

**Publius Papinius Statius**

**Silvae**

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## Book I

BkI: Prologue – Statius to his friend, Lucius Arruntius Stella, Greetings

I've thought long and hard, my Stella, given how knowledgeable and distinguished you are in whatever of our pursuits you follow, as to whether I should gather these things together for publication, works that rose one by one from my heart, flowing in sudden fire and lovely haste from my pen. Why be burdened with a definitive edition, when I'm still worrying over my *Thebaid* even though it's out there? Yet we have Virgil's *Culex* (*The Gnat*) and Homer's *Batrachomyomachia* (*The Battle of the Frogs*). There isn't one of our great poets who hasn't prefaced his work with something lighter. Anyway, it's too late to keep them quiet, since you and the rest in whose honour they were composed, possess them already. Still, they're bound to forfeit the crowd's indulgence, since the only thing to commend them, is the speed of their composition. None of them took more than a couple of days, and some only one. I'm more than afraid the lines themselves bear witness to this truth!

The first piece constitutes a sacred witness: since I employed the usual formula: 'to begin with Jove'. I dared to offer these hundred lines, on the Mighty Horse, to our most indulgent of Emperors, only a day after he'd dedicated that same work. 'Well,' some fool will say, 'you could have written the thing long before!' Tell him, my dear Stella, tell him that epithalamium, that wedding ode you had me write, took no more than forty-eight hours. A bold claim? After all, the entire thing is three hundred hexameters long, and besides you might well tell a lie to help a friend. Well then, here's Manilius Vopiscus too, a most erudite spirit, who leads the task of saving our almost defunct literature from loss: he boasts on my behalf, without being asked, that what I wrote of his Tiburtine villa was all penned in a day. Next there's a piece for Rutilius Gallicus, the convalescent. Of that I'll say nothing, in case it's thought I'm trying to take advantage, and lying blatantly, since the witness himself is dead! As for Claudius Etruscus, who believe it or not had his *Baths* from me in the space of a dinner, I'll forgo his testimony! December's Kalends are last, at least that's credible: truly the happiest of nights filled with undreamed-of public pleasures...

## BkI:1 – The mighty Equestrian Statue of the Emperor Domitian

What's that imposing mass dominating the Latian Forum,  
the colossus on its back rendering it twice the size?  
Did it glide down from the sky, a finished work of art?  
Or cast in Sicilian fires, leave Cyclops, Brontes and Steropes,  
weary? Or did Pallas mould you for us, a Germanicus  
grasping the reins, as the Rhine and the mountain realm  
of the astonished Dacians saw you, not long ago?  
Now let the fame of the Trojan Horse diminish, wonder  
of past ages, for whose creation leafy trees were felled  
on Ida and Dindymon's sacred heights. Troy would not  
have held *this* horse, not though the walls were razed,  
not though the throng of boys and virgin girls, led by  
Aeneas himself and mighty Hector, tried to drag it within.  
That horse besides was cursed, hiding the fierce Achaeans  
in its belly; this one's gentle rider recommends it, his face  
is fine to gaze on, with its mingled traces of war and kind  
peace. It reveals no more than the truth: its form is equal  
to his grace and comeliness. His Thracian steed, glorying  
in its mighty burden, bears battle-weary Mars no more  
loftily; nor seems to race more flowingly beside the Strymon,  
its steaming breath driving that speeding river onward.  
The setting equals the work. Here, facing it, Julius Caesar's  
temple stretches away, gift of Augustus his adopted son:  
Caesar who showed our divine rulers the path to the skies.  
He may learn from your features, your greater clemency,  
who show no anger even at foreign savagery, grant quarter  
to Cattians and Dacians. If you had borne the standard,  
Pompey and Cato would have bowed to Caesar's orders.  
Its broad flanks are overlooked by the Basilica Julia  
And by the Basilica Aemilia, twice restored by Paullus,  
Your father's and smiling Concord's temples overlook the rear.  
You shine above the temples, your head high in the pure air,  
Seeming to gaze before you: does not a new palace rise  
On the Palatine, finer than ever, scorning every flame,  
Do not the Virgins guard the secret fire from Troy,  
Does Vesta not praise her faithful priestesses again?  
Your right hand forbids conflict: Minerva weighs  
Lightly in your left, Medusa on her shield extended  
As if to urge on your steed; the goddess never chose  
A finer place to stand, not even when Jove held her.  
Your chest is wide enough to bear the world's cares,

Temese gave all from her exhausted mines to forge it.  
A cloak hangs at your back, a broad sword protects  
Your flank, large as that blade with which Orion  
Threatens on wintry nights, and terrifies the stars.  
While your charger, matching its master's thoughts  
And gaze, lifts its head and threatens a fierce ride,  
Mane bristling at its neck, life pulsing through its  
Shoulders, its broad flanks readied for the spur.  
Instead of a vacuous clod of earth, its bronze hoof  
Paws at the flowing tresses of captive Rhine.  
Arion, Adrastus' steed, would have feared him,  
While Castor's Cyllarus trembles, as he gazes  
From the nearby shrine. This horse loyal to the bit,  
Will know no other rein, serving one star alone.  
The earth can scarcely bear the weight, straining  
At such a burden; even though an enduring base  
Supports it, that might uphold a crowning mountain  
Peak, or even withstand Atlas' knee: neither iron  
Nor bronze it is that overbears it, but your genius.  
Erecting it took no great time. The god's living image  
Made the effort sweet, the workers bent to their task  
Found their strength grow, the high platform rang  
To their hammer blows; a constant din echoed from  
Mars' seven hills, drowning the roar of mighty Rome.  
The guardian of the place, whom the sacred chasm,  
And famous pool bring to mind, Marcus Curtius  
Himself, heard the bronze clash, the Forum sound  
To innumerable harsh blows, lifted mud-stained hair  
Crowned with the oak-wreath, from that sacred deep.  
Alarmed, at first, at the vast effigy, the light gleaming  
From this mightier horse, his raised head sank fearfully  
Three times in the depths; then joyful at the noble sight  
He cried: 'Hail, thou son and father of great gods, deity  
Known to me from afar: now my marshy sanctuary is  
Blessed and will be revered, for I behold you close by,  
And am able to gaze at last on your immortal radiance.  
Only once did I find and win the means of salvation  
For Romulus' tribe: while you in extended conflict  
Ended the conflict on the Capitol, war on the Rhine,  
Rebellion in Germany, and forged the Dacian peace.  
Born in our age, you would have sought to plunge  
Into the depths I feared, while Rome restrained you.'  
Yield, oh steed, that stands in Caesar's Forum, facing

Latian Dione's temple, you whom Lysippus, they say,  
Made for Alexander (the rider now bearing Caesar's  
Wondrous head): scarce marked by time, you may  
Contemplate how great the distance between them.  
Who is so ignorant as not to say, on seeing both,  
That the horses are as dissimilar as their riders?  
This statue fears not winter rain, nor Jove's triple fires,  
The tribe from Aeolus' windy cave, nor passing years:  
It shall endure as long as do earth and heavens,  
As long as the Roman era shall. In the silent night  
When earthly things please the heavenly, your clan  
Will glide from the sky and mingle their close kisses.  
Brother, son, sister, and father will enter your arms;  
One single breast will offer up a place for every star.  
Delight forever in this gift of the Senate and people.  
Apelles would have delighted in delineating you;  
Old Phidias would have longed to place your image  
In a new-built temple of Elean Jove; soft Tarentum  
Would have preferred your face, fierce Rhodes those  
Eyes like starry fires, than those of scorned Phoebus.  
May you love earth faithfully, yourself haunt the shrines  
We dedicate to you, delighting not in heavenly palaces,  
Happy to see your grandsons endow this gift with incense.

BkI:2 – Epithalamium in honour of Lucius Arruntius Stella and Violentilla

Why are Latium's hills echoing now with sacred song?  
Apollo, for whom do you pluck your plectrum, hang  
The sounding ivory among your shoulder tresses?  
Behold the distant goddesses descend from singing  
Helicon, and with torches nine shed ritual flame,  
And choral chant that flows from Pieria's spring.  
Among them Elegy's impudent face draws close,  
Haughtier than of late, exhorting and wooing them,  
Hiding her lame foot, wishing to be the tenth Muse,  
And mingle barely noticed among those Sisters.  
Venus herself, Aeneas' mother, takes the bride's hand,  
Who chaste and sweet blushes with downcast eyes.  
Venus herself oversees the marriage bed and the rites,  
Hiding her godhead in Latian attire, veiling hair, face  
And eyes, keen not to over-shadow the newly wed.  
I discover the reason for the rite this day: it's for you,  
Stella, (fling wide the doors), for you, the choir sings;  
For you Phoebus and Bacchus, and winged Mercury  
From Maenalus' shade, bring garlands, while happy Love  
And the Graces scatter endless petals in fragrant showers,  
As you clasp the snow-white form of your longed-for bride.  
Now your forehead welcomes roses, now lilies mingled  
With violets, concealing your lady's shining face.  
This then was the day, twined in the Fates' white thread,  
When the marriage of Stella and Violentilla was to be,  
Declared and celebrated. Let fears and cares depart,  
An end to those deceitful lying sidelong prophecies;  
Rumour, be still. That errant love has bowed to rule,  
And yielded to the bridle, vulgar gossip ran its course,  
And all have seen those kisses so widely talked about.  
But you, Stella, are anxious, though the night of nights  
Is yours to delight in, fearful of the prayers a kind  
Deity has answered. No more sighing, sweet poet,  
She is yours. You may go to and fro freely over  
The open threshold. No more doorkeepers, rules,  
Or modesty. Sate yourself at last with her long-sought  
Embrace (now won) remembering nights of harshness.  
Just, your reward, if Juno had granted you Hercules'  
Labours, the Fates a meeting with Stygian monsters,  
Or swept you like Jason through the clashing rocks.  
Worth it for her sake to race, in fear of Pisa's rules,



Hearing it's king, Oenomaus, roaring in swift pursuit.  
Not even if you had been Paris, rash shepherd, seated  
On Trojan Ida, would such a gift have been yours, not  
If kind Tithonia had caught you up in her airy chariot.  
But what brought about this marriage, and our poet's  
Unlooked-for joys? Here beside me, graceful Erato,  
While doors and hallways seethe with the throng,  
And thresholds are beaten by many a long staff, tell!  
There's time for fitting talk, the poet's lair is listening.  
It chanced on a night just gone, kindly Venus abed,  
And the Milky Way serenely clasping the heavens,  
That she rested there from Mars' rough embrace.  
A host of sweet Amors crowded her pillowed couch,  
Seeking a sign: where to wave their flames, what hearts  
Will she order pierced? Is it land or sea she prefers?  
To stir the gods, or go on tormenting the Thunderer?  
She herself had no thoughts as yet, no heartfelt purpose.  
Weary she lay in the sheets, where once Vulcan's chains  
Surprised her, encircled the bed, revealing her shame.  
Then a lad of the winged host, whose torch burned  
Brightest, from whose slight hand no arrow had ever  
Failed, piped up sweetly, speaking in childish tones  
(While all his brothers, their quivers still, were silent):  
'You know, dear mother, my right hand is never slow  
To serve. Whoever you yield to me, man or god, is  
Set aflame. But this once, mother, let me be moved  
By human tears, hands clasped in vows and prayers,  
For we are not made of harshest steel, we are your  
Children. There's a fine young man of Latian stock,  
Joyful Nobility bore him, from a patrician line,  
And straightway granted him a heavenly name,  
Stella, a presage of his future handsome form.  
I pierced him with my arrows (for your pleasure),  
Mercilessly, made him tremble beneath a hail of darts.  
Many an Ausonian lady sought him for her daughter,  
But I tamed the unbowed, sentenced him to the yoke  
Of a powerful mistress, to long years of hopefulness.  
As for her I but grazed her lightly (as you ordered),  
With a shaft from a slack bow and my torch's tip.  
From that moment on, all astonished, I witnessed  
What fires the troubled youth confined within him,  
How he suffered from my attentions night and day.  
I never pressed any man harder, wound on wound,

Mother. I once saw Hippomenes coursing eagerly  
Down the cruel field, even at the end never so pale.  
I once saw Leander, outstretched arms rivalling oars,  
Praised his efforts, and often lit his path as he swam,  
Yet his ardour warmed the savage waves far less.  
You, young man, have surpassed the lovers of old.  
I was amazed myself at how you endured such fever,  
I strengthened your spirit, and wiped your moist eyes  
With my caressing plumes. How often Apollo would  
Complain to me of his poet's pain! Now, grant him,  
Mother, the marriage he desires. He's our friend,  
He's our faithful standard-bearer; he might have told  
Of warlike efforts, heroic deeds, and fields of blood,  
But he dedicated his pen to you, preferred to advance  
Gentle poetry, and intertwine the laurel with our myrtle.  
He tells of erring youth, his own and others' wounds.  
Mother, how he reveres you, the goddess of Paphos!  
He it was who mourned for Violentilla's black dove.'  
So he ended. Hanging fondly at his mother's soft  
Neck, he warmed her breast with trembling wings.  
She answered, her gaze not spurning his request:  
'Great is the prize indeed the Pierian youth desires,  
One rarely granted to lovers, even those I approve.  
Marvelling at her unique beauty, which her ancestral  
Glory and race's fame rivals, I clasped her at birth,  
And nursed her in my lap. Nor, my son, has my hand  
Been slow to add beauty to her neck and face, or comb  
Her hair adding rich unguents, She has grown in my  
Sweet likeness. Look there at the nobility of her brow,  
Her heaped tresses. See how she surpasses the women  
Of Latium: as Diana exceeds her maidens in height,  
Or as I myself stand high, far above the Nereids.  
She is worthy to have risen with me from cerulean  
Waves, and taken her place beside me on my shell,  
And if she'd been allowed to ascend the starry skies,  
And enter here, you yourselves, my Loves, might stray.  
Her soul's greater than her riches, though I've lavished  
Great wealth on her. I already moan that miserly China  
Despoils too small an acreage for her silks; Clymene's  
Amber fails, her Heliades, those green poplars, weep  
Too sparsely; too few fleeces blush with Sidonian dye;  
And insufficient crystals freeze out of the enduring ice.  
For her I bid Hermus and Tagus flow with silted gold

(There's too little to adorn her); for her, I commanded  
Glaucus, Proteus, all the Nereids, to search out Indian  
Pearls for her necklaces. If Phoebus had caught sight  
Of her in Thessaly's fields, Daphne had run no risk.  
If she had been seen at Theseus' side on Naxos' beach,  
Bacchus would have fled and left Ariadne there alone.  
And if Juno had not deterred me, with endless complaint,  
Heaven's lord would have assumed wings, or horns,  
For her sake, Jupiter's golden shower fallen on her.  
Yet she shall be given to him you favour, my son,  
My power supreme; though, grieving, she often spurns  
The yoke of a second marriage. Already I feel that she  
Herself is yielding, warming in turn to him.' So saying,  
She stretched her starry limbs, and crossed the exalted  
Threshold of space, to summon her Amyclaeon swans  
To the bridle. Amor yoked them, sat astride the jewelled  
Shaft, waving on his lovely mother through the clouds.  
Here's Tiber, the Ilian hills: a lofty residence reveals  
Its shining gods, the joyful swans swoop to its noble  
Entrance. The house is worthy of the goddess, no less  
Than the bright stars. Here Phrygian stone, and Libyan,  
Hard green Laconian rock, onyx marble, Carystian too  
With its sea-green colours, porphyry whose purple hue  
Sparta envies, as does the Tyrian stirrer of the dye-pot.  
Gleaming pediments crown countless columns, beams  
Bolted together with Dalmatian metals glitter brightly.  
Cool shade is cast where ancient trees exclude the sun,  
And here translucent fountains tremble amongst marble.  
Nature forgets her usual order: here Sirius brings chill;  
Winter, warmth: the house's seasons tempered to please.  
Kindly Venus delighted at the sight, her foster-child's fine  
Dwelling, no less than at sight of Paphos from the waves,  
Idalium, her Cyprian mountain city, or her shrine at Eryx.  
Then she addressed the girl, who lay on her lonely bed:  
'O my favourite among Laurentian girls, how long shall  
You sleep alone, embrace the chastity of an empty couch?  
When shall this propriety, and loyalty to a memory, end?  
Will you not submit to the yoke? Sadder years will come.  
Deploy your beauty now, make use of those fleeting gifts.  
I did not grant you such grace, such pride in your looks,  
And my own care, to have you spend your years a widow,  
As if I cared not. More than enough to have scorned those  
Earlier suitors! This one, in truth, is deeply devoted to you,

In every way, and loves and admires you above all others,  
No way deficient in looks or birth: as for his clever verses,  
What youths, what girls of Rome have them not by heart?  
Him you will witness (such is the favour shown him by  
Ausonia's ruler) raise the twelve rods of the Quindecimviri  
Before due time: even now he crosses Cybele's threshold,  
For sure, and reads the writings of the Euboean Sybil.  
Soon the Father of Latium, whose intentions are clearly  
Known to me, will grant the youth purple robes and curule  
Ivory, and grant him a role too in celebrating Dacian spoils  
And (a still greater glory) in extolling those recent laurels.  
So act, make your marriage bed, away with idle youth!  
What clans, what hearts has my nuptial torch not joined?  
Neither cattle, birds nor packs of wild creatures deny me.  
I merge sky and earth in marriage when rain thins the cloud.  
So the generations change, and the world's youth renews.  
If I had not taken a Phrygian mate, how would fresh Trojan  
Glory have arisen, those gods been saved from the flames?  
How would Etruscan Tiber have sustained my Julian line?  
How would the walls of seven-hilled Rome, the seat of Latin  
Empire, have risen if Ilia, that Dardan priestess, had failed  
To captivate Mars in secret play, or if I had so forbidden?  
Such are the words with which she beguiles girls in silence,  
Rousing the urge to marry. Now she recalls to mind  
The poet's gifts, prayers, sleepless sighs at the threshold,  
His Asteris sung throughout the whole city, his Asteris  
Before nourishment, Asteris by night, Asteris at dawn;  
Hylas was never so honoured. Now she allows her hard  
Heart to relent, freely, now to consider herself too harsh.  
Hail to your marriage bed, most pleasing of Latin poets!  
The long journey is over, the labours of your venture,  
The harbour's won. Thus, Alpheus, that river in flight  
From gleaming Pisa, on fire for a far-off foreign lover,  
Sent his pure stream through a deep submerged channel  
Until at last he rose panting and open-mouthed to drink  
The Sicilian fount, the Naiad amazed at his sweet kisses,  
Arethusa, not thinking her lover had sprung from the sea.  
What a day that was, my Stella, when you ran to meet so  
Glittering a heavenly prize! How your longing heart leapt  
When your lover's assenting face favoured sweet marriage!  
You thought it heaven, and yourself straying among bright  
Stars. Paris, the shepherd, was less exultant on Laconian  
Shores, when Helen came down to meet the Trojan fleet;

Nor did Thessalian Tempe find Peleus any more joyful,  
When Chiron the Centaur saw Thetis approach the land  
Of Haemonia. How slowly the stars move in their circuit,  
How reluctant Aurora to fulfil a bridegroom's prayer!  
When Apollo, father of poets, Leto's son, and Bacchus  
Son of Semele saw from afar these marriage preparations,  
They urged their swift followers onward: out of Delos,  
The one; Nysa the other. Lycia's peaks sound for the first,  
Shadows of chilly Thymbra, Parnassus: Pangaea, Ismara  
Re-echo the other, and Naxos, once witness to marriage.  
Then they entered the house they love, gifted their tuneful  
Friend a lyre; the one, a yellow dappled skin of a fawn;  
The other, the plectrum, the quill; one crowns with laurel  
The poet's brow, the other veils with vine-leaves his hair.  
Dawn has scarce broken when signs of the coming union  
Are to be seen, both houses seethe with the festive pomp.  
The doorposts are green with leaves, the crossroads lit,  
And the busiest streets of spreading Rome rejoice.  
Every mark of office, every rod, arrives at the threshold,  
Every robe of state is tweaked, in the plebeian turmoil:  
Here knights swarm, there wives invade the young crowd,  
All call the pair happy, but amongst the gathering more  
Envy the groom. Hymen who leans on a doorpost waits  
To deliver his brand-new wedding-song to charm the poet,  
Juno brings on the sacred yellow ribbons, while Concord  
Marks out the wedding-hour with her twin torches.  
Such is this day: let the bridegroom sing of the night,  
As much as it's right to know. So, Ilia on the riverbank  
Sank from Mars' embrace, conquered by cunning sleep,  
Not as Lavinia's snowy cheek blushed at Turnus' gaze,  
Nor as Claudia gazed once more on the people of Rome  
When the keel of the ship, freed, confirmed her chastity.  
Now, friends of the Muses and servants of Apollo, now  
It's your task to variously labour. Let our band emerge  
Wreathed in ribbons and ivy, each triumph with the lyre.  
But you above all who deny noble Epic its final foot,  
Grant us songs worthy of the marriage feast: Philetas,  
Would have competed to celebrate this day, to Cos's  
Applause; old Callimachus; Propertius in Umbrian cave;  
And Ovid too, joyful though exiled in Tomis; Tibullus  
As well, counting himself rich in owning a well-lit hearth.  
As for me no single love, no single reason draws me on  
To sing, my Muse is joined with yours as one, my Stella;

At the same altar we rave endlessly together, and draw  
The one water mutually out of the streams of learning.  
While you, my lady, Naples cradled your birth, it was  
Upon our patch of soil, sweet glory, you first walked.  
Let that land lift towards the bright sky, and Sebethos'  
Stream overflow with pride in its lovely foster-child;  
Let not the Lucrine Naiads take more delight in their  
Sulphurous depths or the pools of Pompeii's Sarnus.  
Come then, give splendid sons to Latium, to govern  
Law courts and armies, and playfully delight in song.  
Let kind Cynthia hasten the tenth month of each birth,  
And may Lucina be merciful, I pray. And you, boys,  
Spare your mother, don't spoil her sweet womb,  
Her firm breasts; when Nature shapes your visages  
In her silent retreat, may you receive good looks  
From father, more from mother, and you, loveliest  
Of Italy's daughters, possessed by a worthy spouse,  
Cherish the long-sought bond. So may your charms  
Not fade, your looks stay fresh, with a lasting flower  
Of youth, all this beauty of yours be slow to wane.

BkI:3 – Manilius Vopiscus' Villa at Tibur (Tivoli)

At one who feels the cool air of eloquent Vopiscus'  
Estate at Tibur, and those twin mansions the Anio  
Flows between, or chances to know that commerce  
Between mutual shores, where those halls compete  
To each detain the owner, the burning dog-star fails  
To howl, nor leafy Nemea's lion cub, Leo, to frown.  
Winter so clings there, persistent cold so overcomes  
The sun, the place never swelters in mid-summer heat.  
Pleasure herself, her gentle hand, designed it with you,  
Then Venus bestowed Idalian unguents on its roofs,  
Laved them with her hair, and embellished them with  
Grace, forbidding her winged offspring to forsake it.  
O ever memorable day! What joys my mind recalls,  
What a host of wonders to weary the dazzled eyes?  
How soft the landscape, what beauty of that fair site,  
Before art touched it! Nowhere has Nature indulged  
Herself so freely. Tall woods overhang swift waters;  
There an illusory image echoes the leafiness above,  
A selfsame shadow flees with the far-flowing wave.  
Anio itself (wonderful to tell!) full of rocks above  
And beneath, here calms its swollen rage, its roaring  
Foam, as if it were reluctant to disturb Vopiscus'  
Muse-haunted hours, his slumbers filled with song.  
Both shores are home, nor does the gentlest stream  
Divide them; and fine buildings occupy either bank,  
No strangers to one another, not parted by the river:  
Let Fame boast of Sestos' bay, those straits Leander  
Crossed, those dolphins that the brave lad out-swam!  
Here is eternal calm, her tempests have no power,  
No waters seethe. Here sight and sound, and almost  
Hands traverse; no tidal flood parts us from Chalcis,  
Nor does Rhegium's Bruttian shore gaze far across  
To Sicilian Pelorus, separated from it by the deep.  
How shall I start or move my song, how silent end it?  
Shall I marvel at the gilded beams above Mauritanian  
Citrus-wood doorposts everywhere, or bright veined  
Marble, nymphaean waters flowing in every bedroom?  
Eyes draw me this way, and mind that. Shall I speak  
Of the venerable age of the trees? Or of the courtyard  
That gazes on the river down below, or another court  
That views the other side, towards the silent woods,

Where all is quiet for you, and the untroubled night,  
Is calm or mere murmurs invite to undisturbed sleep?  
Or of the steaming baths approached by a grassy ledge,  
Where flames exert themselves against the chill shore,  
And the river united with a vaporous furnace mocks  
Those nymphs panting hard, despite the nearby waters.  
I saw works of art, antiques, metals variously crafted.  
It would be wearisome to list the gold statues, ivories,  
The gems fit for adorning fingers, all that the hands  
Of artists ever created, firstly in miniature, in silver  
Or bronze, and then in conceiving enormous colossi.  
As I wandered, looking round, gazing at everything  
I stumbled unexpectedly on riches. Brightness fallen  
From above over mosaic tiles sending back their glow  
Displayed the shining ground, whose floor delighted  
In pictorial art, new forms beyond those of Pergamum.  
I trod fearfully. Why wonder now at mingled roofs  
Or those separated by many levels? Or at that tree left  
Mid-hall, rising through doors and ceilings to emerge  
Above, doomed to suffer the axe under another master?  
Though for now some fleeting Naiad or Hamadryad  
Unknown may have you to thank for unbroken years.  
Why tell of tables opposite each other on twin shores,  
Of cold pools, and the springs in the water's depths,  
Or the Marcian pipeline crossing beneath the river,  
In its bold leaded channel, traversing the depths,  
Lest Alpheus, that stream of Elis, alone be led beneath  
The waters, on sweet Ionian course to Sicilian haven.  
Here Anio himself, leaving his cave and spring deep  
In the night, discarding his grey-green cloak, moves  
The fragile weed, spread across his chest, to and fro;  
Or plunges his mass in the stream, and as he swims  
Splashes up glassy water. In this shade Tiburnus lies,  
Here Albula would wish to lave her sulphurous hair.  
This place might lure Egeria from her Arician grove,  
Deprive chill Taygetus of his choirs of dryads, might  
Summon Pan from the forests of Lycaeus. The sisters  
Of Praeneste might transfer here, should the temple  
Of Tyrrhian Hercules cease to grant its own oracles.  
Why laud the twice-fruiting orchards of King Alcinous,  
Those boughs that stretched ever-burdened to the sky?  
Let Telegonian Tusculum's and Turnus's Laurentian  
Acres yield; those Lucrine villas, and blood-stained



Antiphates' Baiaean shore; and the treacherous ridge  
Of glassy Circeii, where Ulysses' wolf-crew howled;  
Terracina's proud citadel, Caieta that Aeneas's nurse  
Owes to her Trojan charge; or even Antium's shore  
That calls to you when the light thins in rainy winter.  
Surely this life allows weighty matters be considered,  
Here fecund quiet's concealed, grave virtue with brow  
Serene, sane elegance and pleasure free of indulgence,  
So much so that old Epicurus would have preferred it,  
And, leaving Athens, have wished his Garden farewell.  
It would have been worth enduring Aegean tempests  
To reach here, braving Capella and the rainy Hyades,  
Even though his vessel would have had to pass Malea,  
And Messina's straits. Why do we scorn delight nearby?  
Here your lyre pleasures Tibur's fauns, Hercules himself,  
And Catillus, Tibur's founder, whom a greater poet sang,  
Whether you decide to contest with Pindar's plectrum,  
Or raise your instrument to the mighty deeds of heroes,  
Or brandish it darkly, livid with the black salt of satire,  
Or with no less care bestow splendour on your letters.  
Worthy of the all the wealth of Midas, Croesus, Persia,  
Hail to your mind's riches! Should not the golden flow  
Of Hermus traverse your flooded fields, and the Tagus  
With its gleaming sands. May you so cultivate learned  
Leisure, I pray; every cloud on your heart so disperse,  
That you pass beyond the limits set to Nestor's old age.

BkI:4 – To Rutilius Gallicus on his recovery from illness

You gods above exist, hurrah, and Clotho's spinning's  
Not inexorable! Kindly Astraea witnesses piety, returns  
To Jove's side reconciled, and Gallicus again can view  
The uncertain stars. Heaven loves you, Domitian (who  
Can deny it?) Fortune demurred at robbing your state  
Of such a minister. The head beside you rises free of  
An immeasurable weight, unwinds itself from age's  
Ruinous web, and renews, invigorated for fresh years.  
Let your Urban Cohorts, prompt to salute the standard,  
The lawyers who often flock to you to protest at courts  
In turmoil, and citizens who don the toga in far cities,  
Whose cries implore your justice everywhere, compete  
In joy; let the seven hills of Rome, follow each other,  
In ringing celebration, and let dark rumour fall silent.  
He is preserved to us, and reviving shall long remain,  
In whose power rests kind watch over tranquil Rome.  
Our new age need not charge the Fates with any crime,  
Nor the freshly-restored altar of Tarentus be found guilty.  
As for me, I'll not call on Phoebus, though without him  
My lyre is mute; nor the Aonian Muses of whom Pallas  
Is the tenth; Tegea's god Mercury; nor Dirce's Bacchus;  
Come to me in person, you whom I sing, and grant me  
New strength and spirit; for it was no lack of eloquence  
With which you won wide distinction in Ausonia's robes,  
And gave wise advice to the Centumviri. Though Pieria's  
Sources of inspiration fail to quench my thirst, Pirene's  
Aid be denied me, deeper draughts flow to me from your  
Fount, whether you write plain prose in free measure,  
Or whether your sweet flood of words is constrained by  
Art, and what you compose conforms to rules and laws.  
To work! Should we not return Ceres her own gifts, and  
Bacchus his own wine? If Diana rich in spoils accepts  
Ours at every shrine, and the God of War our captured  
Spears, don't spurn (though your voice be mightier,  
Gallicus, its speech overflowing with sublime riches)  
The tribute of my humbler lyre. The wandering moon  
Is ringed with stars; even the lesser streams reach the sea.  
What gift of affection did anxious Rome not show you in  
Reward! What fine Senators and Knights did I not note,  
And common folk not prone to mourn the powerful!  
The Senate feared no less for Numa when he sickened,

Nor the nobles for Pompey, nor the women for Brutus.  
Here's why: to hear the clank of sad chains unwillingly;  
To spare the lash, nor go where the heights of power  
Command, but to renounce much of one's own strength  
Of arms, acknowledge humble prayers and hear petitions,  
Show justice in the Forum, yet not push the magistrates  
Aside, or let the toga blunt the force of arms; that's the way  
To move men's hearts, so does reverence depend on love.  
The very harshness of overwhelming Fate terrified us all,  
And that sudden onset of incipient danger as the illness  
Knew no pause. It was scarcely the result of age (in years  
He has barely counted beyond twelve lustres, a ripe sixty)  
But rather the stress of work, the effect of a powerful mind  
On the body, vigilant service to his Caesar, labours of love.  
So an insidious fatigue penetrated deep into weary limbs,  
And a slow and numbing indifference to life's demands.  
Then the god who, beneath the summits of the Alpine  
Ridge, bestows his sacred name on Apollonian groves,  
Turned his gaze, too long neglectful of such a favourite,  
Towards him, and forestalling delay cried: 'Come now,  
Gladly, with me Aesculapius, my son, there's a chance  
(To be grasped) to save a great man. Let us go seize  
The distaff from which fate's thread is drawn: fear no  
Dire lightning bolt. Jove unsought will praise our skill.  
It's no ordinary life, unblessed by the gods, we'll save.  
In brief, as I'll explain when we're beneath his roof,  
He himself grants his family nobility, retrospectively;  
Though his origins are not obscure, they're eclipsed  
By after brilliance, and gladly yield to later greatness.  
Like them, robed in the gown, he first showed talent:  
Famous and mighty in eloquence; then sworn to duty  
Served in innumerable camps, in every region to east  
And west, never able to relinquish the sword, and find  
Relaxation from all his endeavours in tranquil leisure.  
Galatia's lusty Gauls dared to make war against him  
(As once against me!); for nine harvests Pamphylia  
Feared him, bold Pannonians and Armenians, skilled  
With the bow, and Araxes now with its Roman bridge.  
What of his praetorship, and his governorship, twice,  
Of Asia, that itself would have wished a third, a fourth,  
Had he not been recalled by the Fasti and a Consulship,  
Repeatedly promised? What of the wondrous obedience  
Libya's tribute showed, triumph in the midst of peace,

And such riches as not even he who commissioned you  
Dared expect? The Alps and Trasimene and the ghosts  
Of Cannae rejoiced, and Regulus appeared, he joyful  
Above all, and first to take note of the brilliant tribute.  
Time's too short to tell of armies in the north, of rebel  
Rhine, Veleda's prayers, and greatest and most recent  
Of glories, Rome placed in Gallicus's care as Dacians  
Died, he being chosen, no stranger to good Fortune,  
To take the City's reins from our great leader's hands.  
So, my son, if I speak fitly, we must snatch him from  
Pluto's grasp. Rome's illustrious father demands it,  
And deserves it; not for nothing at the Secular Games  
Did those boys, in patrician purple, chant their hymns  
In my honour. Whatever medicines exist in Chiron's  
Cave of remedies; whatever Trojan Pergamum keeps  
For you, in your temple; whatever happy Epidaurus  
Grows in her healing sands; that power of flowering  
Dittany Crete bears beneath Ida's foliage; your snake's  
Copious foam – I'll gather in my hands, with every  
Benign extract the knowledgeable shepherd gains  
From Arabia's fragrant fields or from Amphrysus' herbs.'  
So he spoke. Now, they found those limbs were bathed  
In languor; breath was short; both girded themselves in  
Paonian fashion, willingly both took and gave advice,  
Till they dispelled with sundry remedies the baneful  
And most sinister vapours of unwholesome slumber.  
Gallicus himself helped the gods; stronger than all that  
Sickness, he anticipated aid. Telephus was not cured  
More swiftly by Haemonian skill, nor fearsome Atrides'  
Cruel wounds healed more rapidly by Machaon's balm.  
What space for my anxious prayers among the crowds  
Of senators and others? Yet I summon the stars on high  
And you, Apollo, father of poets, to bear witness to how  
I spent day and night in terror, and clung to the doorpost,  
Now with eye, now with ear straining to note everything,  
Like a little boat astern of some great ship, when the storm  
Blows furiously and on its own small account receives  
The raging waves and tosses high in the same westerly.  
Now Fates, spin your shining thread joyfully, spin now,  
Sisters, let no one measure the span of life gone by;  
Let this be his life's rebirth. Worthy are you to outlive  
Those aged Trojans, exceed the Sibyl's heap of dust,  
Nestor's decay. Poor as I am, where shall I find a tribute

Fit to give as an offering for you? Not though Mevania  
Emptied its valleys, Clitumnus supplied its snow-white  
Bulls, would that suffice me. Yet often a clod of soil,  
Grain, a little salt, regardless of the rest, delight the gods.

## BkI:5 – The Baths of Claudius Etruscus

My lyre, inspired, shall not beat at Helicon's gates  
With weighty plectrum, nor will I call on the Muses  
I've often wearied: I dismiss Phoebus and Bacchus  
From the choir; you too winged Mercury hide your  
Tortoise-shell, be silent. My song summons others.  
It's enough to elicit the Naiads, the watery powers,  
And Vulcan, the king of fire, all hot and exhausted  
From his Sicilian anvil. I'll lay Thebes' noxious arms  
Aside for a while; I wish only to amuse a dear friend.  
Pour cups without count, lad, string the tardy lyre:  
Be done with Toil and Care, while I sing of the baths  
Bejewelled with shining marble, and my Muse, Clio,  
Dancing in purple ribbons and ivy, spurning the chaste  
Laurel or Apollo's white ribbons, entertains Etruscus.  
Come, green goddesses, show us your streaming faces,  
Bind up your glassy hair with tender reeds, free of all  
Garments, as when you emerge from the depths of your  
Springs, and torment your Satyr lovers with the sight.  
Though I'd not summon those of you whose crimes  
Trouble the fair waters. Let Salmacis stay far from here,  
And her treacherous fountain; and Oenone's stream, she  
Deserted, arid with grief; and her who stole Hylas away.  
You nymphs of Latium and the Seven Hills, whose fresh  
Waters swell the Tiber; and you that swift Anio delights;  
Aqua Virgo that welcomes swimmers; and Aqua Marcia  
Bringer of Marsian snows and coolness; you whose flow  
Cascades along airy channels, raised on countless arches;  
Yours the work I attempt, yours the mansion my gentle  
Song reveals. Nowhere have you haunted richer in style.  
Venus herself guided her husband Vulcan's hands, she  
Made them skilful; and not merely common flames fired  
The furnace, she used the torches of her winged Amors.  
Here's no marble of Thasos or Carystos, alabaster sulks  
Far off, serpentine mutters in exile, here all the stone  
That gleams is from Numidia's golden quarries, except  
For a porphyry to grieve the purples of Sidon and Tyre,  
Or that marble with blood-red flecks that Attis stained  
With his own blood in Synnas's hollow Phrygian cave.  
There's barely room for Eurotas whose long green veins  
Set off Synnas's variations. The doorways are not remiss,  
The ceilings gleam, the beams glitter, glow with figures

In glassy variety. The fires are amazed at all the wealth  
That they reveal around them, and temper their flames.  
Daylight is everywhere, as the rebellious sun penetrates  
The roof, with all its rays, warmed by different flames.  
There's nothing vulgar here. No Temesean copper you  
Note. The pleasant flow is through silver channels, then  
Into silver it falls once more, lapping the shining brim,  
Wondering at its own charms, and reluctant to depart.  
Outside a blue-green river sparkles between gleaming  
Banks, clear throughout from its surface to its depths;  
Whom would it not tempt to throw off heavy clothes,  
And take a plunge? Venus would rather have sprung  
From these deeps, Narcissus here you'd have seen  
Yourself more truly, here swift Diana would have  
Loved to bathe, even if she risked being discovered.  
Why tell of the planking laid out across the ground  
So the ball-games may be heard, where languid flames  
Surround, and the hypocausts release a mild warmth?  
Were some new guest to arrive from Baiae's shores  
He'd not despise it (if it's right to compare the great  
And small) nor would a bather fresh from Nero's Baths  
Refuse to sweat it out here once more. Hail, lad, to your  
Shining ingenuity and care! Let all here age, gently, along  
With you, and your fortunes revive, happier than before!

## BkI:6 – The December Kalends

Mighty Apollo, and stern Pallas  
And you Muses, away and play!  
We'll recall you on Janus' Kalends.  
Let unchained Saturn join with me,  
And December soaked with wine,  
Smiling Humour and wanton Jest,  
While of happy Caesar's joyous  
Day I tell, and of tipsy feasting.  
Scarce had Aurora brought the dawn,  
And already good things rained down:  
These the dews the easterly sprinkled:  
Whichever are best of Pontic nuts,  
And dates from Idume's fertile hills,  
And plums pious Damascus grows,  
And figs Ebusos and Caunos ripen,  
Freely the lavish spoils descend.  
And pastries and 'little Gaiuses'  
Ameria's un-dried apples and pears,  
Spiced cakes and ripened dates,  
Shower from an unseen palm.  
Not stormy Hyas drenches Earth  
Nor the Pleiades with such showers  
As rattled down on the Latian theatre  
Like bursts of hail from a clear sky.  
Let Jupiter cloud the whole world  
Threaten to deluge the open fields,  
So long as our Jove brings such rain.  
Look, along the aisles comes another  
Crowd, handsome and finely dressed,  
No less in number than those seated!  
These bring bread-baskets and white  
Napkins, and elegant delicacies to eat,  
Those pour out mellow wine freely:  
So many cupbearers down from Ida.  
The fourteen rows, now virtuous, sober,  
Are fed, with the people wearing gowns;  
And since you nourish so many, Lord,  
Annona, the price of corn's, outweighed.  
Ages, compare now, if it's your wish,  
Old Saturn's centuries, golden days:  
Never flowed wine so, even then,



Nor did harvest anticipate new year.  
Every order eats here at the one table:  
Women, children, knights, plebs, Senate:  
Freedom has set aside reverence.  
Why you yourself (which of the gods  
Issues and accepts his own invitation?)  
Have come to the feast along with us.  
Now all, now whoever, rich or poor  
Can boast of dining with our leader.  
Amid the din, and rich novelties,  
The pleasant spectacle flickers by.  
The unskilled sex, unused to swords,  
Take position in warlike combat.  
They seem like troops of Amazons  
In heat, by Tanais or wild Phasis.  
Here's a line of audacious midgets,  
Whom Nature suddenly left off making,  
And tied forever in spherical knots.  
They deal wounds and ply their fists  
And threaten each other with death!  
Mars and blood-stained Courage laugh  
While cranes swoop at their errant prey  
Wondering at their pigmy pugnacity.  
Now as the shades of night gather,  
A scattering of riches provokes tumult!  
The girls enter, now readily bought,  
Here's whatever delights the stalls,  
Pleasing forms, or established skill.  
Here, the fat Lydian ladies applaud,  
There are cymbals, jingling Spaniards,  
And there, the troops of noisy Syrians.  
Here's the theatre-mob, and those who  
Barter common sulphur for broken glass.  
Meanwhile vast flocks of birds suddenly  
Swoop like clouds from among the stars,  
Flamingos, pheasants and guinea fowl,  
That Nile, Phasis and Numidia capture.  
Too many to seize; the folds of gowns  
Are happily filled with new-won prizes.  
Countless voices, that rise to the stars,  
Proclaim the Emperor's Saturnalia,  
Acclaim him leader with fond applause.  
Here's the only licence Caesar banned:

Barely had darkness cloaked the world,  
When a fiery ball from the arena's midst  
Shone as it rose through the dense gloom,  
Exceeding the light of the Cretan crown.  
The sky was bright with flame, permitting  
No licence at all to night's dark shadows.  
At the sight of it, idle Silence and Sleep  
Must take themselves off to other cities.  
Who could sing the free jests, the shows,  
The banquets, the home-grown foodstuffs,  
Those lavishly flowing rivers of wine?  
Now my strength ebbs, and your liquor  
Drags me tipsily towards needful slumber.  
To what distant ages shall this day travel?  
Sacred, undiminished, through the years.  
Whilst Latium's hills, by Father Tiber,  
And Rome, still stand, and its Capitol,  
That you restore to Earth: it shall remain.

**End of Book I**

## Book II

BkII: Prologue – Statius to his friend, Melior, Greetings

Such is my friendship with you, in which I delight, dear Melior, who are no less elegant in your literary discernment than in the whole tenor of your life, and such the nature of the little works I dedicate to you, that this whole book of mine would seek your regard even without this letter. For its first theme is our dear Glaucias, who as a charming infant under your roof, one of the unfortunates whose destiny so often turns out to be thus, I embraced and loved, he who is now no longer yours. I sent a poem of consolation, as you know, for this recent loss, so promptly that I felt I owed you an apology for its alacrity. Nor am I boasting of it to you, who know, but am indicating it to others who might otherwise criticise the piece too harshly, coming as it did from a sorrowful writer to a grieving recipient, given that tardy consolation is well-nigh superfluous. My dear Pollius's Surrentine villa comes next; that piece deserved more diligent composition, to honour his eloquence, but as a friend he has forgiven me. You should know, Melior, that the little pieces regarding that tree and that parrot of yours were written in epigrammatic fashion. The same facility of style was required for the tame lion; the work would have fallen flat if I had not presented it to our most sacred Emperor, while the lion lay dead in the amphitheatre. I added another consolation to this book, addressed to our friend Ursus, a clear-minded and learned lad, who loses no time to idleness. I did so, freely, because besides what I owed to him, he will credit you with the compliment. A birthday ode for Lucan ends the volume, an ode that Polla Argentaria, a treasure among wives, asked as a favour when we happened to discuss that celebratory day. I could not show greater reverence for such a mighty author than by mistrust of my own hexameters in praise of him.

If these writings, such as they are, do not displease you, my dearest Melior, let them find their audience in you; if not, may they return to me.

BkII:1 – On Glaucias, favourite of Atedius Melior

How perverse to even begin to console you, Melior  
For your foster-child, abruptly taken, while I yet stand  
By the pyre's glowing embers? As yet the sad wound's  
Open veins gape wide, the treacherous path of the blow.  
While I, in my cruelty, make verse and healing words,  
You seek out loud lament, and the beating of breasts,  
Out of love with the lyre, and turning deaf ears aside.  
Song is ill-timed. Sooner would a tigress choose to hear,  
Or some bereaved lion and lioness robbed of their cubs.  
Not even by the threefold harmony of the Sicilian Siren,  
Or that lyre of Orpheus's, woods and wild beasts knew,  
Could your wild cries be calmed. Frantic grief consumes  
Your heart, and when you are touched you groan within.  
None would forbid it; sate yourself with misery, be free  
To conquer bitter pain. Has the need to weep yet gone?  
Are you no longer weary, resentful of a friend's pleas?  
Now, shall I sing? See even as I do so, my face swims  
With tears, and their sad droplets fall to stain the page.  
For I myself, beside you, led the black-garbed funeral  
Procession, and the child's bier (alas how wrong it felt!)  
While Rome watched; I saw the cruel heaps of wretched  
Incense, and the heartfelt weeping there over his corpse,  
And as you outdid a father's groans, or a mother's arms  
Outstretched to clasp the pyre, ready to eat the flames,  
I, likewise, could scarcely restrain you, without offence.  
And now, a poet of ill-omen, alas, I doff the ribbons  
Honouring my brow, reverse my lyre, beat my breast,  
Beside you. Be soothed now, I pray, and if I have felt  
And deserved involvement in your mourning, accept  
Me as your friend and companion in this raw grief.  
Fathers in pain have heard me. I have sung solace  
To mothers prostrate by the pyres of dear children,  
And solaced myself when, Nature, I, bowed down,  
Lamented, oh so dear a father! I don't say, harshly,  
Do not mourn; but share your pain, let us both weep.  
For many a long hour; unsure how to begin my praise  
Of so deservedly loved a child, I sought some worthy line.  
At one moment his age, at the very threshold of life,  
Inspired me, then his charms, or precocious modesty,  
His sense of honour, his probity riper than his years.  
Oh, where is that fine complexion suffused with blushes,

Those star-bright orbs, eyes filled with heavenly radiance,  
And the modest compactness of that slender forehead,  
The delicate locks of hair above, the soft decorous fringe?  
Where's that melodious voice with its charming plaint,  
Those kisses redolent of spring flowers at each embrace,  
Those tears blended with laughter, those accents laced  
With the sweetness of Hybla's honey, at which serpents  
Ceased to hiss, and cruel stepmothers longed to serve him?  
No way I do exaggerate his true charm. Alas, the milk-white  
Throat, those arms always clasped about his master's neck!  
Oh where is the burgeoning hope of that coming manhood,  
The longed-for grace on those cheeks, the beard he so often  
Swore to you was there? A heavy hour, a hostile day turned  
Everything to ashes; and all that is left to us is our memories.  
Who'll now soothe your heart with the happy talk you loved,  
Who'll reflect the drift of your cares, your private thoughts?  
Who'll calm you when bile inflames your anger, and you wax  
Harsh with your servants, turning you from hot ire to himself?  
Who'll steal the food you've just raised, the wine you've sipped,  
From your lips, wreaking havoc with his sweet plundering?  
Who'll leap on your bed, and murmur to break your morning  
Slumber, who'll delay your leaving with a clinging embrace,  
And call you back at the very threshold to receive his kisses?  
Who'll meet you on your return again, and rise to your hands  
And lips, embracing your shoulders with his little arms?  
Mute is the house, I bear witness, and desolate the hearth,  
Neglect pervades the bedroom, sad silence the dinner-hour.  
What wonder, Atedius, that your loyal foster-father honoured  
You with so grand a funeral? You were your master's solace,  
A haven for his old age, at times his joy, at times his heart's  
Sweet care. You were not spun round on some barbarous  
Slaver's turntable, nor for sale, a child, among the Pharian  
Goods there, cracking concocted jokes, speaking made words,  
Playfully seeking a master, and all too slow to discover one.  
Here was your home, here was your origin, both your parents  
Were long dear to your master's house, freed for your happiness,  
Lest you bemoaned your birth. But no sooner were you snatched  
From the womb, than your master raised you up, in exultation,  
To greet the glittering stars with your first cry, calling you his  
In his heart; clasped you to his breast naming you as his own.  
By permission of sacred parenthood, and by your leave, Nature,  
Who dictate the whole world's primal laws, may I be allowed  
To say: consanguinity and natural descent via a line of offspring,

Are not the only bonds; adopted children are often dearer to us  
Than kin. Legitimate sons are a necessity, but those we choose  
Are a joy. So Achilles meant more to that kindly centaur Chiron,  
Than to Haemonian Peleus. Nor did the aged Peleus accompany  
His son to the Trojan War, but Phoenix clung to his dear pupil.  
Evander, far away, prayed for his son Pallas's triumphant return,  
While loyal Acoetes, Evander's armour-bearer, watched the fight.  
Among the bright stars, winged Perseus' father, Jupiter, lingered,  
While Perseus was nurtured by the wave-borne fisherman Dictys.  
What need to speak of mothers less affectionate than the nurse?  
What need to tell of you, Bacchus, lying more safely in Ino's lap,  
After your mother, Semele, tricked by Jove, had turned to ashes?  
Ilia, careless of her son, reigned as queen over Tuscan waters,  
While Acca, his nurse, grew weary carrying Romulus around.  
I have seen twigs grafted on an alien tree grow taller than they do  
On their own. And your mind and spirit had already made you  
His father, even before his beauty and his ways captured you,  
Even then, you loved the sounds that he made though limited  
To crying, you loved his innocent wailing and his infant tears.  
Like a flower fated to die at the first breath of adverse wind,  
Standing far too tall in the tender field, so that child, in looks  
And proud steps beyond his years, prematurely outdid his peers.  
When he stood firm in a wrestling hold, you might have thought  
Him born of some Spartan mother, (Apollo would have been  
Ready to exchange him for Hyacinthus, Oebalus's son, or  
Hercules for his favourite Hylas); or when, in Greek costume,  
He performed eloquent Menander's Attic speeches, wanton  
Thalia, in delight, would have praised his accents, ruffled  
His handsome locks, by placing there her garland of roses;  
Or when he recited from Homer, the story of Troy's toils,  
Or the adventures of Ulysses long-delayed homecoming,  
His father, teachers even, were amazed at his understanding.  
Surely Lachesis touched the child's cradle with her hand  
Of ill fate, and Envy fondled the infant on her lap; the one  
Stroked his cheeks and curly hair, the other granted him  
Talent and filled him with those accents we now mourn.  
Developing year by year he bid fair to equal Hercules'  
Labours, and yet he was still not much more than a child;  
His step was firm already, his clothes seemed inappropriate  
To his stature, he always seemed to be outgrowing them,  
And what gear did your tender master not rush to provide?  
Not wanting to restrict your breathing with a lined cloak,  
Or burden your chest with a constricting winter mantle,

Always selecting clothes to suit your years, with folds  
Not too ample, at one time dressing you all in scarlet,  
Now in a green like the grass, now in the sweet blush  
Of purple; delighting in making your fingers sparkle  
With vivid gems. Hosts of servants and gifts unending;  
Only the toga of free birth lacking to your modest dress.  
Here is the doom of the house. Suddenly a hostile Fate  
Raises her hands. Whom do you bare your savage nails  
To harm, goddess? Do neither beauty nor piteous youth  
Move you? Procne could never have attacked him so,  
Nor the cruel Medea have steeled herself to such fierce  
Wrath, not even if he had been Jason's son, by Creusa.  
Mad Athamas would have turned his grim bow aside.  
Ulysses, though he hated Troy and Hector's very ashes,  
Would have wept, balked at hurling the lad from its walls.  
The seventh dawn comes, and his cold eyes are dimmed,  
Already Proserpina holds a lock of his hair in her hand.  
But even as the Fates curtail his frail years, his dying gaze  
Fixes on you and his failing tongue murmurs your name.  
All the air left in his empty lungs he breathes towards you;  
He remembers your name alone, her hears only your cry,  
And moves his lips for you, and speaks his parting words,  
Forbidding you to grieve, trying to console your sadness.  
We thank you, Fates, that no lingering illness consumed  
His boyish beauty as he lay there, he will descend whole  
To the shades, his body inviolate, nothing lost; as he was.  
What should I tell of the funeral rites, or the lavish gifts  
Given to the flames, the corpse alight with funerary pomp?  
Or of how tall your sad pyre rose high in a purple mound,  
How Cilician saffron and those tributes of Indian spices,  
Arabian, Pharian, Palestinian perfumes drenched the hair  
About to burn? Melior rushes to bring all he has to the pyre,  
To set a torch, prodigally, to his entire wealth, loathing all  
These riches left behind; but the jealous fire refuses to burn,  
The flames are stifled, unequal to so great a pile of offerings.  
A shudder grips my senses. Melior, calmest of men, how I  
Feared for you during the last rites, hard by the funeral pyre!  
Was this then the pleasant and friendly face I used to know?  
Whence was that passion, wild gestures, strange tremors?  
Now flat on the ground you hid from the cruel light of day,  
Now you tore at your clothes fiercely, raked the skin beneath,  
Pressing your mouth to those beloved eyes and cold lips.  
The father and mother of the dead child were both present,

But those parents gazed at you dumbfounded by your grief.  
No wonder, all the populace wept for the tragedy, as did  
The crowd who had gone on ahead, by the Flaminian Way  
Over the Mulvian Bridge, when the blameless child was lost  
To the sad pyre, earning their tears for his beauty and youth.  
So drowned Melicertes was carried by sea to an Isthmian  
Harbour and, set down there, was laid beside his mother Ino.  
So too the greedy flames consumed Opheltes, torn by snakes  
As he was playing in Nemea's serpent-infested meadows.  
But lay aside your fears, and cease to fear death's menace.  
Triple-jawed Cerberus will never snarl at him, the Furies  
With their torches and writhing snakes never scare him;  
Even Charon the surly oarsman of the avid boat will steer  
Nearer to the barren bank, closer to the scorched shore,  
Lest the lad should find it difficult to clamber aboard.  
What is this Mercury, Cyllene's son, proclaims to me,  
So joyously, with his wand? Can anything there bring joy?  
Yet the boy would recognise great Blaesus there, his high  
Countenance, from statues in your house, when you twined  
Fresh garlands, or clasped the waxen images to your breast.  
Seeing him as he paces the banks of Lethe's stream, there  
Among the Ausonian noblemen, and among Quirinus' line,  
The lad would walk timidly by his side, approaching silently,  
Plucking at the edge of his robe, following him persistently,  
Nor would Blaesus spurn him the more he plucked at him,  
Merely think the boy some young relation unknown to him.  
When later he was made aware that this was his dear friend's  
Darling child, who had consoled that friend for his own death,  
He would take him up and clasp him to his mighty breast,  
Taking him happily by the arm, showing him all the charms  
Of bloodless Elysium, the bare branches and the silent birds,  
And the weak and pallid flowers there, nipped in their bud.  
Nor would he discourage him from those memories of you,  
But heart to heart share the lad's love for you, yours for him.  
Death has him. Surely now you must heal the wound, raise  
Your head bowed by grief? All we see is passing or doomed  
To pass. The nights vanish and the days, and even the stars,  
And its substance can do nothing to preserve the solid earth.  
As for human beings they are mortal, and who shall weep  
The loss of transient creatures? Some war takes, some the sea,  
Some are ruined by love, others by savage greed or madness,  
To say nothing of disease. Some await winter's frozen face,  
Others implacable Sirius' fatal heat, while yet again others



Go to find their fate in pallid autumn's rain-filled depths.  
Whatever has a beginning, fears its end. We shall all, all  
Go our way; Aeacus rattles the urn for countless shades.  
But happily he for whom we grieve, he will elude both  
Men and gods, and doubtful days, and all the dangers  
Of blind chance, immune to fate. He did not ask for death,  
Nor did he deserve, nor fear, it. We the anxious multitude,  
We are wretched, ignorant of when our last day will dawn,  
How we shall quit this life, from what star the lightning will  
Fall, what cloud thunder our fate. Does this not move you?  
Yet you shall be moved, and willingly. Come to us, Glaucias,  
Sent from the dark sill, you who alone can win what I ask,  
(Neither Charon the ferryman, nor Cerberus chained tight  
To the inexorable gate, bar guiltless souls): soothe his heart,  
Forbid his eyes to weep; and fill long nights of blessedness  
With your sweet speech and the living image of your face;  
Deny you have perished; and bring him, as only you can,  
Renewed awareness of a bereaved sister, sorrowing parents.

BkII:2 – Pollius Felix's Villa at Surrentum (Sorrento)

Between the walls whose name they say derives from the Sirens,  
And the cliffs that carry Tyrrhene Minerva's temple at Misenum,  
There's a villa on high that gazes down on the Dicarchaeon deep,  
Where the countryside's dear to Bacchus, where the grapes ripen  
On the slopes of the hills, without envying the Falernian vines.  
Here then I gladly sailed, over my native bay, from my home  
Naples, as the quadrennial festival of the Augustalia ended,  
When a lazy quiet had settled on the stadium, and the dust lay  
White, and the athletes' thoughts turned to Ambracian laurels.  
I was tempted here by the eloquence of gentle Pollius, and by  
The youthful grace of shining Polla, though I had been eager  
To turn my steps to where the Via Appia, queen of highways,  
Carries travellers along the long, familiar track towards Rome.  
The delay was worth it. Curving headlands on either hand  
Frame crescent-shaped waters, forming the tranquil bay.  
Nature grants space, and the streaming shore separates  
The heights, running inland between overhanging cliffs.  
The first thing that graces them is a steaming bath-house  
With twin domes, where fresh water flows to the briny sea.  
Here Phorcus's nimble choir, and Cymodoce with dripping  
Hair, and sea-green Galatea take their pleasure in bathing.  
Neptune, the cerulean master of the swelling waves, he  
Who is custodian of this innocuous house, keeps watch  
Before his temple; his shrine is brine-wet with the benign  
Spray. Hercules protects the fortunate fields, and the bay  
Rejoices in the protection of its dual deities. Here the land  
Is saved from harm, and here the savage waters are tamed.  
The sea is wonderfully calm. Here weary waves lay aside  
Their fury, and wild southerly winds breathe more gently.  
Here the headlong tempest abates, and the pool lies there  
Modest and untroubled, imitating the manners of its owner.  
From there a colonnade zigzags over the heights, city-work,  
Its long spine mastering the rugged cliffs. It's pleasant now  
To wander where dense dust once obscured the sunlight,  
Over those places where the track was rough and foul:  
It's like the covered path that leading from Ino's harbour  
At Lechaeum climbs the high slopes of Bacchis' Corinth.  
Not if Helicon granted me the power of both its springs,  
Or Pierian Piplea quenched my thirst, or Hippocrene  
That sprang from beneath Pegasus' hooves, or sweet  
Castalian Phemonoe pouring out her chaste waters,

Or those disturbed by my dear Pollius when under  
Phoebus' auspices he plunged deep into the urn,  
Not even then would my Muse be equal to the task  
Of describing the endless sights and the adornments  
Of this place. My eyes are wearied by their serried  
Ranks, my legs grow weary as I am led from one  
To another. What a host of delights! Should I wonder  
Most at the place itself or the ingenuity of its owner?  
This building faces east, towards Apollo's first rays,  
That one causes him to linger, denies the fading light  
As the day tires, and the mountain's darkening shadow  
Meets the sea, and the palace swims in the glassy water.  
This one is loud with the sea's clamour, that one knows  
Nothing of sounding waves, preferring inland silence.  
Some sites Nature favours, others the developer has  
Conquered, where she yields to new and gentler ways.  
There was a hill where now is a plain, a wilderness  
Where you now shelter; where you see tall trees now  
There was once no dry land: the owner has tamed all,  
The soil delights to follow where he removes the rock  
Or carves it. See how the cliffs fall beneath the yoke,  
And buildings cling there, as the hill's ordered to retreat.  
Let Arion, Methymna's poet, Amphion's Theban lyre,  
And Thracian Orpheus's plectrum yield you the glory;  
May you too move rocks, be followed by tall groves.  
What can I say of antique statues in bronze or wax,  
As if vivified by Apelles' delightful colours or shaped  
As if by Phidias' hands, wondrous work, and Olympia  
Still unfurnished, or made to exist by Myron or Polyclitus'  
Chisel, or bronzes more precious than gold from Corinth's  
Ashes, busts of generals and poets, faces of ancient sages,  
Whom it's your care to study, whom you know by heart,  
Free of other cares as you are, with your mind composed  
And virtuously calm, ever yourself? What of the thousand  
Roofs, the changing views? Each room offers its own delight,  
And each a sight of its own sea, and beyond Nereus' flood  
The various windows command their individual landscape.  
This one faces Ischia, from that one rugged Procida appears;  
There Misenum spreads, named for Hector's armour-bearer,  
And there Nisida, surrounded by the sea, breathes its ill breath;  
Over there's Euploea of fair omen for all wandering vessels,  
And there is Megaris jutting seaward into the curling waves,  
And your own Limon distressed that its lord rests opposite

As it looks across to your palace at Sorrento, in the distance.  
Yet one room of them all, one room surpasses all the others,  
Which shows you Naples directly, over the path of the sea.  
Here are marbles cut from the depths of the Greek quarries:  
Here the product of eastern Syene streaked with veins, here,  
Here what Phrygian axes carved in Synnas, among the fields  
Where wailing Cybele mourns for her Attis, on its coloured  
Stone the areas of white being delineated by purple circles:  
Here marble quarried from Amyclaeon Taygetus, mountain  
Of Lycurgus, green rock imitating the colour of soft grasses;  
Here the yellow stone from Numidia, Thasos, Chios glistens,  
And that of Carystos delighting to equal the grey-green waves;  
All of them salute the turrets of Chalcidian Naples opposite.  
Be blessed for favouring that colony of Greece, frequenting  
Grecian fields, not allowing Pozzuoli, Diarchus' city where  
You were born its jealousy. The more ours our cultured ward.  
How shall I tell of rural riches, farmland claimed from the sea,  
And the cliffs awash with grape-juice, the nectar of Bacchus?  
Often in autumn when Lyaeus' crop is ripening on the vine,  
Some Nereid climbs the rocks and in night's secret shadows,  
Wiping her sea-wet eyes with a leafing shoot, steals the sweet  
Grapes from the slopes; often the crop is drenched with brine  
From the spray below, the Satyrs tumble into the shallows,  
And the mountain Pans long for Doris, naked in the waves.  
Be fertile, earth, for your master and mistress, through all  
The years of Mygdonian Tithonus, and Pylian Nestor, nor  
Alter your noble allegiance, nor let the courts of Hercules  
Be better cultivated, nor they be better pleased by Pozzuoli  
Bay, or the seductive vineyards of Galaesus by Tarentum.  
Here my Pollius exercises the Pierian arts of the Muses,  
Whether considering the teachings of Gargettian Epicurus,  
Or plucking the lyre, or weaving the unequal elegiac lines,  
Or unleashing instead his menacing veins of iambic satire.  
From this cliff the Siren swoops down towards finer songs  
Than hers; from that Minerva listens, nods her plumed crest.  
Then swift winds fall, the waves themselves are ordered not  
To roar, delightful dolphins leap from the water, drawn now  
To his skilled harp-playing, and roam here beneath the cliffs.  
Long life to you, who own riches greater than Midas' treasure,  
Croesus' gold, happy beyond the thrones of Troy and Persia,  
Untroubled by transient emblems of power, the fickle crowd,  
Laws or armies, whose great soul is master of hope and fear,  
Above desire, immune from Fate, denying unworthy fortune;

Your last day will not find you trapped in the dubious whirl  
Of circumstance, but replete with living, and ready to depart.  
We, the wretched crew, forever eager to serve passing joys,  
Ever in hope of more, we are scattered to the chance breeze:  
While you from the high citadel of mind regard our errant  
Ways, and smile at human pleasures. There was a time  
When the approval of two countries pulled you this way  
And that, and you were carried on high through two cities,  
Venerated here by Pozzuoli, by the people of Dicharchus,  
Adopted there by mine, Naples; generous to both equally,  
Proud with the fires of youth, unsure as to the right path.  
But now the mists of circumstance are blown away, you  
See the truth. Others are still tossed about on those deeps,  
But your ship has found safe harbour, and a tranquil calm,  
Where it remains unshaken. Continue so, and never send  
Your ship among our tempests, her weary journey over.  
And you, his wife, most accomplished by far among  
Latin ladies, of equal mind, no anxieties have ever altered  
Your heart, no threats your brow, rather bright joy is ever  
In your face and looks, and all delight free of every care:  
No unfruitful treasure-chest strangles the use of secret  
Wealth, no loss of interest torments a grasping spirit:  
Your riches are on view which you enjoy in cultivated  
Temperance. No hearts, as one, are more blessed by all  
The gods, and no other minds has Concord better taught.  
Learn on, untroubled: may the flames in your two hearts  
Mingle and merge for ever, and sacred love serve chaste  
Friendship's laws. Go on through the years and through  
The centuries, surpassing in fame those ancient glories.

## BkII:3 – Atedius Melior's Tree

There's a tree casts its shade on illustrious Melior's  
Limpid waters, embracing the pool; from its base  
Curves down towards the pond then rises on high,  
Its crown erect, as though re-born from the waves,  
And founded with secret roots in the glassy flood.  
Why ask Apollo for the tale? Naiads, tell the story,  
Obliging Fauns (no others needed) grant me a poem.  
Once a band of tender Nymphs were fleeing Pan.  
He chased after as if he desired them all, yet it is  
One, Pholoe he wanted. Through woods and streams  
She evaded now the hairy legs, now shameless horns.  
Past Janus' warlike grove she flew, and Cacus' dark  
Aventine, Quirinus' fields to reach the Caelian waste.  
Then drained by the effort and wearied by her fear,  
She drew her flowing garment about her and, where  
Placid Melior's harmless dwelling stands exposed,  
Sank down on the margin of the whitened shore.  
The god of the herds followed swiftly, thinking  
The consummation his. Already his burning lungs  
Had ceased their panting, already he loomed close  
Above his prey. But, lo! Diana turned her swift step  
That way, while roaming the Seven Hills, tracking  
The spoor of a deer that had crossed the Aventine.  
Angered by what she saw, she turned to call to her  
Loyal band: 'Shall I never prevent the raids of this  
Greedy, vile, lascivious brood? Is the number  
Of my chaste companions, doomed to dwindle?'  
So crying, she took a short bolt from her quiver;  
Held back from a full shot with its singing flight,  
Content to hurl it one-handed; and touched, they  
Say, the sleeping Naiad's left hand with its vanes.  
She in turn woke to light and her insolent enemy,  
And to hide her snow-white limbs plunged, just  
As she was, fully clothed, into the deep; thinking  
Pan followed her far underwater, she wrapped  
Herself in the weeds at the bottom of the pool.  
Suddenly thwarted what was her pursuer to do?  
He was afraid to trust his body to the depths,  
Conscious of his shaggy hair, and from a child  
Never taught to swim. He complained bitterly  
Of Diana, the invidious arrow and the waters.

Then he laboured to plant a plane-tree sapling  
Beside them, long-stemmed, of countless shoots,  
With a slender tip that would leap to the heavens,  
And heaped fresh silt around it, and sprinkled it  
With the water of longing, and commanded it, so:  
'Tree, live long, a token in memory of my desire;  
May you at least reach down and show affection  
For that hidden resting-place of the cruel Nymph,  
And press your foliage against the watery surface.  
Let her not feel the heat above, or be struck by  
Harsh hail, though she has deserved it; remember  
Merely to ripple and stir the water with your leaves.  
Then I'll hold in mind, both you and its mistress,  
Protect you, the place benign, in inviolate old age,  
So Jupiter's and Apollo's trees, variegated poplars,  
And my own pines may marvel at your flourishing.'  
So he spoke. The tree vivified by the god's ancient  
Power, with slanting stem, leaned on the brimming  
Waters, and probed them with its affectionate shade.  
It longs for an embrace, but the nature of the water  
Repels it, will not be touched. At last, struggling in  
The air, and retreating from the depths, it cleverly  
Raises its smooth tip erect, as though ascending  
From the pool's depths, born from another root.  
Now Diana's Naiad no longer even dislikes it,  
Welcoming the branches excluded from the deep.  
Such the little gift I make you on your birthday,  
Small but fated perhaps to survive many years.  
Honour that delights and serious yet lively virtue  
Have made their home in your tranquil breast.  
Idle repose is not for you, nor the inequitable  
Exercise of power, nor unrestrained ambition,  
But the middle way of integrity and kindness.  
Unwaveringly loyal, and free of mental turmoil,  
Private, yet ordering your life for anyone to see,  
Despising gold, yet using wealth to advantage:  
Letting the light play over your riches, go on  
And flourish, with youthful spirit and manners,  
Equal the Ilian ancients, Priam and Tithonus,  
Exceed the years that your father and mother  
Took to Elysium. This they have won by their  
Entreaty from the harsh Fates, this, the sublime  
Fame of noble Blaesus, which evidenced in you

Shall escape silent neglect, and grow green again.



## BkII:4 – And His Parrot

Parrot, king of birds, your owner's eloquent delight,  
Talented imitator, Parrot, of the human tongue, what  
Cut short your lispings with the suddenness of fate?  
Yesterday, sad bird, while we dined, you were about  
To die, though we watched you sampling the table's  
Gifts with pleasure, wandering from couch to couch  
Past midnight. And you talked to us, spoke the words  
You'd learned. Now our entertainer possesses Lethe's  
Eternal silence. No more tales of Phaethon and Cynus:  
Swans are not the only birds given to celebrating death.  
What a fine cage you owned, with a bright red cupola,  
With those sides barred with silver wedded to ivory,  
Its gates and perches sounding to your beak's clatter,  
Now, making their own sad creak. Empty that happy  
Prison, your narrow dwelling's clamour is no more.  
Let that school of birds crowd round to whom Nature  
Grants the noble skill of mimicry; let Apollo's raven  
Beat its breast; the starling who repeats from memory  
Words it has heard; those girls changed to magpies  
In Aonian contest; the partridge that replies linking  
Repeated sounds, and sad Philomela the nightingale  
Who moans in her Thracian room. Bring your grief  
Here, lament as one, and together carry your dead  
Kinsman to the fire, while all rehearse this dirge:  
'Dead is the renowned glory of the airborne race,  
Parrot, the green sovereign of the Eastern climes,  
Whose looks not even Juno's peacock with its  
Jewelled tail, nor the pheasants of icy Colchis,  
Nor the guinea fowl Numidians trap in a humid  
Southerly, matched: he, who saluted kings, uttered  
Caesar's name, would act as a sympathetic friend,  
Or a light-hearted guest at dinner, was always  
Ready to echo the given words. So that when he  
Was released from his cage, dear Melior, you  
Were never alone. Yet he is not sent to the shades  
Ingloriously: his ashes steam with Assyrian spice,  
While his fragile feathers smell of Arabian incense,  
And Sicilian saffron. Unwearied by slow ageing,  
He mounts the perfumed pyre, a brighter Phoenix.

## BkII:5 – The Tame Lion

What benefit to you to quench your rage, be tamed;  
Unlearn destructiveness and the slaughter of men;  
Suffer orders, obey a master less powerful than you;  
Grow used to going to and from your prison cage;  
And to leave your captive prey of your own will;  
To loose your jaws, to release the hand set inside?  
You are dead, trained adversary of taller creatures,  
Not trapped by a Numidian band in a cunning net,  
Nor surmounting the spears with a formidable leap,  
Nor deceived by the empty depths of a hidden pit,  
But undone by a wild beast in flight. Open on its  
Hinges is the cage-door of the unlucky, while behind  
Closed gates tame lions roar at the outrage allowed.  
Their manes fell when he was dragged back, they  
Contracted their brows and shrouded their eyes.  
Yet the sudden shame of being toppled by that  
First blow failed to overwhelm you: your courage  
Held, brave in death, as you fell, not turning tail,  
Still menacing. As a dying soldier aware of his  
Fatal wound still attacks the enemy before him,  
Raising his arm, threatening with falling blade,  
So you, with slow strides, stripped of all dignity,  
Open-jawed, focused your gaze, seeking the foe.  
Though defeated, there is solace for your sudden  
Death, since the crowd, the city fathers, groaned  
At your fate, as if you were a famous gladiator  
Felled on the harsh sand, and Caesar was moved,  
Among the loss of so many beasts whose sacrifice  
Is cheap, out of Scythia, or Libya, or the Rhine  
Or Alexandria, moved, for the loss of a single lion.

BkII:6 – Consolation for Flavius Ursus on the Death of a Favourite Servant

Whoever grades grief or sets limits to mourning is all  
Too cruel! It is tragic when parents must carry young  
Children, or (vile!) their adolescent sons, to the pyre,  
Harsh too to bemoan the empty half of the bed when  
A wife is snatched away; and wretched a sisters' cry,  
A brother's lament. Even a lesser blow may yet stir  
Feelings as deep, or deeper, surpassing those aroused  
By greater wounds. A slave (for so does Fate ascribe  
Names blindly, and yet knows not the heart), a slave  
It is you mourn for, faithful Ursus, who by his love  
And loyalty earned tears, to whom freedom of thought  
Was dearer than lineage. Don't leave off weeping, feel  
No shame. Let grief be unrestrained before the gods,  
If such pain delights them; you mourn a human being  
(woe to me who myself light the pyre!) your Ursus,  
Who welcomed such sweet bondage, resented nothing,  
And, demanding of himself, did all that he did freely.  
Who would curb the tears shed at such a death? Even  
Parthians grieve for a horse killed in battle, Molossians  
For loyal hounds, birds have pyres, Silvia's stag Virgil.  
What if he had not been born a slave? I myself knew his  
Character, and noted how he obeyed you, yet his spirit  
Ran visibly high, the fire evident in his young veins.  
Many a Grecian mother would wish, many a Latin  
Desire, to produce such a son. Not even Theseus would  
Have matched him, whom the clever Cretan girl drew  
By a fragile thread back to her side, nor shepherd Paris,  
Soon to behold Helen, his Spartan lover, when he  
Launched that unwilling pine-keel into the waves.  
I tell no shadow of a lie, sing with no thoughtless  
Freedom: I saw him, see him still: nor even Achilles  
Whom Thetis hid on a virgin shore as he cried war,  
Nor Troilus who was caught by a Thessalian lance  
As he fled round the Trojan walls cruel Apollo built.  
How handsome you were! More so by far than all  
Other men and boys, less so only than your master.  
He alone surpassed you, just as the bright moonlight  
Outshines lesser lights, and Venus lessens other fires.  
There were no womanish charms in your looks, no  
Unmanly graces, like those from whom the charge  
Of ambiguous beauty demands a change of sex:

You were stern and virile, no impudent looks but  
Glances fine, austere, as handsome as the helmeted  
Parthenopaeus. Your hair rough, unadorned and yet  
Becoming, your cheeks bright with new down yet  
Not smothered; such youths Eurotas rears, Leda's  
Stream, such pure lads of tender age go to Olympia,  
To prove the powers of their early years before Jove.  
As for the modesty of your noble mind, your calm,  
Temperate ways, spirit riper than your tender age,  
What words could show them? Often your criticism  
Of your lord was welcomed; your thoughtfulness;  
A deep understanding; with him you were sad, happy,  
His mood was yours, taking your expression from his,  
Your loyalty worthy to outdo in fame that of Patroclus  
Or Pirithous. Yet, let the limits of praise be as Fortune  
Allows; Eumaeus was no more faithful, in his sad  
Mind, as he hoped for Ulysses' long-delayed return.  
What god or circumstance determined so terrible  
A blow? Why was the baleful hand of fate so sure?  
O how much better for you, Ursus, if you had been  
Free of your opulent wealth and ample fortune! If  
Rich Locri had belched Vesuvian fire in smoking  
Ruin, or water had drowned the Pollentian glades,  
Or the Lucanian Acir or Tiber had directed their  
Deep waters to the north; or if whatever place from  
Which generous Fortune returned her bounty, say  
Kindly Crete, or Cyrene, denied its promised harvest,  
You might have faced the gods with untroubled brow.  
But unhappy Envy expert in injury, found your spirit's  
Vital core, the path to hurt. Sad Nemesis with a frown,  
Marked him out, on maturity's very threshold, about to  
Join three years to three lustres, first filling out his form,  
Brightening his eyes, raising his head higher than before;  
Ah, a deadly favour to the wretched lad! Tormented by  
Gazing and envy, she clasped him, cast the net of death  
Over him, plucked at the face she should have revered,  
With merciless talons. Venus was barely at its fifth rising,  
Harnessing the dripping steed, when you, Beloved, saw  
The cruel shores of fatal Acheron, and ancient Charon.  
How your master cried your name! Had your mother  
Lived not even she could have bruised her arms more  
Cruelly, blackening them in grief, nor your father; for  
Sure, your brother who witnessed your funeral was

Ashamed to be outdone. No slave's pyre for the dead.  
The flames consumed harvested Sabaeon and Cilician  
Perfumes; cinnamon stolen from the Pharian phoenix;  
Those flowing juices extracted from the Assyrian bud;  
Your master's tears; these alone the ashes consumed,  
These the fire endlessly drank. But to your sad shade  
Not the wine of Setia that quenched your grey embers,  
Nor the smooth onyx that clasped your bones, proved  
More welcome than the grief. Yet you yourself forbid it.  
Why, Ursus, should we give way to sorrow? Why nurse  
The loss, perversely love the wound? Where is all that  
Eloquence of yours, defendants hauled to justice know?  
Why torment the dear shade with such wild mourning?  
Peerless though he was, and worthy of your grief, you  
Have grieved. He has joined the blessed, he now enjoys  
Elysium's peace, finds perhaps illustrious ancestors there.  
Or among Lethe's pleasant silences, it may be, the Naiads  
Of Avernus flow from all around to dally with him there,  
While Proserpine takes note of him with sidelong glance.  
Cease your moans, I beg. Perhaps the Fates or perhaps  
You yourself will grant you another Beloved, and you  
May cheerfully show him decorous ways and manners,  
And teach him, likewise, how to show you affection.

BkII:7 – An Ode for Polla in Honour of Lucan's Birthday

Whoever on Venus' hill, Acrocorinth,  
Has drunk Pirene's Pegasean waters,  
With heart moved by poetic frenzy,  
Let them attend: it is Lucan's birthday.  
And you, Mercury, Arcadian inventor  
Of the sounding lyre; and you Bacchus  
Of the whirling Bassarids; you Apollo;  
And you Muses, the Hyantian sisters;  
All who own the grace of poetic song,  
Adorn your hair, put on new purple  
Ribbons, in your joy, and let fresh  
Ivy cling all round your white robes.  
Let rivers of poesy flow more freely,  
The woods of Aonia shine greener;  
If their shade is pierced by the sun  
Let soft garlands fill their spaces.  
Now set a hundred fragrant altars  
In Thespieae's groves, with a hundred  
Victims Dirce bathes, Cithaeron feeds:  
Hush now: for it's Lucan we celebrate;  
And favour us Muses, this is your day,  
When he is honoured who honoured  
You in both the arts free and chained,  
Verse, prose; priest of the Roman choir.  
Happy, too happy land, and blessed,  
You that see Hyperion's westward  
Setting, beneath the deep Ocean wave,  
Hear the hiss of his descending arc;  
Your oil-presses rivalling Athens,  
Soil fertile with Minerva's olives.  
Andalusia, unroll your rich carpets:  
You can boast of Lucan's birthplace,  
More so even than giving us Seneca,  
Or producing honey-tongued Gallio.  
Let the Guadalquivir, more renowned  
Than Homer's Meles, flow upstream,  
Lifting its flowing waters to the stars.  
Let Virgil's Mantua provide no rival.  
As he lay there, at first, on that soil,  
A sweet cry his earliest murmuring,  
Calliope took him on her kind lap.

Then setting mourning aside at last,  
Eased of long lament for Orpheus,  
She spoke: 'Dedicated to the Muse,  
Soon to surpass the immortal bards,  
It is not Thracian trees or creatures  
That you will move with your quill,  
But Seven Hills, Mars' own Tiber,  
In eloquent song, cultured knights,  
And their senators in purple robes.  
Let others tell of Troy's nocturnal  
Ruin, Ulysses' long voyage home,  
Or of Minerva's bold ship, Argo:  
Born to Latium, mindful of the race,  
You, yet bolder, will sing of Rome.  
And first, while still of tender years,  
You'll toy with Hector; a chariot  
From Thessaly; King Priam's golden  
Ransom; unbar the infernal gates.  
Our Orpheus, ungrateful Nero  
You'll recite to kind audiences.  
You'll tell of a guilty emperor's  
Monstrous fires sweeping Rome.  
Next a little thing for chaste Polla,  
Bestowing honour and ornament.  
Then, more nobly, in manhood,  
You will thunder of Philippi,  
White with the bones of Romans,  
And the battles there at Pharsalia;  
Caesar, godlike martial lightning;  
Cato grave with the public good;  
And Pompey courting popularity.  
You'll shed pious tears at crime,  
Pompey's murder at Alexandria,  
Build a nobler tomb than Pharos.  
All this you'll sing when young,  
Before the time of Virgil's 'Gnat.'  
Daring Ennius' untaught Muse  
Will yield and the high ardour  
Of learned Lucretius, and Varro  
And his wave-borne Argonauts,  
Ovid and metamorphosed forms.  
A greater thing indeed I'll utter,  
The *Aeneid* itself shall give way,

When you shall sing to Latium.  
I'll not grant bright poesy alone,  
But with marriage torches give  
A wise girl to grace your genius,  
One kindly Venus or Juno might  
Grant, of beauty, simplicity, birth,  
Grace, charm, elegance, and riches,  
And I will sing the wedding song,  
Before your door in festive chant.  
Oh you Fates, too harsh and cruel,  
Ever denying the noblest long life!  
Why is the highest chance's toy,  
Greatness, doomed to die young?  
So Babylon holds the narrow tomb  
Of great Alexander, Ammon's son,  
Whose lightning ran east and west.  
So Thetis moaned at Achilles' fall,  
He shot by Paris' trembling bow.  
So once I followed Orpheus' head  
That sang by Hebrus' murmuring.  
So you, doomed by a crazed Nero,  
Ordered to plunge towards Lethe,  
While you sang of war, and nobly  
Gave solace to grand sepulchres,  
(Oh wicked crime!) are silenced.  
So she spoke, with shining quill,  
Brushing away her falling tears.  
But you, soaring in heaven's vault,  
Riding the noble chariot of Fame,  
Where mighty spirits rise, and view  
The earth below, beyond the tomb;  
Or dwelling within Elysium's gates,  
In earned retreat, in groves of peace,  
Where the dead of Pharsalia throng,  
Pompeys, Catos keep you company,  
As you sound out your noble song;  
Or, blessed, proud, your great shade  
Knowing Tartarus, hearing from afar,  
The guilty scourged, watching Nero  
Pallid at his mother's vengeful torch;  
Be here in splendour at Polla's call,  
Beg a day, pray, from those gods  
Of the silent; their gate may open



For a husband's return to his bride.  
She does not worship you as a false  
Image, boldly in some wanton dance,  
But reveres you as yourself, meets  
With you there in her deepest being.  
Nor is it vain solace that your face,  
Imitated in delineating gold, affords,  
Shining over her bed, granting calm  
Sleep to her. Be far from here, Death!  
Here is life's birth, here is its origin.  
Let dark mourning yield, eyes be wet,  
Let sweet tears flow, and festal grief  
Celebrate all that for which it wept.

**End of Book II**

### **Book III**

BkIII: Prologue – Statius to his friend Pollius: Greetings!

I need not justify to you at least, dearest Pollius, so deserving of the quiet to which you cling so faithfully, the temerity of these little pieces, since you know that many of them were suddenly born at your side, and you were frequently troubled by my pen's audaciousness, when you led me into your eloquence's sanctuary, and I entered into literature more fully, drawn by you into every corner of learning. Hence I send you this third book of my *Silvae* without anxiety. You were a witness to the second but the sponsor of this. It opens with Hercules of Surrento; I paid him homage in these lines, as soon as I saw him consecrated on your shores. Next is a work addressed to Marcus Celer, a young man of vast distinction in whose friendship I take the greatest of pleasure. He was sent by our most sacred Emperor to join a legion in Syria, and since I could not go with him, I sent the poem by way of a companion. Then my friend Claudius Etruscus, filled with filial devotion, as he mourned his father with true tears in a manner unusual nowadays, deserved my solace. And Earinus, the freedman of our Germanicus, knows how promptly I answered his request, when he asked me for a few dedicatory lines for the locks of hair he was sending to Pergamene Asclepius along with a jewelled casket and mirror. Last is a brief poem in which I urge my Claudia to retire with me to Naples. This, in truth, is a conversation piece, an intimate conversation with my wife, aimed at persuading rather than pleasing. You will favour this work in particular, knowing as you do that in deciding on a place of retreat I had you especially in mind, and that I was retiring not so much to my native place, as to your company.

BkIII:1 – Pollius Felix's Hercules at Sorrento

Lord of Tiryns, Pollius renews your interrupted worship  
And gives his reason for your neglect last year, that you  
Are housed under a larger dome, no pauper on a naked  
Beach in a shelter for stray sailors to use, but beneath  
A roof held up by Greek marble, with bright doorposts,  
As though again risen to the skies from Oeta's pyre,  
Purified once more by tongues of flame honouring you.  
Eyes and thought can scarce believe it. Are you then  
That humble guardian of a door-less sill, a little altar?  
Where did rustic Alcides find this new-made house, this  
Unexpected splendour? Gods have their fates, places too.  
O speedy piety! Not long ago all this was barren sand,  
Wave-drenched slopes, their rocks coated with earth  
And scrub, scarce open to being trodden by human feet.  
What riches have but now enfolded these bare cliffs?  
Were these walls built by Amphion's or Orpheus's lyre?  
Time is amazed at this, but twelve-month, labour, marvels  
At a work to last forever. The god, brought and erected  
His own stronghold, strained to shift awkward boulders,  
Pushed back the mountain slope with his mighty breast;  
One might think inexorable Juno had commanded this.  
Come, bring your guardian spirit to your new shrine,  
Whether, free of her orders, you are in your homeland,  
Argos, and trample on Eurystheus, buried in the grave,  
Or beside your father Jupiter's throne, among the stars  
Your virtues won, while Hebe, with girded tunic, offers  
You a blissful drink of nectar: better she than Ganymede.  
It is not noxious Lerna that invites you; nor Molochus  
And his poor fields, and the fearful territory of Nemea;  
Nor Diomodes' Thracian caverns; nor the Pharian King  
Busiris' tainted altar; but a happy and an innocent house,  
Ignorant of evil guile, a place worthy of a heavenly guest.  
Set aside your cruel bow, your quiver's merciless arrows,  
Set aside your club deep-drenched in the blood of kings;  
Doff the Nemean lion's skin from your aching shoulders.  
Here are cushions for you, piled high, and embroidered  
With Sidonian acanthus, a rugged seat with ivory figures.  
Come in kindness and peace, not lost in a storm of anger,  
Nor to serve fearfully, but as Maenalian Auge saw you,  
Wearied by the revels, and your brother Bacchus' wine,  
Or as Thespius, amazed, found himself, after your roving

Each night, again newly your father-in-law. Here's your  
Festive arena, where un-gloved youths in harmless rage  
Perform annual contests in your rituals of purification.  
In your temple the priest appointed, to his grandfather's  
Delight, is a child as you were when you first strangled  
Your stepmother's huge serpents, mourned their death.  
But come, revered Calliope, say how this shrine suddenly  
Appeared. And Hercules will sound the accompaniment,  
Making music of a sort with his sonorous bow-string.  
It was the season when the heavenly vault most broods  
Above the torrid earth, and the cruel dog-days, struck  
By Hyperion's fierce rays, scorch the breathless fields.  
The time was at hand when smoke fills Diana's grove,  
Her sanctuary at Nemi, for a runaway slave made king,  
Hippolytus' hidden lake glowing. Diana herself crowns  
Her ancient hounds, polishes up her arrows, and allows  
The wild creatures to pass in safety: all the land of Italy  
Celebrating the Ides of Hecate, and every hearth purified.  
For myself, though I had my own estate beneath Dardan  
Alba's hills, with a running stream, by grace of our great  
Leader, sufficient to ease my care at home and alleviate  
The heat, I was staying with eloquent Pollius, at his house  
At Sorrento, by the cliffs, said to be named from the Siren;  
No stranger, studying his peaceful way of life assiduously,  
Working away at virgin songs, new flowers of the Muses.  
It chanced as we were spending Diana's day by the shore,  
Escaping the narrow walls, and the customary life indoors,  
Warding off the sun beneath the leaves of a spreading tree,  
The sky was hidden, bright day gave way to sudden cloud,  
As the faint breath from the west gave way to a strong wet  
Sirocco, a downpour such as Juno once brought to Libya,  
When wealthy Dido was wed to her Trojan bridegroom,  
And the Nymphs who witnessed it cried from the wilds.  
We scattered, while the servants collected all the festive fare  
And the wreathed wine-jars. Our picnic was now homeless,  
Though a host of buildings overlooked the glowing fields,  
And hill-slopes gleamed richly with many a damp rooftop,  
Yet the intensity of the shower, and confidence in the sun's  
Imminent return, persuaded us to seek the nearest shelter.  
A little hut stood there, it's name that of a sacred temple,  
A narrow, humble home that contained mighty Hercules,  
With barely room enough to hold sea-going mariners,  
And adventurers on the deep. Here, our party gathered.

Here crowded the servants with the food, rich couches,  
And elegant Polla's company of favoured attendants.  
The cramped shrine was full, the doors nigh on bursting.  
The god, ashamed, smiled and entered his dear Pollius'  
Heart, and clasping him tightly in his loving arms, said:  
'Are you the generous donor who, when young, filled  
All the buildings of Puteoli and Naples with your gifts,  
Who planted so many green groves on our hill-slopes,  
Built turrets, erected statues in bronze and stone, all  
Those lifelike wax images with their varied colours?  
What was this site, this dwelling-place, before it had  
You for owner? You ran a length of road over bare  
Rock, and where there was only a kind of track before  
Your tall colonnade stands, its line of pillars granting  
Their elegance to the route. At the edge of the bay,  
You enclosed the warm waters beneath twin vaults.  
I can barely list it all. Is Pollius beggared on account  
Of me? Yet I enter even this poor sanctuary happily,  
And love the shore you spread before me. But Juno  
Looks down from nearby, and ridicules me, silently.  
Grant me an altar and a temple worthy of your work,  
One that ships on a fair wind would hesitate to leave,  
One which my celestial father might visit, a place  
To which a host of gods might be invited to dine,  
My sister, Minerva, from her high shrine, my guest.  
Fear not that a solid mass of hostile mountain-slope,  
Vast tracts of time have not eroded, blocks the way.  
I shall be there myself to aid so great an enterprise,  
Carving through savage depths of reluctant earth.  
Begin, and trusting to Hercules' exhortation, dare!  
Not even Amphion's Thebes will have risen so fast,  
Nor Troy's walls.' He left, his command remained.  
The plan was sketched in draft form straight away.  
Innumerable hands were set to work: some fell trees,  
Plane beams, as others sink foundations in the soil.  
Wet clay is baked to protect from storm, shut out  
The frost, crushed limestone melted in the furnace.  
But the greatest task is to cut sections by hand,  
Through the rock, opposing cliffs resistant to steel.  
Then, Tyrrhian Hercules, the patron of the site,  
Lays his weapons aside, and sweats at the work,  
Breaking the uneven ground with a stout pick,  
As the lowering sky is veiled by shades of night.

Capri's rich isle and the green slopes of Taurubulae  
Resound, and a mighty echo runs from sea to land.  
Not even Etna reverberates so, when anvils shudder  
To Steropes' and Brontes' blows, no louder the din  
From Lemnos' caves when fiery Mulciber shapes  
The aegis, his chaste gift, an adornment for Pallas.  
The cliffs are lowered, and the workmen returning  
At first light, are amazed at the progress. Bring on  
Next year's heat, and Hercules enriched looks down  
From his great tower towards the sea, rivalling Juno's  
Neighbouring edifice, inviting Pallas to a fine temple.  
Now the trumpets sound, in times of peace, and now  
Trials of strength stir the hot sand. Jupiter at Olympus  
Would not disdain such rites, nor would Delphi's god.  
Nothing is sad here: let the sorrowful Isthmus yield,  
And cruel Nemea: a happy grandchild makes offering.  
The sea-green Nereids soar, freely, from their pumice  
Caves, cling to the wet cliffs, and gaze unashamedly,  
From their various hiding places, at naked wrestlers.  
The slopes of Gaurus, covered with Icarian vines,  
Gaze too, and the woods that wreathe sea-girt Nisida;  
With peaceful Limon and Euploea, the sailor's friend,  
And Lucrine Venus, and Misenus, on your Phrygian  
Heights, you too hear the sound of Greek trumpets,  
While kindly Naples smiles to see the people's rites,  
The naked contests, a smaller echo of her gatherings.  
Come now, and with your invincible hand, deign to  
Honour the acts of rivalry, gladly: whether to split  
The clouds with a discus is your delight, or outrun  
The swift breeze with a javelin, or wrestle as you  
Once did in Libya: grace our rites: if you possess  
The Hesperidean apples still, set them in venerable  
Polla's lap, she'll retain, not demean such honours.  
Were she to resume her sweet charms of yesteryear,  
(By your favour) she might seem a second Omphale.  
A happy Bacchant I bring these offerings to the new  
Altars. Now I see Hercules himself at the threshold,  
Opening his lips, speaking these words, as follows:  
'Hail to your generous spirit, imitator of my labours,  
Tamer of rugged cliffs and Nature's wildernesses,  
Shameful and infertile, that you now render useful,  
The haunt of wild creatures, tempting shy divinities  
From their hiding-places! What reward shall I grant

Your merits, what thanks shall I dispense? I'll seize  
The threads of Fate, and extend the Sisters' distaffs  
(I know how to conquer cruel Death), avert grief,  
Forbid sad bereavement, revitalise you, in a hale  
And green old age, let you watch your grandchildren  
Grow to maturity; he ripe for a bride, she a husband,  
And a fresh generation rise in turn from their stock,  
A bold brood clinging to their grandfather's shoulders,  
Or rushing as one in benign rivalry to Polla's embrace.  
No limit shall be set to the shrine's existence, as long  
As the canopy of glittering sky shall bear my being.  
Nor shall I frequent Nemea more, or ancient Argos,  
My temple at Tivoli, or at Cadiz, where the sun sets.'  
So he spoke, and touching the flame rising from his  
Altar, bowing a head wreathed in white poplar leaves,  
Swore it by Styx, and his heavenly father's thunderbolts.

## BkIII:2 – Wishing Maecius Celer a Safe Voyage

You gods, whose delight it is to preserve bold ships  
And quell the dangers of the stormy seas, now pacify  
The waves and, applying your benign counsel to my  
Prayers, let the waves grow quiet and calm as I pray:  
Neptune, the charge I deliver to your deeps, is great  
And rare. Young Maecius is committed to the fickle  
Waters, readies himself to transport the greater part  
Of my soul across the ocean. Reveal your kindly fires  
You Oebalian Twins, there on the twin tips of the yards.  
Illuminate the sea and sky, I beg, quench your sister's  
Stormy nimbus, banish all Helen's flame from the air.  
You, Nereids, also, Phorcus' cerulean tribe, to whom  
Is given the honour and fortune of the second realm  
Whom it's right for me to call stars of the vast ocean,  
Rise in foam from Doris' glassy caverns, and swim  
In peaceful rivalry through Baiae's bay, by shores  
Flowing with warm springs, seeking the tall ship  
That Celer, Ausonia's noble ward, delights to board,  
Nor seek her long; for she was recently the first ship  
To bring her cargo of Alexandrian corn to Puteoli,  
The first to greet Capri, and sprinkle Mareotic wine  
To starboard, as her libation to Tyrrhene Minerva.  
Circle both her sides in a gentle arc, and allocate  
Your tasks: these brace the mast's rigging ropes,  
Those raise the topsail high to the upper mainmast,  
Some spread the canvas to the winds, while others  
Set the thwarts, and drop the curved ship's rudder.  
Some need to plumb the shallows, and then secure  
The boat that's destined to trail astern, some dive  
Into the depths to loose and raise the fluked anchor.  
One must control the tide, send the waves eastward.  
Let not one of the sea-green sisters lack her duties.  
Let Proteus of the many shapes swim on there ahead  
Bi-formed Triton here, and Glaucus, he who became  
A sea-god, half-fish, still striking Anthedon's beach  
With his fair tail, when he glides by his native shore.  
You, above all, Palaemon and your mother, Leucothea,  
Show me your favour, if it should be my desire to sing  
Of Thebes and, with no failing lyre, Apollo's Amphion.  
And may Aeolus who contains the winds in his cave,  
Whom the many breezes, every breath on all the seas,



The storms, the rain-filled clouds, obey, prison more  
Narrowly in his cliffs, winds of the north, south, east.  
Let Zephyrus, the southerly, haunt the heavens, alone,  
Drive on the ships, and skim the surface of the waves,  
Cleaving to the deeps till, they waft your sails, now safe  
From tempests, to Paraetonium, on the Egyptian shore.  
My prayer is heard. Zephyrus himself sounds on board,  
To chide the tardy crew. Ah, my heart is cold with fear,  
And, however ominous it may seem, cannot forgo a tear.  
Now a sailor slips the cable, the ship casts off from land,  
As a narrow gangplank is lowered into the shallow water.  
The heartless captain at the stern calls out long and loud  
Dividing last embraces, putting an end to faithful kisses,  
Denying a lingering clasp of arms around a beloved neck.  
Yet I shall be the last of all to go ashore, nor will I leave  
Until the vessel's under way, and takes to its long course.  
Who, bold of spirit, made the tall uncharted waves a path  
For wretched living creatures, and drove the faithful sons  
Of solid land into the depths, thrown to the ocean's jaws?  
No more audacious the courage that piled snowy Pelion  
On Ossa, crushed breathless Olympus beneath twin peaks.  
Surely it had sufficed to cross stagnant swamps and pools,  
And throw bridges over narrow rivers? Why must we go  
Into the depths of the abyss, fleeing the land on every  
Side, confined to a tiny boat, and naked to the elements,  
Exposed to raging winds, and the tempest's indignation,  
To the storm's roar, and the Thunderer's fierce lightning?  
Before there were ships, the sea slumbered in torpid calm,  
Thetis refrained from foaming, no billows wet the clouds.  
At first sight of them, the waves towered, the storms rose  
To challenge men, Then the Pleiades, and the she-goat,  
Olenian Capella were veiled, and Orion more hostile  
Than ever. My complaint is just. See now the ship flies,  
Dwindling in size gradually, driven over the errant waves,  
Defeating the gaze that clings to her from afar, holding  
So many hopes and fears clasped to her frail timbers.  
Carrying you, above all, Celer, pledged with my love.  
What heart have I for rest, or enjoyment of the days?  
Who will bring me, prey to every fear, word of you?  
Have Lucania's angry shores granted you fair passage?  
Does Charybdis whirl, virgin Scylla's devouring jaws  
Threaten? How does the dangerous Adriatic treat your  
Voyaging? Is the Carpathian Sea calm? What winds

Carry you over the waters that smiled on Jupiter's  
Dalliance with Europa? My complaint's well-merited.  
Why am I not active as your companion, even to go  
And war in unknown India, or in Cimmerian wilds?  
I'd stand by my patron's martial standard, as you  
Grasped reins or weapons, gave orders to your men,  
As an admirer even, were I not present as a soldier.  
If Phoenix, whom the great Achilles revered, once  
Went with him to Troy and Thymbraean Pergama,  
Though no warrior, nor sworn to serve Agamemnon,  
Why do I hold back? But I'll never be far from you  
In my heart's love, following your far sail in prayer.  
Isis, Io, you who had your stall in Phoroneus' cave,  
Now queen of Pharos, goddess of the airless Orient,  
Welcome the Mareotic boat, to your sistrum's rattle,  
Lead the peerless youth to whom Latium's leader  
Grants the eastern standards, Palestine's cohorts,  
Lead him yourself, with kindly hand, through festive  
Gates to your sacred harbour, to Alexandria's city.  
With you to protect him, let him learn, how Nile  
Is at liberty to flood, form fertile marshes; how  
The shallows recede; how the banks where swallows  
Nest, in the covering clay, then constrain the waters;  
That Memphis is jealous; and Therapnaean Canopus  
Loose-living; that Cerberus, Lethe's guardian, keeps  
The Pharian altars, as Anubis; how common creatures  
Represent the mighty gods; how the eternal phoenix  
Builds her own pyre; what fields Apis treasures, where  
He bathes in Nile's waters, among fearful worshippers.  
Lead him to the Macedonian tomb, where Alexander,  
Warring founder of the city, sleeps drenched in honey  
From Hybla; and the snake-haunted halls of Cleopatra,  
Who after Actium, died of their gentle venom, fleeing  
Roman chains. Then escort him to Syria, and his camp,  
And hand him over, goddess, to the care of Latian Mars.  
He's no new guest; he sweated in that field a mere boy,  
Known only for his tunic's broad gleaming purple stripe,  
But already strong enough to outdo cavalry squadrons  
In agile wheeling, shame enemy arrows with his spear.  
Thus the day will dawn when Caesar commands you  
To leave the service, and destines you for greater things.  
Then I, standing once more on this shore, watching huge  
Waves break, will ask for other favourable winds to blow.

How proud I'll feel, how powerfully I'll pluck the votive  
Lyre! You'll raise me to your shoulders, my arms about  
Your sturdy neck, mine will be the first breast on which  
You, fresh from travel, shall fall. You'll tell me all those  
Things you've stored, we'll talk of the intervening years!  
You'll tell of swift Euphrates, royal Bactra, the sacred  
Treasures of ancient Babylon and Zeugma, the highways  
Of the Pax Romana; the location of flowering Edom's  
Date-palms; what extracts produce Tyre's costly blushes,  
And those purples twice-dipped in Sidon's vats; or where  
Fertile branches first sweat bright balsam from the bud:  
While the tombs I've made for conquered Greeks shall  
Be my tale, and the page that closes my Theban labours.

### BkIII:3 – Consolation for Claudius Etruscus

Greatest of goddesses, Piety, whose divinity, beloved  
Of Heaven, rarely looks down on desecrated Earth,  
Come, gleaming in snow-white robes, with sacred  
Ribbons in your hair, as when once, not yet driven  
From here by wretched sin, you cherished simple  
People, a golden age. Come to the funeral of a gentle  
Man; praise sad Etruscus' pious tears; wipe his eyes.  
Who sees him, his heart breaking with endless lament,  
Embrace the pyre, bow above the ashes, might think  
He mourned some young wife, or that the flames ate  
The face of his maturing son? He weeps for a father.  
Attend the rites, gods and men. Far from here, sinners,  
Who commit a silent crime perhaps in the heart, think  
A weary father's years too long, fear a mother's head  
Now bowed, shall host avenging snakes, and fear  
Stern Aeacus's urn of judgement in the underworld.  
I summon the pure and innocent. See how he holds  
The aged head in his arms, sprinkling sacred tears  
Over his white hair, cherishing the last cold breath.  
The son thinks his father's life too brief (wonderful  
But true), that the dark Sisters acted prematurely!  
Let gentle ghosts exult by Lethe's stream; rejoice  
You Elysian fields, and set garlands on the altars,  
Let festive offerings gladden the darkened groves.  
The shade that comes is happy, more than happy,  
Being mourned by his son. Far the Furies' hissing,  
Three-headed Cerberus; the long descent lies open  
To illustrious spirits. Let him approach the fearful  
Throne of the silent god. Let him bring last thanks,  
For length of years, ask them anxiously for his son.  
Hail now to your pious groans! I bring consolation  
Etruscus, for worthy lament, and freely consecrate  
Aonian offerings to your aged father. Do you, throw  
Eastern spices on the pyre, proud harvests of Arabia,  
Cilicia; let the flames own your inheritance, treasures  
Be heaped in a tall pile: send pious clouds to the wide  
Heavens: I shall bring gifts impervious to fire, your  
Lament, that I portray, will endure through centuries.  
For I too know what it is to mourn a father: like you  
I too have lain face down, groaning before the pyre.  
Memory of that day prompts me to ease your loss

With song: I too have borne what I confer on you.  
Gentlest of fathers, yours was no shining lineage,  
No pedigree bestowed by ancestors; great fortune,  
Filled the place of family, concealing your parents'  
Obscurity. You served indeed no common masters,  
East, west were subject equally to their command.  
No shame to you; for everything in heaven and  
Earth obeys some rule. All things reign and serve  
In their turn. All earth is under its own sovereign;  
Happy Rome imposes its power on crowned kings;  
Rome is governed by its leaders; over them rises  
The empire of the gods; and even deities submit  
To rule. The swift choir of stars, pay service and  
The wandering moon, nor does the sun return so  
Regularly in its course, except by rule and order.  
And (if it is permitted to compare high and low)  
Hercules bore the harsh strictures of a cruel king,  
Apollo's flute was not ashamed to be mastered.  
But nor were you brought to Latium from some  
Barbarian shore, your native place was Smyrna,  
You drank from the Meles' holy springs, from  
Hermus' waters, where Lydian Bacchus bathes,  
Re-gilding his horns with its fine aureate sands.  
Then fortune on fortune, your rank increasing  
With successive posts, always privileged to go  
At Caesar's side, privy to the secrets of the gods.  
First, when maturity had hardly begun to clothe  
Your cheeks, Tiberius' palace lay open to you.  
(There, gifted beyond your years, you achieved  
Your freedom) Nor did the next heir, Caligula,  
Cruel though he was and haunted by the Furies,  
Send you away, you even travelled with him as  
His companion to icy Germany, enduring him,  
A tyrant terrible in word and glance, a savage  
To his own, like one who tames the fierceness  
Of wild beasts, who when they've tasted blood  
Orders them to draw back and leave their prey.  
But Claudius, it was, in his old age, not yet sent  
To the starry heavens, who raised you to highest  
Office as you deserved, and after long service,  
Left you to his 'grandson' Nero. What god-fearing  
Man ever served to equal effect so many temples  
And so many altars? Winged Mercury is Jupiter's

Messenger on high; Juno is mistress to rain-bearing  
Isis; Triton stands ready to obey Neptune's orders.  
You bore in turn the yoke of successive leaders,  
Stayed whole; your barque fortunate on every sea.  
Now a light from the heights shone on the loyal  
House, and mighty Fortune entered at full pace.  
One man was trusted with the sacred treasury, riches  
Gathered from every nation, a whole world's tribute.  
All the gold Iberia mines, all that gleams in the peaks  
Of Dalmatia; all the produce of the African harvests,  
Whatever comes from sultry Nile's threshing floors;  
Whatever the diver finds in the depths of Eastern seas;  
Wool from the sheepfolds of Lacedaemonian Galaesus,  
Translucent crystal, Massylian citrus-wood, fine Indian  
Ivory; all that the northerlies, all that the fierce easterlies,  
And cloudy southerlies bring, entrusted to one minister,  
Obeys his order: sooner count winter rains or the leaves  
Of the forest. He was shrewd and careful of his charge;  
Calculating swiftly: how much to spend on Roman arms  
In every sphere; how much on the corn quota, or shrines;  
How much for aqueducts; for breakwaters against the sea;  
For the far-flung network of roads; for the gold that gleams  
From our leader's lofty ceilings; how much gold to form  
The gods' faces, or clink, stamped, from Ausonia's mint.  
Thus you rarely rested, pleasure was far from your thoughts,  
Your diet meagre, your cares not dulled by drinking deep;  
Rather you found the claims of marriage pleasant, willing  
To fetter your spirit with nuptial ties, be joined in festive  
Wedlock, and produce loyal servants for your master.  
Who knows not of noble Etrusca's high birth and beauty?  
Though I never had sight of her myself, her portrait, equal  
To her fame, renders her peerless loveliness, so her charm  
Is displayed in the likeness to her of her children's faces.  
Her family were noble: her brother bore the rods and held  
The highest curule chair, faithful in command of Roman  
Arms and standards, when madness first seized the fierce  
Dacians, doomed their race to follow a triumphant chariot.  
Thus, however the father's lineage fell short, the mother's  
Compensated, and the house, rejoicing in their marriage,  
Saw the dark branch brighten. Nor were children lacking:  
Lucina twice brought fruitful delivery, and herself eased  
The labour pains. Happy you might have been if long life,  
A just fate, had let you see your children's young faces!

But, your own youth was broken off midway, your joys  
Ended: Atropos' shears severed your flowering years,  
Like lilies drooping on their pallid stems, like roses dead  
With the first sirocco, or hyacinths fading in spring fields.  
You Loves with your arrows fluttered above the pyre,  
And anointed the ashes with your mother's perfumes.  
You tore hair and feathers, spared no amount of them  
To scatter on the flames, piling your quivers on the fire.  
What offerings would you have made, what tears shed,  
Beside your mother, then, my Etruscus, you who deem  
Your father's death untimely, piously regret lost years!  
Our Emperor who governs the powers above with a nod,  
And divides earth and stars between his famed offspring,  
Granted your father honours at the Idumaeon triumph,  
Judging him worthy of a place in the victory parade,  
Not denying it because of the fact of his humble descent.  
He promoted him to a seat among the knights, as well,  
Raised his house, removing the iron ring from his hand,  
Elevating him to the same high station as his own sons.  
For eighty years the days of his prosperity flowed by,  
The tenor of life unclouded. How ready he was to use  
His wealth on his sons' behalf, forgo an entire fortune,  
Is witnessed by Etruscus' customary lavish elegance;  
Your affection made the manner of his life less frugal,  
For you held him in a never-relinquished embrace,  
A father respected not merely for his authority; even  
His own brother gave precedence, championed his rise.  
Greatest of Emperors, what thanks do devoted youths  
Return to you, what pious vows discharge for a father  
Pardoned? Since you were content to admonish him,  
With thunder and a brief storm, while he, dumbfounded,  
Trembled at the coming lightning, an old man in error,  
Slowed by age, exhausted by work, or from whom  
Fortune, so long indulgent, chose it seems to withdraw.  
While his partner in office crossed rough seas, leaving  
Italy's fields far behind, he was merely told to retire,  
To Campania's gentle coast, Apulia, Diomedes' Arpi,  
And as a guest, not exiled. Then, after no long period  
Of time, Germanicus, you unbarred the gates of Rome  
To him once more, and reinstated the fallen house: no  
Surprise, most merciful of rulers, since yours is that  
Clemency that grants merciful terms to the conquered  
Catti, and allows the Dacians their mountain territories,

And after the recent harsh battles did not inflict a Latin  
Triumph on the Marcomani, or the nomadic Sarmatians.  
Now his day has ended and the inexorable thread is cut.  
Here grieving Etruscus' piety asks of me a finer song  
Than the Sirens sang on Sicilian cliffs, or the swan  
Sure of its fate, or the nightingale cruel Tereus' mate.  
With what fierce blows do I see him wearying his arms  
In grief, or bowing his face to rain kisses from above!  
Friends and servants can barely restrain him, the rising  
Pyre deter. So Theseus mourned Aegeus on Sunium's  
Shore, deceived by the colour of the approaching sails.  
Then with a heart-rending cry and ashen countenance,  
He speaks to the warm embers: 'Why have you left us,  
Most loyal father, just as Fortune returns? Our divine  
Leader and the gods' brief anger have been appeased,  
To no profit, robbed of all benefit from this, you flee  
Ungrateful to the shades. We cannot move the Fates,  
Nor can we placate the harsh deities of baneful Lethe.  
Happy, was he who bore Anchises on his shoulders,  
As the Greek flames in holy awe gave him passage;  
Happy, young Scipio saving his father from the cruel  
Carthaginians; happy, was Lausus in his brave piety.  
Did Alcestis not weigh her husband's life against hers,  
And Orpheus, in supplication, overcome pitiless Styx?  
How much finer such an attempt for one's own father!  
But you shall not be wholly taken, nor shall I forsake  
Your ashes. Here your shade will rest, under this roof.  
You will be guard and master of the hearth, all here  
Shall obey you; rightly the lesser, always secondary,  
I'll offer food and drink to your sacred spirit, worship  
Your effigies; now gleaming stone, skilfully carved  
Wax, will conjure up your image, red gold and ivory  
Will imitate your look. And I'll seek advice from them,  
A long life's wisdom, pious thoughts, prophetic dreams.'  
Such are his words, and sweet they seem to his happy  
Father who, sinking slowly to the unrelenting shadows,  
Shall go to recount them there to his beloved Etrusca.  
For the last time, gentlest of aged fathers, hail, in a last  
Farewell! While your son lives, you will never suffer  
The sad ruin and mournfulness of a neglected tomb.  
The altar will always breathe of flowery perfumes,  
And your happy urn will drink Assyrian fragrance,  
And the greater tribute, tears. Here he will sacrifice



To your shade, raise a tumulus of your own earth.  
This, my song, his actions earned, he also dedicates  
To you, happy to grant this sepulchre to your ashes.

#### BkIII:4 – Flavius Earinus' Locks of Hair

Go, locks of hair, go swiftly over favourable seas,  
Go now, I pray, softly couched in encircling gold;  
Kind Venus, granting you safe voyage, will calm  
The southerlies, bear you perhaps from the perilous  
Vessel, and lead you in her shell through the waves.  
Aesculapius, Apollo's son, take the renowned tresses,  
Caesar's lad offers you, accept them, and show them  
Gladly to your unshorn father. Let him consider them  
Closely and conclude they are from his brother Lyaeus.  
Perhaps then he will trim the glory of his own immortal  
Locks, and set their trimmings in gold for you as well.  
Pergamus, be happier by far than pine-clad Mount Ida,  
Though Ida prides itself on sacred rape among the clouds,  
(since it gave Ganymede to the gods, the sight of whom  
Troubles Juno, who recoils at his touch, refusing nectar),  
For you are favoured by heaven, distinguished by your  
Handsome ward, the servant whom you sent to Latium,  
Whom the Ausonian Jupiter, Domitian, and his Roman  
Juno, both view with friendly gaze; not without the will  
Of the gods could the lord of the earth be so well pleased.  
They say that golden Venus, once, carried by her downy  
Swans, on her way from Eryx' heights to Idalian groves,  
Reached the temple in Pergamus where the gentle god  
There to help the ill, their greatest recourse, holds back  
The imminent Fates, broods by his health-giving snake.  
She saw a lad, himself a bright star of unmatched beauty,  
Playing before the altar of the god himself, and deceived  
At first by this unexpected apparition, for a while thought  
He must be one of her many sons, though he had no bow,  
Nor shadowy wings springing from radiant shoulders.  
She admired his boyish grace, gazed at his face and hair,  
Saying: 'Must you go then to walled Rome, neglected  
By Venus? Must you endure a humble roof, and bear  
The common yoke of servitude? Not so! I shall grant  
Your beauty the master it merits. Come with me, lad,  
Come. I shall carry you to the Leader, a gift of gifts,  
In my winged chariot, no plebeian fate awaits you;  
You are destined to serve the honour of the Palatine.  
I confess I've neither seen in all the world, nor given  
Birth to, anyone as sweet. Endymion and Attis shall  
Freely yield to you, and Narcissus consumed in vain

By his image in the pool, a barren love. The nymphs  
Preferring you to Hylas, would have seized your urn.  
You, lad, exceed them all; only more handsome is he  
To whom you shall be given.' So saying, she swept  
Him up through the air, in her swan-drawn chariot.  
Swiftly they reach the Latian Hills, and the Palatine  
Once Evander's home, newly adorned by Domitian  
Father of the globe, level now with the highest stars.  
Then the goddess took close care how best to dress  
His hair, what clothes might now highlight his looks,  
What gold was fittest to circle his neck and fingers.  
She knew the Leader's celestial gaze, she had linked  
The wedding torches, openly handed him his bride.  
Thus she combs those locks, drapes the lad in Tyrian  
Garments, grants him rays of her own fire. Former  
Favourites, a crowd of servants, draw back; and he  
With fairer hand, bears first cups to the Leader, solid  
Fluorspar and crystal; fresh grace improves the wine.  
Lad, dear to the gods, chosen as taster of the sacred  
Nectar, selected to touch that mighty hand, and often;  
As the Getae, Persians, Indians, Armenians seek to do.  
Born under a lucky star, oh, how the gods favoured you.  
Once too, Asclepius himself, god of your land, left  
Lofty Pergamus to cross the sea, before the first down  
Marred your bright cheeks, dimmed your beauty's glory.  
No other power was credited with transforming the boy:  
With silent art, Apollo's son gently suppressed his sex,  
No wound apparent. For Venus had been anxious lest  
The lad suffer; the noble Leader had not yet ordered  
Male children left intact; now it is illegal to castrate,  
And mutilate manhood; Nature rejoices, seeing only  
What she creates. No longer are female slaves fearful  
Of bearing sons to endure the effects of an evil ruling.  
Had you been born later, you too, of greater strength,  
Would have known darkened cheeks, and fuller limbs.  
You'd have rejoiced to send beard as well as shavings  
To Apollo's shrine; now let those locks alone sail on  
To your father's shore. Venus drenched them in copious  
Perfumes, a kindly Grace would comb them threefold.  
Purpled Nisus's severed lock will yield it precedence,  
And that which proud Achilles vowed to Sperchius.  
When your snow-white brow was first ordered to be  
Cropped, and your gleaming shoulders to be unveiled,

The tender winged boys, with their mother Venus, flew  
To place the silk bib round your neck, and prepare your  
Tresses. Then they joined their arrows to cut the locks,  
And set them with gold and gems. Venus caught them  
As they fell, and bathed them again in secret essences.  
Then from the crowd of boys, one lad who happened  
To be bearing a splendid golden gemmed mirror in his  
Raised hands cried: Let's send this too, nothing could be  
More pleasing to your home temple; only fix your gaze  
Within, more potent than the gold, leave your image there.'  
So saying he enclosed the captured likeness in the mirror.  
But the peerless lad himself, stretched his arms to the stars,  
Saying: 'Gentlest guardian of mankind, in return for these,  
If I have merited it, and you so will, renew our master's  
Youth and preserve him to the world. The stars request it,  
The sea and earth, and I. May he exceed, I pray Nestor's  
Years and Priam's, glad to grow old beside the sanctuary  
Of his household gods, and beside the Tarpeian temple.  
So he spoke, and Pergamus marvelled as its altars shook.

BkIII:5 – To his wife Claudia

Why do you grieve by day, wife, and, in the nights  
We share, breathe sleepless sighs of anxious care?  
Not that I fear a broken vow, or that another love  
Is in your heart; no arrow is licensed to pierce you  
(Though Nemesis with frowning face should hear),  
No, indeed. Were I separated from my native land,  
Wandering, after twenty years spent at war, at sea;  
You'd make, still chaste, the thousand suitors flee,  
Not feigning to re-weave that uncompleted web,  
But openly, truly, blade in hand, refusing marriage.  
Then, why is your face altered, your brow clouded?  
Because, weary, I propose we return to my Euboean  
Homeland, and settle in old age in my native land?  
Why should that sadden you? Surely you've no love  
For pleasure, no mad contest in the Circus charms you,  
Nor entering those noisy theatres amongst the crowd;  
Rather virtue, and shaded quiet, and joys uncommon.  
What then of those waves I'd have you travel with me?  
As though I were urging a voyage, so we might go live  
In the Arctic or beyond Hesperian Thule's misty waters,  
Or to the impenetrable source of the seven-mouthed Nile.  
Surely it's you whom Venus joined to me, by a kind fate,  
In the springtime of my life, and keeps by me in old age;  
You that pierced me, untouched by marriage, with a first  
Wound, I but an errant youth; yours the bridle welcomed  
In glad obedience, the bit still pressed by my mouth, one  
I'll never change. As I bore the Alban wreath in my bright  
Hair, wore the olive leaves made of Caesar's sacred gold,  
It was you who clasped me to your heart and kissed my  
Garlands furiously. When at the Capitoline my lyre was  
Rejected you too mourned with me Jupiter's ingratitude,  
And cruelty; and you it was whose vigilant ear caught,  
Whole nights long, my first notes of overflowing song;  
Only you knew my long labour; my *Thebaid* aged along  
With you. How I gazed at you when lately I was almost  
Swept to the Stygian shades, when I heard Lethe's waters  
At my feet, and focused again eyes near closed in death!  
Surely Lachesis granted hours to my weary life, in pity  
For you; it was your reproach the powers above feared.  
Now, after all this, do you balk at the one brief journey,  
Do you refuse to accompany me to that delightful bay?

Alas where is your constant loyalty, proven in a host of  
Ways, that of the ancient heroines of Greece and Rome?  
If Ulysses had allowed, Penelope would have gone gladly  
To Troy (what deters a lover?), Aegiale, Diomedes' wife  
Grieved to be left behind, as did Ajax's mother Meliboea,  
And that Laodamia whom savage lamentation maddened.  
No less than her you know how to be loyal, and give your  
Life for your husband. Thus, you still sought out his ashes,  
And his shade; embraced the obsequies, of your tuneful  
Spouse, once more raining blows on your breast, though  
You were mine. Nor is your love and care for your girl  
Any less; such is your maternal affection, your daughter  
Is never absent from your heart; day and night, you hold  
Her fast in the deepest recess of your spirit. Not even thus  
Does Alcione flutter round her nest, Philomela round her  
Vernal home, cradling, giving her life's breath to her young.  
Does she clasp you now, because alone in her widow's bed  
She spends a youthfulness, so fair to see, in barren idleness?  
Yet it will come, marriage; come, with all its burning torches,  
As surely as all her gifts, both of mind and body, deserve it,  
Whether shown when she clasps the quivering lute, or makes  
Music worthy of the Muse, with a voice fine as her father's,  
Sings my verse, spreads white arms with supple movement,  
Her goodness even exceeding her talent, her modesty her art.  
Are you and your lightsome lads, Venus, not ashamed such  
Charm is wasted? Not only Rome is fertile in match-making;  
Lighting the wedding torch, my land may grant a son-in-law.  
Vesuvius' crater and that fatal mountain's flow of fire has not  
Wholly depleted its towns of terrified citizens. Cities stand,  
Alive with people. There is Puteoli, founded under Apollo's  
Auspices, its shoreline and harbour welcoming all the world,  
There Capua's walls, that Capys filled with Teucrian settlers,  
Imitating the expansiveness of mighty Rome, and there too  
Our Naples, lacking neither native folk or colonists, city  
Of Parthenope; the Siren, borne there by the sea, guided  
To a gentle land, by Venus' dove, sent by Apollo himself.  
Such is the place (for I was not born in barbarous Thrace,  
Or Libya) I say, to which I would conduct you, tempered  
As it is by the mildest of winters, the coolest of summers,  
Washed by the indolent waves of a most un-bellicose sea.  
Peace there is guaranteed, and the noiseless life of leisure,  
A quiet undisturbed by storms, sleep that runs its course.  
No madness of the Forum, no laws made against brawling:

Men ruled by morality, and rights that need no magistrates.  
What need to praise its magnificent sights and adornments,  
The temples, the squares marked out by countless columns,  
The dual complement of theatres there, open and roofed,  
The quinquennial contests ranking next to the Capitoline's?  
What need to praise the plays, the freedom and laughter,  
The mixture of Roman dignity there, and Greek licence?  
Nor is there any lack of entertainment nearby; for variety,  
You can visit the seductive shores of vaporiferous Baiae;  
Or Cumae, and the prophetic Sibyl's numinous dwelling;  
Or Misenum, memorable for the oar-topped Trojan tomb;  
Or shall it be the flowing vineyards of Bacchic Gaurus,  
And Capri, isle of the Teleboae, sweet to fearful sailors,  
Where the Pharos lifts its light, a night-wandering moon,  
And the Surrentine hills, dear to Lyaeus, their sour wine,  
Hills my Pollius, above all, enhances by his living there;  
Or the medicinal pools of Venae and renascent Stabiae?  
Shall I relate my country's thousand attractions for you?  
Suffice it to say, wife, suffice it to say; she created me for  
You, and bound me to you as husband for many a year.  
Is she not worthy of being called mother and nurse to both?  
But I am ungrateful, running on like this, doubting your  
Character. You will come with me, dear wife, you will  
Even go on ahead. Without me what worth would Tiber  
Have, prince among rivers, or the roofs of martial Rome?

**End of Book III**

## Book IV

BkIV: Prologue – Statius to his friend Marcellus: Greetings!

I've contrived a book, dearest Marcellus, that I can dedicate to your loyal affection. I don't think I've begun any little work of mine without invoking the divinity of our great Emperor, but this book owns to three such pieces, and what greater tribute to you than that the fourth is by way of honouring you. Firstly, I have celebrated our Leader's seventeenth consulship. Secondly, I give thanks for the honour of attending his most sacred banquet. Thirdly, I show admiration for the Via Domitiana, by means of which the annoying delays caused by the sandy ground have been eliminated. Thanks to it, you will receive the letter I write to you from Naples in this volume more swiftly. Next there's an ode to young Septimius Severus, a classmate of yours and, as you know, one of the most distinguished members of the second Order, but besides that a very close friend of mine. As for the statuette of Hercules belonging to our friend Vindex, in addition to the honour he deserves from me, and from literature itself, I can also credit you. I have already borne adequate testimony to my regard for Maximus Vibius, based on his nobility and eloquence, in the letter to him that I published concerning my *Thebaid*; but here I call on him to hasten his return from Dalmatia. Joined with that is a poem addressed to my fellow townsman Julius Menecrates, a distinguished young man and my friend Pollius's son-in-law. I congratulate him for having honoured the city of Naples by the number of his children. I intend a worthier tribute to Plotius Grypus, a young man of senatorial rank, but in the meantime I include in this volume some hendecasyllables which caused us some amusement at the Saturnalia.

Why then are there more poems in the fourth book of my *Silvae* than in its predecessors? Because I don't want those who condemn my publishing this type of composition to think that their criticisms have had any effect. For in the first place, it is pointless for them to argue over a thing already completed, and in the second, I had already presented a number of these works to our master the Emperor – and that is a more important consideration even than publication! Are we not allowed to exercise our talents in play? 'Only in private,' they say. Yet we're allowed to watch ball games and fencing matches. Anyway, whoever reads anything of mine reluctantly may consider himself my adversary. Why then accept his advice? In conclusion, I am the one exhibited in public; let him be silent and rejoice. As for this book, Marcellus, defend it if you wish; and be done with it. If not, I'll bear the blame. Farewell.



## BkIV:1 – The Emperor Domitian’s Seventeenth Consulship

Caesar’s purple adds one, joyously, to those sixteen entries  
In the calendar: Germanicus sees in a memorable new-year,  
Rising with the new day, and with the stars in their grandeur,  
Shining more brightly than they, and greater than the dawn.  
Judges of Latium exult; rejoice you magistrates; let Rome  
Sweep the sky more proudly with her seven hills; above all  
Let the Palatine, let Evander’s summit triumph over the rest.  
The lictors newly-appointed enter the Palace, that twelve-fold  
Honour of the Consulship returns. The Senate, their prayers  
Heard, delight in having overcome Caesar’s modest reluctance.  
Janus himself who presides over the renewal of endless time,  
Lifts his arm and gives thanks at either threshold of the Forum.  
You have joined his hands with those of his neighbour Peace,  
And ordered him to set aside all thoughts of war, and swear  
Allegiance to the civic laws of this new Forum Transitorium.  
See he raises upturned palms, and with twin mouths declares:  
‘Hail, great father of the world, who prepare with me to renew  
The century! Rome would ever desire to see you celebrated so  
In my new month; so let the times be re-born, so let the years  
Make their entrance. Make the calendar continually joyous:  
Let the folds bordered with rich purple clothe your shoulders,  
The robe, the *toga praetexta*, fresh from Minerva’s swift hands.  
See how temples gleam more brightly, the flames rise higher  
On the altars, how the midwinter stars themselves glow warm  
For you, matching your mild temperament. Rejoice you knights,  
You tribes, you purple-clad senators, every rank draws lustre  
From our Consul. Has any former time seen the like of this?  
Tell me, mighty Rome if so, I pray; antiquity’s long years  
Enumerate them with me, and ignoring trivial examples,  
Only recount those that my Caesar has deigned to surpass.  
Thirteen times as the years slid by Augustus bore the Latian  
Rods, but many years passed before he truly deserved them.  
You were young when you outdid your ancestors, and what  
Gifts you refused, honours you reject! Yet you will yield,  
And reward the senate’s prayers often with promise of this  
Day. A further sequence remains to be fulfilled, many a time  
Will fortunate Rome grant you the magistrate’s curule chair.  
With me you’ll celebrate a second Secular Games; for you,  
The altar of ancient Tarentus shall be renewed. You’ll bear  
A thousand trophies; allow the celebration of your triumphs.  
Balkh and Babylon have still to be newly trained to tribute,

There are no Indian laurels yet at Capitoline Jove's breast,  
Arabia and the Orient do not yet petition, nor is the year yet  
Fully honoured, ten months remain still to be named for you.'  
So Janus spoke, and happily withdrew behind his archway.  
Then all the gods opened wide their shrines, issuing joyful  
Portents from heaven, and Jupiter promised you, our great  
Leader, long days of youth, and as many years as his own.

## BkIV:2 – Gratitude to the Emperor Augustus Germanicus Domitianus

Virgil, who brought Aeneas to the fields of Laurentium,  
Celebrated Elissa's, great Sidonian Dido's, royal feast,  
While Homer, his Ulysses weary with endless voyaging,  
Depicted Alcinous' banquet in immortal lines of verse:  
But how shall I acknowledge my prayers granted, what  
Thanks suffice, now that Caesar brings me this new joy,  
A place at his sacred banquet, a seat at his imperial feast?  
I could not find a fitting utterance, though both Smyrna  
And Mantua were to wreath my happy brow with laurel.  
I seem to sit with Jove among the stars, and I seem to sip  
Immortal nectar offered me by Trojan Ganymede's hand.  
The years behind were barren; this is the first day of my  
Mortal span; behold, here is the true threshold of my life.  
Is it you I gaze at, as I sit here, sovereign of all the lands,  
Great father of a world conquered, dear to the gods, hope  
Of all mankind? Is it given to me, indeed, to look on your  
Face nearby at wine and board, allowed to remain seated?  
Here is the august building, immense, magnificent and not  
With a mere hundred columns but enough to support high  
Heaven and the gods above, were Atlas to ease his burden.  
The Thunderer's neighbouring temple views it in wonder,  
The gods rejoice to see you installed in a palace equalling  
Their own (hasten not to ascend to the heights of the sky);  
So wide are its foundations, such is the extent of its halls,  
Wider than a spreading plain, embracing much of heaven  
Within its roof; you fill the house and weight it with your  
Great genius. Here in contention find stone from Libyan  
Heights, and the bright stone of Troy, blocks from Syene,  
Chios too, rocks to rival the colour of the grey-green sea,  
Marble from Carystos, and Luna to support the columns.  
Its height challenges vision; your weary eyes can scarce  
Find the roof, and you'd think it heaven's gilded ceiling,  
When Caesar asks the great men of Rome and the ranks  
Of robed knights all to recline here at a thousand tables,  
Ceres herself with tucked-up robe, and Bacchus, labour  
To supply them. So Triptolemus scattered her great gift  
From the sky, so Dinosus cast shadow on the bare hills  
And sober fields, beneath his covering of clustered vines.  
But I'd no time to spare for gazing at citrus wood tables  
On ivory legs, or ranks of servants, my eager look was  
Towards him, with visage calm, its radiance tempered

By tranquil majesty; he, modestly lowering the banner  
Of his good fortune, yet a concealed beauty still shining  
In his face. So might barbarian emissaries, or unknown  
Peoples, recognise him by the sight. So Mars reclines  
In some chill Thracian valley, his war-horses stabled;  
So Pollux relaxes gleaming limbs, after some Spartan  
Wrestling bout; so Bacchus rests by Ganges, to Indian  
Cries; so mighty Hercules, after some dreadful Labour  
Delighted in laying his body down on that lion's skin.  
My comparisons are trivial, and your aspect unmatched:  
So the leader of the gods looks, when he visits Ocean's  
Shore, at the banquets of the Ethiopians, his sacred  
Countenance suffused with nectar, and bids the Muses  
Sing arcane songs, Apollo laud victory over the Giants.  
May the gods grant (since they say they often listen to  
Lesser spirits) that you achieve twice or thrice the sum  
Of your father's years. May you elevate deified spirits  
To the stars, found temples, show regard for your family.  
May you often open the gate to the year, greeting Janus  
With fresh lictors, often mark the quinquennial festival  
With lustral crowns. To me, your granting my presence  
At your auspicious banquet, at the rituals of your table,  
Seems like that day long ago when, below Trojan Alba's  
Mount, I sang now of German battles, now of Dacian,  
And your hand granted me Minerva's golden crown.

## BkIV:3 – The Via Domitiana

What vast cacophony, of tough flints  
And solid steel, filled stony Appia,  
On the side that borders on the sea?  
Not the sound of Hannibals' cavalry;  
No wandering foreign general shakes  
Campania's fields in perfidious war.  
Nor is it Nero disturbing the waters,  
Cleaving hills, creating murky swamps.  
Rather it is he who surrounds Janus's  
Threshold with a Forum and just laws,  
And so restores her virgin acres to Ceres,  
Sober fields long denied her; as Censor  
Forbids emasculation and grown males  
To fear the punishment of sexless form;  
Who restores the Capitoline Thunderer,  
And returns Peace to her own dwelling;  
Who consecrates an everlasting temple  
To his father's tribe, with Flavian deities;  
Who impatient of tracks that limit men,  
Plains that obstruct their every journey,  
Eliminates long diversions, and paves  
Over, in solid form, the clinging sand,  
Happy to make the Euboean Sibyl's cave,  
The slopes of Gaurus, and steaming Baiae,  
More accessible to Rome's Seven Hills.  
Here the slow traveller gripped the swaying  
Pole of his two-wheeled cart as malignant  
Ground sucked at his wheels, here Latian  
Folk feared their journey through the plain.  
No swift passage; glutinous ruts slowed  
Tardy travel, while weary beasts crawled  
Along, under the weight of their high yoke,  
And balked at their over-heavy burdens.  
Yet now a task, that wore away a whole  
Day, scarcely takes a couple of hours.  
No vessel, no outstretched wings of a bird,  
Speeding under the stars, consume less time.  
The first labour was to mark out trenches,  
Carve out the sides, and by deep excavation  
Remove the earth inside. Then they filled  
The empty trenches with other matter,

And prepared a base for the raised spine,  
So the soil was firm, lest an unstable floor  
Make a shifting bed for the paving stones;  
Then laid the road with close-set blocks  
All round, wedges densely interspersed.  
O what a host of hands work together!  
These fell trees and strip the mountains,  
Those plane beams and smooth posts;  
Some bind stones, consolidate the work,  
With baked clay and tufa mixed with dirt;  
Others toil to drain waterlogged ditches,  
And divert the lesser streams elsewhere.  
Such hands might carve Mount Athos,  
And bridge the mournful Hellespont  
With a solid causeway, unlike Xerxes'.  
Subject to them, Ino's Isthmus might  
See waters mingle if the gods allowed.  
Shores are roused, and swaying woods.  
The din travels the towns along the road,  
And vine-girt Mount Massicus returns  
Faintly-heard echoes to Mount Gaurus.  
Peaceful Cumae, the Liternian marsh,  
The slow Savone, wonder at the sound.  
But Voltumnus lifts his face, tawny head  
And mass of dripping hair close-tangled  
With soft rushes, then leaning against  
The mighty arch of Caesar's bridge he  
Pours out words from his hoarse throat:  
'O beneficent landscaper of my plains,  
Who seeing me spread over far valleys,  
Not knowing how to keep within limits,  
Bound me by rule in a straight channel,  
Behold how I, threatening and turbulent,  
Once barely letting boats pass, riskily,  
Now bear a bridge, trampled underfoot!  
I that once carried earth and trees away  
Now flow (shamefully) between banks.  
But I give thanks, my servitude is just,  
As I yield to your power and command,  
Men shall read of you as the great leader,  
And the eternal conqueror of my shores.  
Now you tend to my gushing channel,  
Free me of silt, wipe away the shame

Of barren soil on every side; the wave  
Of the Tyrrhene sea no longer breaks  
Against my sandy, mud-laden current,  
(As the Cinyphian Bagra da crawls by  
Silent shores midst Carthaginian fields.)  
Rather I run so as to challenge the calm  
Sea with my shining flow, and contend  
Against the Liris with my clear stream.’  
So the river spoke; as he did so, a stretch  
Of marbled roadway reared its mighty back.  
Its gateway, auspicious entrance, arched  
Gleaming with the output of all Liguria’s  
Quarries and the warlike leader’s trophies,  
Vast as the bow that crowns the rain-cloud.  
There the hastening traveller makes a turn,  
There Appia grieves at being left behind.  
Then the journey is swifter and livelier,  
Then even the horses enjoy their speed,  
As when a rising breeze fills all the sails,  
Just as the oarsmen’s arms grow wearied.  
Come then, all you peoples of the East,  
Who owe allegiance to Rome’s Emperor,  
Flow along in your unimpeded journey,  
Arrive more swiftly, you Oriental laurels!  
Nothing obstructs your wish, no delays.  
Let whoever leaves Tivoli at daybreak  
Sail the Lucrine Lake in early evening.  
But who is this at the end of the new road,  
With white hair and sacred ribbons, where  
Apollo’s shrine marks out ancient Cumae?  
Does sight deceive, or does the Sibyl bring  
Chalcidian laurels from her sacred cavern?  
Withdraw lyre, set your song aside: a holier  
Chant begins, and we must fall silent. See!  
She twists her head about, raging widely  
Over the new extent, occupying the way!  
Then she gives utterance from virgin lips:  
‘I prophesied: “He shall come (fields and  
Rivers, wait) by heaven’s favour he shall  
Come, he will nullify the dark woods and  
Powdery sand with a high bridge and road.”’  
Behold he is a god, Jupiter commands him  
To rule the fortunate earth in his place; no

Man worthier has held the reins of power  
Since Aeneas, eager to learn of his future,  
Was able to penetrate and leave Avernus'  
Prescient grove, with me to conduct him.  
He's a friend to peace, formidable in war;  
Were he to command the blazing heavens,  
More powerful and effective than Nature,  
India would be damp, with copious cloud,  
Libya be watered, and Haemus grow warm.  
Hail, leader of men, and father of new gods,  
A divinity foreseen and attested to by me!  
No need to read my words as they unroll  
On disintegrating parchment to the solemn  
Prayers of the Fifteen, but listen, as you  
Deserve to, close beside me, while I sing.  
I have seen the thread of everlasting ages  
The white-robed Sisters weave for you.  
A long sequence of centuries awaits you.  
Longer lived than your sons, than their  
Great-grandsons, you'll pass such years  
Of peace, in endless youth, as Nestor did,  
Or such, they say, as Tithonus attained,  
As many as I myself once asked of Apollo.  
The snowbound north already obeys you,  
Now the east will win you great triumphs.  
You will go where Bacchus and Hercules  
Went, beyond the stars and blazing sun,  
And the Nile's source, and Atlas' snows,  
And, a warrior blessed with every crown  
Of glory, ascend triumphal chariots and  
Refuse them, while Vesta's Trojan fire  
Burns, Capitoline Jupiter thunders in his  
Renascent halls, you ruling earth, until  
This road's as old as ancient Appia now.



BkIV:4 – A Letter to Vitorius Marcellus

Speed, my letter, over the Euboean plains, brook no delay;  
Take the road that now branches from the noble Via Appia,  
And whose solid mass presses down the soft sands beneath.  
And when you have made your way, swiftly, to Rome's hills,  
Take the nearest road to the right bank of the yellow Tiber,  
Where the Etruscan shore pens in the lake for naval vessels,  
And the deep waters are fringed with suburban garden villas.  
There you will find Marcellus, he of the noble mind and form,  
And will recognise him by his conspicuous height and stature.  
First you must greet him in the customary everyday manner,  
But then be sure to relay to him this poetic message of mine:  
'Already the passing of rainy spring has rendered the earth  
And turning sky weary, now Sirius burns in the heavens.  
Already people forsake the tall buildings of crowded Rome.  
Some, sacred Palestrina, or Diana's wooded hills at Nemi,  
Or the cold of Mount Algidus, or Tusculum's shade, protect;  
Others, head for the groves of Tivoli and the Anio's coolness.  
And you, what gentler clime draws you from the clamorous  
City? In what cooling breeze do you elude the summer sun?  
And what above all of your Gallus, who is your greatest care,  
Whom I too love (is it more for his gifts of character or mind)?  
Does he summer on Latium's shores, or revisit quarried Luna,  
And the walls of his Tyrrhene home? Yet if he is close to you,  
It is certain I will not be long absent from your conversations:  
That must be why the sound of them is buzzing in my ears!  
But while the fearful mane of Leo's constellation is alight with  
The presence of the over-powerful sun, ease your heart of care,  
And steal yourself away from endless toil. For now the Parthian  
Seals his quiver and unstrings his guilty bow, and the charioteer  
Allows his horses, driven hard in the labours of Elis, to bathe  
In the Alpheus, and even my lyre grows weary, its strings slack.  
Times of leisure nurture our strength and restore it; our energy  
Is greater after rest. So Achilles, fiercer after singing of Briseis,  
Laying the pen aside, took up arms aggressively against Hector.  
You too, idleness, if you'll seek it for a little while, will silently  
Set on fire, and you'll return refreshed to your customary labour.  
Surely, for now, that wrangling over Latium's laws can lessen,  
The season of leisure delights in peace; the time of harvest has  
Discharged the courts; defendants no longer crowd your rooms,  
No querulous clients demand your presence; the spear is idle  
That marks the Court of a Hundred, from which your eloquence

Flows far and wide, so famously celebrated, beyond your years.  
Happy in your pursuits, caring nothing for Helicon's garlands,  
Or the peaceable laurels from the summits of Parnassus, your  
Vigorous mind, ready for great tasks, shoulders whatever comes,  
While I find solace in an idle life of song, and seek the fickle  
Joys of literary fame. Behold, seeking rest and the happy shore  
Where sea-borne Parthenope found refuge in the Ausonian bay,  
I listlessly strike trembling strings, seated on the steps of Virgil's  
Tomb; I take heart; I sing at the shrine of the immortal master.  
But if Atropos grant you long life (which I pray she does) so  
Latium's divine leader will advance you (it being your study  
To worship him next to the Thunderer; he who has added to  
Your praetorship a new task of straightening the Via Latina)  
Perhaps you will be sent to lead the Ausonian cohorts, either  
To guard the peoples of the Rhine, or the shores of dark Thule,  
Or the banks of the Danube and the threshold of the formidable  
Caspian Gates. For your power of eloquence is not your only  
Strength: those limbs are well-suited to warfare that are slow  
To don the heavy breastplate. In the line of march your crest  
Would wave above the ranks, if you were to handle the jingling  
Reins, the fieriest horse would obey. I will drift into old age  
Singing the deeds of other men; while you handsome in arms  
Perform acts worthy of song, and set a magnificent example  
For little Geta, whose great ancestor already demands of him  
Noble feats, and acquaints him with the triumphs of his house.  
Up then, boy, get moving, and catch up with your young father,  
Fortunate in your mother's lineage, and your father's courage!  
Already the Senate is happy to nurture you fondly in its robes  
Fringed with purple, joys in promising you every curule chair.  
I sing this to you, my dear Marcellus, on the Chalcidian shore,  
Where Vesuvius rears his broken summit in anger, pouring out  
Flames to rival the Sicilian fires. Marvellous to believe! Will  
Future generations, when the crops have grown again and this  
Wilderness shows green once more, credit that people and cities  
Are buried beneath, that an ancestral countryside has vanished,  
In a mundane act of fate? Nor does that crater cease its deadly  
Eruptions. May your Chieti be far from such a destiny, may  
No such like madness possess your Marrucinian mountains!  
Now if you'd like to know a little of what occupies my Muse,  
Her Sidonian labours on my *Thebaid* have been completed,  
And her sails are furled once more in the long-awaited haven.  
She has offered incense, and the entrails of a virginal heifer,  
To the festal flames, on the ridges of Parnassus, and among

The woods of Helicon, hung ribbons for me on the votive tree.  
Now a different chaplet comes to be entwined in my idle hair:  
I attempt a tale of Troy itself, and mighty Achilles, although  
The father who wields the bow now summons me elsewhere,  
Showing me the Ausonian leader's mightier arms. Impulse  
Has long been drawing me that way, but fear holds me back.  
Will my shoulders sustain so great a weight, or will my neck  
Sink beneath the vast burden? Will they bear it, Marcellus?  
Or can my vessel, which is accustomed to sail the lesser seas,  
Not yet be trusted to endure the greater perils of the Ionian?  
But now farewell, and do not let that affection for the poet  
You know so intimately vanish from your heart. For Hercules  
Himself was not chary of nurturing amity. The glory of loyal  
Theseus, faithful in friendship, shall yield to yours, and that  
Of Achilles who dragged the battered corpse of Priam's son  
Around the walls of Troy to bring solace for his dead friend.

BkIV:5 – A Lyric Ode to Septimius Severus

Blessed by the bounty of a small estate,  
Where Alba once worshipped Teucrian Lares,  
I salute, and in no common metre,  
The brave and eloquent Severus.

Now harsh winter conquered by the higher sun,  
Flees to the North and the Great Arcadian Bear,  
Now the sea and land are smiling once more,  
As the northerlies turn to soft zephyrs.

Now all the trees are dressed in the soft leaves,  
Of a fresh year's spring, now the new plaintive songs  
Of birds arise, and un-attempted trills,  
That seemed lost for good in silent winter.

To me a patch of soil, an undying fire,  
And a roof darkened by the smoke of lamps,  
Bring comfort, with wine poured from the jar  
In which it only lately fermented.

No bleating here of a thousand woolly sheep,  
No lowing of the cow for her sweet lover,  
The fields are silent save when they echo  
To the music of their owner's singing.

But this place is dear to me, first of my loves  
After my native land; here the virgin queen  
Of battle, the goddess Minerva, crowned  
My singing with Caesar's golden prize,

While you strove with all your might to support  
Your friend in his sweet struggle, just as Castor  
Supporting his brother Pollux, trembled  
At every sound from Lampsacus' arena.

Was it really Lepcis, in distant Libya,  
That saw your birth? Soon she will be bearing  
An Indian harvest and forestall perfumed  
Sabaean with mounds of rare cinnamon.

Who would have thought that sweet Septimius  
Had other than crawled on every hill of Rome?  
Who would have said he did ought when he quit  
The breast but drink from Juturna's fountain?

No wonder your worth: not knowing African  
Shallows, you reached our Ausonian harbour,  
And immediately, an adopted child,  
Learned at once to swim in Tuscan waters.

Then you were raised among the Senators' sons,  
Content with the brilliance of the twin narrow  
Stripes of purple, but patrician by nature,  
Your character seeking endless labours.

Not Punic your speech, nor foreign in your dress,  
Or in your mind: Italian, Italian!  
There are in the City and in Rome's squadrons,  
Those worthy of being Libya's sons.

Your voice is cheerful though the Forum roars,  
While your eloquence itself is not for sale,  
And your sword sits quietly in its sheath  
Unless your friends summon you to draw it.

But peace and the countryside are more often  
To your taste, now at your father's place at Veii,  
Now on the leafy heights of the Hernici  
People, now in ancient Sabine Cures.

Here, most of your work is in prose, in free  
Words and measure; but remember me sometimes,  
And now and again strike the sounding lyre  
That hides modestly in your grotto there.

BkIV:6 – Novius Vindex's Statuette of Hercules

By chance as I wandered idly in the Saepta Julia  
At sunset, my labours set aside, my mind freed  
From the day, kindly Vindex took me off to dine.  
That dinner remains in the depths of my memory,  
Perpetually in progress: we swallowed nothing to  
Mock the digestion, no cuisine from distant clime,  
No wine as ancient as our never-ending calendar.  
And wretched are they who desire to know how  
The pheasant of Phasis differs from Rhodope's  
Wintry crane; which goose contains more offal;  
Why Tuscan boar is so much finer than Umbrian;  
Which seaweed is slippery shellfish's softest bed!  
Rather true affection, and words from the heights  
Of Helicon, and happy laughter helped us exhaust  
A winter's night, banish sweet sleep from our eyes,  
Until the next Twin emerged from the Underworld,  
And Tithonia smiled at yesterday's bedraggled table.  
O, what a night, worth a Tyinthian double moon!  
To be marked forever with Thetis' Red Sea pearls,  
Long-remembered, while its spirit lives on forever.  
It was then and there that I learned of the thousand  
Forms of antique ivory and bronze, and wax statues  
That almost speak. Who could rival Vindex's eyes  
For recognising the work of old masters, attaching  
The true maker's name to some un-attributed statue?  
He'll reveal to you which bronzes cost Myron many  
A sleepless night, which living marbles a labouring  
Praxiteles chiselled, which ivories Phidias smoothed,  
To which works Polyclitus' furnace summoned breath,  
What outlines proclaim the ancient Apelles from afar:  
For this is his study when he sets the lyre aside, this  
The passion that summons him from Aonian grottoes.  
Of all it was Hercules, Amphitryon's son, guardian  
Spirit of the modest table, that captivated my heart.  
My eyes were not satisfied with any swift appraisal.  
Such was the nobility of the work, the majesty caught  
In narrow limits. The god himself, the god, who let  
You behold him, Lysippus; small to view, but large  
To the appreciation; and though he's no more than  
Twelve inches tall, yet if your gaze travels his limbs  
You'll be tempted to say: 'This was the breast that

Crushed the Nemean predator; these were the arms  
That bore the deadly club, and broke Argo's oars.'  
So great the illusion that renders a small form large.  
What precision in the work, what daring in the art  
Of a skilled master, fashioning a table ornament yet  
Conceiving the power of a giant in his imagination!  
Neither the Telchine's in Ida's caverns, nor stolid  
Brontes, nor the Lemnian who forges the god's arms,  
Could in sport have made such a perfect little work.  
The figure's not severe, not unfitting for a banquet,  
But looks as the hero seemed in Molochus' humble  
Home; or to Auge, the priestess, in Alea's groves;  
Or, risen to the stars from Oeta's flames, drinking  
Nectar happily with the gods, though Juno scowled.  
This is the gentle countenance which, as though  
Joyous at heart, encourages the diners. One hand  
Holds Bacchus' mellow cup, the other remembers  
That club; a rough seat supports him, and its stone  
Is finely adorned with the hide of the Nemean lion.  
This sacred work has a noble history. Alexander,  
Pella's ruler, venerating him as a deity, showed it  
On his cheerful table, taking it about east and west.  
He would grasp it happily with that hand that gave  
And removed crowns, and overthrew great cities.  
He sought courage from it for the next day's fight,  
And victorious would tell it of his glorious battles,  
Whether he had robbed Bacchus of chained Indians,  
Or had shattered gated Babylon with his great spear,  
Or had conquered Pelops' land and Greek liberty;  
Only omitting from the long list of glorious deeds,  
It's said, his triumph over Hercules' native Thebes.  
And when the Fates were bringing his life to an end,  
When he drank the fatal draught, and death's dark  
Cloud veiled him, he feared the altered look of his  
Beloved deity, its bronze sweating at his final meal.  
The marvellous treasure soon passed to Hannibal:  
The Carthaginian leader, brutal, proud, and with a  
Traacherous sword, made his libation to the valiant  
God, who hated him, though he offered him food  
And wine, steeped as Hannibal was in the blood  
Of the Italian race, bringing fatal flame to Roman  
Roofs. Sadly, the god accompanied that foul army,  
Even when sacrilegious torches fired the god's own

Turrets, defiling the houses and temples of innocent  
Saguntum, and filling her people with noble outrage.  
After the Carthaginian leader's death, no ordinary  
House gained possession of the matchless bronze.  
Always used to entering famous homes, and happy  
In its succession of owners, it adorned Sulla's feasts.  
Fortunate now, too, if the gods weigh human hearts  
And virtues, since its master's soul is innocent and  
Free of fault: loyalty of old is his, and once begun  
His friendship is perennial, as Vestinus knew who,  
In the flower of life, equalled his mighty ancestors;  
Vestinus, whose spirit Vindex breathes night and day,  
Living, embraced by the arms of that beloved shade.  
Here then, Hercules, bravest of gods, you know happy  
Rest, gazing not at wars and fierce battles, but the lyre  
And sacred ribbons, and song-loving sprays of laurel.  
In solemn verse shall be recounted how you terrorised  
The Ilian and Getic dwellings, and snowy Stymphalos  
And the flowing ridges of Erymanthos; how you dealt  
With the Iberian herd, and Busiris of the savage altar;  
The gates of Death will be sung, which you entered  
To despoil; the Hesperides and the Amazons in tears.  
Neither the Macedonian king, nor barbarous Hannibal,  
Nor the harsh voice of savage Sulla could ever have  
Celebrated you thus. Surely, Lysippus, its creator, you  
Would not have wished to be judged by any other eyes.



BkIV:7 – A Lyric Ode for Vibius Maximus

Brave Muse, Erato, long have you wandered  
The widening plain, now set aside heroic  
Labours, and restrict your mighty efforts to  
A smaller circuit.

And you, Pindar, leader of the lyric host,  
Allow me to grasp a different pen awhile,  
If I have now rendered your Thebes sacred,  
In Latian song.

For Maximus I will attempt such verse,  
Now my garlands must be of untouched myrtle,  
Now my thirst is greater yet I must drink  
Of a purer stream.

When will you be summoned to sweet Latium  
From Dalmatian mountains, where the miner  
Returns from seeing Dis, pale as the colour  
Of the gold he mines?

Behold me, born in a much less distant land,  
Yet idle Baiae does not hold me by its  
Pleasant shore, nor the trumpeter Misenus who  
Bore Hector's armour.

My Muse is torpid without you; Apollo  
Himself comes to me less often than he did,  
And behold my *Achilles* is obstructed  
At the first real turn.

For it was with you as loyal counsellor,  
That, much tortured by editing, my *Thebaid*  
Attempted with daring lyre the delights  
Of Mantuan fame.

Yet I forgive you your delay since you've filled  
Your empty hearth with kindly progeny.  
O joyful day! Behold there is a  
Second Maximus!

Childlessness is to be avoided at all cost,  
The perverse heir would summon it in prayer,  
Begging (ah shame!) for death to overtake  
His dear relative.

The childless are buried without a tear:  
While the greedy inheritor occupies  
The house, hovering over death's spoils, even  
Costing the last pyre.

Long life to the noble child, may he grow  
To inherit his father's virtues, travel  
The path few tread, challenge his grandfather  
With his achievements!

You shall tell the little lad of the sword  
You carried to the East, to the Orontes,  
Commanding the standard of the cavalry  
That Castor favours.

His grandfather will relate how he followed  
Unconquerable Caesar's lightning bolt, imposed  
Harsh terms on the fleeing Sarmations; they must  
Live under one sky.

But first let the boy learn all your skill, by which  
You retrace the world's ancient times, give us  
Once more the writings of terse Sallust, and Livy,  
Once Padua's son.

BkIV:8 – Congratulations to Julius Menecrates

Parthenope, fling wide the doors of the gods, and fill  
The garlanded temples with clouds of Sabaeon incense,  
And the pulsating sacrificial entrails. Menecrates' line  
Has acquired a third scion. Your crowd of nobles grows,  
A solace for those losses inflicted by raging Vesuvius.  
And let not Naples gather round the festal altars alone,  
Let neighbouring harbours, too; lands loved by gentle  
Dicaearchus, and Sorrento dear to Bacchus, the shores  
Where his maternal grandfather lives, circled by a throng  
Of children vying to express his features; deck the altars.  
And may their uncle rejoice, distinguished by Libyan spear,  
And Polla who considers them her own, hug them benignly  
To her breast. Hail, young man, who grant so many shining  
Offspring to your worthy country! Behold the house shakes  
To sweet tumult, clamorous with so many masters. Let dark  
Envy be gone, turning her malicious heart elsewhere: white  
Atropos promises them long years, and the glory of extended  
Achievement, and promises their country's Apollo his laurels.  
Thus it proved an omen that the most august Father of Rome,  
Granted you the joyful privileges earned by triple offspring.  
Lucina came as often, entering your pious house repeatedly.  
Thus fruitful be your house, I pray, its sacred gifts unaltered.  
Hail, that your line has more frequently acquired sons, too!  
Yet a girl brings happiness to a young father (achievement  
Belongs to the sons, but she will grant grandsons swiftly),  
Like to fairest Helen, crawling among her Spartan brothers,  
Ready for the gymnasium, and its sanded wrestling-ground;  
Or as on the face of the heavens, when in some clear night,  
Two radiant stars will appear, one either side of the moon.  
Yet I have a grievance, oh rarest of young men, and it's not  
A slight one, I am even angry, as angry as we may be with  
Those we love. Was it right I heard of it by common gossip?  
When this third child gave cry, why did no letter come swiftly  
To bring me word, telling me to heap hot coals on the altar fire,  
Garland my lyre, and adorn my doorposts, bring out a jar dark  
With Alban smoke, and mark the day with chalk? Only now,  
Late and tardily, I sing the fulfilment of my prayers. Yours is  
The fault, yours the shame. But I'll not prolong my complaint  
Further; behold a merry throng of children, yours, surrounds  
You, to defend their father! With them, you can conquer all.  
Gods of our native land, whom a Euboean fleet, with great

Augury, carried over the waves to Italy's shore; and you,  
Apollo, guide to a far-wandering people, whose dove on  
Your left shoulder fortunate Eumelus, Parthenope's father,  
Fondly eyes and adores; and you, Actaeon Ceres, for whom  
We silent devotees wave votive torches, in breathless course;  
And you, twin sons of Tyndarus, to whom Lycurgus's grim  
Taygetus, and shaded Therapnae, gave no more devout worship;  
Protect this house and its children on behalf of our country.  
May they serve our city with wealth and eloquence, weary  
As she is with time and much labour, keeping her name green.  
Let their father teach them gentle ways, and their grandfather  
Teach them liberal splendour; both the pursuit of lovely virtue.  
For surely wealth and birth will bring this girl within patrician  
Doors, on her first marriage, and if only unconquerable Caesar  
Show the virtuous divine favour, surely these brothers when  
Manhood's first achieved, will knock on the Senate's doors.

BkIV:9 – Joking Hendecasyllables for Plotius Grypus

To be sure it's a jest, Grypus, to send me  
A little book in return for my little book!  
Yet it could only be thought amusing  
If you sent me a proper one to follow.  
For if you persevere in joking, Grypus,  
It's no joke! Look, let's consider both.  
Mine is purple, on fresh parchment,  
Adorned with a pair of knobs at the ends.  
Beside my time, it cost me a denarius:  
Yours, moth-eaten, putrid with mould,  
Like the sheets that drain Libyan olives,  
Or hold incense, or pepper from the Nile,  
Or serve when cooking Byzantine tunny.  
And they're not even your own speeches,  
Those you thundered as a youngster there,  
In the triple Forum, or to the Hundred,  
Before Caesar made you his controller  
Of the supply train, general overseer  
Of relay stations on every highroad;  
No, you send me Brutus' boring stuff,  
Bought by you, for a Caligulan penny,  
From some wretched bookseller's bag.  
Were there no caps for sale, stitched  
Out of cloak trimmings, no towels, no  
Yellowed napkins, writing paper, dates  
From Thebes, or figs from Caria? No  
Handful of plums or Syrian prunes  
Gathered together in a crumbling cone?  
No dry wicks, no peeled onion-skins?  
Not even eggs, no oats, no rough meal?  
No slimy shell of some creeping snail,  
That has wandered the Libyan plains?  
No lump of bacon or mouldy ham?  
No Lucanian sausage, no little Faliscans,  
No salt, no honeyed-dates, no cheese?  
No bread made with washing soda,  
Or raisin wine boiled with its lees,  
Or muddied dregs of sweet wine?  
Why not give me stinking candles,  
A knife, or some thin letter-paper?  
Or how about a little jar of grapes,

Dishes turned on a Cuman wheel,  
Or a set (what's to be afraid of?)  
Of white cups and white saucers?  
But as though you were balancing  
Scales, you give the same, tit for tat.  
What! If I greet you in the morning  
With my loud after-breakfast belch,  
Must you do likewise in my house?  
Or if you treat me to a sumptuous  
Feast, must you expect the same?  
Grypus, I'm angry with you, so  
Farewell; only please don't send  
Me now, with your customary wit,  
Your own hendecasyllables in reply!

**End of Book IV**

## **Book V**

BkV: Prologue – Statius to his friend Abascantus: Greetings!

Every good example should be honoured, as benefiting the public. The devotion you show to your Priscilla is an aspect of your own character and none can withhold their sympathy, no husband certainly. To love a living wife is a delight, a dead one a religion. However I do not present this work as one of the crowd, nor as an obligation. Priscilla loved my wife, and by loving her, confirmed her approval in my eyes; so I would show ingratitude were I to ignore your tears. Moreover, I always do my humble best to oblige any follower of the Divine House, since whoever worships the gods in good faith, loves their priests also. Yet though I have wished for a long while that our friendship could deepen, I would rather this occasion had not presented itself so soon.

BkV:1 – Consolation on the Death of Priscilla

Had I the skill to shape true likenesses in wax,  
Impress features and bring life to ivory or gold,  
Priscilla, I'd create a work of solace welcome  
To your husband. For by his great devotion he  
Deserves in his grief to have had Apelles render  
Your face in paint, or Phidias to re-create you.  
So hard does he seek to bring back your shade  
From the pyre, fights a mighty battle with Death,  
Wearying artists, trying to love you in every form.  
But beauty the skilful hand creates is still mortal:  
While, rarest lady of a husband who is praised, I  
Attempt with timeless lyre to grant you obsequies  
Long-lasting, proof against oblivion, should Apollo  
Favour me, and Caesar assent, who always makes  
One with him; for you can rest in no better tomb.  
This is late treatment indeed for such an affliction,  
Since Phoebus's swift orbit brings the second year.  
But when the blow was fresh, and the house dark  
With its shock, what then could reach the bereaved  
Man's sad ear? Then his sole consolation was to weep;  
Tear his clothes; tire his servants, outdoing their grief;  
Berate the Fates, and the unjust gods, with fierce cries.  
Even if Orpheus himself had been present, with every  
Wood and river, if Calliope and her sisters, and all the  
Priests of Bacchus and Apollo, had gathered round him,  
That poet's singing would not have served, nor the lyre  
That the gods of Avernus and the snake-haired Furies  
Gave ear to; such the grief in this spouse's stunned mind.  
Even now, as I sing, the scar though healed is sensitive  
To the touch, and conjugal tears weigh on his heavy lids.  
A husband's sorrow even now in those eyes? Wondrous,  
Yet true! Sooner might Niobe's tears have dried, on Mount  
Sipylos; Aurora's grief for Memnon have failed; or Thetis's,  
She weary of shedding storms of tears by Achilles' tomb.  
Honour to your feelings! The god who grasps the reins  
Of the whole world and, closer to us than Jupiter, orders  
Men's tasks, sees you grieving and takes note, and in that  
Finds private evidence for the worth of his chosen servant,  
In the love you show her shade, and her funeral obsequies.  
This is ardour at its most chaste, this is a love that merits  
The deepest approval from our Censor and our master.



Nor is it any wonder that unbroken concord joined you  
Together by unbroken ties, so linking both your hearts.  
She indeed had wed before, known marriage with another  
Spouse, yet, like a virgin bride, cherished and embraced  
You with all her mind and spirit, just as the elm loves  
The vine, sharing its branches, mingling foliage, asking  
Autumn's bounty, glad to be wreathed in the dear stems.  
Women without moral virtue are praised for the gift of  
Their looks, or their ancestry, possessed of false esteem,  
But devoid of the true. Though her birth too was noble,  
And her aspect as delightful as any husband might wish,  
Greater honour was in her, to know the one bed, cherish  
The one flame privately in the very marrow of her bones.  
No Trojan rapist could have sullied that love, no Ithacan  
Suitor, no seducer of his brother's wife like that Thyestes,  
Who polluted a chaste marriage, to win Mycenae with gold.  
If she had been offered the riches of Babylon, or Lydia's  
Mass of treasure, or the potent wealth of India, China, and  
Arabia, she'd rather have died untouched in chaste poverty,  
Defending her reputation with her life. Yet hers no harsh  
And frowning face, no undue severity marring her manner,  
But simple cheerful loyalty was hers, all charm with modesty.  
And if some great danger had summoned her to a wider role,  
She'd happily have confronted armies, braved the fiery bolts  
Of lightning, or the hazards of the deep seas, for her husband.  
Fortune dictated that no adversity came to prove her wifely  
Care, or brought her pallor to match his peril. Instead her  
Prayers on his behalf took a happier path, earning the favour  
Of the gods, testing their good will day and night, bowing in  
Supplication at the altars, worshipping our leader's mild spirit.  
She was heard, and Fortune came with generous step. He saw  
The young man's quiet diligence and devotion, perfect loyalty,  
Alertness of mind for business, watchful intelligence, his sober  
Judgement fitted to handling great matters as they arose; he who  
Knows all around him, surrounds himself with proven ministers.  
No wonder since he sees west and east, what the south wind and  
Wintry north are doing, probing the counsels of sword and gown,  
And the heart itself. On those strong shoulders he placed a mighty  
Burden, a weight almost beyond bearing (for no other role in the  
Sacred palace is so demanding), transmitting the Roman leader's  
Orders throughout the wide world, handling all the powers and  
Responsibilities of empire: what northern victory's announced;  
What wandering Euphrates, or the banks of the Danube, tell of,

Or the legions on the Rhine; how far the limits of our world  
Have retreated and Thule, fringed by the roar of ebbing tides;  
For every spear comes bearing glad laurels, and never a lance  
Is adorned with the infamous feather. His role announcing too,  
When our leader grants military promotions, who now qualifies  
To command a century (some knight appointed to infantry duty)  
Who a cohort, who will occupy the superior and illustrious rank  
Of tribune, who is worthy to give a cavalry troop the password;  
And anticipating a thousand events, whether the Nile as yet has  
Drowned the fields, or the rainy southerly now drenched Libya?  
No greater volume of messages, were I to enumerate them all,  
Does that winged messenger with the wand, Mercury, bear from  
The stars, nor Iris, Juno's servant, descending through the moist  
Air, spanning the rain-filled atmosphere with her coloured bow,  
Nor Fame who bears your laurels, Domitian, outrunning the sun  
In her swift flight, outstripping the tardy Bear among the stars,  
And leaving Thaumás' daughter, Iris, behind her in mid-heaven.  
How humble you appeared to men and gods, Priscilla, on that  
Auspicious day when your spouse acceded to his noble office!  
Your joy was almost greater than his own, when pouring out  
Your heart, you threw yourself eagerly at the sacred feet of that  
Leader to whom you owe so much. Not as the prophetess Apollo  
Appoints to guard his secret cave rejoices, on the Aonian peak,  
Nor she whom Dionysus grants the right of the foremost *thyrsus*,  
Bestowing on her the standard of his frenzied band of followers.  
Hers was a calm not changed by power, a probity never harmed  
By good fortune; the tenor of her mind was unchanged, and her  
Modest aspect was proof against mounting fortune. She eased  
Her husband's cares solicitously, encouraging work and leisure.  
She herself served him, in his habit of frugal meals, sober ways,  
Reminding him of his leader's example, like a thrifty Apulian  
Farmer's wife, or a hardy Sabine, who seeing the stars emerge,  
And knowing her husband is about to return from his labours,  
Sets out the table, swiftly, and awaits the sounds of his return.  
Those are lesser things: she'd have endured the frozen north with  
You, Sarmatian winters, the Danube, the pale frosts of the Rhine,  
Steeled her spirit to endure the heat with you, and were it allowed  
Have borne a quiver, defended her flank with Amazonian shield,  
As long as she might be with you in the dust of battle, near to  
The lightning bolt of Caesar's steed, as you waved the god's  
Weapons, spattered by the bloody sweat of his mighty spear.  
Thus far the kindly lyre. Now it is time to lay aside your laurel,  
Phoebus Apollo, the moment to shroud my hair with sad cypress.

What god linked Envy and Good Fortune together in implacable Relationship? Who commanded those cruel goddesses to wage Eternal war? Must the one never mark a house for distinction But the other must fix it with grim gaze and drive joy away with Savage hand? This home was flourishing, happy, and untroubled; Far from sadness. For how could Fortune, false and faithless as She is, be feared when Caesar was so kind? Yet envious Fate Found a way for savage hurt to reach this blameless hearth. So Mature vines are damaged by the malign sirocco, so a ripe crop Is spoiled by excess rain, so an opposing wind catches a swift Vessel, darkening the billowing sail. Fate snatched away Priscilla, Of peerless beauty, as when a tall pine-tree, glory of the forest, Is wasted, struck by Jove's lightning, or uprooted from the soil, And once despoiled returns not a single whisper to the breeze. What use honesty, or chaste loyalty, or the worship of the gods? The dark nets of death entangled the poor wretch on every side, The Sisters' pitiless skein was tightened, and only a last strand Of the exhausted thread remained. Her crowd of attendants, her Doctors' assiduous skill, achieved no lessening of her illness; Yet her servants feigned to hope, though she saw her husband's Tears. As for him, he asked her life in vain of Lethe's relentless Stream, weeping in anguish at every altar, beating at the doors, And scouring the threshold with his body, then calling on Caesar's Merciful godlike power. Oh, fate's harsh path! Was something Yet not denied him? What extension might have been added To her mortal years, if you, our dear Leader, were omnipotent! Death would have moaned far off in its blind pit, and the Fates, Would have laid aside, in idleness, their weaving of life's thread. Her expression altered once more, her gaze strayed, her hearing Was dulled, save only when she recognised her husband's voice. Reviving from the midst of death, her mind saw him alone, he It was her failing arms clasped tightly as her unmoving gaze met His, preferring to sate her vision with a dear spouse than the sight Of her last sunlight. Then dying she comforted her one true love: 'Don't cry, I beg you: you, the part of my self that shall live on, To whom I long to give the years cruel Atropos steals from me: Don't beat your breast in fierce lament, and torment your wife's Departing spirit. I leave the marriage bed it's true, but death Preserves the order of our ages, I go first. Better the time we had Than long decrepitude. I have seen you shining in full flower. I Have seen you draw nearer and nearer to the Leader's right hand. Neither the Fates nor any divine power has any mastery over you: That right I bear away with me. Pursue your path, and willingly,

Love without cease the sacred personage, and his potent genius.  
Now, a command that you yourself would wish, give a hundred  
Pounds weight in gold to the Capitoline temple, a likeness where  
Caesar's sacred face shall shine, showing his own votaress' love.  
Then I shall evade the Furies, and the furthest depths of Tartarus,  
And I shall be happy in my admittance to the regions of Elysium.'  
So she spoke, as she faded, embracing her husband's body, and  
Without grief transferred a lingering breath to his mouth, then  
Allowed her eyes to close beneath the touch of his beloved hand.  
Now the young man's heart was inflamed by cruel sorrow, now  
He filled the desolate house with savage cries, now sought to draw  
His sword, now climbed to high places (his friends could barely  
Restrain him), now mouth against mouth, bent over his lost one,  
He fiercely vented the sorrow deep in his heart: just as Thracian  
Orpheus at the sight of his wife's pyre laid down his lyre beside  
Strymon's shore, and stunned, song-less, wept at the sad flames.  
Abascantus would even have taken his own despised life, so you  
Priscilla might not have gone down to Tartarus unaccompanied,  
But his thoughts precluded it, out of loyalty to the leader, out of  
Sacred duty, and the greater love. Who could give true account  
Of the rites and gifts of the funeral procession? There, crowded  
Together in a long train, flow the spring produce of Arabia and  
Cilicia, Sabaeen flowers and the flame-feeding Indian harvests,  
Incense carried from Palestinian shrines, and Hebrew essences,  
Corycian saffron and myrrh; her body lies on a high bier, veiled  
By silk, and Tyrian purple. But her husband alone of all the train  
Draws the spectator's gaze. On him mighty Rome turns her eyes,  
As though he was bearing his young sons to the grave, such is the  
Grief apparent in his face, such is the dust on his cheeks and hair.  
Her they call free, her end calm and happy: their tears are for him.  
There is a place outside the City, where the Appian Way begins,  
Where Cybele's grief is ritually washed away in the Italian Almo,  
Ida's streams no longer recalled. Here your peerless consort laid  
You to rest, Priscilla, beneath a dome, gently covering you with  
Rich Sidonian purple (since he could not tolerate the sound and  
Smoke of a pyre). Age will no longer wither you, nor will the  
Effects of the years do you harm: such care is taken of your body,  
Such are the riches that the venerable marble breathes. Soon your  
Features are evoked by various effigies: here is a Ceres in bronze,  
There Ariadne the Cnossian, here Maia in clay, here a chaste Venus  
In stone. Those powers take on your lovely features without demur:  
Servants stand round as usual, the crowd accustomed to obey you,  
Then tables and couches are regularly set out. It's a house, a home!

Who dare call it a sad sepulchre? Seeing the husband's just devotion,  
One might readily exclaim: 'Yes, I see that this is a minister of one  
Who lately created a shrine for his eternal race, and set new stars  
In another heaven.' So, when a tall ship, her mainmast's wide yards  
Fully rigged for sail, begins a fresh voyage from the Pharian shore,  
And sets out on her course, a narrow ship in the same waters will  
Claim a small part of the measureless southerly breeze for herself.  
Why now, noble youth, still cherish overflowing grief in your heart,  
Preventing endless sorrow from departing? Perhaps you fear lest  
Priscilla tremble at Cerberus's clamour? He's silent for the virtuous.  
Or lest the ferryman is tardy and thrusts her from the brink? Yet he  
Conveys those of merit swiftly, seating their shades quietly in his  
Hospitable barque. Moreover if some soul, praised by a devoted  
Husband, arrives, Proserpine has joyful torches lit: she summons  
The heroines of ancient times from their holy cells, and brightens  
The sad darkness with radiant light, scattering Elysian flowers  
And garlands before that ghost. So Priscilla has joined the shades.  
There she entreats the Fates for you, with suppliant hands; so that  
When you are old, and your term of mortal life is ended, you may  
Leave your Leader behind still young, and bringing peace on earth.  
And, there, the unerring Sisters vow they will honour her prayers.

BkV:2 – In Praise of Crispinus, the Son of Vettius Bolanus

My friend Crispinus seeks Tyrrhenian fields and Etruscan  
Glades; though his stay will not be long, nor does he go far,  
Yet a hidden pain tugs at my heart, and tears swell from my  
Damp eyes, as though I were watching his ship wearily from  
A high cliff, his departing sails among Aegean storm-clouds,  
And bemoaning my vision, conquered by that airy distance.  
What if it were the fair beginnings of first military service,  
My glorious boy, if the camp's sweet auspices summoned  
You now? How joyfully my tears would flow, how close  
Would be my embrace! Should friends pray for sadness?  
You have only attained sixteen, and yet your spirit belies  
Your young age, your body is weighed down by a mind  
Beyond its years. No wonder. You are from no plebeian  
Ancestry, no unknown line of obscure ancestors lacking  
Former glory. You were not of equestrian blood, not fresh  
From the knights' robes and narrow stripes, no newcomer  
Knocking at the doors of that august sanctuary, at the seat  
Of the Roman Senate: a crowd of your kin preceded you.  
Just as when in the Circus the audience awaits a stallion,  
Handsome to view, and glorying in some noble pedigree,  
One of the happy matings of parents of worthy ancestry,  
And applause erupts for him; the very dust and marker  
Posts rejoice to recognise his presence as he speeds by;  
Even so, noble lad, the Senate feels you are born to join  
Its ranks; have the patrician crescent adorn your shoes.  
Your shoulders early knew the formal Tyrian folds, and  
The mantle of power. Indeed your father has shown you  
His example to follow on your road to glory. As soon as  
He had crossed manhood's threshold he waged war, by  
The Araxes, against the Armenian bowmen who refused  
To make submission to cruel Nero. Corbulo headed that  
Strict campaign, but that fine soldier Bolanus, your father  
Admired, became the comrade and partner to his labours.  
Only to Bolanus would he confide his deepest anxieties,  
And share with him his doubts: what occasion favoured  
Deception; which the right moments for open warfare;  
When to be suspicious of the bold Armenians, and when  
Their flight was real. Bolanus would reconnoitre some  
Dangerous route, or find a safe ridge to make camp on;  
Bolanus would survey the ground, circumvent malignant  
Obstacles of forests or torrents, implement the clear will

Of his revered commander, and handle his demanding  
Requests alone. Thus the barbarian regions learnt of him;  
His was the second helmet in the war, the nearest plume.  
Thus the startled Phrygians knew the weapons of Nemea,  
And Cleonae's bow, decimating their ranks, yet feared  
Telamon too, not merely Hercules, in battle. Learn, my boy,  
(Since you've no need to find love of valour from some  
Foreign tutor: let the glory of your family teach courage,  
Let the Decii, or Camillus returning from his exile, serve  
As examples), learn from your father: how magnificently  
He reached Thule, the sun setting on its darkened wave,  
That wearied orb bearing his commission; how expertly  
He governed mighty Asia's thousand cities, in his year,  
With moderate rule. Drink in such matters, attentively.  
May your family strive to commend these things to you,  
And your father's old companions praise such precepts.  
Now you prepare to make a journey, ready for a swift  
Departure. Though the signs of manhood are not there  
On your cheeks, and your whole life's course not yet set,  
Nor is your father at your side; he is dead, swallowed by  
Cruel Fate, leaving you two children without a guardian.  
It was not even he who removed the boyhood purple  
From your tender arms, clothed your shoulders anew.  
What youth is not seduced by uncurbed freedom and  
The liberty of his new robes, like an un-pruned sapling,  
Flourishing its leaves, and wasting its fruit as foliage?  
But thoughts of poetry were in you, and chaste reticence,  
And a character trained to rule itself; from that there came  
Light-hearted honesty, a tranquil brow, and elegance shy  
Of its borders with indulgence, and affection dispensed in  
All its forms: your family fortunes obliged you to give way  
To a brother whose age equalled yours; admire your father;  
Forgive your wretched mother. How could she compound  
Those evil essences in that deadly glass, aimed at you, who  
Should by your voice deflect the snake's attack, and by a look  
Defuse a stepmother's enmity? I would seek to vex her shade,  
Denying her grave peace, with the curses she merits. But you,  
The best of lads, I see you turn away with thoughtful words:  
'I beg you, spare her ashes. It was Fate and the guilty Parcae's  
Wrath, the fault of the gods who perceive human intent too late,  
Who fail to halt wicked acts at their first inception, and deter  
The fledgling attempts of minds in planning the unspeakable.  
May that day be blotted from history, and no future generation

Give it credence. Let us at least maintain a silence, and allow  
Accusations against our own to be interred in deepest night.  
Our Leader, who cares for his people, exacted retribution, by  
Which actions Piety, that every evil fears, reappeared on earth.  
That vengeance is enough, and we must bemoan it. Would  
That I might implore the savage Furies to keep Cerberus far  
From her timid shade, and speed her ghost to Lethe's waters!  
Hail to your depths of soul, youngster! But your mother's guilt  
Is all the greater. And high courage, not merely virtue was your  
Aspiration from the first. Not long ago a friend paled at a false  
Accusation of unmerited ill-fame, and the Lex Julia stirred up  
The Forum, in the form of many a juryman, brandishing her  
Lightning bolt, in chastity. You'd no experience of stern courts  
Of law, hidden as you were in the cool silence of your studies,  
But you appeared, and averted danger from your anxious friend,  
And a mere novice, unarmed, you repelled the hostile missiles.  
Never did the statues of Romulus and Aeneas witness so young  
A combatant amongst those conflicts of lawyers in the Forum.  
The judges were amazed at such boldness, and enterprise, and  
Even the culprit himself was afraid of you. Your limbs possess  
No less vigour, your strength eager for brave action, matches  
Your spirit, and obeys its challenging demands. I myself saw,  
Not long ago, on Tiber's bank, where the Tyrrhene waters mix  
With the Laurentian, how you galloped there, beating the flanks  
Of your fiery horse with bare heels, in a threatening manner.  
Believe me, I thought you were the god Mars. So fair Ascanius,  
On his African steed, hunted Dido's lands, setting the poor girl  
On fire for his father, Aeneas; so Troilus, in swift flight, tried to  
Evade the menacing pursuit, so Parthenopaeus whom the Theban  
Women, watched, with no inimical gaze, from the walls, as he  
Wheeled his Arcadian squadrons about in that Ogygian dust.  
Act now (since the Leader's indulgence is striking, and your  
Brother happily leaves a sure trail for your wishes to follow),  
Take heart, then, and think the brave thoughts of a soldier.  
Mars, and Athene the Attic maiden, will show you battle array,  
Castor how to wheel cavalry, Quirinus how to flourish a shield,  
With that same shoulder that felt Mars' 'shield from the sky'  
Against your young neck, among the Salii with virgin weapons.  
To which lands should one go, to which of Caesar's worlds?  
Would you swim Arctic rivers, or the Rhine's forking flow,  
Or sweat in Libya's torrid fields? Or will you startle nomadic  
Sarmatians, and Pannonian ridges? Or will the Danube with  
Its seven mouths see you, and Peuce encircled by her spouse's



Shadowed flow? Or will you tread Jerusalem's ashes, Edom's  
Subject palm-groves, the fertile groves not planted for her use?  
But if some place which your mighty father helped to govern,  
Welcomed you, how Armenia's turbulent river Araxes would  
Rejoice, what glory might exalt Caledonia's plains! Then some  
Aged dweller in that wild land may tell you: 'Here your father  
Used to hand out justice, harangue the army from this mound.  
The forts and watchtowers (there, you can see) he scattered far  
And wide, and lined these walls with a ditch; these gifts he  
Dedicated to the war-gods (you'll read the inscriptions); this  
Breastplate he wore himself in battle, that he captured from  
A British king.' Just as Phoenix told Pyrrhus about Achilles,  
Who was unknown to him, planning victories against Troy.  
Happy are you, Optatus, tireless friend and comrade, loyal  
To Crispinus in the manner of Pylades, or like Patroclus,  
In the war at Troy; you, who trusting in youthful powers,  
Will travel all roads with him, mount every rampart, sword  
At your side perhaps (may our divine Leader so assist you);  
For such is the harmony between you, such is the affection;  
And so, I pray, may it continue. As for me, bodily strength  
Already wanes; I can only help you with vows and prayers.  
Alas, and should I chance to gather the usual crowd together,  
And the Roman elders come to listen to my songs, then you,  
Crispinus, will not be there, and my *Achilles* will look for  
You on every bench and find you absent. But (poets' omens  
Are never idle) you will return fitter than ever, and he who  
Opens the life of legions and camps to you, will allow you  
To rise swiftly through the civil ranks too, and surrounded  
By the rods, sit there proudly in your father's curule chair.  
But who is this messenger from Trojan Alba's high hills.  
From which our local god views the walls of his Rome?  
Swifter than Rumour he enters, your house, Crispinus,  
And fills it. Did I not say: 'a poet's auguries are never idle'.  
Lo, mighty Caesar unbars the gates to office for you, he  
Entrusts Italy's military duties to you. Go, my boy, strive  
To be equal to a gift so great. Happy are you, who now  
Take service under our great Leader and receive your first  
Sword from Caesar's hand. No less is this than if the Lord  
Of Battle himself showed the legions to you and set the stern  
Helm on your brow. Go bravely, and expect greater things.

### BkV:3 – A Lament for His Father

You, my most learned father, gave me unfortunate powers,  
An impulse for the ill-omened lyre, and the song of lament  
From the Elysian fount. Without you how shall I stir Delian  
Haunts, or move Cirrha as I once used to do? I've unlearned  
Whatever Apollo once taught me in the Corycian shade, all  
That Bacchus showed me on Ismarian hills. The Parnassian  
Votive ribbons vanish from my hair. To my terror the fatal  
Yew has stolen over my ivy, and the tripod's laurel (shame!)  
Has withered. Surely I am one whose noble inspiration might  
Exalt the deeds of great-hearted kings, and evoke their battles.  
Who has clouded my mind with barren neglect, Apollo sunk  
Deep, who has condemned my spirit to the chill shadows?  
The Muses encircle their poet in dismay, creating not one  
Sweet sound of hand or voice. Their leader leans her head  
On her silent lyre, as if by the Hebrus after Orpheus' death,  
Seeing the motionless trees, and the host of creatures now  
Deaf to the song that had been snatched away from them.  
Do you, free of your body now and soaring to the heights,  
Do you scan the shining spaces, and the elements of things:  
What a god is, where fire derives from, what guides the sun,  
What causes the moon to wane and what renews her from  
The darkness – giving continuance to Aratus' starry music;  
Or in the secluded meadows of Lethe's plain, among hosts  
Of heroes and blessed spirits do you mix with Hesiod and  
Old Homer, yourself no less industrious a shade, making  
Music one after another, and mingling your songs together:  
Give voice, my father, lend your skill to my great sadness.  
Three times has the face of the moon waxed and waned  
In the sky, found me listless, and not solacing my woes  
Among the Muses. Since the flames of your pyre reddened  
My visage, and I breathed your ashes with streaming eyes,  
Poetry seems worthless. I can scarcely exercise my mind  
Again, to perform this rite, and begin to brush the dust  
From the silent strings, with damp eyes and faltering hand,  
Leaning here on the tomb in your own fields where you  
Rest quiet, where after Aeneas' death, starry Ascanius set  
Alba on the Latian hills, loathing the sites yet soaked with  
Trojan blood, and an ill-omened stepmother's royal dowry.  
Here I (and no softer an air breathes from Sicilian saffron,  
Nor rare cinnamon gathered by rich Sabeans, nor scented  
Harvest of Arabia), I, alas, make offering and praise you

In Pierian lament; receive your son's moans, pain, and tears,  
Such tears as few fathers have ever received! May it be my  
Good fortune to build an altar to your shade, a work equal  
To some great temple, raised high, an airy mass outmatching  
Cyclopean cliffs, or the daring granite blocks of the Pyramids,  
And to encircle your tomb with a mighty grove. There I would  
Hold games to surpass those beside Anchises' Sicilian grave,  
Opheltes' in Nemea's grove, or maimed Pelop's at Olympia.  
There, no Grecian athlete, in his naked strength, would cleave  
The air with a Spartan discus, no sweat from horses sprinkle  
The ground, and no hooves echo over some crumbling trench;  
Behold, Apollo's choir, wreathing your lauded brow, my father,  
With the poet's leafy prize! Moist-eyed I would lead the dirge  
Myself, as priest of the altar and your shade. Not Cerberus  
With his jaws, nor Orphean rules, could deter your presence.  
And perhaps, as I sang your actions and virtues, Piety would  
Rank me no lower than eloquent Homer in poetic skill, and  
Would seek to compare me favourably to the immortal Virgil.  
Why must the mother, bereaved, seated by her son's cooling  
Pyre, have more reason to rail against the gods, and the Fates'  
Iron thread, or the wife gazing at her young husband's ashes,  
Who escapes the restraining hands of the crowd to reach her  
Spouse's corpse as he burns, there to die if she is allowed to?  
It may be they might heap greater reproaches on the gods,  
So that even strangers would grieve to see the funeral cortege.  
But Nature and Piety have rightly appointed me to lament you.  
You seem to me, father, to have entered cruel Tartarus' gates,  
At destiny's first threshold, as if torn from life's springtime.  
Erigone, the virgin of Marathon, mourned Icarus, murdered  
By a crowd of savage countrymen, no less bitterly than did  
Andromache her Astyanax, hurled from the towers of Troy;  
And the noose stifled Erigone's last moans, while Andromache  
Shamefully served Thessalian Neoptolemus on Hector's death.  
I shall not bring the offering to my father's pyre, that the swan,  
Knowing its fate, sends before it at its tuneful death; nor that  
Sweetest of all threatening seductive songs those Sirens sing  
To mariners from their black rock in the Tyrrhenian waters;  
Nor the murmur of mutilated Philomela's moans, as she vents  
Her complaint to her pitiless sister. These, poets know too well.  
Who has not told of Helios' daughters turned to trees, shedding  
Amber tears at their brother's burial; of the Phrygian knife that  
Flayed Marsyas, who dared to compete with Apollo's playing,  
And Minerva's delight at the downfall of that boxwood flute?

No, let Piety, forgetful of mankind, mourn for you, and Justice  
Recalled to heaven, and Eloquence, in both tongues, and Pallas  
And Apollo the poet's Heliconian cohort, who labour to forge  
Verse in hexameters, who fit their poetry to the Arcadian lyre,  
Its tortoiseshell their care and skill; those whom noble Wisdom  
Take credit for, in sevenfold glory, in every clime; those who  
On tragic stilts thunder of Furies, royal palaces and the stars  
Turning backwards in the heavens; and those whose delight  
It is to squander their powers on wanton Thalia, or to maim  
The heroic metre in elegiac couplets. For your mind dealt in  
All of these, a creator in all, wherever the wide road of speech  
Runs, whether choosing to confine yourself to Aonian rhythms,  
Or to extend your words to free running prose, and matching  
The showers of rain in their unrestrained powers of utterance.  
Naples, lift your half-buried countenance from the violent  
Ash-shower, Parthenope, set locks of your hair, singed by  
Vesuvius' breath, on the body and tomb of your great foster  
Son, than whom Athen's heights, learned Cyrene, and brave  
Sparta, created nothing finer. If you, my Naples, were lacking  
In pedigree, and were unknown to fame, or devoid of heritage,  
His citizenship proved you Greek, born of Euboean ancestry,  
So often did his brow bear your garlands, at the quinquennial  
Festival, when he sang in praiseworthy verse, and surpassed  
The eloquence of Pylia Nestor, and Ulysses, Dulichium's ruler,  
To take both prizes, and wreath his hair with the dual reward.  
Father, not of low birth, nor obscure blood, nor a race without  
Worth, nevertheless your parents' wealth was lessened by your  
Needs. There was the rich ceremony when Youth had you lay  
Aside your purple-bordered gown and the gold locket at your  
Breast, which had been granted you in honour of your birth.  
The Muses smiled on you at your entry into life, and Apollo  
In your boyhood, placing a lyre in your hands, and bathing  
Your face in his sacred stream, was gracious to you even then.  
As for your homeland the issue is fraught; your native place  
Is undecided between two contesting countries. Grecian Velia,  
Founded by Latians, where Palinurus the drowsy helmsman  
Fell from the ship, and wretchedly woke, in the watery deep,  
Claims you by race; Naples claims you hers by long residence,  
As different cities, different birthplaces share Homer's titles,  
And all of them make a case; he in truth can never belong  
To them all, yet the hope of glory nourishes false pretenders.  
And while you were still growing, still greeting life's dawn,  
Yet eager for glory, bold in wit, you were quickly entered

In your native city's contests, those that adults can barely  
Entertain. The Euboean audiences were stunned by your  
Youthful song, and parents pointed you out to their sons.  
From then on your voice was heard in many a competition,  
And glorious in festival. Verdant Laconia applauded Castor  
Less often on the race-course, and Pollux in the boxing ring.  
If victory here at home was simple, what of your winning  
Prizes in Greece, wreathing your brow now with Apollo's  
Delphic laurel, now with Nemean parsley, Isthmean pine,  
When Victory, who often wearies of the victor, never left  
Your side, or snatched away her garlands, crowned another?  
Hence your parent's hopes were vested in you, and noble  
Youths guided by you, as they learned of the ways and deeds  
Of bygone peoples: the tale of Troy and Ulysses' wanderings;  
Of Homer's power to parade heroes' horses, battles, in verse;  
Of the riches Hesiod and Epicharmus showed honest farmers;  
Of what governs the recurring strophes of Pindar's subtle lyre;  
Of Ibycus, who prayed to those birds, and Alcman, sung in  
Strict Laconia, bold Stesichorus and rash Sappho, without  
Feminine fear, who leapt to her death at Leucas; as well as  
Others worthy of the lyre. You were skilled at interpreting  
Callimachus' verse, the obscurities concealed in Lycophron,  
Sophron's entanglements, and Corinna's hidden subtleties.  
But why mention these? You would yoke yourself to Homer,  
And match his hexameters in prose, never at a loss or outrun.  
What wonder that men left their homes to see you? Lucania  
Sent them, stern Apulia's fields, Pompeii mourned by Venus,  
Herculaneum that Alcides neglected, Minerva who gazes from  
Sorrento's heights at the Tyrrhene deeps, or Misenum on the  
Nearby bay, marked by trumpet and oar, Cumae that long ago  
Received Ausonia's household gods, or Puteoli's harbour, or  
Baiae's shore, where fires deep in the sea exhale, and hidden  
Conflagrations fail to harm the houses. They come as they  
Used to come to Avernus' crags, and the Sibyl's dark cave,  
To ask their questions (and she would sing of the menacing  
Gods, and the actions of the Fates, no idle prophetess though  
She tricked Apollo). Soon too you taught the young Roman  
Noblemen, never ceasing to guide them in their father's steps.  
Under your direction was the Pontifex Maximus, the inspector  
Of the hidden Trojan flame, who conceals the sanctuary that  
Hides Minerva's statue Diomedes stole; who yet a boy learned  
The ritual. You approved the Salii and showed them their arms;  
The Augurs the day that grants them foreknowledge; and who

Is authorised to unroll the Sibylline books; and why the hair  
Of Cybele's priest is covered; and the girl Luperci feared your  
Whip. Now one of that host may deal law to the Eastern nations,  
Another controls the Iberians, or at Zeugma holds Achaemenian  
Persians back. Some govern the rich folk of Asia, or the Pontic  
Region; as civil magistrates guide the courts; command the army  
At some loyal station. All their great glories commenced with you.  
Mentor would not have matched you for shaping youthful minds,  
Nor Phoenix, he the guide to Achilles his indomitable foster-son,  
Nor Chiron who moved that same lad with a gentler song, when  
He would rather have heard the sound of bugles and war-trumpets.  
Such was your labour when civil Fury raised her torch of a sudden  
On the Tarpeian Mount, and stirred up conflict like the giants at  
Phlegra. The Capitol was afire with sacrilegious torches, Latian  
Cohorts displaying Gallic rage. Scarce had the flames died down,  
While the temple pyres yet burned, when swifter than those flames  
Themselves, you ran to bring solace for the shattered shrines, with  
Pious cries, to bemoan the extinguished lightning bolts. Latium's  
Nobles and Caesar, vengeance of the gods, were all dumbfounded,  
And Jupiter himself nodded approval in the midst of conflagration.  
Then it was your destiny to mourn Vesuvius' fires in pious song,  
And shed tears for the losses in your native place, when Jupiter  
Lifted the summit of the mountain and raised it to the stars, only  
To hurl it on the wretched cities, wreaking havoc far and wide.  
The goddesses admitted me, when I sought the groves of song  
And Boeotia's valleys, I who claimed descent from your stock.  
It was not simply the sea, land and sky, you granted me, every  
Son's debt to his father, but this lyrical grace, however unworthy,  
Language beyond the common, hope of fame beyond the grave.  
How you gazed when I soothed the Latian elders with my songs,  
While you were present, a happy spectator of your own gifts!  
Ah what a confusion of joy and loving tears, mingled with fear  
And prayer and delighted modesty! How much yours, that day!  
How little greater my own glory! So, when a father watches his  
Son in Olympia's arena, it is rather he who fights and is fought,  
Each blow to his heart; him who the benches watch, the Greeks  
Seem to gaze at, he who covers his brow with handfuls of sand,  
He who prays to die if only he might grasp the wreath of victory.  
Alas, when you were here to witness it, I only won local wreaths,  
Neapolitan crowns, made of Ceres' corn! Alba's Trojan fields  
Would scarcely have contained you, if you had carried away  
The Alban garland granted to me by Caesar. What strength that  
Day might not have granted you, lifted so many years from you!

And when the Capitoline wreath of oak and olive failed to adorn  
My brow, and the honour I had hoped eluded me, how calmly  
You'd have accepted Tarpeian Jupiter's ritual jealousy! With  
You as my master, my *Thebaid* came near the works of ancient  
Poets. You inspired my song, you showed me how to pen heroic  
Deeds, rites of war, and places. Without you my course falters,  
The way's uncertain, and my orphaned vessel sails through fog.  
I was not the only one you showed your great affection for: you  
Cherished your wife too; one torch lit your marriage, one love.  
I cannot prise my mother from your cold tomb now; at sunset  
And dawn she feels you there, possesses you, sees you once more,  
As other women in ritual devotion observe the laments for Attis  
And Osiris, play Cybele and Isis, mourning the deaths of deities.  
What should I say of your character and ways, open but serious;  
Of your loyalty, your contempt for wealth, your sense of honour,  
Your love of rectitude? Or again, the charm of your conversation  
When you relaxed, your mind and spirit untouched by the years?  
For these values the gods' protection granted you fame, generous  
Praise, untouched by any misfortune. You were snatched away,  
My father, at sixty-five, your years neither slender nor excessive,  
But love and grief forbid me numbering them, oh you who were  
Worthy of transcending the age of Nestor, Priam and Tithonus,  
Worthy of seeing me alive at that age! Yet the gates of death held  
No pain for you: your death was easy, no lingering age sent your  
Body, senile in decay, to the approaching tomb; lethargic torpor,  
Death disguised as sleep, led you to Tartarus in slumber's arms.  
What moans and lamentations did I raise then (my friends were  
Witness, my mother noted the piety I showed with satisfaction)!  
Allow me to say it, rightfully, shade; my father, you could have  
Done no more for me. Happy was Aeneas, clasping his sire again,  
In vain, in his arms, there in the Elysian Fields, carrying him once  
More among Greek shadows; that Aeneas who descended living  
To Tartarus, led by the aged Sibyl, seer of Hecate, when he went  
Down there seeking knowledge of the fate awaiting his posterity.  
If a more private matter led Orpheus and his lyre down to sluggish  
Avernus; if Admetus could rejoice in Thessaly to see his wife again;  
If the spirit of Protesilaus could return once more to life for a day;  
Why then should your lyre or mine, father, not earn a like gift, of  
The shades? Only let me be allowed to touch my father's face, only  
Let me clasp his hand, and whatever sentence might be may follow.  
But you, rulers of the shades, you, Proserpine of Enna, if prayers  
Are valued, ward off the torches of the snake-haired Furies, close  
The three mouths of Cerberus, the harsh guardian, let distant vales

Hold back the Centaurs, the Hydra's and Scylla's monstrous swarm  
Of heads, and let Charon, ferryman of the dead, scatter the crowd,  
Beckon his aged Spirit to the brink, set him gently on the far shore.  
Come, ghosts of the virtuous, come you host of Greek poets, strew  
The illustrious shade with Lethe's garlands, show him the groves  
No Fury invades, whose light and air are those of the skies above.  
Then come to me, on the path by which that gate of kindly horn  
Bests the malign gate of ivory, and in my sleep counsel me as you  
Once did. As a gentle nymph Egeria, in the Arician cave, instructed  
Numa in the sacred rites and lore; as the elder Scipio experienced  
Dreams full of the presence of Latian Jupiter, or so the Ausonians  
Claim; as Sulla was never without his image of protecting Apollo.



## BkV:4 – Sleep

For what crime, youthful Sleep, gentlest of the gods,  
For what error, do I, wretched, alone lack your gift?  
The cattle, and the wild birds and beasts fall silent,  
The nodding tree-tops seem as if in weary slumber,  
The raging torrents cease their roar; now the tremor  
Of the waves subsides, the sea is calm on the shore.  
And for the seventh time the sun-god sees my eyes  
Glazed in sickness, as the star of dawn and twilight  
Visits me, and Tithonia passes me and, in compassion,  
Sprinkles me with the cold dew from her starry whip.  
How could I endure it even if I had blessed Argos'  
Thousand eyes, opening in turn, never all at the one  
Time. Alas now, if there's a man clasped in his girl's  
Twining arms who denies you all night long, Sleep,  
Leave him, come to me. Nor do I even ask that you  
Cover my eyes with your wings (such is the prayer  
Of the more fortunate); touch me with the tip of your  
Wand (it is enough) or pass by lightly, knees in air.

## BkV:5 – A Lament for His Son

What misery! I can begin with no customary words,  
Hateful as I am now to the Castalian waves of song,  
Offensive to Apollo. What altar or mystery of yours  
Have I profaned, Pierian Sisters? Tell me, punish me  
And let me confess to the crime. Have I trespassed in  
Some sacred cavern, or drunk from some forbidden  
Spring? What was the fault, or the error, for which  
I pay so dearly? See my child is torn away, reaching  
For me, heart and soul, with failing arms; not, it's true  
Of my race or bearing my name or features; no I was  
Not his father, but see my tears and bruised flesh, give  
Credit to my grief, you bereaved: for bereaved am I.  
Let fathers come here, mothers with dress torn open:  
Let she who with full breasts and faltering step, bore  
Her new-born to the pyre, beat her wet chest, then  
Quenched the dying embers with her milk, let her  
Eyes endure the sight of the ashes and the tragedy.  
Whoever has plunged a lad still dressed in the bloom  
Of youth into the coals, and seen the cruel flames  
Lick the first down on his cheeks as he lies there,  
Let him weary himself with me in alternate moan:  
He'll be defeated by tears; and Nature, you'll be  
Ashamed, so fierce and so wild is my mourning.  
Even though, after thirty days, I make this effort  
Leaning on his tomb, turning my pain to poetry,  
I create discordant metre, and in words like sobs.  
There's the power of the lyre, an angry impatience  
With silence, but my head's devoid of accustomed  
Laurels, no sacred ribbons grace my brow. Fronds  
Of yew wither, behold, in my hair, and branches  
Of funereal cypress, excluding the cheerful ivy. I  
No longer strike the strings with an ivory plectrum,  
But with errant fingers pluck madly at the tuneless  
Lyre. I love, alas, I love to pour out a song no one  
Could praise, and clumsily ease the wretched pain.  
Have I deserved this? Shall the gods see me thus,  
Ill-omened in song and dress? Shall Thebes and  
Achilles, my new theme, be shamed? Shall nothing  
Pleasing flow from my lips again? I who so often  
Gently soothed fathers' and mothers' pain, widows'  
Grief, I the mourners' mild comfort, heard by tombs

After untimely deaths, as the shade descends, I falter  
And seek myself healing hands and the bandages  
To bind my wound. Now, my friends, is the moment  
For you whose flowing tears and wounded breasts  
I stanch'd, to return my aid, pay gratitude's savage  
Debt. Yes, I rebuked you in your sad bereavements:  
'You, unhappy man, who go lamenting another's loss,  
Restrain your tears, and be sparing of your sad songs.'  
That was right. For my own strength is now exhausted,  
My store of words, my mind finds nothing equal to this  
Lightning-stroke. All speech falls short, language itself  
Is useless. Forgive me, lad, you've buried me in deepest  
Darkness. Oh, Orpheus were unfeeling, if he had seen  
His dear wife's wound yet found a song that rang sweet;  
And Apollo, if he had broken the silence at Linus' tomb.  
Perhaps I am excessive, eager for lament, weeping past  
The bounds of decency, but who are you to criticise my  
Tears and moans? He is fortunate indeed; cruel; ignorant,  
Fortune, of your power, who dares to make laws against  
Sorrow, and decree there should be boundaries to grief!  
Alas, he inspires more! You might more readily restrain  
The flowing river that breaks its banks, or halt devouring  
Flames, than forbid the bereaved to mourn. And let this  
Critic, in his severity, understand the reasons for my pain.  
I did not love some loquacious favourite bought from an  
Egyptian boat, taught the invective of his native Nile from  
Infancy, glib of tongue, insolent of wit; no, he was mine;  
Mine. I caught him as he fell to the earth, anointing him  
With the essence of rich oils, cherishing him as he sucked  
At this air new to him, with tremulous wails, I made him  
A part of my life. What more could his parents have given?  
Surely I gave you a second birth, little one, when I gave you  
Freedom, and you still at the breast, though all unknowing  
You laughed at my gift. Swift to act perhaps my love seemed,  
But swift with good reason, lest something so small should  
Lose a day of freedom. Should I not heap my reproaches  
On the gods, and on Tartarean injustice? Should I not weep  
For you, dear lad? I wanted no son while you were alive.  
From the first moment of your birth, you seized my heart,  
And fixed yourself there. I taught you sounds and words,  
Saw to your complaints and hidden hurts, stooped down  
And raised you to my lips as you crawled along the ground,  
And in my loving lap saw you close your drooping eyelids,

As I summoned sweet sleep. My name was your first speech,  
My games your pretty laughter: in my features was your joy.

**End of Book V**