From such came Titius, Ramnes, Solonium Luceres,  
Romulus of four white horse.

For sure Bovillae was a smaller suburb, and  
Fidenae stood a long way off.

Large was shrunken Alba, born of white sow's omen;  
Gabii held multitudes.

From such beginnings Romans draw but name, nor think  
how she-wolf nurtured their first brood.

To greater fortune, Troy, you sent your vanquished gods:  
and with such auguries the Dardan  
ship conveyed to victory the reborn Trojan arms  
to lands blest, Iulus, with your gods.

From first the omens boded well. The Wooden Horse's  
opened belly did no harm  
to trembling father carried on his own son's neck:  
the flames held back from burning them.

Then came the noble Decius, and Brutus' axes,  
Venus bearing Caesar's arms.

And so the Sibyl's tripod purified the fields  
with blood of Remus Aventine,  
and words of Trojan prophetess, though late fulfilled,  
were truly said to aged Priam:

'Troy will fall but rise again as Trojan Rome:  
on land and sea a glorious reign.

Reign back, you Greeks, from futile triumph: Ilium lives,  
and to these ashes Jove gives arms.'

optima nutricum nostris, lupa Martia, rebus, 55  
    qualia creverunt moenia lacte tuo!  
moenia namque pio coner disponere versu:  
    ei mihi, quod nostrost parvus in ore sonus!  
sed tamen exiguo quodcumque e pectore rivi  
    fluxerit, hoc patriae serviet omne meae. 60  
Ennius hirsuta cingat sua dicta corona:  
    mi folia ex hedera porrige, Bacche, tua,  
ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Umbria libris,  
    Umbria Romani patria Callimachi!  
scandentis quisquis cernit de vallibus arces, 65  
    ingenio muros aestimet ille meo!  
Roma, fave, tibi surgit opus: date candida, cives,  
    omina, et inceptis dextera cantet avis!  
sacra diosque canam et cognomina prisca locorum:  
    has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus. 70

She-wolf of Mars, that nursed our early fortunes best,  
what walls have risen from your milk!  
Those battlements in piety I'd put as verse,  
though voice be thin upon my lips.  
But still, whatever stream comes from this puny breast,  
I pour out for my country's sake.  
Let Ennius crown his words with rugged garlands: Bacchus,  
crown me with your ivy leaves,  
that Umbria swell with pride to have my books, a land  
that has a Roman Callimachus,  
and all who see the citadels that climb that valley  
sense my genius in its walls.  
Rome, smile on me: I work for you, and, citizens,  
give augury for right success.  
I'll sing of gods and names and ancient places: goals  
to which my foaming horse will press.

Notes

## IB

Quo ruis imprudens? fuge dicere fata, Properti! non sunt a dextro condita fila colo. accersis lacrimas: aversus cantat Apollo: poscis ab invita verba pigenda lyra.	
certa feram certis auctoribus, aut ego vates nescius aerata signa movere pila.	75
felicesque Iovis stellas Martisque rapaces et grave Saturni sidus in omne caput;	83 84
me creat Archytae suboles Babylonius Horops Horon, et a proavo ducta Conone domus. di mihi sunt testes non degenerasse propinquos, inque meis libris nil prius esse fide. nunc pretium fecere deos et fallimus auro (Iuppiter!) obliquae signa iterata rotae	
dixi ego, cum geminos produceret Arria natos (illa dabat natis arma vetante deo):	89 90
non posse ad patrios sua pila referre Penatis: nempe meam firmant nunc duo busta fidem. quippe Lupercus, equi dum saucia protegite ora, heu sibi prolapso non bene cavite equum;	
Gallus at in castris, dum credita signa tuetur, concidit ante aquilae rostra cruenta suae: fatales pueri, duo funera matris avarae! vera, sed invito, contigit ista fides.	95
idem ego, cum Cinarae traheret Lucina dolores, et facerent uteri pondera lenta moram,	100
'Iunonis facite votum impetrabile' dixi: illa parit: libris est data palma meis!	
quid moneant Pisces animosaque signa Leonis, lotus et Hesperia quid Capricornus aqua.	85 86

## 1b. The Poet's Horoscope

Why this rush to learn your fate, Propertius?  
Unfavourably your threads are spun.  
Your song brings grief; Apollo slights you; not so willing  
is the lyre to grant you words.

Sure things I tell with certainty, or am a seer  
who cannot work the sphere of bronze  
for kindly Jupiter, rapacious Mars, the star  
of Saturn burdensome to all.

Babylonian Horops of Archytas fathered  
me, called Horos: Conon's house.

All witnesses declare I have not shamed my kin,  
that truth is foremost in my books.

Today men profit from the gods and — Jupiter!  
— for gold pervert what stars disclose.

I said, when Arria sent her two sons off (and armed,  
against the counsel of a god)

they'd not return their weapons to ancestral hearth:  
in truth two graves made good my words.

For Lupercus in shielding horse's injured face  
then slipped and fell before the same.

and Gallus, minding standards in the camp, was cropped  
by that same eagle's bloodstained beak.

Both ill-starred youths a mother's greed brought down! How sound  
my prophecy, though not so wished.

So when Lucina lengthened out Cinara's pains,  
obstructing her delivery,

I said, but let her make a pact with Juno, when  
at once birth came. My books were right.

What power has Pisces, ardent Leo, Capricorn  
that bathes in Hesperidean waves —

hoc neque harenosum Libyae Iovis explicat antrum,  
aut sibi commissos fibra locuta deos,  
aut si quis motas cornicis senserit alas, 105  
umbrave quae magicis mortua prodit aquis:  
aspicienda viast caeli verusque per astra  
trames, et ab zonis quinque petenda fides.

exemplum grave erit Calchas: namque Aulide solvit  
ille bene haerentis ad pia saxa ratis; 110  
idem Agamemnoniae ferrum cervice puellae  
tinxit, et Atrides vela cruenta dedit;  
nec rediere tamen Danai: tu diruta fletum  
supprime et Euboicos respice, Troia, sinus!  
Nauplius ultores sub noctem porrigit ignis, 115  
et natat exuviis Graecia pressa suis.  
victor Oiliade, rape nunc et dilige vatem,  
quam vetat avelli veste Minerva sua!

hactenus historiae: nunc ad tua devehar astra;  
incipere tu lacrimis aequus adesse novis. 120  
Umbria te notis antiqua Penatibus edit —  
mentior? an patriae tangitur ora tuae?—  
qua nebulosa cavo rorat Mevania campo,  
et lacus aestivis intepet Umber aquis,  
scandentisque Asis consurgit vertice murus, 125  
murus ab ingenio notior ille tuo.

ossaque legisti non illa aetate legenda  
patris et in tenuis cogaris ipse lares:  
nam tua cum multi versarent rura iuveni,  
abstulit excultas pertica tristis opes. 130  
mox ubi bulla rudi dimissast aurea collo,  
matris et ante deos libera sumpta toga,  
tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo  
et vetat insano verba tonare foro.

withheld from desert oracle of Libyan Jove  
or entrails speaking as a god,  
or anyone indeed who'd watch the winged crow's flight,  
or shade produced by magic waters.  
Observe the paths of heaven, truth that stars enact,  
and in the five zones place your trust.

Look to Calchas who released the fleet from Aulis  
rightly clung to sheltering rocks:  
the blood of Agamemnon's daughter stained his knife,  
so too the sons of Atreus' sails,  
and yet the fleets did not come home. Troy, dry your tears,  
and think of those Euboean bays.  
Nauplius extends its vengeful beams at night,  
and Greece lies shipwrecked with its spoil.  
Victorious Ajax, seize and rape the prophetess  
Minerva shelters in her robe.

Enough of stories: now I venture on your stars:  
compose yourself to feel fresh tears.  
Old Umbria gave you an illustrious home — I lie,  
do I, or touch your native land?  
In mists on fields Mevania lays down its dew,  
as Umbrian lake its summer streams:  
a wall ascends the high Assisi peak, and one  
made yet more famous by your gifts.  
Here, early for your age, you gathered father's bones,  
withdrawing to a modest home.  
Where many bulls had worked your land, strict measuring rod  
came out to seize that well-tilled wealth.  
Gold bulla taken from your youthful neck, you wore  
the toga flanked by mother's gods,  
Apollo gives some little of his verse, and bans  
performance in the noisy forum.

at tu finge elegos, pellax opus: (haec tua castra!), 135  
scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo.  
militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis,  
et Veneris pueris utilis hostis eris.  
nam tibi victrices quascumque labore parasti,  
eludit palmas una puella tuas: 140  
illius arbitrio noctem lucemque videbis: 143  
gutta quoque ex oculis non nisi iussa cadet. 144

et bene cum fixum mento discusseris uncum,  
nil erit hoc: rostro te premet ansa tuo.  
nec mille excubiae nec te signata iuvabunt 145  
limina: persuasae fallere rima sat est.

nunc tua vel mediis puppis luctetur in undis,  
vel licet armatis hostis inermis eas,  
vel tremefacta cayum tellus diducat hiatum:  
octipedis Cancri terga sinistra time! 150

You'll form your elegies, seductively, for war,  
and show what others too can write.  
You'll go on flattering service in the cause of Venus,  
useful target for her boys.  
Yet, whatever victories your efforts win,  
the palm eludes you in one girl.  
You'll see the night and day as she dictates, nor will  
one teardrop fall but as she bids,  
  
and though you loose the hook lodged in your chin, yet more  
her prows will press and spike you fast.  
Nor can a thousand guards or sealed-up doors assist:  
the smallest chink lets in deceit.  
  
In future, should you struggle in mid-ocean, go  
unarmed against the fully armed,  
in shuddering earth and open cleft, take note of Cancer:  
fear its eight-legged other side!

Notes

Quid mirare meas tot in uno corpore formas,  
 accipe Vertumni signa fatente deo.  
 Tuscus ego et Tuscis orior, nec paenitet inter  
 proelis Volsinios deseruisse focos.  
 tempore quo sociis venit Lycomedius armis  
 quoque Sabina feri contudit arma Tati. 51  
 vidi ego labentis acies et tela caduca,  
 atque hostis turpi terga dedisse fugae.  
  
 et tu, Roma, meis tribuisti praemia Tuscis, 49  
 unde hodie Vicus nomina Tuscus habet, 50  
 sed facias, divûm Sator, ut Romana per aevum 55  
 transeat ante meos turba togata pedes. 56  
 haec me turba iuvat, nec templo laetor eburno: 5  
 Romanum satis est posse videre Forum.  
  
 hac quondam Tiberinus iter faciebat, et aiunt  
 remorum auditos per vada pulsa sonos:  
 at postquam ille suis spatium concessit alumnis,  
 Vertamnus verso dicor ab amne deus. 10  
 seu, quia vertentis fructum praecepimus anni,  
 Vertanni rursus creditur esse sacrum.  
 mendax fama, vaces: alius mihi nominis index: 19  
 de se narranti tu modo crede deo. 20  
  
 opportuna meast cunctis natura figuris:  
 in quamcumque voles verte, decorus ero.  
 indue me Cois, fiam non dura puella:  
 meque virum sumpta quis neget esse toga? 25  
 da falcem et torto frontem mihi comprime faeno:  
 iurabis nostra gramina secta manu.

## 2. Vertumnus

You who'd marvel at the shapes my body has should learn  
the features of the god Vertumnus.

A Tuscan born in Tuscany, yet still I quit  
Volsinii hearths when war arrived,  
that time the Etruscans came with allied arms to quell  
fierce Tattius's Sabine force.

I saw the faltering ranks, the weapons dropped, the foe  
that turned to flee in ignominy.

But you, Rome, gave a prize for that to Tuscan kin,  
and call a street the Tuscan Street,  
Grant, Sower of the Gods, that endlessly before  
my feet the toga'd ranks may pass.

I like this throng, and not the ivory temple: sight  
of Roman Forum is enough.

Here once the Tiber flowed: they say the plash of oars  
would echo as they struck the shallows.

That lake is for my offspring: having changed my course,  
I now am called the god Vertumnus

Again, with first fruits of the passing year received,  
the rites are then Vertumnus's.

Enough of rumour toying with my name; now hear  
the god who talks about himself.

My nature's open to all roles: whatever shape  
you'd turn me to, then so I am.

In Cōan clothed, I am a pleasing girl; in toga  
who'd deny I am a man.

With scythe, and forehead bound with wisp of straw, you'd swear  
my hand was used to cutting grass.

arma tuli quondam et, memini, laudabar in illis:  
 corbis et imposito pondere messor eram.  
 sobrius ad lites: at cum est imposta corona,  
 clamabis capiti vina subisse meo. 30  
 cinge caput mitra, speciem furabor Iacchi;  
 furabor Phoebi, si modo plectra dabis.  
 est etiam aurigae species cum verberare et eius 35  
 traicit alterno qui leve pondus equo. 36

cassibus impositis venor: sed harundine sumpta  
 fautor plumoso sum deus aucupio.  
 sup petaso piscis calamo praedabor, et ibo 37  
 mundus demissis institor in tunicis.  
 pastor me ad baculum possum curvare vel idem  
 sirpiculis medio pulvere ferre rosam. 40

nam quid ego adiciam, de quo mihi maxima famast,  
 hortorum in manibus dona probata meis?  
 prima mihi variat liventibus uva racemis, 13  
 et coma lactenti spicea fruge tumet;  
 hic dulcis cerasos, hic autumnalia pruna 15  
 cernis et aestivo mora rubere die;  
 insitor hic solvit pomosa vota corona,  
 cum pirus invito stipite mala tulit. 18

caeruleus cucumis tumidoque cucurbita ventre  
 me notat et iunco brassica vincta levi;  
 nec flos ullus hiat pratis, quin ille decenter 45  
 impositus fronti langueat ante meae.  
 at mihi, quod formas unus vertebar in omnis,  
 nomen ab eventu patria lingua dedit;

I once bore arms, and was, I know, well praised for that;  
and with a backpack served as reaper.

Soberly I dressed for court, but, wearing wreath,  
you'll think that wine's undone my head.

Bound with turban I must mimic Bacchus, given  
lyre I steal the sun-god's touch.

With whip in hand I ape the charioteer, the man  
who vaults so nimbly horse to horse.

With hunter's net I hunt, with twigs become the feathered  
patron of the fowler's god.

With fishing hat and rod I fish, in trailing clothes I saunter  
out as peddler, aptly dressed.

I bend myself, a shepherd, to the crook, can bear  
rush-wickered roses through the dust.

Need I add my greatest fame derives from hands  
that bear the choicest garden fruit?

For me the first grape darkens on the purple cluster,  
corn-ear swells with milky grain,

at feet fall cherries, autumn plums; through deepening summer  
mulberries are flushed with red.

My dues the grafter pays with fruit, reluctant  
pear stock having borne him apples.

The blue-green cucumber, pot-bellied gourd, the cabbage  
fastened with a slender rush,

they mark me out, and not a bloom in meadows flowers  
but nods its beauty to my brow.

And so, because alone I swell to every shape,  
this name my country's given me.

sex superant versus: te, qui ad vadimonia curris, 57  
non moror: haec spatiis ultima creta meis.

STIPES ACERNUS ERAM, PROPERANTI FALCE DOLATUS,

ANTE NUMAM GRATA PAUPER IN URBE DEUS. 60

AT TIBI, MAMURRI, FORMAE CAELATOR AËNAE,

TELLUS ARTIFICIS NE TERAT OSCA MANUS,

QUI ME TŌT DOCILEM POTUISTI FUNDERE IN USUS.

UNUM OPUS EST, OPERI NON DATUR UNUS HONOS.

My last six lines — I'll not detain one rushing by  
to answer bail — will end my course.

PRIOR TO NUMA WAS A ROUGH-HEWN MAPLE STUMP,

A POOR GOD WELCOME IN HIS CITY.

MAY OSCAN SOIL NOT HURT YOUR HANDS, MAMURRIUS,

IN FASHIONING MY SHAPE IN BRONZE.

YOU CAST ME IN SO MANY ROLES: A SINGLE WORK,

BUT MANY HONOURS GIVEN IT.

Notes

### III

Haec Arethusa suo mittit mandata Lycotae,  
cum totiens absis, si potes esse meus.  
si qua tamen tibi lecturo pars oblita derit,  
haec erit e lacrimis facta litura meis:  
aut si qua incerto fallet te littera tractu, 5  
signa meae dextrae iam morientis erunt.

te modo viderunt iteratos Bactra per arcus,  
te modo munito Persicus hostis equo,  
hibernique Getae, pictoque Britannia curru,  
tunsus et Eoa decolor Indus aqua. 10

haecne marita fides et pacta munera nuptae,  
cum rudis urgenti bracchia victa dedi?  
quae mihi deductae fax omen praetulit, illa  
traxit ab everso lumina nigra rogo;  
et Stygio sum sparsa lacu, nec recta capillis 15  
vitta datast: nupsi non comitante deo.

omnibus heu portis pendent mea noxia vota:  
textur haec castris quarta lacerna tuis.  
occidat, immerita qui carpsit ab arbore vallum  
et struxit querulas rauca per ossa tubas, 20  
dignior obliquo funem qui torqueat Ocno,  
aeternusque tuam pascat, aselle, famem!

dic mihi, num teneros urit lorica lacertos?  
num gravis imbellis atterit hasta manus?  
haec noceant potius, quam dentibus ulla puella 25  
det mihi plorandas per tua colla notas!  
diceris et macie vultum tenuasse: sed opto  
e desiderio sit color iste meo.

### 3. A Husband at the Wars

Arethusa's message to Lycotas: if,  
though much away you still are mine,  
and any part of this is smudged or missing, know  
this blot's occasioned by my tears,  
and if some letter's indecipherable, it will  
be death that hovers at this hand.

Among drawn bows has Bactria seen you, Persia's mail-clad  
enemy on armoured horse,  
the wintry Getans, Britain with its painted chariots,  
Indians burned by fiery dawns.

Is this a husband's loyalty, the bridal contract  
made on yielding to your arms?  
The torch that flared with omens on my wedding day  
derived its black light from my pyre.  
The Styx's water sprinkled me; my hair was not  
bound straight; there was no wedding god.

The gate-hung vows have only done me harm; it's now  
the fourth cloak made for your campaigns.  
Curse him who fashioned out a stake from blameless tree,  
or made a trumpet from hoarse bones:  
far more than Ocnus should he hang there from a rope,  
forever feed a donkey's hunger.

Tell me, does breastplate chafe your gentle shoulder, heavy  
spear make rough unwarlike hands?  
I trust these pain you more than love-bites on the neck  
some girl may give and I regret.  
They say you're thin of face for lack of food: I hope  
your paleness comes from missing me.



For me, when evening star brings bitter nights, I kiss  
whatever weapons you have left,  
and though the bed is mine alone, the slip's not straight  
and waking birds don't sing their songs.  
But Craugidus, my whimpering puppy, pleases me  
and claims the side of bed once yours.

On winter nights I labour on at martial duties,  
Tyrian wool-stuffs for your cloak,  
and learn where flows the would-be-won Araxes, range  
of Parthian horse without a drink,  
and from a map with painted countries find arrangements  
our creator has ordained,  
what lands are frozen, which have heat, what winds can bring  
your sails back safe to Italy.  
One sister's sat with me; and, worrying, my nurse  
says wrongly winter holds you back.

Blessed Hippolyta, bare-breasted, carried arms,  
and hid soft looks in savage helmet.  
I would that Roman camps admitted girls: I'd go  
as trusted chattel in your service.  
Nor would the Scythian heights delay me, Jupiter  
converting water deeps to ice.

All love is mighty; more with husband gone and Venus  
fanning fire there by herself.  
What use are rich Phoenician silks, or watery crystal  
rings that decorate my hands?  
All's silent here. Occasionally for Kalend rites  
a girl unlocks the household gods.  
I deck the shrines, heap vervain at the crossroads, burn  
the Sabine herbs in ancient hearths.  
If owl has hooted from a neighbour's rooftop, sputtering  
lamp require a touch of wine,

illa dies hornis caedem denuntiat agnis,  
succinctique calent ad nova lucra popae.

ne, precor, ascensis tanti sit gloria Bactris,  
raptave odorato carbasa lina duci,  
plumbea cum tortae sparguntur pondera fundae, 65  
subdolus et versis increpat arcus equis!

sed (tua sic domitis Parthae telluris alumnis  
pura triumphantis hasta sequatur equos)  
incorrupta mei conserva foedera lecti!

hac ego te sola lege redisse velim: 70  
armaque cum tulero portae votiva Capenae,  
subscribam: SALVO GRATA PUELLA VIRO.

that day pronounces death on this year's lambs, and priests'  
attendants look to fresh returns.

Be wise in scaling Bactrian walls, or stripping linen  
from some scented potentate,  
at leaden missiles from the whirling sling, when bow  
twangs after the departing horse,  
but most, as hero conquering Parthia's sons, your headless  
spear behind triumphal horse,  
maintain inviolate our marriage bed: the term  
I stipulate to have you back,  
when on your arms at the Capena Gate I'll write:

A GIRL GIVES THANKS HER SPOUSE IS SAFE.

Notes

## IV

Tarpeium nemus et Tarpeiae turpe sepulcrum labor et antiqui limina capta Iovis.	
quid tum Roma fuit, tubicen vicina Curetis	9
cum quateret lento murmure saxa Iovis?	10
muris erant montes: ubi nunc est curia saepta,	13
bellicus ex illo fonte bibebat equus.	14
atque ubi nunc terris dicuntur iura subactis,	11
stabant Romano pila Sabina Foro.	12
lucus erat felix hederoso conditus antro, multaque nativis obstreperet arbor aquis,	
Silvani ramosa domus, quo dulcis ab aestu	5
fistula poturas ire iubebat ovis.	
hunc Tatius contra vallo praecingit acerno, fidaque suggesta castra coronat humo.	
hinc Tarpeia deae laticem libavit: at illi	15
urgebat medium fictilis urna caput.	
vidit harenosis Tatium proludere campis	19
pictaque per flavas arma levare iugas:	20
obstipuit regis facie et regalibus armis, interque oblitas excidit urna manus.	
saepe illa immeritae causatast omina lunae, et sibi tingendas dixit in amne comas:	
saepe tulit blandis argentea lilia Nymphis,	25
Romula ne faciem laederet hasta Tati.	
dumque subit primo Capitolia nubila fumo, rettulit hirsutis bracchia secta rubis,	
et Tarpeia sua residens ita flevit ab arce vulnera, vicino non patienda Iovi:	30

#### 4. Tarpeia

Tarpeia's crime I tell, her shameful grave, and how  
Jove's ancient hearth came under threat.

What was Rome to speak of, when Jove's crags recoiled  
from murmur of the Cures trumpet?

Its walls were hills, and, where the hemmed-in Curia stands,  
a warhorse watered at a spring;

the spears of Sabines stocked the Roman Forum now  
dispensing laws for subject nations.

A verdant grove within a glen was thick with ivy,  
rustling trees and babbling stream:

Sylvanus' home it was, to which his well-tuned pipe  
invited sheep converge and drink.

Facing it, in maples, Tatius built a camp,  
erecting circling wall of earth.

There, drawing water for her goddess, went Tarpeia,  
heavy pot pressed on her head,  
saw Tatius in practice on a sandy stretch,  
his blazoned greaves and golden crest,  
and, stupefied by regal looks in regal arms,  
found hands went numb, and dropped the pot.

It was an aspect of the blameless moon, she said,  
requiring stream should wash her hair,  
give silver lilies to the nymphs, pray Romulus  
not harm the face of Tatius.

She climbed the Capitol in early evening haze,  
returned with arms rough bramble-scratched,  
and sat then in Tarpeia's grove, to make the plaints  
abhorrent to her neighbour Jove.

`ignes castrorum et Tatiae praetoria turmae  
et formosa oculis arma Sabina meis,  
o utinam ad vestros sedeam captiva Penates,  
dum captiva mei conspicer ora Tati!  
Romani montes, et montibus addita Roma, 35  
et valeat probro Vesta pudenda meo!  
ille equus, ille meos in castra reponet amores,  
cui Tatius dextras collocat ipse iubas!

`quid mirum in patrios Scyllam secuisse capillos,  
candidaque in saevos inguina versa canes? 40  
prodita quid mirum fraterni cornua monstri,  
cum patuit lecto stamine torta via?  
quantum ego sum Ausoniis crimen factura puellis,  
improba virgineo lecta ministra foco!  
Pallados exstinctos si quis mirabitur ignis, 45  
ignoscat: lacrimis spargitur ara meis.

`cras, ut rumor ait, tota pigrabitur urbe:  
tu cape spinosi rorida terga iugi.  
lubrica tota viast et perfida: quippe latentis  
fallaci celat limite caespes aquas. 50  
o utinam magicae nossem cantamina Musae!  
haec quoque formoso lingua tulisset opem.  
te toga picta decet, non quem sine matris honore  
nutrit inhumanae dura papilla lupae.

`sic, hospes, spatiorne tua regina sub aula? 55  
dos tibi non humilis prodita Roma venit.  
si minus, at raptae ne sint impune Sabinae:  
me rape et alterna lege repende vices!  
commissas acies ego possum solvere: nupta  
vos medium palla foedus inite mea. 60  
adde Hymenaeae modos, tubicen fera murmura conde:  
credite, vestra meus molliet arma torus.

'You fires and general's tent of Tatius' troops, you Sabine  
arms resplendent to my eyes,  
I'd sit a captive on your hearths, if only eyes  
beheld the face of Tatius.  
Farewell then hills of Rome, and Rome thereon, and Vesta  
sins of mine must put to shame.  
The horse, whose mane he dresses on the right, will carry  
Tatius campward with my love.

'What wonder Scylla cut her father's hair, and had  
white loins recast as savage dogs?  
Or that a monster's horns were conquered by his sister,  
twisting path made safe by thread?  
What shame I bring Italian girls, a sinful girl  
selected for a virgin's hearth!  
Forgive if any ask why Pallas' fires are out:  
I've drenched her altar with my tears.

'Tomorrow there is drinking through the town, and I  
must climb the dew-drenched thorny ridge.  
The whole route's slippery and dangerous, waters  
hidden by deceptive grass.  
Would I knew some magic spells, a tongue of mine  
to help out such a handsome man.  
To you belongs the royal robe, and not the waif  
brought up on she-wolf's barbarous teat.

'So shall I, stranger, walk your courts as queen, to bring  
a Rome betrayed as dowry?  
If not, and lest the Sabine rape go unavenged,  
assault and take me, like for like.  
As bride I separate the battle lines, bind foes  
together in my wedding gown.  
Hymenaeus, music! Trumpeter be still, and make  
my marriage bed subdue your arms.

`et iam quarta canit venturam bucina lucem,  
ipsaque in Oceanum sidera lapsa cadunt.  
experiar somnum, de te mihi somnia quaeram: 65  
fac venias oculis umbra benigna meis.'

dixit, et incerto permisit bracchia somno,  
nescia se furiis accubuisse novis.  
nam Venus, Iliacae felix tutela favillae,  
culpam alit et plures condit in ossa faces. 70  
illa furit, qualis celerem prope Thermodonta  
Strymonis abscisso pectus aperta sinu.

Urvi festus erat (dixere Parilia patres),  
hic primus coepit moenibus esse dies,  
annua pastorum convivia, lusus in urbe,  
cum pagana madent fercula divitiis, 75  
cumque super raros faeni flammantis acervos  
traicit immundos ebria turba pedes.  
Romulus excubias decrevit in otia solvi  
atque intermissa castra silere tuba. 80

hoc Tarpeia suum tempus rata convenit hostem:  
pacta ligat, pactis ipsa futura comes.  
omnia praebebat somnus: sed Iuppiter illam 85  
decrevit poenis invigilare suis.  
mons erat ascensu dapibus festoque remissus 83  
nec mora, vocalis occupat ense canis. 84  
prodiderat portaeque fidem patriamque iacentem,  
nubendique petit, quem velit, ipsa diem.

at Tatius (neque enim sceleri dedit hostis honorem)  
'nube' ait 'et regni scande cubile mei!' 90  
dixit, et ingestis comitum super obruit armis.  
haec, virgo, officiis dos erat apta tuis.  
et satis una malae potuit mors esse puellae, 17  
quae voluit flammis fallere, Vesta, tuas? 18  
a duce turpe Iovis mons est cognomen adeptus:  
o vigil, iniuste praemia mortis habes.

But now the fourth horn marks the coming of the day,  
and, tired, the stars sink in the sea.  
I'll try to sleep, and conjure you in dreams: be sure  
to come to me in friendly guise.'

Fitfully she gave her arms to sleep, not knowing  
how she lay with new-bred fiends.  
For Venus, guardian of the Trojan embers, feeds  
her sins and sheaths more fire in bones,  
as makes a mad Bacchant upon the swift Thermōdon  
have torn clothes reveal a breast.

There was festival (Parilia our fathers  
called it) marking our first walls:  
the shepherd's yearly feast, of city revelry  
and overflowing local fare.  
Above the scraps of burning hay the crowd,  
inebriated, kicks its feet.  
Romulus decreed the sentries should stand down,  
the camp be silent, trumpets still.

Tarpeia seized the time and met the foe; she made  
a pact by which she too was bound.  
All were sleeping, vulnerable, but Jove decreed  
her wakefulness should have its cost.  
With all the revelry, the hill was scaled: her sword  
despatches dogs before they bark.  
Betraying gate's security and country, now  
she asks him name the wedding day.

But Tatius, who did not hold with treachery,  
said, 'Marriage? Mount my kingdom's bed!'  
Beneath his heaped companions' shields he crushed her:  
virgin dues were truly paid.  
But can one death redeem such wickedness, a girl  
undoing Vesta's sacred fire?  
But Jove's mount gained its shameful name from such a guide,  
whose unfair gain brought on her death. [Notes](#)

## V

Terra tuum spinis obducat, lena, sepulcrum,  
 et tua, quod non vis, sentiat umbra sitim;  
 nec sedeant cineri Manes, et Cerberus ultor  
 turpia ieiuno terreat ossa sono!

docta vel Hippolytum Veneri mollire negantem, 5  
 concordique toro pessima semper avis,  
 Penelopen quoque neglecto rumore mariti  
 nubere lascivo cogeret Antinoo.  
 illa velit, poterit magnes non ducere ferrum,  
 et volucris nidis esse noverca suis. 10  
 quippe et, Collinas ad fossam moverit herbas,  
 stantia currenti diluerentur aqua:  
 audax cantatae leges imponere lunae  
 et sua nocturno fallere terga lupo,  
 posset ut intentos astu caecare maritos, 15  
 cornicum immeritas eruit ungue genas;  
 consuluitque striges nostro de sanguine, et in me  
 hippomanes fetae semina legit equae.  
 exorabat opus tenebris, ceu blanda papyron  
 saxosamque ferat sedula culpa viam: 20

`chrysolithus si te Eoa iuvat aurea ripa  
 et quae sub Tyria concha superbit aqua,  
 Eurypylyisve placet Coae textura Minervae,  
 sectaque ab Attalicis putria signa toris,  
 seu quae palmiferae mittunt venalia Thebae, 25  
 murreaque in Parthis pocula cocta focis;  
 sperne fidem, provolve deos, mendacia vincant,  
 frange et damnosae iura pudicitiae!

## 5. Acanthis

May earth, procuress, heap your grave with thorns,  
and what is feared: your shade feel thirst.

No peace in ashes, and avenging Cerberus  
for your foul bones howl hungrily.

She could seduce the celibate Hippolytus,  
make omens sear the brightest match,  
she'd have Penelope hear nothing of her husband,  
marry lustful Antinous.

At her behest the lodestones spurn their iron, mother  
birds abandon young at nest.

And if she move the Colline herbs to field-side ditch  
the crops would wash away in rain.

She'd boldly cast her spells upon the moon, and take  
on pelt that is the night-time wolf's.

With nails she'd scratch out eyes of harmless ravens, blind  
the watchful husband to her arts,  
consult of screech-owls how to have my blood, and take  
the potent slime of mares in heat.

She'd work in darkness like the papyrus worm, or bore  
as moles do, sedulously through earth.

'You want the golden chrysolites from eastern shores,  
empurpling shell from Tyrean sea,  
Eurypylean weave of Cōan cloth, or fancied  
figures of Attalic covers,  
or goods shipped out from palmy Thebes, or myrrhine cups  
that come hard-fired in Parthian kilns?  
Then spurn all faith, cast down the gods, have lies prevail,  
and break the laws of chastity.

`in mores te verte viri: si cantica iactat, 45  
     i comes et voces ebria iunge tuas. 46  
 si tibi forte comas vexaverit, utilis ira: 31  
     post modo mercata pace premendus erit.  
 denique ubi amplexu Venerem promiseris empto,  
     fac simules puros Isidos esse dies.  
 ingerat Aprilis Hyale tibi, tundat Omichle 35  
     natalem Maiis Idibus esse tuum.  
 supplex ille sedet: posita tu scribe cathedra  
     quidlibet! has artis si pavet ille, tenes!  
 semper habe morsus circa tua colla recentis,  
     dentibus alternis quos putet esse datos. 40

`nec te Medeae delectent probra sequacis  
     (nempe tulit fastus ausa rogare prior),  
 sed potius mundi Thais pretiosa Menandri,  
     cum ferit astutos comica moecha Getas.  
 et simulare virum pretium facit: utere causis! 29  
     maior dilata nocte recurret amor. 30  
 ianitor ad dantis vigilet: si pulset inanis, 47  
     surdus in obductam somniet usque seram.  
 nec tibi displiceat miles non factus amori,  
     nauta nec attrita si ferat aera manu, 50  
 aut quorum titulus per barbara colla pependit,  
     cretati medio cum saluere foro.

aurum spectato, non quae manus afferat aurum!  
     versibus auditis quid nisi verba feres?  
 qui versus, Coae dederit nec munera vestis, 57  
     istius tibi sit surda sine arte lyra.  
 dum vernat sanguis, dum rugis integer annus,  
     utere, ne quid cras libet ab ore dies! 60  
 vidi ego odorati victura rosaria Paesti  
     sub matutino cocta iacere Noto.'

'So take your lead from men. If one embark on song  
unite your drunken voice with his  
He pulled your hair? Then use that anger: press him hard  
that afterwards he buy your peace.  
When arms and promised intercourse are bought, pretend  
chaste days of Isis intervene,  
Have Hyale make out it's April, Omichle  
your birthday is the Ides of May.  
He sits as suppliant? Take chair and write, whatever:  
you will have him if he tremble.  
Always have fresh bites about your neck: he'll think  
there is a rival in those teeth.

'But do not copy insults wild Mēdēa made  
(her asking first brought on contempt),  
but costly Thāis in Menander's urbane play  
where harlot tricks the cunning slave.  
A fancied lover lifts the price: conceive of one!  
Postpone a night, and love's increased.  
Have doorman let in one with gifts, if empty-handed  
go on sleeping, bolt undrawn.  
Don't spurn the soldier badly made for love, or sailor's  
crabbed hand holding out a coin,  
or some barbarian still tagged about his neck  
whose chalked feet danced the market place.

Weigh well the gold, not hand that offers it. With verse  
what do you get but paltry words?  
Whoever gives his homage but not Cōan cloth  
will have a lyre that's deaf to art.  
Make use of blood that's fresh and years unwrinkled: lest  
the morrow take those looks away.  
I've seen rose-gardens fit to outlast perfumed Paestum's  
felled by morning's South Wind heat.'

his animum nostrae dum versat Acanthis amicae,  
per tenuem ossa mihi sunt numerata cutem.  
sed cape torquatae, Venus o regina, columbae 65  
ob meritum ante tuos guttura secta focos  
vidi ego rugoso tussim concreocere collo,  
sputaque per dentes ire cruenta cavos,  
atque animam in tegetes putrem exspirare paternas:  
horruit argenti pergula curva foco. 70  
exsequiae fuerunt rari furtiva capilli  
vincula et immundo pallida mitra situ,  
et canis, in nostros nimis experrecta dolores,  
cum fallenda meo pollice clatra forent.

sit tumulus lenae curto vetus amphora collo: 75  
urgeat hunc supra vis, caprifice, tua.  
quisquis amas, scabris hoc bustum caedite saxis,  
mixtaque cum saxis addite verba mala!

With Acanthis working on my sweetheart's mind,  
my bones were numbered through the skin,  
but Venus, queen: accept this ring-dove, throat cut clean,  
before your altar as deserved.

I've lived to see cough rattling in a withered throat,  
and phlegm rise through her pitted teeth.

She breathed her last foul breath into an ancient couch;  
her shack was bent, its hearth was cold.

For funeral she had but borrowed braids beneath  
her scanty hair and washed-out cap,  
and dog, that once was vigilant when I would try  
to lift the door-latch with my thumb.

Make bawd's tomb some old wine-jar with a shattered neck,  
and let the fig-tree press her down.

Have lovers desecrate her grave with broken rocks,  
their curses mixed with stones they cast.

Notes

## VI

Sacra facit vates: sint ora faventia sacris,  
et cadat ante meos icta iuvenca focos.  
serta Philiteis certet Romana corymbis,  
et Cyrenaeas urna ministret aquas.  
costum molle date et blandi mihi turis honores, 5  
terque focum circa laneus orbis eat.  
spargite me lymphis, carmenque recentibus aris  
tibia Mygdoniis libet eburna cadis.  
ite procul fraudes, alio sint aëre noxae:  
pura novum vati laurea mollit iter. 10

Musa, Palatini referemus Apollinis aedem:  
res est, Calliope, digna favore tuo.  
Caesaris in nomen ducuntur carmina: Caesar  
dum canitur, quaeso, Iuppiter ipse vaces!

est Phoebi fugiens Athamana ad litora portus, 15  
qua sinus Ioniae murmura condit aquae,  
Actia Iuleae Leucas monumenta carinae,  
nautarum votis non operosa via.  
huc mundi coiere manus: stetit aequore moles  
pineae, nec remis aequa favebat avis. 20  
altera classis erat Teucro damnata Quirino,  
pilaque feminea turpiter acta manu:  
hinc Augusta ratis plenis Iovis omine velis,  
signaque iam Patriae vincere docta suae.

tandem aciem geminos Nereus lunarat in arcus, 25  
armorum et radiis picta tremebat aqua,  
cum Phoebus linquens stantem se vindice Delon  
(nam tulit iratos mobilis ante Notos)  
astitit Augusti puppim super, et nova flamma  
luxit in obliquam ter sinuata facem. 30

## 6. Actium

The priest begins: let tongues be hushed for sacrifice  
and calf fall smitten at my shrine.

Have Roman wreath contest Philetean ivy, have  
the urn supply Cyrenean water.

Bring balms and gracious incense: at the hearth  
thrice lay the woollen fillets round.

Strew water on me, dress the stone afresh, and pipe  
libations from the Phrygian jars.

Deceit and injury go hence, and let pure laurel  
smooth a new path for the priest.

As is Apollo's temple on the Palatine  
much worth your praise, Calliope,  
my songs are sung for Caesar's glory, add a plea  
that Jupiter himself attend.

On the Athamanian coast a port of Phoebus,  
cove there quelling Ionian roar:

a Julian keel recalls great Actium's triumph, no  
hard distance for the sailor's prayers.

Here met the world's great forces, pine on waves, though fate  
did not exalt all oars alike.

One fleet, whose spears were shamefully in female hands,  
Teucrian Quirinus had damned,  
against it rode Augustus, sails unfurled by Jove,  
its standards speaking fatherland.

Nereus brought the lines at last to matching crescents.

Weapons shimmered on the waves.

Then Phoebus, leaving Delos (held in his protection,  
moved though once by angry winds),

above Augustus' poop deck flashed three times his lightning  
suddenly in zigzag flame.

non ille attulerat crinis in colla solutos  
aut testudineae carmen inerme lyrae,  
sed quali aspexit Pelopeum Agamemnona vultu,  
egessitque avidis Dorica castra rogis,  
aut qualis flexos solvit Pythona per orbis  
serpentem, imbelles quem timuere deae. 35

mox ait `o Longa mundi servator ab Alba,  
Auguste, Hectoreis cognite maior avis,  
vince mari: iam terra tuast: tibi militat arcus  
et favet ex umeris hoc onus omne meis. 40  
solve metu patriam, quae nunc te vindice freta  
imposuit prorae publica vota tuae.  
quam nisi defendes, murorum Romulus augur  
ire Palatinas non bene vidit avis.

et nimium remis audent: pro, turpe Latinos 45  
principe te fluctus regia vela pati!  
nec te, quod classis centenis remiget alis,  
terreat: invito labitur illa mari:  
quodque vehunt prorae Centauros saxa minantis,  
tigna cava et pictos experiere metus. 50  
frangit et attollit vires in milite causa;  
quae nisi iusta subest, excutit arma pudor.  
tempus adest, committe ratis: ego temporis auctor  
ducam laurigera Iulia rostra manu.'

dixerat, et pharetrae pondus consumit in arcus: 55  
proxima post arcus Caesaris hasta fuit.  
vincit Roma fide Phoebi: dat femina poenas:  
sceptra per Ionias fracta vehuntur aquas.  
at pater Idalio miratur Caesar ab astro:  
`sum deus; est nostri sanguinis ista fides.' 60  
prosequitur cantu Triton, omnesque marinae  
plauserunt circa libera signa deae.

He had not come with hair undone from shoulders, nor  
unwarlike with the tortoise lyre,  
but with the gaze of Agamemnon's Pelops,  
when the Greek camp fell to flames,  
or when he stilled the winding serpent Python's coils  
so frightening to the peaceful Muses.

He spoke, 'Known, world protector sprung from Alba Longa,  
more than Hector or your line:  
the land's already yours, Augustus: conquer sea:  
my bow and shoulder strive for you.  
Free Rome from fear. She sees you as defender: prow  
she's heaped up with her civic prayers.  
Unless you guard her, Romulus saw no walls blessed  
on Palatine by flight of birds.

'Their oars dare much: for shame that Roman waves should bear  
a royal fleet while you stand first.  
Be unafraid there rise a hundred oars, their fleet  
unwillingly ploughs through the sea;  
and Centaurs stood on prows with piled up rocks will prove  
but hollow planks and painted threats.  
The cause men fight for forges or will limit courage:  
shame will press the weapon down.  
The hour has come. Commit your fleet. I bless the hour,  
with laurelled hand will guide your prows.'

He spoke. His bow shot out its heavy quiver-load,  
and following came Caesar's spear.  
With Phoebus, Rome prevailed. The woman paid. Her rule  
Ionian waters bore away.  
So Caesar's father, gazing from Idalian star:  
'I am a god, here's proof of blood.'  
The Tritons sang, and all the nymphs applauded round  
the trophies of their liberty.

illa petit Nilum cumba male nixa fugaci,  
 occultum, iusso non moritura die.  
 di melius! quantus mulier foret una triumphus, 65  
 ductus erat per quas ante Iugurtha vias!  
 Actius hinc traxit Phoebus monumenta, quod eius  
 una decem vicit missa sagitta rates.

bella satis cecini: citharam iam poscit Apollo  
 victor et ad placidos exuit arma choros. 70  
 candida nunc molli subeant convivium luco;  
 blanditiaeque fluant per mea colla rosae,  
 vinaque fundantur prelis elisa Falernis,  
 terque lauet nostras spica Cilissa comas.

ingenium positis irritet Musa poetis: 75  
 Bacche, soles Phoebus fertilis esse tuo.  
 ille paludosos memoret servire Sygambros,  
 Cepheam hic Meroën fuscaque regna canat,  
 hic referat sero confessum foedere Parthum:  
 'reddat signa Remi, mox dabit ipse sua: 80  
 sive aliquid pharetris Augustus parcat Eois,  
 differat in pueros ista tropaea suos.  
 gaude, Crasse, nigras si quid sapis inter harenas:  
 ire per Euphraten ad tua busta licet.'

sic noctem patera, sic ducam carmine, donec 85  
 iniciat radios in mea vina dies!

With misplaced faith in skiff she takes off for the Nile,  
to cheat her death of its due day.

And rightly so: how small a triumph would she make  
through streets Jugurtha once was led.

For such a feat the Actian Phoebus won his temple:  
ten ships drowned for each shaft sent.

Enough of war, for Phoebus now must have his lyre,  
removing armour for the dance.

Let white-clothed banqueters ascend the grove,  
and roses' charms flow round my neck,  
let wine expelled from its Falernian press be poured,  
Cilician saffron bathe my hair.

His genius excites the poet's Muse, and, Bacchus,  
you inspire your brother Phoebus.

Recall enslavement of the Sygambri fen-men, sing  
of Cēpheas's Mēroë,  
recall how slowly Parthians heard our words: 'Return  
the spoils you took or lose your own.

Or, if Augustus spare the eastern bowmen, it's  
to leave his grandsons triumphs still.

Rejoice to hear us, Crassus, in your darkened sands:  
Euphrates takes us to your tomb.'

With song and goblet I will spend the night until  
the dawn adds lustre to my wine.

Notes

## VII

Sunt aliquid Manes: letum non omnia finit,  
luridaque evictos effugit umbra rogos.  
Cynthia namque meo visast incumbere fulcro,  
murmur ad extremae nuper humata tubae,  
cum mihi somnus ab exsequiis penderet amoris, 5  
et quererer lecti frigida regna mei.  
eosdem habuit secum quibus est elata capillos,  
eosdem oculos; lateri vestis adusta fuit,  
et solitum digito beryllon adederat ignis, 10  
summaque Lethaeus triverat ora liquor.  
spirantisque animos et vocem misit: at illi  
pollicibus fragiles increpuere manus:  
  
'perfide nec cuiquam melior sperande puellae,  
in te iam vires somnus habere potest?  
iamne tibi exciderant vigilacis furta Suburae 15  
et mea nocturnis trita fenestra dolis?  
per quam demisso quotiens tibi fune pependi,  
alterna veniens in tua colla manu!  
saepe Venus trivio commissa et, pectore mixto  
fecerunt tepidas pallia nostra vias. 20  
foederis heu pacti, cuius fallacia verba  
non audituri diripuere Noti!  
  
'at mihi non oculos quisquam inclamavit eunti:  
unum impetrassem te revocante diem:  
nec crepuit fissa me propter harundine custos, 25  
laesit et obiectum tegula curta caput.  
denique quis nostro curvum te funere vidit,  
atram quis lacrimis incaluisse togam?  
si piguit portas ultra procedere, at illuc  
iussisses lectum lentius ire meum. 30  
cur ventos non ipse rogis, ingrata, petisti?  
cur nardo flammae non oluere meae?  
hoc etiam grave erat, nulla mercede hyacinthos  
inicere et fracto busta piare cado.

## 7. Cythia's Ghost

The Shades exist, and death not wholly bounds our life:  
a sallow ghost escapes the pyre.

I dreamt that Cynthia leant upon my bed, though late  
immured within the wayside din.

Awoken to the love I'd buried, round me fell  
the frigid empire of my bed.

Her hair was worn as at her end, the same her eyes,  
though dress was charred along one side,  
and fire had eaten that familiar beryl ring,  
and Lethe worn away her face.

But living breath and voice erupted; brittle fingers  
rattled as she snapped her thumb.

'Can woman get no better from a gutter wretch  
whose strength's already gone in sleep?

Have you forgotten the Subura trysts, nocturnal  
slidings down a window-sill?

How often I let down a rope to you, by turns  
my body coming to your hands,

or, sharing Venus at the crossroads, breast to breast,  
we warmed the road beneath our cloak.

Alas for troths, deceiving words the South  
Wind mocked at and has torn to shreds.

'Who cried to see my eyelids close? Or called me back?  
Nor did you gain me one more day.

No watchmen rattled his split reed for me when that  
coarse roof-tile cut into my head,

nor did they see you bowed in grief, or your dark toga  
wetted with your tears for me.

It irked to pass beyond the gate: nor would you make  
the cortège go at slower pace.

You called no winds to fan the pyre, nor did you add  
a sprinkled incense on the flames.

Were hyacinths too much expense: could you not pour  
a prayer from that broken jar?

`Lygdamus uratur candescat lamina verna: 35  
     sensi ego, cum insidiis pallida vina bibi.  
 ut Nomas arcanas tollat versuta salivas;  
     dicet damnatas ignea testa manus.  
 quae modo per vilis inspectast publica noctes,  
     haec nunc aurata cyclade signat humum; 40  
 te patiente meae conflavit imaginis aurum, 47  
     ardente e nostro dotem habitura rogo. 48  
 et graviora rependit iniquis pensa quasillis,  
     garrula de facie si qua locuta meast;  
 nostraque quod Petale tulit ad monumenta coronas,  
     codicis immundi vincula sentit anus;  
 caeditur et Lalage tortis suspensa capillis, 45  
     per nomen quoniamst ausa rogare meum.  
 non tamen insector, quamvis mereare, Properti: 49  
     longa mea in libris regna fuere tuis. 50  
 iuro ego Fatorum nulli revolubile carmen,  
     tergeminusque canis sic mihi molle sonet,  
 me servasse fidem. si fallo, vipera nostris  
     sibilet in tumultis et super ossa cubet.

`nam geminast sedes turpem sortita per amnem, 55  
     turbaque diversa remigat omnis aqua.  
 unda Clytaemestrae stuprum vehit altera, Cressam  
     portans mentitam lignea monstra bovis.  
 ecce coronato pars altera rapta phaselo,  
     mulcet ubi Elysias aura beata rosas, 60  
 qua numerosa fides, quaque aera rotunda Cybebes  
     mitratisque sonant Lydia plectra choris.  
 Andromedeque et Hypermestre sine fraude marita  
     narrant historias, pectora nota, suas:  
 haec sua maternis queritur livere catenis 65  
     bracchia nec meritas frigida saxa manus;  
 narrat Hypermestre magnum ausas esse sorores,  
     in scelus hoc animum non valuisse suum.  
 sic mortis lacrimis vitae sancimus amores:  
     celo ego perfidiae crimina multa tuae. 70

`Apply to Lygdamus the slave the white-hot brand:  
through him I drank the sickening wine.  
Though cunning Nomias rid herself of strange concoctions,  
red-hot brick will show her hand.  
That prostitute who sold herself for cut-rate nights  
now sweeps the ground with gilded hem.  
You let her melt my golden image down that she  
might claim a dowry from my flames.  
Unjustly now she heaps the basket with the wool  
if chattering servant tell my looks.  
For placing garland on my grave, Petale lies  
now shackled to a filthy log.  
Lalage's hung up by her twisted hair and flogged  
who begged a favour in my name.  
No more I'll say, though warranted, Propertius,  
since in your books my reign was long,  
but swear by Fate that none unravels — and let the truth  
have threefold dog bay soft for me —  
that I kept faith. If false then may the viper hiss  
and coil about my mound of bones.

`Two ways are given us across that hideous river:  
all row this way or must that.  
One bears adulterous Clytemnestra and the Cretan  
queen disgraced as monstrous cow,  
the other — see — is borne off by a flower-hung skiff,  
Elysium's roses scenting air:  
the rhythmic lyre and Cŷbele's round cymbals make  
the Lydian chords match mitred dance.  
Andromeda and Hypermnestra, truly married,  
tell their sad betrothal tales.  
The first of arms unjustly shackled to cold rocks  
and bruised by chains her mother forged,  
and Hypermnestra tells the crime her sisters dared  
for which her mind had not the strength.  
In death our tears confirm our love, and I conceal  
the many faithless sins of yours.

`sed tibi nunc mandata damus, si forte moveris,  
     si te non totum Chloridos herba tenet:  
 nutrix in tremulis ne quid desideret annis  
     Parthenie: potuit, nec tibi avara fuit.  
 deliciaeque meae Latris, cui nomen ab usust,                     75  
     ne speculum dominae porrigat illa novae.  
 et quoscumque meo fecisti nomine versus,  
     ure mihi: laudes desine habere meas.  
 pelle hederam tumulo, mihi quae praegnante corymbo  
     mollia contortis alligat ossa comis.                             80  
 pomosis Anio qua spumifer incubat arvis,  
     et numquam Herculeo numine pallet ebur,  
 hic carmen media dignum me scribe columna,  
     sed breve, quod currens vector ab urbe legat:  
 HIC TIBURTINA IACET AUREA CYNTHIA TERRA                     85  
     ACCESSIT RIPAE LAUS, ANIENE, TUAE.  
  
 `nec tu sperne piis venientia somnia portis:  
     cum pia venerunt somnia, pondus habent.  
 nocte vagae ferimur, nox clausas liberat umbras,  
     errat et abiecta Cerberus ipse sera.                             90  
 luce iubent leges Lethaea ad stagna reverti:  
     nos vehimur, vectum nauta recenset onus.  
 nunc te possideant aliae: mox sola tenebo:  
     mecum eris, et mixtis ossibus ossa teram.`  
  
 haec postquam querula mecum sub lite peregit,                     95  
     inter complexus excidit umbra meos.

Here are — if you have feelings, and are not bewitched  
by spells of Chloris — my commands:

Let not my nurse Parthenie want in her old age,  
who could but didn't clutch your purse.

Nor let my dear-loved Latris, named for service, hold  
the mirror to a second face.

As to verses in my name: I beg you burn them,  
no more win your fame through me.

Put ivy on my tomb, that with its swelling clusters  
it may thread my tiny bones.

Where fruiting Anio waters fields, and Hercules  
ensures that ivory not stain,

inscribe a column fittingly if brief, as such  
a traveller reads when leaving Rome.

HERE IN TIBUR'S SOIL LIES GOLDEN CYNTHIA, ADDING  
GLORY TO YOUR ANIO'S BANKS.

'Disdain no dreams that come from that blessed gate: when sent  
they issue with the force of truth.

At night unloosed, we fettered shades can roam, and even  
Cerberus can slip his chains,

but dawn compels return to Lethe's stagnant waters;  
ferryman tots up his load.

Let others have you now, but soon I'll take you: mine  
to mix your worn-out bone on bone.'

And having laid this mournful lawsuit out, the shade  
dissolved, eluding my embrace

Notes

## VIII

Disce, quid Esquilias hac nocte fugarit aquosas,  
cum vicina novis turba cucurrit agris.  
turpis in arcana sonuit cum rixa taberna; 19  
si sine me, famae non sine labe meae. 20

Lanuvium annosi vetus est tutela draconis,  
hic, ubi tam rarae non perit hora morae,  
qua sacer abripitur caeco descensus hiatu, 5  
hac penetrat (virgo, tale iter omne cave!)  
ieiuni serpentis honos, cum pabula poscit  
annua et ex ima sibila torquet humo.  
ille sibi admotas a virgine corripit escas: 11  
virginis in palmis ipsa canistra tremunt.  
talìa demissae pallent ad sacra puellae, 9  
cum temere anguino creditur ore manus. 10  
si fuerunt castae, redeunt in colla parentum,  
clamantque agricolae 'fertilis annus erit.'

huc mea detonsis avertast Cynthia mannis: 15  
causa fuit Iuno, sed magis causa Venus.  
Appia, dic quaeso, quantum te teste triumphum  
egerit effusis per tua saxa rotis!  
spectaclum ipsa sedens primo temone pependit, 21  
ausa per impuros frena movere locos.  
serica nam taceo vulsi carpenta nepotis  
atque armillatos colla Molossa canes,  
qui dabit immundae venalia fata saginae, 25  
vincet ubi erasas barba pudenda genas.

cum fieret nostro totiens iniuria lecto,  
mutato volui castra movere toro.  
Phyllis Aventinae quaedamst vicina Dianae,  
sobria grata parum: cum bibit, omne decet. 30  
altera Tarpeios est inter Teia lucos,  
candida, sed potae non satis unus erit.  
his ego constitui noctem lenire vocatis,  
et Venere ignota furta novare mea.

## 8. An Unwelcome Interruption

Much trouble on the fountained Esquiline last night,  
and folk by New Fields all came out.

A brawl erupted in a drinking shop, involving  
my good name if not myself.

Lanuviun, from old protected by an ancient snake,  
(the odd hour here is not ill spent)

displays a sacred slope that opens to a cleft  
where serpent (maidens, fear this path!)  
hungrily demands its annual tribute, spitting  
hisses from the twisted earth.

It comes and seizes what is offered, though the basket  
tremble in each virgin's hand.

The girls on such a task are never keen to trust  
their honour to a serpents mouth,  
but if found chaste come back to parents' arms, the farmers  
calling it a 'fruitful year.'

So there went Cynthia with her close-clipped ponies, pleading  
rites of Juno (more of Venus).

So tell of that triumphal progress, Appian Way,  
as wheels rolled forward on your stones,  
her spectacle above the yoke in flourishing  
the reins about the shameful parts.

Myself, I'm silent on the youngster's silk-hung trap,  
Molossian dogs with jewelled collars:  
some day he'll have to sell himself for filthy gruel  
with beard to shame those smooth-scraped cheeks.

But since she often wronged our bed I chose to move  
my camp and find some other couch.

There is a Phyllis near the Aventine Diana,  
plain when sober, pleasing drunk,  
A pure Teïa, also, from Tarpeian groves,  
not satisfied by one at cups.

With these I planned to pass a happy night, and add  
some spice to usual nuptial sports.

unus erat tribus in secreta lectulus herba. 35  
 quaeris discubitus? inter utramque fui.  
 Lygdamus ad cyathos, vitrique aestiva supellex  
 et Methymnaei grata saliva meri.  
 Miletus tibicen erat, crotalistris Byblis,  
 (haec facilis spargi munda sine arte rosa), 40  
 Magnus et ipse suos breviter concretus in artus  
 iactabat truncas ad cava buxa manus.  
  
 sed neque suppletis constabat flamma lucernis,  
 reccidit inque suos mensa supina pedes.  
 me quoque per talos Venerem quaerente secundam 45  
 semper damnosi subsiluisse canes.  
 cantabant surdo, nudabant pectora caeco:  
 Lanuvii ad portas, ei mihi, solus eram;  
 cum subito rauci sonuerunt cardine postes,  
 et levia ad primos murmura facta Lares. 50  
  
 nec mora, cum totas resupinat Cynthia valvas,  
 non operosa comis, sed furibunda decens.  
 pocula mi digitos inter cecidere remissos,  
 palluerunt ipso labra soluta mero.  
 fulminat illa oculis et quantum femina saevit, 55  
 spectaculum capta nec minus urbe fuit.  
 Phyllidos iratos in vultum conicit unguis:  
 territa 'vicini,' Teïa clamat 'aquam!'  
 crimina sopitos turbant elata Quirites,  
 omnis et insana semita voce sonat. 60  
 illas direptisque comis tunicisque solutis  
 excipit obscurae prima taberna viae.  
  
 Cynthia gaudet in exuviis victrixque recurrit  
 et mea perversa sauciat ora manu,  
 imponitque notam collo morsuque cruentat, 65  
 praecipueque oculos, qui meruere, ferit.

A couch for three was set out on a screened-off lawn,  
with me — you ask? — between the two.

Lygdamus had charge of ladle: summer glasses,  
scented, unmixed Lydian wine.

Miletus played the flute, and Byblis castanets  
(with roses pelted for her skill).

Magnus, shrunk to his small frame, was beating stunted  
arms about a boxwood crate.

Although the lamps were full, the flames kept flickering;  
the table top fell on its legs,  
and when at dice I sought the lucky Venus throw  
the wretched Dog kept coming up.

But I was deaf to singing, saw no undone breasts,  
my thoughts still on Lanuvium's gates,  
when suddenly the doors were shattered on their posts,  
and fracas rushed in from out front.

Cynthia throws back the folding doors, her hair  
disordered, and in splendid rage.

The cup fell from my hands; my lips, though steeped in wine,  
I felt had turned distinctly pale.

Her eyes flashed fire as only women's can, a scene  
as frightful as a city's sack.

Angrily she goes for Phyllis with her nails,  
Teïa calls out, 'Neighbours, fire!'

The hubbub wakes up neighbouring citizens, the whole  
concourse awash with angry noise.

The girls, their hair torn out and tunics ripped, escape  
to darkness and the nearest tavern.

Cynthia, gloating on her spoils, then hastens back  
to lay about me with her hand:

she bites my neck, there drawing blood, and most of all  
must poke out eyes she thought to blame.

atque ubi iam nostris lassavit bracchia plagis,  
Lygdamus, ad plutei fulcra sinistra latens  
eruitur, geniumque meum protractus adorat.  
Lygdame, nil potui: tecum ego captus eram. 70

supplicibus palmis tum demum ad foedera veni,  
cum vix tangendos praebuit illa pedes,  
atque ait 'admissae si vis me ignoscere culpae,  
accipe, quae nostrae formula legis erit.  
tu neque Pompeia spatiabere cultus in umbra, 75  
nec cum lascivum sternet harena Forum.  
colla cave inflectas ad summum obliqua theatrum,  
aut lectica tuae se det aperta morae.  
Lygdamus in primis, omnis mihi causa querelae,  
veneat et pedibus vincula bina trahat.' 80

indixit leges: respondi ego 'legibus utar.'  
riserat imperio facta superba dato.  
dein, quemcumque locum externae tetigere puellae,  
suffiit, at pura limina tergit aqua,  
imperat et totas iterum mutare lucernas, 85  
terque meum tetigit sulphuris igne caput.  
atque ita mutato per singula pallia lecto  
despondi, et toto solvimus arma toro.

And when she tired of beating me she went for Lygdamus  
concealed the left side of the couch.

She dragged him out. He called upon my guardian spirit,  
(but Lygdamus, I'm held like you).

Finally, a suppliant, I begged for terms,  
and was allowed to touch her feet.

'So, if you'd seek forgiveness for such offences,  
know the terms that I prescribe.

They'll be no promenading now through Pompey's shade,  
or sand at Forum festivals,

beware of craning round to see the upper stalls  
or ogling at an open litter,

Lygdamus, my foremost curse, shall have his legs  
bound up in chains and sent for sale.'

Such were the terms, which I agreed. She laughed, exulting  
in the power that she enjoyed.

Immediately she cleansed each spot the girls had touched,  
and rinsed the threshold thoroughly;

she made me change once more the oil in lamps, and thrice  
with burning sulphur touched my head.

At last, when every sheet was changed, and I not loath,  
we laid down arms about the bed.

Notes

## IX

Amphitryoniades qua tempestate iuencos  
egerat a stabulis, o Erythea, tuis,  
venit ad invictos pecorosa Palatia montis,  
et statuit fessos fessus et ipse boves,

qua Velabra suo stagnabant flamine quaque 5  
nauta per urbanas velificabat aquas.

sed non infido manserunt hospite Caco  
incolumes: furto polluit ille Iovem.  
incola Cacus erat, metuendo raptor ab antro, 10  
per tria partitos qui dabat ora sonos.

hic, ne certa forent manifestae signa rapinae,  
aversos cauda traxit in antra boves,  
nec sine teste deo: furem sonuere iuenci,  
furis et implacidas diruit ira fores.

Maenaliio iacuit pulsus tria tempora ramo 15  
Cacus, et Alcides sic ait: 'ite, boves,  
Herculis ite boves, nostrae labor ultime clavae,  
bis mihi quaesiti, bis mea praeda, boves,  
aruaque mugitu sancite Bovaria longo:  
nobile erit Romae pascua vestra Forum.' 20

dixerat, et sicco torquet sitis ora palato,  
terraque non ullas feta ministrat aquas.  
sed procul inclusas audit ridere puellas,  
lucus ubi umbroso fecerat orbe nemus,  
femineae loca clausa deae fontesque piandos 25  
impune et nullis sacra relecta viris.

devia puniceae velabant limina vittae,  
putris odorato luxerat igne casa,  
populus et glaucus ornabat frondibus aedem,  
multaque cantantis umbra tegebat aves. 30

## 9. Ara Maxima

That time the son of Amphitryon drove his oxen  
from the stalls of Erythēa,  
he came to that steep hill of herds, the Palatine,  
weary with his tired-out cattle.

Here the Velabrum had pooled, and boatmen sailed  
on what are now our urban waters,  
but not in safety: faithless Cacus, there his host,  
polluted Jupiter by theft.

Cacus, a local brigand, from a fearsome cave,  
made noises coming from three mouths;  
to cover up his tracks he dragged the cattle backward  
by their tails to his dark cave.

A god had witnessed this: 'thief' lowed the cattle: anger  
battered down the thief's harsh doors.

With Cacus dead, three foreheads crushed by the Maenalian  
bough, Alcides said: 'Go, cattle,  
known to Hercules, last labour of my club,  
now twice my quest and twice my booty:  
hallow Fields of Cattle with your lowing: let  
your pastures host Rome's noble Forum.'

He spoke, his palate dry, his mouth consumed by thirst,  
while earth, though fertile, gives no water.

Far off he hears the sound of women laughing where  
the trees stood round in circled shade:  
a precinct sacred to the women's goddess, spring of worship,  
rites that men may not observe.

Red bands enfold the lintels, incense swells, and fires  
illuminate the mouldering hut.

A poplar with its greyish leaves adorned the shrine,  
thick shadow sheltered singing birds.

huc ruit in siccam congesta pulvere barbam,  
 et iacit ante fores verba minora deo:  
 vos precor, o luci sacro quae luditis antro,  
 pandite defessis hospita fana viris.  
 fontis egens erro circum antra sonantia lymphis; 35  
 et cava suscepto flumine palma sat est.  
 audistisne aliquem, tergo qui sustulit orbem?  
 ille ego sum: Alciden terra recepta vocat.  
 quis facta Herculeae non audit fortia clavae  
 et numquam ad vastas irrita tela feras, 40  
 atque uni Stygias homini luxisse tenebras?  
*et gemere abstractum Dite vetante canem?* 42

'angulus hic mundi nunc me mea fata trahentum 65  
 accipit: haec fesso vix mihi terra patent. 66  
 quodsi Iunoni sacrum faceretis amarae,  
 non clausisset aquas ipsa noverca suas.  
 sin aliquem vultusque meus saetaeque leonis 45  
 terrent et Libyco sole perusta coma,  
 idem ego Sidonia feci servilia palla  
 officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo,  
 mollis et hirsutum cepit mihi fascia pectus,  
 et manibus duris apta puella fui.' 50

talibus Alcides; at talibus alma sacerdos  
 puniceo canas stamine vincta comas:  
 'parce oculis, hospes, lucoque abscede verendo;  
 cede agedum et tuta limina linque fuga.  
 interdicta viris metuenda lege piatur 55  
 quae se summota vindicat ara casa.  
 magno Tiresias aspexit Pallada vates,  
 fortia dum posita Gorgone membra lavat.  
 di tibi dent alios fontis: haec lympa puellis  
 avia secreti limitis unda fluit.' 60

Here he rushes, dust on bristled beard, to utter  
what's unworthy of a god:

'You who sport here, in this sacred shade, I beg  
you yield to an exhausted man.

Through water-echoing glades I wander, seeking source:  
what hands can hold would be enough.

You've heard of one whose back bore up the world?

Then I am he, Alcides called.

Who hasn't heard of Hercules's famous club,  
great spear no monster can defy,  
the only man to light up Stygian dark, *have dog  
dragged off against the will of Dis?*

'This corner of the world becomes my life. Though tired,  
I find scarce welcome hereabouts.

Your worship is the rites of Juno: she, though cruel,  
would not refuse her stepson aid.

No doubt my look and lion's mane will scare you, hair  
that's burnt up by the Libyan sun,

but I have worn Sidonian gown, served menially  
a daily stint at spinning wool.

A yielding breast-band bound my shaggy chest: I made,  
though rough my hands, a decent girl.'

So Hercules. And then officiating priestess,  
white hair dressed with purple thread:

'Stranger: do not gaze but go from this feared grove,  
now flee while it is safe to go.

The house that holds this altar is forbidden men,  
protected by a vengeful law.

Think what Tiresius paid to gaze on Pallas, washing  
brave limbs free from Gorgon's guard.

Ask gods to give you other streams: this flows for girls,  
sequestered, on a private course.'

sic anus: ille umeris postis concussit opacos,  
nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim.  
at postquam exhausto iam flumine vicerat aestum,  
ponit vix siccis tristia iura labris:  
'Maxima quae gregibus devotast Ara repertis, 67  
ara per has' inquit 'maxima facta manus,  
haec nullis umquam pateat veneranda puellis,  
Herculis aeternum nec sit inulta sitis.' 70

hunc, quoniam manibus purgatum sanxerat orbem, 73  
sic Sanctum Tatiae composuere Cures.  
sancte pater, salve, cui iam favet aspera Iuno: 71  
Sancte, velis libro dexter inesse meo. 72

So the matron. But he broke down shaded posts  
and door that blocked his angry thirst.  
And when the stream was drunk and craving quelled, his lips  
but scarcely dry, he made this law:  
'For regained cattle now is Ara Maxima,  
the greatest shrine these hands have made,  
but closed to girls in worship, or this thirst of mine  
would go forever unavenged.'

Those hands have cleansed the world, so Tatius' Cures  
set him up as Sanctifier.  
Hail, sainted father on whom Juno smiles: be pleased  
to feature here and bless my book.

Notes

## X

Nunc Iovis incipiam causas aperire Feretri  
armaque de ducibus trina recepta tribus.  
magnum iter ascendo, sed dat mihi gloria vires:  
non iuvat e facili lecta corona iugo.

imbuis exemplum primae tu, Romule, palmae 5  
huius, et exuvio plenus ab hoste redis,  
tempore quo portas Caeninum Acrona petentem  
victor in eversum cuspide fundis equum.  
Acron Herculeus Caenina ductor ab arce,  
Roma, tuis quondam finibus horror erat. 10  
hic spolia ex umeris ausus sperare Quirini  
ipse dedit, sed non sanguine sicca suo.  
hunc videt ante cavas librantem spicula turris  
Romulus et votis occupat ante ratis:  
'Iuppiter, haec hodie tibi victima corruiet Acron.'  
voverat, et spolium corruiet ille Iovi. 15  
Urbis virtutisque parens sic vincere suevit,  
qui tulit a parco frigida castra lare.  
idem eques et frenis, idem fuit aptus aratri,  
et galea hirsuta compta lupina iuba. 20  
picta neque inducto fulgebat parma pyropo:  
praebebant caesi baltea lenta boves.  
necdum ultra Tiberim belli sonus, ultima praeda 25  
Nomentum et captae iugera terna Corae. 26

Cossus at insequitur Veientis caede Tolumni,  
vincere cum Veios posse laboris erat;  
heu Veii veteres! et vos tum regna fuistis, 27  
et vestro positast aurea sella foro:  
nunc intra muros pastoris bucina lenti  
cantat, et in vestris ossibus arva metunt. 30

## 10. Feretrian Jupiter

I start with origins: Feretrian Jupiter's:

three sets of arms from three chiefs won.

Great height I scale, but glory gives me strength: a crown  
from easy summit is no feat.

You, Romulus, were first exemplar of this prize,  
returning full of spoil from foe.

You killed Caeninian Acron at the gates of Rome,  
by spearing horse and then the man.

Hercules's Acron and Caenina's chief,  
a terror, Rome, throughout your lands,  
who took the spoil Quirinus bore, but left his own,  
which was then spattered with his blood.

By hollow towers he brandished spear, but Romulus  
struck first with vow that was fulfilled:

'Acron falls today your victim, Jove.' The vow  
was made; he fell as spoil to Jove.

So would Rome's founder through his valour conquer, trained  
by frugal home for chilly camp.

Skilled both with horse's bridle and the plough, his wolfskin  
helmet rose in shaggy crest.

He had no shield inlaid with gilded bronze, soft belt  
but as his slaughtered cattle gave.

In war confined to Tiber, with Nomentum, Cora's  
then three acres furthest prey.

Next Cossus came, who slew Tolumnius: much labour  
conquering the Veii,

Alas for ancient Veii, a mighty kingdom,  
forum set with golden throne:

your walls now hear the horn of loitering shepherd, fields  
are harvested above your bones.

forte super portae dux Veiens astitit arcem  
colloquiumque astu fretus ab urbe dedit:  
dumque aries murum cornu pulsabat aëno,  
vinea qua ductum longa tegebat opus,  
Cossus ait 'fortis melius concurrere campo.' 35  
nec mora fit, plano sistit uterque gradum.  
di Latias iuvere manus, desecta Tolumni  
cervix Romanos sanguine lavit equos.

Claudius a Rheno traiectos arcuit hostis,  
Belgica cum vasti parma relata ducis 40  
Viridomari. genus hic Brenno iactabat ab ipso,  
mobilis e rectis fundere gaesa rotis.  
illi virgatis maculanti sanguine bracas  
torquis ab incisa decidit unca gula.

nunc spolia in templo tria condita: causa Feretri, 45  
omine quod certo dux ferit ense ducem;  
seu quia victa suis umeris haec arma ferebant,  
hinc Feretri dictast ara superba Iovis.

Veii's leader in the tower above his walls  
had chosen guile and sought to parley,  
as all the while, beneath its covering, the bronze-  
beaked battering ram attacked the walls.  
Cossus said, 'It's better brave men take the field.'  
When both stood on a level plain  
the gods helped Latin arms: the blood from Tolumnius's  
cut-off neck bathed Roman horse.

Claudius repelled the foes that crossed the Rhine,  
chief's Belgic shield he brought to Rome.  
Viridomarus, boasting Brennus ancestry,  
would hurl his spear from chariot,  
but stained striped trousers with his blood and gave  
from severed throat the golden torque.

A temple has three trophies, hence Feretrian:  
sure sign that chief struck chief with sword,  
or that their shoulders bore the conquered's armour: proud  
the altar of Feretrian Jove.

Notes

## XI

Desine, Paulle, meum lacrimis urgere sepulcrum:  
nempe tuas lacrimas litora surda bibent. 6  
vota movent superos: ubi portitor aera recepit,  
non exorando stant adamante viae. 4  
te licet orantem fuscae deus audiat aulae: 5  
panditur ad nullas ianua nigra preces; 2  
cum semel infernas intrarunt funera sedes, 3  
obserat eversos lurida porta rogos. 8  
sic maestae cecinere tubae, cum subdita nostrum  
detraheret lecto fax inimica caput. 10

quid mihi coniugium Paulli, quid currus avorum  
profuit aut famae pignora tanta meae?  
non minus immitis habuit Cornelia Parcas:  
et sum, quod digitis quinque legatur, onus.  
damnatae tenebris et vos, vada lenta, paludes, 15  
et quaecumque meos implicat ulva pedes,  
immatura licet, tamen huc non noxia veni:  
nec precor huic umbrae mollia iura meae.

at si quis posita iudex sedet Aeacus urna,  
in mea sortita uindicet ossa pila: 20  
assideant fratres, iuxta et Minoida sellam  
Eumenidum intento turba severa foro:  
Sisyphoe, mole vaces; taceant Ixionis orbis,  
fallax Tantaleo corripere liquor;  
Cerberus et nullas hodie petat improbus umbras; 25  
et iaceat tacita laxa catena sera.  
ipsa loquar pro me: si fallo, poena sororum  
infelix umeros urgeat urna meos.

si cui fama fuit per avita tropaea decori,  
aera Numantinos nostra loquuntur avos: 30  
altera maternos exaequat turba Libones,  
et domus est titulis utraque fulta suis.

## 11. Cornelia

Make sad no more my grave with weeping, Paullus: those  
deaf shores will drink your tears unmoved.

Prayers may move the gods above, but, Charon paid,  
the path is fixed unalterably.

The god of that halled gloom may hear, but his dark door  
will give no passage to our prayers,

and when the dead wind through the Underworld, a pall  
of white shuts off the burnt-out pyre.

So howled sad trumpets when the harmful fire was thrust  
beneath the bier and bore me off.

What good was in my wedding, Paullus, forebears' triumphs,  
children's pledges for my name?

Cornelia has not found the Fates more yielding: all  
I am is what five fingers hold.

Condemned to darkness and the shallow drift of waters,  
sedges clutching at my feet,

it's true I come too early here, but for no crime,  
nor kindlier treatment for my shade.

If some Aeacus sit as judge before the urn  
then let him weigh my lot as called,

his brothers counselling beside the chair of Minos,  
forum silent with its Furies.

With Sisyphus at rest, and Ixion's wheel suspended,  
Tantalus's thirst assuaged,

no Cerberus today to bark at evil ghosts,  
but chain unloosed and he at rest,

I'll speak my case: and, if not truly, have the sisters' task  
of punishment weigh down my arms.

If any fame derives from fine ancestral trophies  
ours are old Numantian bronze,

and, equally, Libōnes of my mother's line,  
our house supported either side.

mox, ubi iam facibus cessit praetexta maritis,  
vinxit et acceptas altera vitta comas,  
iungor, Paulle, tuo sic discessura cubili: 35  
in lapide hoc uni nupta fuisse legar.

testor maiorum cineres tibi, Roma, colendos,  
sub quorum titulis, Africa, tunsae iaces,  
et Persen proavi stimulat dum pectus Achilli, 40  
qui tumidas proavo fregit Achille domos.  
me neque censurae legem mollisse neque ulla  
labe mea nostros erubuisse focos.  
non fuit exuviis tantis Cornelia damnum:  
quin et erat magnae pars imitanda domus.

nec mea mutata aetas, sine crimine totast: 45  
viximus insignes inter utramque facem.  
mi natura dedit leges a sanguine ductas,  
nec possis melior iudicis esse metu.  
quaelibet austeras de me ferat urna tabellas:  
turpior assessu non erit ulla meo, 50  
vel tu, quae tardam movisti fune Cybeben,  
Claudia, turritae rara ministra deae,  
vel cui, sacra suos cum Vesta reposceret ignis,  
exhibuit vivos carbasus alba focos.

nec te, dulce caput, mater Scribonia, laesi: 55  
in me mutatum quid nisi fata velis?  
maternis laudor lacrimis urbisque querelis,  
defensa et gemitu Caesaris ossa mea.  
ille sua nata dignam vixisse sororem  
increpat, et lacrimas vidimus ire deo. 60  
vidimus et fratrem sellam geminasse curulem, 65  
consul quo factus tempore, rapta soror. 66

et tamen emerui generosae vestis honores  
nec mea de sterili facta rapina domo.  
et bene habet: numquam mater lugubria sumpsit; 97  
venit in exsequias tota caterva meas. 98

In time, with maiden's toga changed for nuptial torch,  
and other headband in my hair,  
I joined your couch — let stone record — to leave it, Paullus,  
married to a single man.

I swear by forebear's ashes, those which Rome respects  
in Africa ground down to dust,  
by Perses spurred on by Achilles' name, who crushed  
the house by that forefather swelled,  
that never have I loosened censor's laws, nor brought  
one sin to cause this hearth to blush.  
Cornelia never tarnished those illustrious trophies,  
was exemplar to her house.

My life continued spotlessly. I lived in fame  
between two torches: life and death.  
Nature showed me conduct drawn from my own blood,  
no fear of judge proved happier.  
Whatever sentence come from that harsh urn, no shame  
attaches to those sat with me —  
not Claudia, spired Cŷbele's rare servant, who  
with rope pulled free the stranded goddess,  
nor you whose spotless linen dress brought hearth to life  
when Vesta would take back her fire.

I have not injured you, my mother, dear Scribonia:  
nought is wanted but this death.  
Acclaimed by mother's tears and city's lamentations,  
bones are blest by Caesar's sighs.  
I died as worthy to be called his daughter's sister:  
tears he showed, who is a god.  
Twice was my brother seated in the curule chair,  
appointed consul when his sister died.

And still I earned the matron's robe of honour, was  
not taken from a childless house.  
More blessed, I did not wear a mother's mourning dress,  
and every child stood by my end.

tu, Lepide, et tu, Paulle, meum post fata levamen:  
condita sunt vestro lumina nostra sinu.  
filia, tu specimen censurae nata paternae, 67  
fac teneas unum nos imitata virum.  
haec est feminei merces extrema triumpho, 71  
laudat ubi meritum libera fama torum.

nunc tibi commendo communia pignora, Paulle:  
haec cura et cineri spirat inusta meo.  
fungere maternis vicibus, pater: illa meorum 75  
omnis erit collo turba ferenda tuo.  
oscula cum dederis tua flentibus, adice matris:  
tota domus coepit nunc onus esse tuum.  
et si quid doliturus eris, sine testibus illis!  
cum venient, siccis oscula falle genis! 80  
sat tibi sint noctes, quas de me, Paulle, fatiges,  
somniaque in faciem credita saepe meam:  
atque ubi secreto nostra ad simulacra loqueris,  
ut responsurae singula verba iace.

seu tamen adversum mutarit ianua lectum, 85  
sederit et nostro cauta noverca toro,  
coniugium, pueri, laudate et ferte paternum:  
capta dabit vestris moribus illa manus;  
nec matrem laudate nimis: collata priori  
vertet in offensas libera verba suas. 90  
seu memor ille mea contentus manserit umbra  
et tanti cineres duxerit esse meos,  
discite venturam iam nunc lenire senectam,  
caelibis ad curas nec vacet ulla via.  
quod mihi detractumst, vestros accedat ad annos: 95  
prole mea Paullum sic iuuet esse senem.  
et serie fulcite genus: mihi cumba volenti  
solvitur aucturis tot mea facta meis.

Lepidus and Paullus, solace after death,  
in your embrace my eyelids closed.  
Daughter, model born in father's year as censor,  
hold like me to one alone,  
which is the greatest triumph that a woman earns:  
completing her conjugal life.

To Paullus I commend the pledges of our love;  
my care for them burns on in ash.  
Perform the mother's part as father; this whole troop  
of mine is thrust into your arms.  
You'll kiss them when they cry, and add a mother's kisses:  
all the house is now your charge.  
And if you're sad then do not show it: when they come  
deceive their kisses with dry cheeks.  
Be nights enough to wear out thoughts of me with, Paullus,  
dreams enfolded round my shape,  
and when in secret you address my semblance, speak  
such words as I would answer to.

If house-door face another's wedding bed, a wary  
mother on the couch once mine,  
then honour her and, children, praise your father's marriage:  
winning her she'll yield to you.  
Do not extol the mother past too much, the new  
will take unguarded speech as slights.  
If he remember me, consoled by shadows, holding  
still my ashes dear to him,  
he may then find his old age softened, and avoid  
the sorrows of a widower.  
Let time that was removed from me fill out your years,  
my offspring please an ageing Paullus.  
So will the house continue. I go willingly  
if many mine extend its span.

causa peroratast. flentes me surgite, testes, 99  
dum pretium vitae grata rependit humus. 100  
moribus et caelum patuit: sim digna merendo,  
cuius honoratis ossa vehantur avis.

My speech is ended. Rise from tears my witnesses:  
the earth will give what life has earned.  
To virtue heaven opens: may my worth convey these bones  
honourably to ancestors.

Notes

### 3. GLOSSARY

No translation can be word-for-word faithful, but the main departures from the prose sense of the text are given below, with notes on the classical allusions.<sup>1 4 23 24</sup> 'Literally' indicates departures from the literal sense. 'Strictly' indicates the omissions through verse requirements, i.e. where I have been unable to capture the full meaning in the 6:4 couplet. I reproduce my original notes, but readers wanting the literal version are probably better served now by sites like [nodictionaries.com](http://nodictionaries.com).

#### BOOK ONE

##### Elegy 1. Love's Madness

1. *brought*: literally: trapped.

3. *the little boy*: my addition.

6. *and wantoned with me, had no sense*: literally: wicked, to not live properly.

9-10. *But Tullus, my friend: Milanion went on to quell*: literally: Milanion never fled, Milanion, tasks to crush. *Tullus* may have been nephew to Lucius Volcaci<sup>us</sup> Tullus, consul in 33 BC with Octavian. *Milanion* won Atalanta's hand in the running contest set by her father *Iasus* by placing golden apples on the track, which she stopped to pick up: suitors who lost the race were put to death.

10. *issue*: my addition: usually translated as Atalanta.

13. *the centaur*: my addition. *Hylaeus* was a centaur killed by *Atalanta* when he attempted to rape her. Propertius supposes that Milanion was injured when he came to her rescue.

14. *Arcady* is the mountainous region of the Peloponnese, where the *Parthenian* hills and caves are also located.

15. *at last his Atalanta, fleet of foot*: literally: could subdue the fleet-footed one.

24. *summon up*: literally: lead. *Colchian song*: a reference to the sorceress Medea.

31-2. A rather free rendering: literally: Remain, those whom the god hears favourably, nodding assent, and be forever well matched in a love that is secure.

34. *toils the same through emptiness*: literally: never lacks an empty time.

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## Elegy 2. Beauty Unadorned

2. Cōan: from the island of Cos: the word has two syllables: Cō'an.

3. Antioch on the *Orontes* was the chief port shipping goods from the east.

7. *revival*: literally: treatment or medicine.

9. *brilliant*: my addition.

15-16. Much condensed. Strictly: Not so did Phoebe, daughter of Leucippus, set Castor aflame, or her sister Hilaira, do to Pollux with her ornaments. Leucippus was Helen of Troy's uncle. The Dioscuri twins, Castor and Pollux, carried off his daughters in a tale told by Theocritus in Idyll 22.

17-18. *Idas* and *Apollo* (Phoebus) fought over the daughter of *Evenus*: she chose Idas because, being mortal, he would grow old with her.

19. *face*: my addition.

20. *marriage on those Phrygian wheels*: strictly: Phrygian marriage on those foreign wheels. *Hippodamia*, daughter of King Oenomaus of Elis, was promised to the suitor who beat her father in a chariot race. Pelops, son of Tantalus from *Phrygia*, won by having the linchpin removed from the king's chariot.

21. *her natural dew-soaked skin*: literally: beauty.

22. *Apelles* was a famous 4<sup>th</sup> century BC painter from Cos.

23. *cosmetics found them few affairs*: literally: they did not seek lovers with cosmetics.

24. *a sun-flushed modesty sufficed*: literally: chastity was sufficient beauty.

28. *Calliope* was the chief of the nine Muses. *Aonian* refers to Aonia (Boeotia) where Mt. Helicon, sacred to the Muses, is located.

29. *clever*: literally: pleasing. *enchanting*: literally: approved by.

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### Elegy 3. After a Night's Drinking

1. *Cnossian girl*: Ariadne, daughter of Minos, King of Crete, helped Theseus escape from the Labyrinth. He married her, but then left her for Phaedra on the island of Dia.

1-4. *deceived*, *long*, and *threatened* are my additions.

3-4. *Andromeda* was the daughter of Cepheus, King of Ethiopia. Her mother claimed to be more beautiful than the Nereids, and Neptune in punishment demanded the sacrifice of Andromeda to a sea monster, from which she was delivered by Perseus.

5. *Maenad dancers*: literally: incessant dancers of Edonia. The Edoni were Thracian people where the orgiastic cult of Dionysus originated.

6. *Apidanus*: a river in Thessaly.

20. *Io*: literally: Inachus' child. Jupiter turned Io into a cow to hide her from his wife, Juno, but she sent *Argus* with his hundred eyes to spy on Io.

23-26. A puzzling and probably corrupt section. Most translators opt for a literal rendering, something like: I took pleasure in tidying the hair; now I gave furtive apples to cupped hands: these gifts I offered to ungrateful sleep, and the fruit repeatedly rolled from your sloping lap.

33. *you woke*: literally: she woke.

35. *some other girl*: literally: someone else.

36. *shamefaced*: literally: forthwith.

37. *wasted*: literally: spent, exhausted.

43. *unwed*: literally: foreign

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#### Elegy 4. Rebuke to Bassus

1. *Bassus* was a poet friend of Ovid's.

5-6. *Hermione*: daughter of Menelaus and Helen. *Nycteus*: son of Neptune. *Antiope*: mother by Jupiter of Amphion and Zethus.

9-10. The literal meaning makes doubtful sense: Less so, if she were compared to trivial beauties, would she come off worse, becoming ugly in the eyes of a harsh judge.

13. *knit*: literally: movement.

23. *hot*: my addition.

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#### Elegy 5. Warning to a Rival

3. *adopt*: literally: feel.

6. *Thessaly* was noted for its witchcraft.

10. *countless moments of despair*: literally: how many thousands of cares will she give you.

31. *Gallus*: identity unknown: apparently not Gallus the poet, who lacked noble birth.

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## Elegy 6. An Offer Declined

3. *Riphaean*: a legendary range of mountains marking the far north of the Roman world: *cold* is my addition.

4. *Memnon*: son of Tithonus and Aurora: king of Ethiopia: *south* is my addition.

6. *flushed complexion*: literally: changing colours.

13. *to visit*: literally: to know.

18. *declared she kept her kisses for an adverse wind*: strictly: kisses are owed to her and the wind being adverse.

19. *Tullus*: probably nephew of Lucius Volcaciuss Tullus: consul in 33 BC, and proconsul of Asia in 30-29 BC. Axes were symbols of power and authority, and were carried by lictors (bodyguards) in their *fasces* (bundles of white birch rods).

23. *youthful rascal*: literally: boy, i.e. Cupid.

31. *Ionian* cities were renowned for luxury.

32. *Pactolus* was a gold-bearing river flowing through Sardis.

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## Elegy 7. To an Epic Poet

1. *Ponticus*: a friend of Ovid's, was writing an epic poem on the Seven of Thebes, in which the brothers Eteocles and Polynices fought over the succession.

8: *moan / at torments that my life's become*: literally: complain of the hard facts of my life.

9. *path I tread*: literally: life I lead.

12. *abuse*: strictly: unfair threats.

13. *those deserted therefore*: literally: deserted lovers will.

20. *wing*: literally: serve.

24. *architect*: literally: poet.

15. *catch you with his truthful bow*: literally: strike you with his unerring bow.

16. *forbid he ever fight our gods*: a puzzling and probably corrupt passage, variously interpreted.

25. *do not scorn*: literally: beware of scorning. *honour*: literally: Amor: amended for sense.

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### Elegy 8A. Cynthia Plans to Go Abroad

2. *Illyria*: now parts of Yugoslavia and Albania.

10. The rise of the *Pleiades* marked the beginning of the sailing season.

16. *Galatea*: a sea nymph.

19. *Ceraunia*: the Ceraunian mountains were in north-west Epirus. *Oricos* was a port on the Illyrian coast, now Ericho.

25. *Propontic shores*: literally Atraciis of disputed reference: here amended to Goold's reading as a country bordering Scythia.

26. *Hylaeae*: a land beyond Scythia.

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### Elegy 8B. Cynthia Changes her Mind

35-36. *Hippodamia*: see note 2. 19-20 above. *Elis* was a state in the Peloponnese famous for breeding fine horses. *kingdom*: strictly: ancient kingdom.

39. *pearls*: literally: shell.

43. *And now I walk among the stars in highest heaven*: literally: Now I can touch the highest stars with the soles of my feet.

44. *the girl*: literally: she

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## Elegy 9. A Warning Come True

5. The *Chaonian* doves at the oracle of Dodona gave prophetic omens.

8. *prefer to be the novice now*: literally: only put down a rudimentary love.

10. Amphion's music in fable moved the walls of Thebes.

11. *Mimnermus*: a 7<sup>th</sup> century BC elegiac love poet. *good*: my addition.

20. *infernal wheel*: Ixion was tied to an ever-revolving wheel in Tartarus for attempting to seduce Juno.

22. *girl*: my addition.

26. *she yields*: literally: she is yours. *Ponticus*: see note 7.1.

29. *Amor*: literally: he.

30. *to Orpheus*: literally: to them.

33. *it eases*: strictly: it often eases.

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## Elegy 10. Gallus in Love

1. *pleasurable*: literally: pleasant the stillness.

5. *Gallus*: see note 5.31.

6. *lost among*: literally: uttering.

15. *enhance*: literally: were composed on.

28. *bliss*: literally: success.

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## Elegy 11. Cynthia at Baiae

1. *Baiae*: fashionable resort on the Bay of Naples.

2. The shallow *Lucrine Lake* between *Baiae* and *Misenum* was separated by a strip of land said to have been thrown up by *Hercules*.

3-4. Agrippa in 37 BC connected Lake Avernus, behind the Lucrine Lake, to the sea, forming a deep water harbour for the fleet. *Thesprotus*: when the crimes of Thyestes became known he fled to King Thesprotus, whose realms included Lake Avernus.

5. *thought or*: my addition.

12. The legendary hero *Teuthras* was associated with the nearby town of Cumae.

16. *gods that saw their troth*: literally: gods they share.

18. *love is fearful of itself*: literally: in this regard all love is fearful.

19. *letters*: literally: little books: perhaps verses more than letters.

29. *Forever was it*: literally: Its shores were.

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## Elegy 12. Cynthia Absent

3. *Hypanis*: probably the Bug, which flows into the Black Sea.

4. *Eridanus*: Greek name for the River Po.

10. Reference is to the Caucasus, where Prometheus was chained in punishment for stealing fire from heaven.

14. *complaints*: my addition: only implied in text.

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## Elegy 13. Gallus Succumbs

1. *Gallus*: see note 5.31.

9. *for all*: literally: for pain.

21-22. *Not so well did Neptune mingle with Enipeus / to win Salmōneus' child*. Condensed: strictly: Not so, mingled with Haemonian *Enipeus*, did

the *Taenarian god* embrace the daughter of *Salmōneus* with easy love. Tyro, daughter of Salmoneus, loved the river god Enipeus. Neptune, who had a sanctuary at Taenarus, was himself in love with Tyro and impersonated Enipeus to gain access to her.

23-24. *Hercules* put himself to death by fire on Mt. *Oeta* in Thessaly, but was revived by Jupiter, made a god, and given *Hebe*, the goddess of youth, as wife.

28. *own feelings*: literally: attraction.

29-30. *a Leda*: strictly: a second Leda. Leda, the wife of Tyndareus, king of Sparta, was seen bathing in the Eurotas by Jove (Jupiter), who took the form of a swan to seduce her. Leda's three daughters were Phoebe, Clytemnestra and Helen.

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Elegy 14. Love and Money

2. *Mentor* was a 4<sup>th</sup> century BC silversmith.

5. *or marvel*: my addition.

11. *Pactolus*: see note 6.32.

12. *pearls collect from Indian deeps*: literally: gems collect from the 'mare Rubrum' (i.e. the Indian Ocean off Arabia).

20. *Tullus*: see note 1.9.

21. *lovesick*: strictly: lovesick youth.

23. *need no*: literally: need not revere.

24. *Alcinous* was the rich king of the Phaeacians in Scheria, who received Odysseus hospitably and sent him on to Ithaca.

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Elegy 15. Cynthia Slow to Visit

4. *hour of need*: literally: fear.

8. *her latest*: literally: a new.

9. *Calypso*, the sea-nymph, held Ulysses the *Ithacan* for seven years on her island of Ogygia.

17-18. *Hypsipyle*, queen of Lemnos, and loved by Jason (*Aeson's son*) when the Argonauts visited on their way to Colchis.

20. *Haemonian guest*: Jason.

21. *Evadne* was the wife of Capaneus, one of the seven against Thebes: she immolated herself on his funeral pyre.

22. *displayed*: literally: died in.

15. *Alphesiboea*, the wife of Alcamaeon, was forced by an oracle to desert her. When her brothers killed Alcamaeon, however, Alphesiboea took her revenge by killing them.

33. *not cheapen those fine eyes*: literally: do not hold those eyes too cheap.

35. *less than truth*: literally: lies.

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## Elegy 16. The Door's Complaint

1. *collected*: literally: was open to.

2. *true Patrician ways*: literally: Patrician chastity.

9. *graffiti*: literally obscene words: may refer to lover's serenades.

10. *noble once, now lewd remarks*: literally: noble, now delivered over to indecent comments.

12. *less honourably*: literally: more shamefully.

40. *where gutters meet*: literally: where three roads meet.

46. *kill*: literally: roar against.

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## Elegy 17. A Storm at Sea

2. *halcyons*: birds that nested on and calmed the waves: here seagulls.

3. *Cassiope* was a harbour town in the north-east of Corfu, a port of call for those making the Adriatic crossing to or from Brindisi. But the word may simply refer to the constellation, perhaps disgraced in mythology — suggesting the storm episode is being used metaphorically.

4. *wasted*: literally: fall.

7. *No changing*: literally: Won't changing.

12. *console*: literally: hold.

18. *Heavenly Twins*: literally: Tyndarids: Castor and Pollux, protectors of sailors.

21. *place*: literally: funeral.

25. *Doris*: sea-goddess, the wife of Nereus and mother of the Nereids.

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## Elegy 18. The Poet in Solitude

2. *Zephyr*: the west wind.

8. *branded with your mark*: allusion to the 'nota censoria' in the censors' list of citizens slated for immorality.

11. *As much as you would trifle with me*: more often translated: As much as I would have you back, capricious one: amended for sense.

17. *my changed look*: literally: changing colour.

20. *Pan*: literally: the Arcadian god.

21. *so often*: literally: ah, often. *whispered through*: literally: resounded beneath.

23. *And how*: literally: Ah, how.

24. *witnessed by your silent door*: literally: known only to the silent door.

26. *made no querulous complaint*: literally: not babble complaints over what she has done.

28. *sleeping rough where all trails end*: literally: comfortless trails in the wilderness.

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## Elegy 19. Facing Death

1. *underworld*: literally Manes.

5. *lids*: literally: eyes. *love*: literally: the boy.

7. *heroic*: strictly: heroic husband. *Phylacas's*: Protesilaus, the first Greek hero to be killed at Troy, only recently married, was the grandson of Phylacus.

8. *forgo*: literally be forgetful of.

11. *whatever else*: literally: whatever I shall be.

18. *that body*: literally: the bones.

26. *be enough*: literally: last long enough.

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## Elegy 20. Hercules and Hylas

2. *escape your mind*: literally: flow from your unthinking mind.

3. *befalls*: strictly: often befalls.

3-5. *Ascanius*: a river in Bithynia, where *Hylas*, the loved friend of Hercules, was abducted. Hylas, son of king Theiodamas, was one of the Argonauts (here called was the *Minyae* because many were grandsons of Minyas, king of Thessaly) who sailed with Jason on the Argo in the search of the Golden Fleece.

6. *fame*: literally name: amended for sense.

9. *or have*: literally: or anywhere. *Giant's shore*: Baiae: see note 11.1.

11-12. *as lustful*: literally: no less lustful. Ausonian and Adryasin refer to water nymphs, Ausonia being Italian.

15. *wandering*: strictly: unhappily wandering.

17. *Pagasa*: coastal town in Thessaly.

18. *Phasis*: river in Colchis (Georgia).

19. *Hellespont*: literally: Athamantis.

20. *Mysia*: rugged coast on the Sea of Marmora.

23. *the invincible*: Hercules.

26. *Cālaïs* and *Zetes* were winged sons of Boreas, the north wind.

31. *Orithyia's nearest*: strictly: they of Pandion, Orithyia's line. Pandion was a king of Athens, and grandfather to *Orithyia*, mother of the Boreads.

32. *Hamadryads*: tree-nymphs.

33. *Arganthus* is a mountain in Mysia. *Pegae* is the Greek for 'spring'.

34. *Thynian*: north coast of Propontis.

39. his nail: strictly: his tender nail.

49. *Alcides*: Hercules.

51. *keep good guard*: literally: guard your love.

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## Elegy 21. A Dead Kinsman Speaks

1. The poem implies that both Gallus and his brother were kinsmen to Propertius, and involved in the Perusine War of 41-40 BC, a struggle between Mark Antony's supporters and the young Octavian, which ended with Caesar Octavian's capture and savage treatment of Perugia (*Perusia*).

4. *regiment*: literally: army's part.

5. *Though*: literally: On this condition.

9. *far*: my addition.

10. *assuredly*: literally: know that.

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## 22. The Poet's Birthplace

1. *home*: literally: Penates, the household gods.

7. *of Tuscany*: literally: Etruscan.

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## BOOK TWO

### Elegy 1. The Task

3. *give*: literally: sing. *Calliope*: see note 1.2.28

5-6. *Cōan*: see note 1.2.2. Second 'Coan' omitted.

14. Homer's *Iliad* runs to over 16,000 lines in 24 books.

17. *Maecenas*: Gaius Cilnius Maecenas was a close friend of Octavian and a wealthy patron of the arts. He supported Virgil and Horace, and the dedication to him here suggests that Propertius has now been admitted to his literary circle.

19-20. The giants Otus and Ephialtes piled Mt. *Ossa* on *Olympus* and *Pelion* on *Ossa* to reach heaven in the war of the Titans.

21-22. *Thebes*: see note 1.7.1. *Pergama*: citadel of Troy. *Xerxes* on invading Greece cut a canal through the isthmus in Chalcidice.

23. *early reign of Remus*: early history of Rome. *rise*: literally: spirit. *Carthage* is a reference to the three Punic Wars.

24. *Cimbri*: a Germanic tribe invading Italy, defeated by Marius in 101 BC.

25. *Caesar*: Octavian, made Augustus in 27 BC.

26. Repetition of 'Caesar' omitted: literally: your Caesar . . . mighty Caesar.

27-28. *I've sung*: strictly: I've often sung. *routs*: strictly: naval battles and routs. *Mutina*, besieged by Mark Antony, was relieved in 43 BC by Octavian. At *Philippi* in Macedonia Brutus and Cassius were defeated by Octavian in 42 BC. *Routs off Sicily* is a reference to Octavian's war against Sextus Pompey.

29. Siege of *Perusia*: see note 1.21.1.

30. *Pharos*: famous lighthouse on the island off Alexandria. *Ptolemaic*: descendants of Alexander's general Ptolemy ruled Egypt from 323 to 30 BC.

31-34. Refers to Octavian's Triumph in 29 BC commemorating his victory at Actium over Antony and Cleopatra. Representations of the kingdoms conquered were carried up the Sacred Way to the Capitol.

37-38. Theseus and Achilles (son of Ixion) were famous for their loyalty to comrades. The section is corrupt or missing a couplet: most translators expand to something like: Theseus and Pirithous to the shades below and Achilles and Patroclus to the gods above illustrate a comrade's love.

3.9.34. *faith*: strictly: true faith.

39. Another reference to the Titans. They battled the Gods on the plain of Phlegra in Thessaly.

39-42. *Callimachus* was the great elegist of third century BC Greece. Propertius claimed a similar aversion to the epic, and the 39-40 couplet echoes Callimachus's style. Caesar's family claimed descent from Aeneas of Troy.

47. *one girl only*: literally: only one.

51. *Phaedra*: literally: stepmother Phaedra, an allusion to Phaedra's guilty passion for her stepson Hippolytus.

53. *Circe*: the sorceress in the *Odyssey* Book 10.

54. *Colchian witch*: Medea who tried to rejuvenate Jason's father at *Iolcus* in Thessaly.

59. *legs: strictly: lame legs*. *Machaon* was surgeon to the Greek army at Troy. *Philoctetes* suffered a festering wound caused by snake bite on his way to Troy.

60. The centaur *Chiron*, son of *Philyra*, cured the blindness of the *Phoenix*.

61-2. *Androgeon*: strictly: lifeless Androgeon. The son of the Cretan king Minos, he was brought back to life by *Asclepius* (*the Epidaurian god*).

63-64. *Achilles' spear*: literally Haemonian spear. Haemonia is the poetical term for Thessaly, where Achilles was born. The king of *Mysia* was wounded by the spear of Achilles, but cured by rust from the same weapon.

65-66. In punishment for disobeying the Gods, *Tantalus* was immersed in a lake with fruit forever just out of reach.

67-68. For killing their husbands on their wedding nights, the daughters of Danaus were condemned to fill a leaking water-tank in the Underworld.

69-70. *breast*: strictly: middle of his breast. *vulture*: literally: bird. A vulture fed on the entrails of Prometheus, which grew again in the night.

76. *splendid British chariot*: literally embossed British chariot. The Romans used the two-wheeled Celtic chariot for pleasure trips.

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## Elegy 2. A Description of Cynthia

2. *affairs*: literally: deceptions.

7. *Munychian*: Athenian.

8. *Gorgon*: Athena's breastplate displayed the Gorgon's head. The Gorgon was the daughter of Phorcis, whose snake-haired gaze turned all who looked at her to stone.

13-14. A reference to the contest between Juno, Venus and Minerva: Paris awarded the prize to Venus, gaining Helen of Troy.

16. *Cumae Sibyl*: the Sibyl of Cumae was offered eternal youth by Apollo, but given an eternity of growing old when she refused him.

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### Elegy 3. Enslaved Again

8. *not erased*: literally: never destroyed.

10. *Nor fashion's hair that falls about the smoothest neck*: literally: Nor hair that falls in a customary fashion on that smooth neck.

11. *Maeotian*: Lake Maeotis, the Sea of Azov.

17. *Iacchus*: cult title of Bacchus. *wine*: my addition. *free*: literally: beautifully

18. *Ariadne*: see note 1.3.1.

19. *Aeolian*: Aeolic was the dialect spoken in Lesbos, home to Sappho and Alcaeus.

20. *Aganippe*: spring on Mt. Helicon, sacred to the Muses.

21. *Corinna*: a Boeotian poetess contemporary with Pindar.

22. *Erinna*: 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Greek poetess of the island of Telos, near Rhodes.

24. A noisy sneeze was a good omen.

36. *Pergamum*: ancient Greek city in Mysia on the river Caicus.

38. refused: literally: delayed.

44. *Eos and Hesperia*: dawn (eastern) lands and western lands (from Greek hespera).

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## Elegy 4. The Miseries of Love

3.51-52. The seer Melampus, son of Amythaon, undertook to recover the cattle stolen by Iphiclus from Neleus, for the sake of Pero, Neleus's daughter, whom he subsequently married.

4.2. *ask a favour, be repulsed*: strictly: often ask a favour, often be repulsed.

3. *be forced*: literally: must often.

5. *I've found*: my addition.

7. *nocturnal Colchis*: Medea.

8. *Perimede*: another witch.

20. *shallow waves*: literally: waves of a tiny strand.

21. *boy . . . a girl* : literally: one . . . other: amended for clarity.

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## Elegy 5. Cynthia's Wantonness

4. 'Cynthia' omitted from line.

11. *Carpathian*: sea between Crete and Rhodes was notorious stormy.

17. *Juno*: the goddess of marriage and guardian spirit of women.

23. *mischief at my hands*: literally: intend injury with thumbs.

26. *ivy*: sacred to Bacchus, referring to Propertius himself, an elegiac writer.

28. *slut*: literally: light.

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## Elegy 6. Unhelpful Influences

1. *Lais*: a famous courtesan of 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC Corinth.

3. *Thais*: an Athenian courtesan, after whom *Menander* named a comedy. She was Alexander's mistress and later married Ptolemy I of Egypt.  
*Athenians*: literally: people of Erichthonius, an early king of Athens.

5-6. *Phryne*: a Boeotian courtesan who offered to rebuild Thebes at her own expense after it was destroyed by Alexander.

3.18.29. *misery*: literally: unreasonable grief.

3.18.29-30. Reference to the plague that followed Agamemnon's rape of Chryseis, daughter of Apollo's priest.

14. *can see*: literally: suspect.

17-18. *Centaurs . . . Pirithous*. A reference to the wedding of the Lapith Pirithous, where the Centaurs tried to abduct the Lapith women.

19. *Romulus*: legendary 8<sup>th</sup> century BC founder (with Remus) of Rome, descendants of Aeneas of Troy, who were suckled by a wolf.

20. *Sabine* women: Romulus invited women from the nearby Sabines to witness games, from which they were abducted by the Romans.

23. *Be blessed the wives of Ulysses and Admetus*: literally: Blessed is the wife of Admetus and the bed of Ulysses. Alcestis died to save to life of her husband *Admetus*: Penelope stayed faithful to *Ulysses* during the Odyssey.

33. *unembarrassed*: literally: unembellished.

34. *without obscenities*: literally: unpainted by such crimes.

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## Elegy 7. A Law Withdrawn

7.1. *edict*. Octavian, needing money to prosecute the war with Mark Antony, proposed levying a tax on bachelors.

16. Helen's brother *Castor* was a famous horseman.

18. *Scythians*: literally: Borysthenidae, of the modern river Dneiper.

20. *country's name*: can also mean 'father's name'.

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## Elegy 8. Robbed

7-8. *so spin / your prospects in*: literally: so goes.

10. *well-defended Troy are dust*: literally: nourished Troy is fallen.

19-20. *your. . . your*: literally: our . . . my.

21. *Haemon*: strictly: Boeotian Haemon. Son of Creon of Thebes, Haemon killed himself on finding his fiancée Antigone dead.

29-38. Incidents in Homer's Iliad.

34. *body*: my addition.

35. *Briseis*: Achilles' slave-girl, taken from him by Agamemnon, a quarrel that forms a central theme of the Iliad.

38. *horses'*: strictly: Thessalian horses.

39. *birth*: literally: mother.

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## Elegy 9A. Not Another Penelope

2. *another*: literally: a dear one.

10. *lovely love-blanch'd*: literally: white.

12. *sandy shallows*: literally shallows. *Simois*: a river near Troy.

13. *tore*: literally: fouled.

14. *huge burnt*: literally: enormous: burnt added for clarity.

15-16. *Achilles* was the son of Peleus and the sea-goddess Thetis. *Deidamia*, the daughter Lycomedes, the ruler of the island of Scyros, bore Achilles' son Neoptolemus.

26. *Styx* is a river of the Underworld: i.e. Cynthia was near death.

33. *Syrtes*: shifting sands off the north African coast.

42. *trembling*: literally: miserable.

48. *love's exertions*: literally: love between you.

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## Elegy 9B. Fighting for Cynthia

An enigmatic fragment.

1. The *Theban leaders* were the sons of Oedipus, their mother was Jocasta: see note 1.7.1

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## Elegy 10. Praise of Augustus

1. *Helicon*: mountain dedicated to the Muses in Boeotia, consecrated to Hesiod the didactic poet.

2. *Haemonian horse*: the epic.

3. *It pleases*: strictly: Now it pleases.

7. *mine is sung*: literally: my girl is written.

12: *Muse*: literally: Pierides. Piera in Macedonia was the birthplace of the Muses.

14. *Cassi*: Marcus Licinius Crassus was disastrously beaten by the Parthians at Carrhae in 53 BC, with great loss of life.

15-16. Octavian took the name *Augustus* in January 27 BC, helping to date this poem. The reference to *Arabia* is a gross exaggeration: Aelius Gallus attempted an unsuccessful invasion of the country in 25 BC.

23. *heights*: literally: chariot.

25. *Ascra*: Hesiod's home: the fountain refers to poetry in epic hexameters.

26. *Permessus*: a stream at the foot of Mt. Helicon, and so standing for elegiac poetry, considered inferior to the epic.

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## Elegy 11. To Cynthia: A Threat

2. *your worth is sown in barren soil*: literally: let him praise who sows in barren soil.

5-6. *care / how*: literally: say / 'how.

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## Elegy 12. Picture of Love

10. *Knossus*: the Cretans were famous as archers.

17. *body*: literally: marrow.

19-20. *why to punish / this poor shadow of himself*: literally: not I but this thin shadow of me is being beaten.

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## Elegy 13. Foreseeing his Funeral

1. *ancient Parthian flights*: literally: Achaemenid Etruscan arrows. The first is a historical error: the Achaemenids had ruled Persia much earlier and did not use the tactics of steppe warriors. Etruscan is a conundrum, which I have rendered as 'ancient'. *Susa* was the capital of the Parthian kingdom.

3. *slender*: an allusion to the Greek poet Callimachus.

4. *Ascra*: see note 2.10.25.

5. *Pierian*: Apollonian: see note 2.10.12.

8. *Linus*: a legendary poet.

19. Funeral processions carried wax masks of ancestors who had held a curule office.

22. *Attalic*: a method of weaving gold thread, attributed to King *Attalus* of Pergamum.

25. *three books*: Book Two originally consisted of two volumes.

26. *Persephone* was Pluto's consort and queen of the Underworld.

31. *chars all to cinders*: literally: turns me to ash.

38. *great Achilles*: literally: Phthian hero.

43. *Three Sisters*: the Fates.

47. *pyre was lit*: literally: ashes were seen: amended for clarity. *Nestor* of the Iliad lost his son Antilochus at Troy.

50. *slow*: literally: late.

53-54. *Adonis* was killed (i.e. won by Persephone from Venus in their competition for him) when hunting on Mt. Idalium in Cyprus.

55. *he so handsome, Venus washed*: literally: you, Venus, washed the handsome man.

58. *what breath can wait on these small bones*: literally: what reply can these small bones make.

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## Elegy 14. The Poet's Triumph

1. *Atrides*: Agamemnon or Menelaus. *Laomedon*: king who built the walls of Troy.

4. Ithaca: literally *Dulichia*: Ulysses's home.

5-6. Reference to Sophocles's *Electra*. Orestes sent his sister an urn supposedly holding his ashes, but revealed himself to her when returning to avenge the murder of his father Agamemnon.

7-8. *that dark maze*: strictly: the maze of Daedalus. See note 1.3.1

23. *Parthia*: see note 2.10.14

25. *Cythera*: Venus: the island of Cythera (modern Kithera), is where, by legend, Venus first stepped ashore.

29. *heavy*: my addition.

31. *fail*: literally: alter.

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### Elegy 15. Love's Ecstasy

7. *Her breath fell on my eyelids thick with sleep*: literally: With her mouth she opened my eyes that had fallen asleep.

15. *Diana*: literally: Phoebe's sister. Endymion: shepherd boy on Mt. Latmos in Caria, with whom Diana fell in love.

23. *Let's feast*: strictly: While fate allows let's feast.

34. *cindery earth*: literally: dryness.

43. *blows*: strictly: cruel blows.

44. *Actium*: naval battle of 31 BC, in which Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra.

45. *attacked*: strictly: so often attacked: *forever* has been transposed.

46. *grieving*: my addition.

49. *in glory in our loving*: literally: while the light continues, do not desert life.

54. *fate will shut us in*: literally: will enclose our fate.

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### Elegy 16. Praetor back from Illyria

1. After a year of office in Rome, a *praetor* normally served as a provincial governor, often enriching himself. For *Illyria* see note 1.8A.2. For *Ceraunian rocks* see note 1.8A.19-20.

2. *spoils for you, deep cares for me*: strictly: great spoils for you, great cares for me.

6. *The door / that's never closed is shut to me*: literally: The door is all night open but I'm not there.

16. *sacked*: literally: ruined.

19-20. An allusion to the Casa Romuli, preserved on the Palatine.

27. *foreigner*: some rival who started as a handsome brute displaying his strength in the slave market.

29. *Eriphyla* was bribed to send her husband to his death in the expedition of the Seven against Thebes. His sons avenged him by killing their mother.

30. *Creusa*: the woman Jason married when he deserted Medea. The latter sent Creusa a poisoned wedding gift to kill her.

32. *can't pain / be sometime absent*: literally: does pain not know how to stay away.

34. *Campus*: the Campus Martius, a recreation ground in Rome.

37. *blustering general*: literally: leader . . . empty noise.

37-42. A reference to Antony and Cleopatra, and their defeat by Octavian at *Actium*.

41. *Caesar's glory had its virtue*: literally: Caesar's merit and Caesar's glory.

45. *swept up*: literally: swept into the void.

49. *heard*: literally: seen. *sky*: strictly: whole sky.

55. *Sidon* was famous for its purple dye.

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Elegy 18A. Young Love Rebuffed

The first lines of this elegy have been lost.

6. *Tithonus*, son the Trojan king Laomedon, was loved by *Aurora*, goddess of the dawn. He asked the gods for immortality but, forgetting to add eternal youth, withered into increasing old age.

10. *before attending to her horses' needs*: strictly: before she unyoked her horses and washed them.

12. *currently*: literally: scarcely.

14. *willed her duty*: strictly: did her duty unwillingly.

16. *Memnon*, the son of Tithonus and Aurora, and king of Ethiopia, was killed in the Trojan War.

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### Elegy 18B. Painted Cheeks

25. *Belgic*: possibly the dye called Batavian foam used to colour the hair red.

36. *over-rouged*: literally: over-decorated.

38. *both*: my addition.

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### Elegy 19. Cynthia in the Country

1. *still*: literally: I'm glad.

4. *make women err*: literally: make you err.

5. *disturbed*: literally: made bitter.

18. *too*: my addition. *Diana*: huntress of the chase.

20. *loose*: literally: urge on.

21. *Of course*: my addition.

25. *Clitumnus*: an Umbrian river: it rises near Propertius's birthplace.

29. *silent*: literally: lonely.

31-32. *for fear your name attract a wooing tongue, and take / advantage of you while I'm gone*: literally: that I change at your name on a persistent tongue, and no one would wish not to harm an absent one.

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## Elegy 20. Faithful for Ever

1. *Briseis*: see note 2.8.35.

2. *Andromache*: Hector's widow, who was taken as a concubine by Neoptolemus of Thessaly after the fall of Troy.

5. *bird of Attica*: the nightingale. According to Greek legend, Procne, an Athenian princess, murdered her son Itys to punish her husband but ever afterwards mourned his death.

6. *Cecrops*: Athenian: Cecrops was the first king of Athens.

7-8. For boasting that she had more children than the mother of Apollo and Diana, Apollo killed the twelve children of *Niobe*, who turned to stone on Mt. Siplyos in Lydia as she wept for them.

10. *Danaë* was imprisoned in a metal tower because the oracle foretold that her son would kill Danaë's father. Jove fell in love with her, and begot Perseus, who did indeed kill his grandfather.

11. *those chains*: strictly: those chains, my life.

12. *barricading iron walls*: literally: iron house of Danaë.

17. *darkness, to*: strictly: darkness, my life, to.

28. *loyalty*: literally: care for me.

29. *tragic Furies*: Eumenides of Greek tragedy: avengers of ill.

30. *Aeacus*: son of Zeus and Aegina: a pious man who after his death became, with Minos and Rhadamanthys, a judge of the dead in the Underworld.

31. The giant Tityos tried to rape Latona, mother of Apollo and Diana, and was punished in Hades by *vultures* that perpetually fed on his liver.

32. *Sisyphus*: king of Corinth and noted for his trickery. He was condemned in Hades to forever to roll uphill a stone that always rolled back.

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### Elegy 21. Panthus dupes Cynthia

1. *damned me with*: strictly: damned me with to you. *Panthus*: identity unknown: appears only in this elegy.

3. *Dodana*: see note 1.9.5.

10-11. *Jason . . . Creüsa*: see note 2.16.30.

12. *young Dulichian*: Theseus: see note 1.15.9.

16. *give themselves*: literally: be so kind.

19. *at all times you choose*: literally: at whatever time.

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### Elegy 22. One Girl is Not Enough

2. *Demōphoön*: son of Theseus who deceived his lover Phyllis: probably a pseudonym.

13. *fall*: literally: be soft.

15-16. A reference to the ecstatic and emasculated priests of the Phrygian goddess Cybele.

19. *Thamyras*: strictly: singer Thamyras. Thracian bard who challenged the Muses to a competition, and was blinded by them.

20. *friend*: literally: envious one.

25. Jupiter, to spend longer with Alcmena, impersonated her husband and stopped the rotation of the stars in the Great and Little Bears.

29-30. Incidents in Homer's Iliad.

31-32. *Andromache*: wife of Hector of Troy.

33. *destroying*: strictly: with power to destroy.

34. *achieve*: literally: be fierce as

38. *that girl*: my addition.

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### Elegy 17. A Night Denied

4. *portions*: literally: sides.

5. *Tantalus*: see note 2.1.65-66.

7. *Sisyphus*: see note 2.20.32.

13. *high cliff*: literally: hard stone.

16. *slip my message through her door*: strictly: pass my message through a crack in her door.

18.4. *never felt a touch of it*: literally: deny you are hurt.

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### Elegy 23. In Praise of Call-Girls

6. *pretty*: my addition.

7. *as did Hercules*: strictly: as they say did Hercules.

14. *Sacred Way*: the Via Sacra was a principal shopping street in Rome. See note 2.24.14.

24. *relinquish rights*: literally: give up liberty.

24.2. *savoured*: literally: read.

24.3. *wince* : literally: sweat.

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## Elegy 24. Everlasting Fidelity

25-26. A reference to the Labours of Hercules: who had to destroy the Hydra of Lerna (a marsh near Argos), and collect golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides at the western limits of the world.

33. *Hercules*: literally: Alcides. *Sibyl*: see note 2.2.16.

34. *day of death*: literally: black day.

43. *Minoan*: Ariadne. See note 1.3.1.

44. *Demōphoön*: see note 2.22.2.

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## Elegy 25. Love's Frustrations

1. *most*: literally: often.

4. *Calvus* and *Catullus* were Latin poets of the previous generation.

10. *Tithonus*: see note 2.18A.6. *Nestor*: see note 2.13.46.

12. *Perillus*: strictly: cruel Perillus, an Athenian craftsman who made a brazen bull for the Tyrant of Agrigentum, in which criminals could be burnt alive. He was executed by the same device.

13. *Gorgon*: the Medusa, a snake-haired monster whose gaze turned all who saw her into stone. Killed by Perseus.

14. *vultures*: see note 2.1.69.

17. *weaken love*: literally wear down love.

26. The chariot race typically had seven laps.

34. *the envy caused then will not last*: literally: that which causes envy is not usually of long duration.

36. *know my age*: literally: age conquers me.

40. *disgrace*: literally: torment.

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## 26A. A Dream of Cynthia

1. *In a dream you were*: literally: In a dream I saw you.
5. *caught*: literally: tossed. *Helle*: daughter of Athamas, King of Thebes. She fled Ino, her cruel stepmother, riding on a golden ram, but fell off into what is now called the Hellespont.
7. take your name: i.e. as Helle gave her name to the Hellespont.
9. *Castor, and his brother*: see note 1.17.18.
10. *Ino* (see above) was attacked by her husband, whom Juno had driven mad, leaping into the sea and being turned into the sea-goddess Leucothea (here Leucothoë).
13. *Glaucus*: a sea-god, son of Neptune.
14. *now*: my addition.
15. *Nereids*: see note 1.17.25.
16. *Neseae* and *Cymothoë* are the names of Nereids in Homer's Iliad.
17. *one*: strictly: the same, I fancy.
18. *Arion*: 7<sup>th</sup> century poet from Lesbos was saved from pirates by a dolphin that carried him safely to shore.

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## Elegy 26B. A Man of Consequence

21. *Amazed*: literally: Now wondering.
23. *Gyges . . . Croesus*: both kings of Lydia in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Gyges was the favourite officer of Candaules, and usurped the throne with the connivance of Candaules's queen. Croesus was proverbial for his great wealth.

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## Elegy 26C. A Voyage

29. *My girl*: strictly: Alas, my girl.

37. *Ulysses*: the hero of Homer's Iliad.

38. On their voyage home, after the victory at Troy, the Greeks lost their fleet on the rocks of Caphereus, a promontory of *Euboea*.

39-40. The reference is to the Symplegades or Clashing Rocks: the *Argo* sailed through them after a dove had been released to find a safe passage.

40. *Argo*: strictly: inexperienced Argo.

47. *Amydone*: strictly: Witness Amydone. Amydone, one of the fifty daughters of Danaus, was sent out to find water during a drought: she was rescued from a satyr but ravished by Poseidon (Neptune).

48. *Lerna*: see note 2.24.25.

51. *Orithyia*: daughter of Erechtheus, king of Athens: she was carried off by Boreas, the north wind.

52. *sea*: strictly: high or deep sea.

53. *Scylla*: strictly: Believe me, Scylla.

54. *Scylla* was the sea-monster on the Italian side of the Straits of Messina that devoured sailors. *Charybdis* was the whirlpool on the Sicilian side of the Straits, a female sea-monster that continually swallowed and ejected sea-water.

56. *Orion . . . Kid*: the autumnal rising of these constellations was associated with stormy weather.

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## Elegy 27. Return from the Dead

3. *wise*: my addition. The seagoing Phoenicians studied the stars, though astrology is ascribed to the Babylonians.

11. *It is*: literally: Only

12. *Boreas*: see note 2.26C.51.

13. *Stygian*: see note 2.9.26.

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## Elegy 28. Cynthia III

2. *spare death in one so beautiful*: strictly: or you'll be charged with the death of one so beautiful.

4. *Dogstar*: Sirius: its rising in July marked the hottest time of the year.

11. *Argive*: literally Pelasgian. Argos was Juno's ancient place of worship.

12. *found eyes*: literally: denied that the eyes. *Pallas*: Pallas Athena: she had grey eyes.

14. *careless*: literally: criminal.

18. *Io* was transformed into the Egyptian goddess Isis.

19. *Ino*: see note 2.26A.10.

21. *Andromeda*: see note 1.3.3-4.

22. *Perseus*: strictly: noble Perseus.

23. *Callisto*: a nymph attending Diana, who turned her into a bear for falling in love with Jupiter.

27. *Semele*: mother of Bacchus by Jupiter: she asked to see his full majesty and was destroyed lightning.

29. *Homer*: literally: Maeonia, the birthplace of Homer.

32. *day of death*: literally: harsh day.

33. *Juno*: strictly: wife Juno.

47. *Persephone*: see note 2.13.26.

49. *many*: strictly: many thousand.

50. *let one remain on earth above*: strictly: let one who's pretty stay above, if that is possible.

51-2. *Antiope, Europa, lovely Tyro*: goddesses celebrated for their beauty. *Pasiphaë* coupled with a bull to produce the Minotaur.

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### Elegy 29A. A Fantasy

3. *group of little boys*: Cupid's fugitiuarii, responsible for capturing runaway slaves.

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### Elegy 29B. An Early Morning Visit

27. *Vesta*: strictly: chaste Vesta: goddess of the hearth.

2.9. *Lapiths*: Greek tribe inhabiting the north of Thessaly. Ischomache: Hippodamia, who married Pirithous and was insulted by the centaurs: see note 2.6.17-18.

2.11. *Brimo*: goddess, often identified with Persephone. *Boebeis*: lake in Thessaly.

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### Elegy 30A. Inescapable Love

30.B.19. *Hyrceanian*: country south of the Caspian sea.

2. *Don*: literally: Tanais: river in Sarmatia.

3-4. *Pegasus*. . . *Perseus*: see note 1.3.3-4.

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## Elegy 30B. Live with Me

17. *Maeander*: see note 2.34.35-6. The reed pipe was invented by Pallas Athene, but she threw it away when distending her cheeks made her look ugly.

25. *I ask you*: literally: may it please you to.

29. *Semele*: see note 2.28.27. *Io*: see note 1.3.20.

33. *Muses*: literally: virgins.

35. *Oeagrus*: father of Orpheus.

36. *Bistonian*: Thracian.

38. *thyrsus*: wand wreathed in ivy and carried by worshipers of Dionysus.

39. *sacred ivy*: see note 2.5.26.

40. *empty*: literally: powerless.

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## Elegy 31-32. Cynthia's Infidelities

31.1. *Sun's*: literally: Phoebus's.

31.1-2. Octavian's temple complex on the Palatine was dedicated in 28 BC, after the victory at Actium.

31.3. *Punic*: African.

31.4. *Danaus* had fifty daughters and was pursued to Argos by fifty nephews, who wanted to marry them. Danaus ordered his daughters to murder them on their wedding nights, for which they were punished in Hades by having to fill an ever-leaking trough or amphora.

31.5. *marble gleamed*: strictly: marble statue stood.

31.7. *Myron*: a 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Greek sculptor, famous for animal depictions.

31.10. *Ortygia*: Delos.

31.12. *Libya ivory*: literally Libyan tooth.

31.13. The *Gauls* under Brennus tried to sack Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi in 278 BC, but were driven off by the Delphians, aided by an earthquake and storm that brought rocks from Mt. *Parnassus* down on the invaders. *one*: literally: the other.

31.14. *Niobe*: see note 2.20.7.

31.15. *Pytho*: a monstrous snake killed by Apollo at Delphi: the cult title of Apollo.

31.16. sung and played: literally: sings and plays.

32.7. keep to: literally: walk only here.

32.9. *hurrying*: strictly: hurrying with lit torches.

32.2. *eyes that make the guilty party*: literally: eyes/lights that bear the crime.

32.3. *Praeneste*: town, 20 miles from Rome, with a temple where fortunes were told by drawing lots.

32.4. *Telēgonus*: strictly Aeaen Telēgonus. i.e. Tusculum, a town 14 miles from Rome, which was supposedly founded by Telegonus, son of Ulysses by Circe.

32.5 *Tibur*: modern Tivoli, 18 miles from Rome, having a famous temple to Hercules. *Lanuvium* was 18 miles from Rome on the Appian Way.

32.10. *crossroads goddess*: literally Trivia. The grove was sacred to Diana.

32.11. *you say*: literally: of course. *Pompey's columns*: a court with colonnades adjoining the theatre of Pompey in the Campus Martius.

32.12. *thread of gold*: literally noble Attalid. See note 2.13.2.

32.14. *Maron*: son of Bacchus or of his attendant Silenus.

32.16. *Triton*: sea-divinity.

32.18. *city*: strictly: city, demented one.

32. 28. *Phoebus*: the sun-god, who sees everything.

32.31. *Tyndaris' daughter*: Helen of Troy, daughter of Tyndaris.

32.33. *the gods*: literally: heaven.

32.35. Reference is to the nymph Oenone on Mt. Ida in Troad.

32.37. *Hamadryads*: tree-nymphs. *Selini*: elderly Satyrs. *chorus father*: presumably Bacchus.

32.43. *accommodating*: literally: fortunate.

32.45. *Lesbia*: mistress of Catullus.

32.47. *expecting Tatius or primal Sabines*: strictly: looks for ancient Tatius or stern Sabines. Tatius was the Sabine king who fought Romulus: renowned for archaic purity.

32.49. *deep*: my addition.

32.52. *Saturn's reign*: golden age.

32.53. *Deucalion's waters*: Deucalion was the son of Prometheus. When Zeus, angry at men's wrong-doings, decided to flood the world, Deucalion saved himself and wife by building a boat: they founded the race of Leleges.

32.54. *that Deucalion deluge went*: literally: after those ancient Deucalion waters.

32.57. *wife of mighty Minos*: Pasiphaë, who gave birth to the Minotaur.

32.59. *Danaë*. See note 2.20.10.

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## Elegy 33A. Isis

1. Io was the daughter of Inachus. Turned into a cow by Juno, angry at Jove's infidelity, she wandered the world so till reaching Egypt, where she became the goddess Isis.

3. *ways*: literally: rites. *our matrons*: strictly matrons of Ausonia. The latter is the poetical name for Italy.

20. *never mixed*: literally: never pleased each other.

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### Elegy 33B. More Wine

24-30. *Icarus' oxen*: Icarus was an Attic farmer who entertained Dionysus and was given the secret of wine-making. He was murdered by fellow farmers who thought he had poisoned them. Dionysus set him among the stars to drive the Great Bear, which was also known as the Seven Ploughing Oxen.

28. *spoiled*: strictly: first spoiled.

31. Eurytion the centaur laid hands on Hippodamia at her wedding to Pirithous, provoking the fight between Centaurs and Lapiths. *Polyphemus* was the Cyclops made drunk with wine from Ismarus in Thrace and then killed by Ulysses.

35. *Lyaeus*: omitted. Lyaeus or loosener was a title of Dionysus.

39. *Falernian*: a good wine from Campania.

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### Elegy 33C. Absence

A fragment, often placed in 2.33B.

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### Elegy 34. To Lynceus

1. *well-made mistress*: literally: looks of a mistress.

7. *adulterer*: Paris, who abducted Helen.

8. *the man Medea followed*: Jason.

9. *Lynceus*: pseudonym of an (unknown) poet friend.

15. *comrade*: literally: lord.

18. *himself*: my addition

20. *nothing*: literally: baseless fear.

21. *good*: literally: one.

29. *Aratus*: Aratus of Soli, the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC author of *Phaenomena*, a versified treatise on astronomy.

31. *Philetas*: Philetas of Cos (also spelled Philitas in Latin) was a scholar poet and tutor to Ptolemy Philadelphus of 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC Egypt.

32. *Callimachus*: famous scholar-poet of Alexandria under Ptolemy Philadelphus.

33. *Achelous*: river god who fought with Hercules over his wife Deianira.

34. freed by power: strictly: broken by great power.

35. *wandering*: strictly: deceitfully wandering.

37-40. Allusion to the Seven against Thebes.

41. *Aeschylus*, the Greek playwright, was famous for his long, compound words. *buskin*: literally: cothurnus, the high boot worn by actors.

44. *one*: literally: poet.

45. *Antimachus* and *Homer* were both epic poets who fell in love, the first with his mistress Lyde, and the second with Penelope.

46. *beauties*: literally: a beautiful girl.

51. *Name girls*: literally: None of these girls.

52. A reference to monthly occultations of the moon.

61. *guarding*: my addition. The temple of Apollo at Actium overlooked the scene of Octavian's sea battle with Antony and Cleopatra.

65-66. An allusion to the opening of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

76. *nymphs*: literally: Hamadryads.

77. *Ascran bard*: strictly: old Ascran bard: Hesiod, whose Works and Days has precepts on agriculture.

80. *Cynthian*: Apollo, believed to have been born on Mt. Cynthus on Delos.

67-76. Allusions to love themes in Virgil's Eclogues.

79. *music*: literally: tortoiseshell, which formed the sounding board of a lyre.

83-84. A reference to Virgil's Eclogue 9.35-6.

85-86. *Varro* of Atax (born 82 BC) translated the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius, and wrote love poetry to his mistress *Leucadia*.

87. *Catullus*: the Latin love poet, 84-54 BC.

89-90. Gaius Licinius *Calvus*, orator and poet, was the friend of Catullus.

91-92. Gaius Cornelius *Gallus* (69-26 BC) was the Prefect of Egypt and the first of the Latin love elegists. Lycoris was his pseudonym for the actress Cytheris.

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## BOOK THREE

### Elegy 1. Invocation

1-2. *Callimachus . . . Philetas*: see note 2.34.31-2. Propertius asks them to accept him as a poet in their (non epic) tradition.

5-6. *What grotto bred your words, what foot was entered on, / what breath was in the water drunk?*: literally: In what cave did you spin the song together? With what foot entered? What water drank? Groves and grottos were associated with the Muses. Entering right foot first was a superstition.

7. *No more*: literally: Begone he who would.

9. *me*: strictly: the Muse born of me.

11. *little Cupids*: a general's children rode with him in the Triumph.

16. *Bactria*: a province of Parthia, now Balkh and surrounds.

18. *unsullied*: strictly: via an unsullied path. *Sisters' mount*: Helicon: see note 2.10.1

19. *Pegasid*: the Muses as Nymphs of Hippocrene, the spring on Mt. Helicon created by the hoof of the winged horse Pegasus.

26. *Achilles*: literally: hero from Thessaly.

25-30. Characters and events in Homer's Iliad.

28. *fouled by chariot wheels*: strictly: fouled by chariot wheels on the plain.

31. *Unheard of. Little matter Ilium, or Troy*: strictly: You would not be known in your patch of earth: Ilium would be a matter for few words, and you too, Troy.

32. *Oetaean god*: Hercules, deified after his self-immolation on Mt. Oeta in Thessaly.

35. *So shall I live to have my future day in Rome*: literally: Rome will praise me among its offspring.

38. *Lycian god*: Apollo, called so by Callimachus.

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## Elegy 2. Power of Song

1-2. *please*: strictly: to touch and please.

5. *Apollo's music stirred the rocks of Cithaeron*: Amphion's music built the walls of Thebes; Cithaeron is a mountain range south of Thebes.

7. *at Etna*: strictly: under savage Etna.

7-8. *Galatēa . . . Polyphemus*: the Cyclops Polyphemus serenaded the sea-nymph Galatea.

10. *crowds*: literally: commotion. *court to me*: literally: court to my words.

11. *Taenarian marble*: from Taenaron in the Peloponnese.
13. *Phaeacian*: of Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, mentioned in the *Odyssey*.
- 14 *Marcian*: the famous aqueduct of Rome, completed in 140 BC.
15. *help*: literally: are my friends.
16. *Calliope*, chief of the nine Muses, was the goddess of epic poetry.
18. *each line*: literally: each poem.
20. *great*: my addition. The temple at Elis, containing the statue of Zeus by Phidias, was one of the seven wonders of the world.
21. *Mausolus*: the tomb of this Carian king, built by his wife in the fourth century BC, was another of the seven wonders of the world.

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### Elegy 3. Poet's Vision

1. Helicon: see note 2.10.1
2. *Pegasus*: literally: Bellerophon's horse.
3. *Alba's kings*: Alba Longa in Latium, where descendants of Aeneas ruled in Rome's early history.
6. *Ennius*: father of Latin poetry, 239-169 BC.
9. *stratagems*: literally: victorious delays.
11. *Lares*: household gods. *too*: my addition.
9. *wise*: literally: victorious.
- 7-12. incidents in Ennius's *Annals*: fight between the Latin brothers Curiatii and the Roman brothers Horatii, Triumph of Aemilius Regillus after his naval victory over Antiochus the Great in 190 BC, the successful delaying tactics of Fabius Cunctator in the Second Punic War, Rome's defeat at Cannae in 216 BC, Juno's placation and escape of Rome from

capture by Hannibal, and the cackling geese on the Capital that raised the alarm and saved Rome from the Gauls in 387 BC.

13. *sacred*: strictly: Castalian: the Castalian spring is (in fact) on Mt. Parnassus, a seat of the Muses.

18. *suited to*: literally: must run on.

21. *you*: strictly: your page.

30. *Arcadian*: literally Tegean, part of Arcady and Pan's home country.

32. *Gorgon's pool*: Pegasus sprang from the blood of Medusa: see note 3.1.19-20.

33. *Nine Maidens*: the Muses.

39. *swans*: associated with Venus.

42. *Aonian*: see note 1.2.28.

43-4. reference to Marius' defeat of the Teutoni in 102 and of the Cimbri in 101 BC.

45. *Swabian*: Julius Caesar defeated the Suebi in 58 BC.

52. *Philetas*: see note 2.34.31.

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#### Elegy 4. Indian War

3. *The furthest lands*: strictly: Rewards are great, men: the furthest lands.

7. *and horses*: strictly: and squires, lead horses.

11. *Vesta*: her fire was kept alight by the Vestal Virgins at a small temple in the Forum.

13. *great*: my addition.

17. *trouserred*: like many steppe peoples, the Parthians wore trousers.

16. *at captured cities' spectacle*: strictly: and read on placards the names of captured cities.

19-20. Caesar claimed descent from Iulus, son of Aeneas, himself the son Venus and the Trojan Anchises.

22. *Sacred Way*: see note 2.1.31-34.

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## Elegy 5. God of Peace

1. *prize*: literally: worship.

6. *Corinth* was famous for bronzes, the particular alloy said to have been discovered when the city was destroyed by Mummius in 146 BC.

13. *Acheron*: river of the dead.

15. *As shades the victor and the vanquished: caged Jugurtha*: strictly: The victor and the vanquished meet as equals in shadows: captive Jugurtha.

16. *Jugurtha*: Numidian ruler brought to Rome for Marius's triumph in 104 BC.

17. *Croesus's close to Irus*: strictly: Croesus of Lydia is similar to Irus of Dulichium. *Irus* was the blind beggar in Homer's *Odyssey*.

18. *when life itself has been enjoyed*: literally: when the day has been seized.

19. *Helicon*: see note 2.10.1.

21. *fill*: literally: bind up.

23. *vanquished*: literally: cut off.

28. *her monthly horns return to full*: strictly: how she monthly draws in her horns and returns to fullness.

29. *Eurus*: east wind.

31. *end*: literally: demolish the foundations of.

32. *drinks*: the rainbow was popularly supposed to draw up water.

35. *Bootes*: see note 2.33B.24-30.

36. *collect in flames*: strictly: closes together in thick flames.

40. *rock*: strictly: rolling rock. *wheel*: the Lapith king Ixion was tied to a perpetually revolving wheel in the Underworld for trying to rape Juno.

41. *Phineus*: king of Bithynia blinded his children and was thereafter plagued by Harpies who stole his food.

43. *Alcmaeon's furies*: strictly: Alcmaeon tormented by furies. Alcmaeon, son of Amphiaraus killed his mother and was also punished by the Furies. *Tisiphone*: one the three Furies.

43. *Cerberus*: three-headed dog guarding Hades.

44. *Tityos*: see note 2.20.31.

48. *Crassus*: see note 2.10.14.

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## Elegy 6. Plea to Slave Lygdamus

1. *Lygdamus*: apparently Cynthia's slave and go-between for Propertius: a Greek name.

19. *You weren't put up to this*: literally: is this the reward he promised in your hearing.

31. *added*: literally: ample.

34. *snore*: literally: sleep.

40. *nights*: literally: days.

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## Elegy 7. Elegy for Paetus

2. *and urge us on to early death*: literally: through you we enter on a premature path to death.

5. *Paetus*: no more is known about Paetus than this poem.

7. *yields*: literally: swims.

34. *lot*: literally: land.

36. *or at harbour wall*: literally: even the harbour betrays its trust.

43. *plough*: strictly: plough with the ox.

62. *deep sea god*: Neptune.

12. *Carpathian*: see note 2.5.11.

49. *Orician terebinth*: turpentine wood from Oricos, a port on the Illyrian coast.

62. *meet trident of the deepsea god*: strictly: the dark god of the sea has lifted his trident against me.

39. *Caphareus*: in southern Euboea, where the Greek fleet returning from Troy was wrecked.

11. *wheeling*: my addition.

67. *Nereus*: see note 1.17.25. *Thetis*: see note 2.9A.15-16.

*Argynnus*, grandson of *Athamas* of Thebes, was drowned in the river Cephisus. Mourning him, Agamemnon refused to give orders for the Greek fleet to sail for Troy, when it became becalmed, requiring the sacrifice of his daughter, *Iphigenia*, to obtain fair winds.

23. *whose death*: strictly: the death of which youth.

42. *waves*: literally: sea.

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## Elegy 8. Lamp-lit Brawl

1. *What fun*: literally: How sweet.

8. *me*: literally: the breast

12. *Venus*: strictly: mighty Venus.

15. *lose*: strictly: often lose.

27-8. *cursed no pallor / brought on by an angry girl*: rather free:  
literally: I wish to be pale from the angry one.

29. *Helen*: literally: Tyndarid wife.

29-32. *Paris, Helen*: characters from the Iliad.

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## Elegy 9. Maecenas

1. *Maecenas*: see note 2.1.17.

8. *heights*: Mt. Parnassus, seat of the Muses.

13. *Mentor's special form*: literally: were for preference poured into  
Mentor's mould.

20. *His seeds say*: literally: Each follows the seeds of.

31. *In this*: strictly: In this, believe me. *Camillus*: Marcus Furius  
Camillus, who routed the Gauls in 390 BC and was known as the second  
Romulus.

37. *high Thebes*: literally: citadel of Cadmus.

37-38. Refers to the sack of Thebes: see note 1.1.1.

39-40. Allude to the Trojan War. *Pergama* is the citadel of Troy.

41-2. *nor Pallas's great wooden horse, that Grecian plot / that ploughed  
and levelled Neptune's walls*: literally: when the victorious wooden house  
of Pallas's devising levelled with a Greek plough the walls built by  
Neptune.

47-48. An allusion to the battle of giants and gods on the plain of Phelgra  
in Thessaly.

51. *that first*: literally: royal.

49. *backward*: literally: underhand.

55. *Pelusium*: frontier fortress town near mouth of the Nile, captured by Mark Antony but surrendered to Octavian..

56. Alludes to Mark Antony's suicide.

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## Elegy 10. Cynthia's Birthday

9. *no halcyons complain but settle*: strictly: the halcyons give up their complaints and let their throats be at rest. *halcyon*: Alcyone so mourned the death of her husband that the gods turned her into a bird. *Itys*: see note 2.20.5.

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## Elegy 11. Female Power

1. *life*: literally: my life.

7. *Blithe*: my addition.

8. *me*: strictly: my example.

9. *Medea* : literally: witch of Colchis. *yoke*: strictly: inflexible yoke.

10. *sowed the earth with warriors*: strictly: sowed the seeds of battle in the arm-bearing earth.

11. *sent*: strictly: allowed to go.

12. *Aeson*: Jason's father.

13. *Penthesilea*: Amazon queen who fought on Trojan side: killed by Achilles, who fell in love with her when he lifted up her visor.

14. *attacked*: strictly: dared to attack.

17. *Omphale*: Lydian queen whom Hercules fell in love with.

21. *Semiramis*: Assyrian queen said to have founded Babylon.

25. *city*: strictly: city she founded.

26. *great*: my addition. *Bactrian*: see note 3.1.16.

29-32: Allusions to Cleopatra.

30. *pleasured*: literally: worn out.

35. *sands*: Pompey fled to Egypt after Pharsalus in 48 BC, and was murdered on arrival.

37-38. Continues reference to Pompey, who married Julius Caesar's daughter Julia in 59 BC. *Phlegraean*: north coast of Bay of Naples, where Pompey was seriously ill in 50 BC.

39. *Canopus*: town on western mouth of the Nile, proverbial for its luxurious lifestyle.

40. *Philip's line*: Cleopatra was one of a Ptolemies, who claimed descent from Philip of Macedon.

41. *Anubis*: jackel-headed Egyptian god.

44. *chase our prows*: literally: Liburnian prows: a fast-moving galley with beaks for ramming.

45. *Tarpeian rock*: Capitoline hill, later the centre of religious observance.

46. *before*: strictly: amid the arms and statues of. *Marius*: Gaius Marius, the great Roman general: see note 3.3.43-44.

47. *Tarquin*: Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome, expelled in 510 BC.

50. *Augustus*: name Octavian took in 27 BC.

53. *attack*: literally: bite arms. An effigy of Cleopatra was displayed in Octavian's triumph of 29 BC.

67. *Scipio's fleet*: that of Scipio Africanus, used to invade Carthage in the Second Punic War. *Camillus*: see note 3.9.31.

59. *Syphax*: Numidian king defeated by Rome in 203 BC. *Pyrrhus*: king of Epirus who invaded Italy and won an over-costly battle in 275 BC.

61. *farewell*: literally: monument. *Curtius* leapt on horseback into a chasm that appeared in the Forum on the assurance that his sacrifice would save the Roman state.

62. *won*: literally: broke. Decius offered himself to gods of the Underworld to gain victory in battle: he charged the enemy lines and was killed.

63. *Cocles*: Horatius, who guarded the bridge over the Tiber against the Etruscans.

64. *has a raven name*: strictly: to whom a raven gave its name. Marcus Valerius Corvus defeated a giant Gaul in single combat in 349 BC: the raven that helped him gave Valerius his cognomen.

69. *Leucadian Apollo*: temple of Apollo on promontory of Leucas, overlooking the battle of Actium in 31 BC, which ended the civil wars of the Republic.

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## Elegy 12. Gallus's Fidelity

2. *Postumus* and *Galla* are not known to history.

8. *Araxes*: river in present-day Armenia.

10. *your brute courage cause your death*: literally: your power will cause bitterness.

11. *Parthian*: literally: Persian.

15. 'Postumus' omitted from line.

23-36. Refer to incidents in the *Odyssey*.

25. *Cicones*: a Thracian tribe near the River Hebrus. *Ismara*: mountain in southern Thrace.

26. *Polyphemus blinded*: strictly: night of Polyphemus' blinding.

27. *restraining herbs*: strictly: herbs which held men prisoner. *Circe's deceit*: she turned Ulysses' comrades into animals. *lotus*: drug of the lotus-eaters, which caused happy forgetfulness.

28. *Scylla and Charybdis threats*: strictly: Scylla, and Charybdis who is torn between ebb and flow: an enigmatic line.

31. Aeaea: Circe's island.

33. *dark halls*: the Underworld, which Ulysses entered to consult the soothsayer Tiresias.

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### Elegy 13. Noble Savages

5. Indian gold was popularly thought to be mined by ants.

7. *Cadmean Tyre*: Cadmus was the son of Agenor, king of Tyre.

10. *Penelope*: literally: of Icarius: the father of Penelope.

14. *neatly settled*: literally: lifted.

16. *complexions dyed with Dawn's red glow*: literally: complexion the red Dawn dyes when rising with her horses.

23-4. *true / Evadne or Penelope*: strictly: faithful Evadne or loyal Penelope. Evadne was the wife of Capaneus, one of the Seven against Thebes, and threw herself on his funeral pyre.

28. *bramble-berries*: strictly: red bramble-berries.

35. *rough*: my addition.

29. *and . . . there*: literally: now . . . now.

37. A reference to Actaeon and Tiresias who both happened on Diana bathing.

46. *true*: my addition.

51. *Brennus*: see note 2.31.13.

52. *unshorn god*: Apollo.

55-56. *Polydorus*, son of Priam, was sent for safety to Thrace during the Trojan War, but was murdered by king *Polymester* for the gold he carried.

57. *For gold as Eriphyla's bracelets*: strictly: So that you, too, Eriphyla, could wear gold on your arms. *Eriphyla*: see note 2.16.29. *Amphiaraus*

was swallowed up by a chasm which Jove's thunderbolt opened in front of his chariot.

61. *Cassandra*: literally: Trojan maenad. She had the gift of prophecy but was never believed.

62. *Pergamum*: Troy.

63. Paris' elopement with Helen caused the Trojan War.

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Elegy 14. Admiration for Sparta

1. *love*: literally: admire.

8. *pancratium*: a Greek contest combining boxing and wrestling.

12. *bronze*: strictly: hollow bronze.

15. *Taygetus*: a mountain range near Sparta.

14. *Thermodon*: a river in Cappadocia, the land of the Amazons.

17. *Eurotas*: river on which Sparta stands.

22. *publicize*: literally: permit.

24. *husband crossed*: literally: stern husband.

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Elegy 15. Story of Dirce

1. *battles*: literally: storms.

2. *and think of you*: literally: without you.

5. *Lycinna*: the persecuted Antiope.

11. *Dirce*: wife of Lycus, ruler of Thebes.

12. *won*: literally: lay with.

22. *this poor girl*: literally: Antiope.

25. *Cithaeron*: see note 3.2.5.

26. *her couch had frost*: strictly: her couch was harsh with scattered frost.

27. *Asopus*: river in Boeotia, rising on Mt. Cithaeron.

39. *you see the hand of Jove*: strictly: you recognize Jove; for your triumph.

45. *final*: literally: funeral.

42. *Aracynthus*: mountain between Attica and Boeotia.

43. *women need / to put their temper*: strictly: fierce anger of you women knows not how to put.

45. *lost*: literally: burned.

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## Elegy 16. Midnight Summons

2. *Tibur*: see note 2.32.5.

3. *waterfalls turn two hills white*: exact sense obscure but referring to the famous waterfalls at Tivoli: literally: where white peaks reveal twin towers.

12. *Sciron*: brigand killed by Theseus: he forced his victims to wash his feet and then kicked them over the cliff into the sea.

13. *Scythian*: nomadic tribesmen living between the Don and Carpathian mountains.

20. *such personages travel safe*: literally: such a class will always travel safe.

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## Elegy 17. Homage to Bacchus

7-8. Bacchus in a lynx-drawn chariot rescued *Ariadne* after her desertion by Theseus.

13. *good*: my addition.

22. *Indians*: strictly: arms of Indians. *Nysa*: a mythical place in India where Bacchus was supposedly brought up.

23. *raving over wine*: strictly: vainly raving over the new-found vine. *Lycurgus*: king of Thrace: he drove Bacchus from the country, for which Bacchus gave him madness.

23-24. *Pentheus*: king of Thebes: resisted Bacchus and was torn to pieces by three maenad bands led by his mother and her two sisters.

25-26. Refers to a Homeric hymn, in which sailors plotted to sell Bacchus into slavery: their ship sprouted vines and they were changed to dolphins.

27. *Dia*: Naxos, the island on which Theseus abandoned Ariadne.

31. *Bassareus*: cult name of Dionysus. Transposed from line 30.

33. *Dirce*: see note 3.15.11.

34. *shrill out their pipes*: literally: play their gaping pipes.

35. *cymbals*: strictly: noisy cymbals.

35-36. *Cybele*: a great mother orgiastic cult originating from Mt. Ida in Phrygia.

39. *buskin*: high boot worn by tragic actors.

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## Elegy 18. Elegy for Marcellus

2. *pools*: strictly: pools of warm water.

3. *hugs*: strictly: lies buried in. *Misenus*: Hector's trumpeter in the Trojan War: he left with Aeneas but was drowned off the Campanian coast.

5. *god of Thebes*: Bacchus.

6. *towns*: strictly: cities.

9. *Marcellus*: Marcus Claudius Marcellus, Augustus' nephew, who died in Baiae in 23 BC.

12. *union*: he married Augustus' daughter Julia in 25 BC.

13. *lately*: my addition.

13-14. Refers to celebrations when Marcellus was made aedile.

19. *cloths of Attalus*: see note 2.13.22.

21. *at last*: my addition. *high and low*: literally: first and last.

23. *barking god*: Cerberus.

24. *grim old man*: Charon, ferryman of the dead.

26. *regardless*: my addition.

27. *Nireus*: most handsome man in Troy: Iliad.

28. *Pactolus*: see note 1.6.32.

31. *ferryman*: literally sailor: Charon.

32. *transport*: body of Marcellus was carried from Baiae to Rome for a state funeral.

33. *Claudius*: Marcus Claudius Marcellus, an ancestor of the Marcellus here, conquered Syracuse in 211 BC during the Second Punic War.

34. A comet appeared during the funeral games for Julius Caesar in 44 BC, and was seen as his soul going to heaven.

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## Elegy 19. Women's Lust

7. *Syrtes*: see note 2.9A.33. *Malea*: most eastern of three southern promontories of the Peloponnese.

11. *she who put on timber horns*: Pasiphaë who coupled with a bull by occupying a wooden cow.

13. *Salmones' daughter*: see note 1.13.21-22.

14. *dissolved*: strictly: was ready to totally yield.

16. *turned herself into a tree*: literally: hid herself as the foliage of new-made tree. Myrrha tricked her father Cinyras into intercourse, and was turned into a myrrh tree when giving birth to Adonis.

17-8. *own*: literally: offspring. *Medea* helped Jason escape with the golden fleece, but murdered her own children to make Jason childless when he deserted her for Creon's daughter.

19. Clytemnestra: Agamemnon's wife, who committed adultery with Aegisthus, and murdered her husband when he returned from Troy.

20. *stands guilty*: strictly: stands infamous for in Mycenae.

21. *lock*: strictly: purple lock. Scylla fell in love with Minos when he was besieging Megara by cutting off her father's purple lock, on which the city's safety depended. Minos punished her afterwards by either dragging her behind his ship or changing her into a bird.

23. *Such was the gift*: still referring to Megara.

24. *Nisus*: the legendary king of Megara, as above.

28. Again referring to Scylla at Megara.

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## Elegy 20. Love Contract

2. *who sailed off from your very bed*: literally: you saw sail away from your bed.

7. *Pallas*: Pallas Athena: Minerva.

13. *My night*: strictly: My first night.

18. *woven stars will witness them*: strictly: the woven crown of the starry goddess will witness them. A reference to Ariadne: see note 3.17.7.

24. *first omens*: auspices taken before the signing of a marriage contract.

25. *May he*: strictly: Therefore, may he.

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## Elegy 21. Only Remedy

8. *assumes*: literally: sleeps on.

20. *Lechaeum*: Corinth: port on the Corinthian Gulf.

21. *So hasten, feet, on hardships that remain*: literally: So, for the remainder, hasten, feet, to endure the journey.

24. *long arms*: the Long Walls connecting Athens to the port of Piraeus.

25. *Plato*: established a school and gymnasium near Athens and called it the Academy after the hero Academus.

26. *Epicurus*: founded the Epicurean school of philosophy at his house in Athens, which had a large garden.

27. *Demosthenes*: famous fourth-century Attic orator who continually warned of Philip of Macedon's intentions.

28. *Menander*: late fourth-century BC writer of comedies.

33. *ill-stared*: literally: shaming.

34. *a day*: literally: death's day.

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## Elegy 22. In Praise of Italy

1. *called*: literally: pleased. *Cyzicus*: an important trading centre on an island off the Propontis coast.

3. *Dindymon*: mountain on Cyzicus island sacred to Cybele.

4. *Dis's plunderers*: strictly: horses of Dis's plunderers. *Dis*: Pluto. An allusion to the rape of Proserpine, though Henna in Sicily is the more traditional site.

5. *Athamantid Helle*: see note 2.26A.1.

6. 'Tullus' omitted.

7. *Atlas*: a Titan in the Atlas mountains of north Africa reputed to hold the world on his shoulders.

8. *Gorgon's*: literally: Phorcys'. For Gorgon . . . Perseus: see note 2.25.13.

9. *Geryon, dust of Hercules-Antaeus contests*: strictly: stables of Geryon, and the marks in the dust where Hercules and Antaeus wrestled. *Geryon* was a giant Hercules killed. *Antaeus* was Libyan giant killed by Hercules in a wrestling match.

10. *Hesperides*: nymphs who guarded the legendary golden apples at the western limits of the world.

11. *course*: strictly: whole course.

11-14. Refer to the voyage of the Argonauts to fetch the Golden Fleece. Also see note 2.26C.39-40.

13. *pine-hewn vessel*: strictly: inexperienced pine-hewn vessel.

15. *Cayster*: river flowing into sea near Ephesus.

21. *we find our*: literally: we stand in.

23. *Anio*: strictly Anio, river of Tiber. See note 3.16.3. *Clitumnus*: see note 2.19.25.

24. *built to last*: strictly: eternal monument. *Marcian conduit*: see note 3.2.14.

23. *Here's Anio*: strictly: Here's Anio of the Tiber.

25. *Alban Lake, and Nemi's*: two lakes in the Alban hills.

26. *spring*: strictly: spring of the nymph. *Pollux*: Castor and Pollux were supposed to have watered their horses at Juturna's pool in the Roman forum on their way to the battle of Lake Regillus in 496 BC.

27. *horned asps*: literally: *cerastes*.

29. *no chains*: strictly: no chains of Andromeda. *banquet*: strictly: Ausonian banquet. For Andromeda see note 1.3.3-4.

30. *sun-god turn away*: reference to Atreus who killed his brother Thyestes' children and served them up to him at a banquet, a horror from which even the sun-god turned away.

30-31. Reference to Meleager, whose mother threw his life-sustaining log into the fire when he killed her brothers.

33. *Pentheus*: he hid in a tree when spying on female Bacchanals.

34. *Danae*: Greek. Diana, in one version of the Iliad story, miraculously substituted a hind for the sacrifice of Iphigenia. See note 3.7.24.

37-38. *Sinis*: a brigand who executed his victims by tearing them apart with bent trees. *harsh rocks*: see note 3.16.12. *shortened planks*: reference to cruel practices of the robber Sciron.

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## Elegy 23. Lost Tablets

24. *Esquiline*: one of the seven hills on the eastern side of the city.

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## Elegy 24-25. Farewell to Cynthia

24.12. *Aegean*: strictly: Aegean sea of.

24.13. *cruel cauldron*: bronze bull of Phalaris: see note 2.25.12.

24.16. *sandbanks*: literally: Syrtes: see note 2.9.33.

25.11. *dissembled*: literally: the secret.

25.14. *chided you*: literally: chided wrinkles.

25.25. *shamefully*: my addition.

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## BOOK FOUR

### Elegy 1. Early Rome

2. *Aeneas*: strictly: Phrygian Aeneas. See note 3.14.19-20.

4. Evander: exiled king of Arcadia who lived on the site of Rome later called the Palatine.

7. *Tarpeian Jupiter*: the Capitoline, on which Jupiter had a temple, was also known as the Tarpeian Mount.

8. *Tiber*: belonged to the Etruscans.

9. *house*: temple of Quirinus, the divine name of Remus.

10. *one hearth was all the brother had*: literally: a single hearth was the total realm of the brothers.

11. *Curia*: Rome's senate house.

15-16. awnings provided shade; saffron water was also sprayed into the air.

19. *Pales*: Goddess of flocks, referring to a shepherd's festival of 21 April, the official foundation date of Rome.

20. *bless*: strictly: purify. A horse was sacrificed to Mars on 15 October: its tail was cut off and the blood used for purification ceremonies.

21. *Vesta*: Vesta's fire was kept alive by the Vestal Virgins in a small temple on the Forum. Her festival was 9 June.

24. *sheep*: strictly: sheep's entrails.

26. *rite*: strictly: wanton rite. Fabian Lupercus: Lupercalia on 15 January, when the priests of Faunus (Roman Pan) ran round the Palatine striking any woman met to make her fertile.

29. *Lycmon*: Etruscan general who helped Remus fight Titus Tatius and the Sabines.

31. *Ramnes, Solonium Luceres, / Romulus with four white horse*: condensed: strictly: the warrior Ramnes, the Luceres of Solonium,

Romulus to drive his four white horses. The first three are the original tribes of the Romans: Lucomio supposedly came from Solonium in Etruria. The four white horse refer to the triumphator's chariot.

33-36. List of towns near Rome.

37. *such beginnings*: literally: nurslings.

38. *brood*: literally: blood or family.

40. *Dardan*: Trojan: Troy was founded by Dardanus.

39-52. Reference to the small ship carrying Aeneas and his followers that escaped unnoticed from the sack of Troy.

49. *And so*: literally: And if.

45. *Decius*: Roman commander who offered himself as a sacrifice for victory to the gods of the Underworld: he charged the enemy line and was killed. *Brutus*: one of Roman's first two consuls after Tarquin: axes are the consular axes carried by lictors in their fasces.

46. *Venus bearing Caesar's arms*: Venus led Aeneas to Rome: the Julian family claimed descent from Iulus, son of Aeneas.

49. *Sibyl's tripod* : much condensed: strictly: Avernian tripod of the quaking Sibyl. The Sibyl of Cumae, near Lake Avernus, prophesied that Remus would be killed by his brother Romulus.

50. *Aventine Remus*: strictly Remus of the Aventine: where Remus watched the building of Rome.

51. Trojan prophetess: Cassandra.

88. *greater might*: condensed: strictly: proud dominion over land and sea.

53. *Ilium*: strictly: the land of Ilium (Troy).

61. *Ennius*: see note 3.3.6.

68. *give augury for right success*: literally: let on a right undertaking a bird sing.

69. *goals*: literally: goal.

70. *foaming*: literally: sweating.

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## Elegy 1B. The Poet's Horoscope

76. *cannot work*: literally: unskilled in moving. *sphere of bronze* planetarium.

77-78. *Horops*: unknown name but suggesting the horoscope. *Archytas* of Tarentum was a 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Pythagorean mathematician. *Conon* of Samos was a 3<sup>rd</sup> century astronomer and mathematician. The whole genealogy is probably a spoof.

88. *what stars disclose*: literally: the revolving signs of the tilted zodiac.

89-99. *Arria*, *Lupercus*, *Gallus*, *Lucina* and *Cinara* are possibly real people, but unknown to history.

86. *Hesperides*: western limits of the world.

91. *onetime*: literally: ancestral.

97. Both ill-starred youths a mother's greed brought down: literally: two fated youths, two funerals of a greedy mother.

100. *obstructing her delivery*: literally: slowly filled her womb with pain.

103. *desert oracle of Libyan Jove*: that of Jupiter Ammon in the Saharan oasis of Siwa.

105-106. Aspects of divination.

108. *five zones*: zones in the spherical heavens corresponding to the five zones on earth: frigid, temperate, torrid, lower temperate and lower frigid.

109. *Calchas*: Greek seer who revealed that Agamemnon had to sacrifice his daughter to obtain a fair wind for Troy.

114-115. *Nauplius*: king of Euboea, who wrecked the Greek fleet on its return from Troy in revenge for the treacherous murder of his son by Ulysses.

117. *Ajax*: literally: Oiliades. Oiliades was the son of Oileus, so called to distinguish him from the other Ajax, son of Telemon. Oiliades raped Cassandra at the sack of Troy, and was drowned by Minerva on his way home.

118. Minerva shelters in her robe: literally: Minerva forbids you to tear from her robe.

123-124. *Mevania*: modern town of Bevagna, below Assisi. The lake has since been drained.

125. and one: literally: a wall.

129. strict *measuring rod* : of surveyors: refers to land confiscations after the 41-40 BC Perusine War.

131. *bullae*: locket worn by Roman children of freeborn parents.

132. *toga*: toga virilis assumed by free-born Roman boys at 15-18 years of age.

134. *bans / performance in the noisy forum*: literally: forbids you bawl words in the mad forum.

142. *spike*: used to grapple with and fasten to ships in naval battles.

145. *yet more*: literally: that's nothing.

150. *crab*: no doubt because, astrologically, Cancer is ruled by the moon (woman in a man's chart) and signifies mother earth and the home: i.e. beware the hidden power of women.

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## Elegy 2. Vertumnus

51-52. Reference to help given by Lycmon: see note 4.1.29.

4. *Volsinii* in Etruria was sacked by the Romans in 264, and the temple of Vertumnus in Rome probably dates from that time.

54. *in disarray*: literally: in ignominy.

55. *Sower of the Gods*: presumably Jupiter.

7-9. The shallow lake is the Velabrum, once formed by the Tiber.

9-12. The Latin plays with the etymology of Vertumnus.

19. *rumour*: strictly: lying, empty rumour.

20. *now hear*: literally: believe.

24. *Coan silks*: see note 1.2.2.

39. *bend*: strictly: can bend.

40. *corn-ear*: strictly: spiky corn-ear.

15. *cherries*: strictly: sweet cherries.

58. *to answer bail*: i.e. one rushing to the Forum so as not to lose his bail by failing to appear.

61. *Mamurrius*: a legendary metalworker.

62: *Oscan*: ancient Italic people of the Campania.

64. WITH MANY: literally: not one.

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### Elegy 3. A Husband at the Wars

2. *yielding*: strictly: innocently yielding.

6. *my hand that faints away*: literally: death is on my hand.

9. *Getans*: a people living on the lower Danube.

10. *burned by fiery dawns*: literally burnt by waters of the dawn.

12. *yielding to your arms*: strictly: innocently yielding to your urgent arms

14. *black light*: funeral pyres were built of unlucky wood.

17. *gate-hung vows*: relations commonly escorted travellers to the city gate and prayed for a safe return.

19. *stake*: each soldier carried a stake to make a palisade.

21. *Ocnus*, cursed with a spendthrift wife, was suspended in hell from a rope, which a donkey ate as soon as he spun it.

32. *slip*: literally: coverlet.

35. *creator*: literally: wise god.

55. *Craugidus*: a Greek name meaning 'yappy'.

35. *Araxes*: see note 3.12.8.

41. *worrying*: strictly: pale with worry.

43. *Hippolyta*: queen of the Amazons.

52. *watery*: rock crystal was thought to be congealed water.

53. *Kalends*: a rite performed on the first day of the month.

57. *deck*: literally: deck with flowers. *vervain*: a type of juniper.

59. *sputtering*: a sputtering lamp was considered a good omen, being revived with a touch of wine.

65. *bow*: strictly: treacherous bow.

69. *our marriage bed*: strictly: the pledge of our marriage bed.

71. *Capena Gate*: opening on to the Appian Way, from which a return from the east would be made.

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#### Elegy 4. Tarpeia

2. *came under threat*: literally: was captured.

9. *Cures*: the Sabine capital.

13. *Curia*: Senate-house of Rome.

5. *Sylvanus*: god of the woods.

7. *Tatius*: the Sabine commander.

25. *Romulus*: strictly: spear of Romulus.

35. *Vesta*: see note 4.1.21.

45. *Pallas's fires*: Pallas Athena's (Minerva's) image was kept in Vesta's temple.

47. *there is*: strictly: says rumour says there is.

63. *four*: the night was divided into four watches.

71. *a mad Bacchant on swift Thermōdon*: literally: she became furious, like a Bacchant of Thermedon by the swift Strymon. The Strymon is a river dividing Macedonia from Thrace. Thermōdon is a river of Pontus, more usually associated with Amazons.

77. *feet*: strictly: dirty feet.

89. *did not hold with treachery*: literally: allowed treachery no honour.

94. *false*: literally: unjust.

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## Elegy 5. Acanthis

1. *thorns*: Acanthis means thorny.

5. *Hippolytus*: son of Theseus and Hippolyta, well known for his chastity.

8. *Antinous*: chief suitor of Helen.

11. *Colline*: Vestal virgins who broke their vow of chastity were buried alive near the Colline gate.

23. *Eurypylean*: Coan: Eurypylus was the leader of the Coan body of troops at Troy. *fancied*: literally: rotten.

25. *palmy*: i.e. Egyptian. *myrrhine*: a mineral found in Parthia, possibly agate or fluorspar.

34. *Isis*: her worship demanded periods of sexual abstinence.

35. *Hyale . . . Omichle*: names of maidservants. April was the month of Venus, when lovers could expect presents.

38. *you will have him if he tremble*: literally: you have him if this trick makes him tremble.

41. Medea, having followed Jason to Corinth, quarrelled violently with him when he proposed to marry Creusa.

51-52. *barbarian*: slave. Slaves from abroad had their feet coated with chalk.

56. *paltry*: my addition.

64. *skin*: strictly: shrunken skin. Lines 63-64 are probably corrupt.

68. *phlegm*: strictly: bloody phlegm.

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## Elegy 6. Actium

2. *shrine*: literally: altar.

3. *Philetean*: see note 2.34.31.

4. *Cyrenean*: Callimachean: see note 2.34.32.

7. *pipe*: strictly: play with ivory pipe.

8. *Phrygian*: literally: Mygdonian.

9. *injury go hence*: strictly: live under another sky.

11. *Recalling*: strictly: I shall recall, O Muse.

15. *Athamanian*: Epirus: reference is to the Ambracian Gulf.

15-68. Description of 31 BC battle of Actium in which Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra.

19. *pine on waves*: strictly: a mass of pine stood on the sea.

22. *Quirinus*: divine title of Romulus.
24. *standards large*: strictly: standards indicating victory for.
25. *Nereus*: a sea god.
26. *sea*: literally: water.
27. *Delos*: the Greek island where Apollo was born. Callimachus describes it as earlier drifting in the wind.
34. *flames*: strictly: greedy funeral pyre.
35. *Python*: Apollo killed the monstrous snake that frightened the Muses when he took up residence at Delphi.
36. *Muses*: literally: goddesses.
37. *Alba Longa*: see note. 3.3.3.
39. *Augustus*: displaced from line 38.
40. *my bow and shoulders fight for you*: strictly: my bow and all the burden of my shoulders fight for and favour you.
- 43-44. Ennius in his *Annales* tells how Remus and Romulus watched the flights of birds to see which of them the gods would favour as the founder of Rome.
54. *your prows*: strictly: the prows of the Julian fleet.
57. *her crown*: strictly: her sceptre.
59. *Idalian star*: either the planet Venus or the comet that appeared at Julius Caesar's funeral.
65. *she*: literally: one woman.
66. *Jugurtha*: see note 3.5.15.
69. *Phoebus*: strictly: victorious Phoebus.
70. *dance*: strictly: dance of peace.
77. *Sygambri*: a Germanic tribe that invaded Gaul in 16 BC.

78. of *Cepheas's Meroë*: strictly: of dark Cepheas's Meroë realms. Swarthy Cepheas was a legendary Ethiopian king, and Meroë a town in that country.

79-80. In 20 BC the Parthians returned the standards they had captured from Crassus in 53 BC.

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## Elegy 7. Cynthia's Ghost

2. *pyre*: strictly: defeated pyre.

5. *round me fell*: literally: I bemoaned.

10. *Lethe*: river of forgetfulness.

13. *gutter wretch*: literally: traitor.

15. *Subura*: bohemian quarter of Rome.

25. A cleft reed was rattled to ward off evil spirits.

28. *dark grey*: literally black, but Romans wore a dark grey toga for funerals.

35. *Lygdamus*: slave appearing in Elegy 3.6.

37. *Nomas*: perhaps a Numidian slave.

43. *Petale*: strictly: aged Petale. A Greek maidservant: name means 'petal'.

44. *clog*: a block of wood to which slaves were shackled.

45. *Lulage*: a Greek servant: name means 'prattler'.

49. *No more I'll say*: literally: I'll not pursue you.

51-52. *triple-tongued dog*: Cerberus.

57. *Clytemnestra*: see note 3.19.19. Cretan queen: Pasaphaë

61. *Cybele*: see note 3.17.35.

63. *Andromeda*: see note 1.3.3-4. Hypermnestra: one of Danaus's fifty daughters: she refuse to murder her husband on the wedding night.

73. *Parthenie*: a Greek servant: name means 'virginal'.

75. *Latris*: another Greek servant: name means 'maidservant'.

76. *face*: literally: mistress.

80. *may interlace my bones*: literally: bind round my delicate bones.

81-82. The Anio flowed past a temple to Hercules, which was popularly supposed to protect the whiteness of ivory.

87. Homer remarks that true dreams come through gates of horn, and false dreams through gates of ivory.

88. *force*: literally: weight.

92. *ferryman*: literally: sailor.

96. *dissolved, eluding*: literally: vanished from.

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## Elegy 8. An Unwelcome Interruption

1. *fountained*: literally: watered. The Esquiline had many fountains and was crossed by three aqueducts.

2. *New Fields*: Maecenas had converted a former cemetery into a park.

3. *Lanuvium*: see note 2.32.5.

9. *never keen to trust*: literally: turn pale when they rashly trust.

10. *honour*: strictly: hand.

16. *Juno*: Lanuvium held the temple of Juno Sospita.

24. *jewelled collars*: literally: bracelet round their necks. *Molossian*: a famous breed of dogs named after the people of Epirus.

25. *gruel*: i.e. what a gladiator lived on.

29. *Diana*: ancient temple to Diana on the Aventine.
31. *pure*: literally: shining. *Teia*: presumably from Teos, on the Ionian coast.
34. *some spice*: literally: experience.
37. *Lygdamus*: appears in Elegies 3.6 and 4.7.
39. *Miletus*: male piper from Egypt. Female dancer *Byblis* was from Spain.
45. *Venus*: highest throw of six: *Dog*: lowest throw of one.
54. *I felt*: my addition.
64. *to lay about me with her hand*: literally: wound my face with the back of her hand.
75. *Pompey's shade*: see note 2.32.11.
76. *sand*: gladiator shows were sometimes put on in the Forum.
77. *upper stalls*: sexes were segregated in the theatre.

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## Elegy 9. Ara Maxima

1. *Amphitryon*: Hercules, sired by Jupiter on Alcema in likeness of her husband of that name.
2. *from the stall of Erythea*: literally: from your stalls, O Erythea. *Erythea* was a legendary island beyond Gibraltar, scene of Hercules's tenth labour: here Britannia.
3. *stern*: literally: unconquered.
6. *now our*: my addition for clarity.
7. *Cacus*: ogre, whose story appears in the Aeneid, etc.
12. *dark*: my addition.

15. *Maenalian bough*: Hercules's club. Maenalus is a mountain range in Arcadia.

16. *Alcides*: Hercules.

21. *consumed*: literally: tortured.

25. *women's goddess*: Bona Dea: her temple on the Aventine was also the site of Cacus's cave.

41-42. Refers to Hercules's twelfth labour, in which he had to extract Cerberus from the Underworld.

42. *dragged off*: strictly: howl to find itself dragged off.

43-44. *Juno: she, though cruel / would not refuse her stepson aid*: strictly: cruel Juno, even she, my stepmother, would not refuse me water.

66. *hereabouts*: literally: in this land.

47-50. An allusion to Hercules's year of slavery under Omphale, the Lydian queen, who dressed him in her clothes while she wore his lion-skin.

57. *Tiresias*: rendered blind, but also given the gift of prophecy.

58. *Gorgon*: see note 2.2.8.

67. *Ara Maxima*: Rome's cattle market.

69. *this thirst of mine*: literally: Hercules' thirst.

71. *on whom Juno*: strictly: on whom even cruel Juno.

73. *cleansed*: strictly: cleansed and sanctified. *Cures*: ancient Sabine capital. *Tatius*: see note 2.32.47.

74. *Sanctifier*: cult title of a Sabine god.

72. *to feature here and bless my book*: literally: to be favourably involved in my book.

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## Elegy 10. Fereirian Jupiter

1. *Fereirian Jupiter*: his temple was on the Capitol.
2. *arms*: spoils of honour taken by a Roman commander from an enemy leader he had killed in single combat. Three occasions are recorded: Romulus from the Caeninian king Acron (8<sup>th</sup> century BC), Aulus Cornelius Cossus from the Etruscan king Tolumnius (437 BC), and M. Claudius Marcellus from the Gaul king Viridomarus (222 BC).
4. *an easy summit brings no crown*: strictly: a crown taken from an easy summit brings no pleasure.
7. *Caeninian*: of the ancient Sabine town near Rome.
11. *Quirinus*: see note 4.6.22.
24. *Veii*: ancient Etruscan town north of Rome.
25. *Nomentum* is modern Mentana, north-east of Rome. *Cora* lies south-east of Rome.
28. *shone*: literally: held.
40. *chief*: strictly: giant chief.
44. *golden torque*: literally: twisted necklace.
45. Etymology is fer-(root), tri-(three), ferit (felled).

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## Elegy 11. Cornelia

1. *Make sad . . . my grave*: literally: burden my grave. *Paullus*: Lucius Aemilius Paullus Lepidus: elected consul in 34 BC and censor in 22 BC.
3. *pall*: literally: portal.
7. *Charon*: literally: ferryman.
5. *god*: Pluto.
11. *forebears*: the Scipios.

12. *children's pledges*: strictly: fine pledges, i.e. children.
19. *Aeacus*: son of Jupiter and the nymph Aegina: one of the judges of dead who drew lots from the urn to see whose case should be heard.
23. *Sisyphus*: see note 2.20.32. *Ixion*: see note 1.9.20.
24. *Tantalus*: see note 2.1.65-66.
25. *Cerberus*: see note 3.5.43.
27. *Danaids*: see note 2.31.4.
30. *Numantia*: reference to the two Scipios who won the title Africanus in the Punic wars: the second added the title Numantius after conquests in 132 BC.
31. *Libones*: reference to Cornelia's brother, Lucius Scribonius Libo, consul in 34 BC.
- 37-38. Reference is largely to the elder Africanus who defeated Hannibal at Zama in 202 BC.
- 39-40. Text uncertain, but seems to refer to Lucius Aemilius Paullus who defeated Perses of Macedon at Pydna in 168. Perses claimed descent from Achilles.
40. *that*: literally: Achilles'.
49. *in that urn*: Roman jurors cast votes into an urn.
- 51-52. Quinta Claudia proved her virginity in 204 BC by single-handedly pulling free a ship carrying an effigy of *Cybele* that had gone aground in the Tiber.
- 53-54. A virgin had let the Vestal fire go out, but it blazed back to life when Aemilia touched it with her gown.
59. Cornelia was half-sister to Augustus' daughter Julia.
61. A woman producing three children was entitled to wear a special dress.
65. *brother*: Publius Cornelius Scipio, consul in 16 BC.

78. *is*: strictly: begins to be.

93-94. *he'll come to find his old age softened, to avoid / the sorrows of a widower*: literally: he'll learn to soften the old age destined to come and let no path be open to a widower's sorrows.

97. *More blessed*: literally: in goodness.

85. *house-door faces*: the official marriage bed occupied the atrium of a Roman house, facing the front door.

86. *mother*: strictly: stepmother.

99. Said in law-courts when witnesses were called, here presumably family and ancestors.

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