



# Virgil's Georgics

a new translation  
by c john holcombe

ocaso press 2012

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Colin John Holcombe

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THE GEORGICS

OF

PUBLIUS VERGILIUS MARO

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The *Georgics*, ostensibly a guide to agriculture, and the most finished of Virgil's productions— indeed of all Latin literature — was written between 37 and 29 BC as the last phase of civil wars ended with Octavian in sole command of the Roman world. Social unrest, what happens when men do not work sensibly together for some common good, forms the backdrop to the *Georgics*, which is divided into four Books. The first opens with an invocation to the Muses, cites Maecenas and Octavian, deals with the growing of crops and weather lore, and ends with an extended prayer to Octavian. The second considers the cultivation of trees, especially the grape and olive, and contains a loving description of the Italian countryside. The third covers the rearing of animals, especially cattle, horses and sheep, and ends with the dreadful Noricum plague. The fourth is more mixed: it opens with a mock heroic description of bees and bee-keeping, moves into the epic style with the tale of Aristaeus and thence into the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. The ending has a short tribute to Octavian and a quote from Virgil's previous work, the *Eclogues*. {1}

Only the outline is known of Virgil's life, but the man seems to have remained the shy and awkward rustic, unmarried, and of indeterminate sexual orientation. He was born in the rural district of Andes, near Mantua in Cisalpine Gaul on October 15th 70 BC, the son of a farmer prosperous enough to give his son an excellent education. When twelve, Virgil was sent for secondary schooling to Cremona, and in 54 BC to study rhetoric in Rome. Public performance was not congenial, however, and Virgil seems to have appeared only once in the courtroom. He made literary friends, embraced Epicurean philosophy and left the street warfare of Rome for the holiday air of Naples, later dividing his time between this elegant resort, his country estate in Campania and a town house on the Esquiline. Though required to write the great Roman epic of the *Aeneid* by Octavian, and famous in his day, and indeed wealthy, the poet kept out of politics and public life. {2} {3} He fell ill on a short trip to Greece in 19 BC, and was persuaded by Octavian to return with him to Italy, where he died, an ending some see as sinister, Greece being the better supplied with doctors. {4}



Called by Dryden the best poem of Rome's best poet, {5} the *Georgics* combines agricultural instruction, political reflection, country lore, mythology and allegory. Its appeal, at the time and ever since, has been its poetry, that unique fusion of beauty and expressiveness. Virgil's style exhibits an extraordinary ear for texture, felicity of phrasing, movement, imagery and metrical subtlety, and combines these with great literary tact. 'The *Georgics*', said Addison, 'is some part of the science of husbandry put into pleasing dress, and set off with all the beauties and embellishments of poetry: in short an opportunity for these beautiful descriptions and images which are the spirit of life and poetry.'

All three of Virgil's works were major additions to western literature. The *Eclogues* created the genre of romantic poetry and introduced real people into its portraits, though the poem also shows lapses of taste and too many borrowings from Theocritus. The *Aeneid* contains Virgil's best poetry, but the writing is generally less finished, and some find the hero too much like Virgil himself to represent the all-conquering hero who establishes Rome's future greatness. That may leave the *Georgics* as the most accessible of Virgil's works: after Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it has certainly been the most influential poem in the western canon, reappearing in the Renaissance as eulogies of rural life, in John Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-44) and in works thereafter that express our longing for a simple, honest and independent life, albeit arduous and sometimes precarious.

The *Georgics* is not a handbook on husbandry. Landowners turned to M. Terrentius Varro for such needs, or, later, to Pliny the Elder. Nor do the *Georgics* give us a real picture of contemporary life. Comparatively little of Italy in Virgil's time was in the hands of smallholders, most being cultivated in vast latifundia with slave labour. Virgil was beholden to the Caesarian faction, but by no stretch of the imagination was Octavian an outstanding general, or even a competent leader in his early years. His victory over Antony was brought on by the latter's reckless Parthian adventure, his association with Cleopatra, and to the superior admiralship of Agrippa, who seized Antony's fortresses in Greece and trapped his fleet at Actium. Calculating, long-headed and ruthless, Octavian was the consummate politician, slowly turning public opinion against the Antonine faction by vilifying Cleopatra as a sorceress who had bewitched their Consul and threatened Rome, and later by concentrating power into his own hands while still observing the outward forms of Republican life. {6}

How sincere is Virgil in the *Georgics*? Most scholars believe the future Augustus did make a genuine effort to rebuild the Republic on more lasting foundations: to re-establish firm government, refurbish Rome and ensure the arts celebrated a new beginning. Virgil was given his country estate by Maecenas, and his father may well have been helped by the Octavian faction to recover land seized by returning veterans. Virgil was also an Epicurean, and on friendly terms with the likes of C. Asinius Pollio and Cornelius Gallus, all members of the Octavian circle. The *Georgics* served Octavian well when he was conducting his propaganda war against Antony and Cleopatra, its praise of the traditional Roman country life contrasting with their supposed excesses, but are the dedications not a little overdone?

We have to accept the conventions of the time, which expected dedications to deities and contemporary rulers. Octavian is commemorated in the exordia of Books One and Three, and in the tailpiece to Book Four, for which, however, there was no precedent. But where Virgil's words express simple enthusiasm, those of the independent Propertius in his elegy on Actium verge on the burlesque. Did the literati secretly loathe their emperor? Virgil was famous when he died, but no contemporary writer mentions his death. Propertius and Catullus simply disappear from the record. Ovid, the well-connected man-about-town, is later exiled to Tomis for some concealed misdemeanour — perhaps an unwise political association, perhaps for making fun of the family values Augustus wished to promote: little is known for certain. But Octavian brought peace after a hundred years of bloodshed and civil wars, and, while many recalled his savagery at Perugia and elsewhere, they were equally grateful for the settlement, accommodating themselves to a society they couldn't then materially alter.

Whether that peace was bought at too high a price is for historians to argue, but certainly some blight settles on Latin literature thereafter. Much is written, but nothing quite follows the erratic brilliance of Catullus, or the swelling confidence of Cicero's oratory. Virgil learnt from both, and from Lucretius, whose majestic style he harnessed, tamed and balanced. Horace had no real followers. Tacitus comes a century later, and his style is terse, elliptical and often bitter. Octavian's empire was still holding together, but no later emperor had its founder's political skill, foresight or phenomenal industry.

Virgil's work therefore represents a golden period, a brief interlude between Republican bloodletting and Imperial containment. That sense of an adjacent world, more significant and tenderly witnessed than this mortal earth generally allows, pervades much of the *Georgics*. The content is not logically arranged, as many have noted, and some indeed is fanciful and irrelevant. If a sensible, carefully structured and researched depiction of rural life is expected, then the *Georgics* fails. It is a literary document, a pageant of light and shade, of trifling matters balanced by the distant or threatening. Books 1 and 3 emphasize the hardship of rural work, are generally sombre, and end with catastrophe. Books 2 and 4 are lighter in tone and end happily. The proem that opens Book 1 is balanced by the short epilogue of Book 4. That proem may have been written last, and is a tour de force, being the longest period in all Latin poetry, and unlike Virgil's usual style, where sentences are rarely extended over more than four hexameters. Virgil's intention was clearly not utilitarian, even in his superb picture-painting, but multilayered, symphonic even, where practical matters are given depth by being seen against the larger events of Italy and abroad, both real and mythological. Propertius also used myth, but his transitions were abrupt, his references rather recondite, and matters too often coloured by his wretched affair with Cynthia. Virgil is the supreme literary tactician who does not show his hand, holding disparate material together by a subtle juggling act of overwhelming writing skill. The *Georgics* is never less than adequate to its subject matter, and in the famous sections — the opening proem to Octavian, his praise of Italy, the horrific plague at Noricum, and the story of Orpheus and Eurydice — its writing rises into the moving and ever-memorable. In that sense, by its all-encompassing style, the *Georgics* becomes a complete work, and any translation must capture some of that style to be worth reading.

Virgil's picture painting is not pretty-pretty. The land has many beauties, particularly in Italy, but its cultivation entails constant effort, hardship and self-discipline. Whatever Virgil thought of the man personally, Octavian was Virgil's hero because it was through him that the arts of peace and agriculture returned to Italy. Maecenas was Virgil's patron, but also an important member of Octavian's administration, charged with creating a functioning society. The floods, droughts and pestilences that threaten a farmer's life loom over the larger fabric of Italy as wars, sedition and civil unrest: it's why Virgil ends Book Four with his self-deprecating comparison: he has done his small part in restoring man to his better nature. Art brings

order, and poets have the power to civilize man through the beauty of their creations.

Book One does not therefore open with Virgil blithely 'singing of crops and herds', but with searching questions about the skill and knowledge we need to farm the land, *and* what the land can teach us. 'What knowledge have the thrifty bees.' {7} Farming is a partnership with nature. What we read in the heavens can help us. Trees, like all plants, have their natural traits, which we can harness but not subvert. We need to understand the local habitat before we can successfully grow crops or raise animals: obvious points that Virgil heightens with reference to affairs of state and conditions in other countries. The bees in Book Four enact in miniature the ways of men, and their spontaneous creation from the sacrificed bullock echoes Octavian's achievement from the bloody carcass of the civil wars. That story leads to Aristaeus and the Orpheus and Eurydice legend. Aristaeus wins back his bees by placating the woodland deities, but Orpheus loses his Eurydice by want of faith, and then is torn apart by the Bacchae whose erotic rites he interrupts with sterile longings for his vanished wife. Virgil is always aware of practical nature, but sees it against the larger needs of government and religious propriety.

The *Georgics* is written in dactylic hexameters whose excellence no English verse can match. {20} The sonorous monumentality of a line like *Laomedontae luimus periuria Troiae*, (1. 502) is hardly captured by *Lāomedōn's great perjuries at Troy*, for example, but in this translation I have employed a simple but exact hexameter, aiming to convey some of the beauty and expressiveness of the original in verse that has the supple continuity of thought expected of well-mannered prose. To aid a Latin pronunciation, I have shown the long vowels in the proper names, but the ictus or stress does not necessarily fall on these vowels, and readers can anglicize the words if they wish. Individual syllables do need to be sounded to keep the metre intact, however: it is *Tempē* with two syllables, for example in line 318 of Book Four. Similarly for English words: in line 512 in Book One, for example — *as, from the opening barrier, the chariot* — 'opening' has two syllables (with an important, slurred suggestion of a third) and 'barrier' and 'chariot' both have three.

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



## LIBER PRIMUS

Quid faciat laetas segetes, quo sidere terram  
vertere, Maecenas, ulmisque adiungere vitis  
conveniat, quae cura boum, qui cultus habendo  
sit pecori, apibus quanta experientia parcis,  
hinc canere incipiam. Vos, o clarissima mundi  
lumina, labentem caelo quae ducitis annum,  
Liber et alma Ceres, vestro si munere tellus  
Chaoniam pingui glandem mutavit arista,  
poculaque inventis Acheloia miscuit uvis;  
10. et vos, agrestum praesentia numina, Fauni,  
ferte simul Faunisque pedem Dryadesque puellae:  
Munera vestra cano. Tuque o, cui prima frementem  
fudit equum magno tellus percussa tridenti,  
Neptune; et cultor nemorum, cui pingua Caeae  
ter centum nivei tondent dumeta iuveni;  
ipse nemus linqvens patrium saltusque Lycaei,  
Pan, ovium custos, tua si tibi Maenala curae,  
adsis, o Tegeaeae, favens, oleaeque Minerva  
inventrix, unciqve puer monstrator aratri,  
20. et teneram ab radice ferens, Silvane, cupressum,  
dique deaeque omnes, studium quibus arva tueri,  
quique novas alitis non ullo semine fruges,  
quique satis largum caelo demittitis imbrem;  
tuque adeo, quem mox quae sint habitura deorum  
concilia, incertum est, urbisne invisere, Caesar,  
terrarumque velis curam et te maximus orbis  
auctorem frugum tempestatumque potentem  
accipiat, cingens materna tempora myrto,  
an deus inmensi venias maris ac tua nautae  
30. numina sola colant, tibi serviat ultima Thule  
teque sibi generum Tethys emat omnibus undis,

## Book One

### 1. Invocation

What makes the cornfield joyful, and beneath what star  
we turn the earth, Maecēnās? How may vines be fastened  
to the elm? What husbandry will manage cattle,  
breed the ox? What knowledge have the thrifty bees?  
With such I start my song. And you, O radiant lights  
that lead the seasons in their fruitful dance, and you,  
both Līber and propitious Cerēs, who have turned  
Chāonian acorn lands to thick-sown fields of wheat  
and mixed in drafts of Archeloüs new-made wine;  
10. and Fauns, you rustic deities who serve for local  
powers—so dance you Dryad girls and gods—your gifts  
I celebrate. And Neptune giving birth to neighing  
horse when your great trident struck the earth, and you,  
the dweller of the woods, for whom three hundred head  
of snowy cattle browse the Ceōs thicket lands;  
Tegean Pan that guards the flocks, though much you love  
Maenales lands, come, leave your own Lycaeus groves  
and favour us; Minerva of the olive gift,  
and you, young man, who first revealed the curving plough,  
20. Sylvānus, planter of the pliant cypress tree,  
and you, obliging gods and goddesses who watch  
our fields, to nourish native fruits we have not sown,  
and make the heavens so generously water crops.  
And you, great Caesar, who in time will join the gods,  
in unknown company, but choosing, it may be,  
to safeguard cities, care for lands, become the source  
of wondrous harvest on the widespread earth, the seasons'  
potentate that wears his mother's myrtle crown,  
who broods on boundless seas, the sovereign breath  
30. that mariners to far-off Thūlē look to, Tēthys  
furthers, winning you as son-in-law with waves,



anne novum tardis sidus te mensibus addas,  
qua locus Erigonen inter Chelasque sequentis  
panditur—ipse tibi iam bracchia contrahit ardens  
Scorpius et caeli iusta plus parte reliquit—  
quidquid eris,—nam te nec sperant Tartara regem  
nec tibi regnandi veniat tam dira cupido,  
quamvis Elysios miretur Graecia campos  
nec repetita sequi curet Proserpina matrem—  
40. da facilem cursum atque audacibus adnue coeptis  
ignarosque viae mecum miseratus agrestis  
ingredere et votis iam nunc adsuesce vocari.

Vere novo, gelidus canis cum montibus humor  
liquitur et Zephyro putris se glaeba resolvit,  
depresso incipiat iam tum mihi taurus aratro  
ingemere et sulco attritus splendescere vomer.  
Illa seges demum votis respondet avari  
agricolae, bis quae solem, bis frigora sensit;  
illius inmensae ruperunt horrea messes.  
50. At prius ignotum ferro quam scindimus aequor,  
ventos et varium caeli praediscere morem  
cura sit ac patrios cultusque habitusque locorum  
et quid quaeque ferat regio et quid quaeque recuset.  
Hic segetes, illic veniunt felicius uvae,  
arborei fetus alibi, atque iniussa virescunt  
gramina. Nonne vides, croceos ut Tmolus odores,  
India mittit ebur, molles sua tura Sabaei,  
at Chalybes nudi ferrum, virosaque Pontus  
castorea, Eliadum palmas Epiros equarum.  
60. Continuo has leges aeternaque foedera certis  
inposuit natura locis, quo tempore primum  
Deucalion vacuum lapides iactavit in orbem,  
unde homines nati, durum genus. Ergo age, terrae  
pingue solum primis extemplo a mensibus anni  
fortes invertant tauri glaebasque iacentis  
pulverulenta coquat maturis solibus aestas;

or as a star which lengthens out the warmth of summer  
months you blaze in Virgo, free of grasping claws  
now fiery Scorpio has withdrawn her arms and left  
a worthier portion to you of the heavens. Be as  
you will, for Hades wants you not as king, that power  
should overwhelm itself, although Ælysium  
bewitched the Greeks, for Prōserpina could not hear  
her mother calling and return to earth. Assent  
40. to what is here so rashly ventured on, regret  
with me the ignorance of country ways, and grow  
in your divinity accustomed to our prayers.

### notes

## 2. Ploughing

As soon as spring appears with chilly streams from snow-  
clad hills, and soil is thawed and crumbling in the west's  
soft wind, I'd see the oxen groaning at the heavy  
plough, whose blade is polished as it cuts the ground.  
To answer to a farmer's prayers, a field must twice  
know sunlight's warmth and twice the frost, and only then  
can yield as fit to burst the granaries. But still,  
50. before the plough is turned to unfamiliar ground,  
take care to note the changing wind and weather's moods,  
to know the land's peculiarities and local  
needs, what regions favour this and what do not:  
this place the wheat grows easily, and there the vine,  
as elsewhere grass and trees assume their natural green.  
Does not Tmōlus send her saffron scent, and India  
ivory, effete Sabeans spice, the naked  
Chalybes their steel, and Pontus pungent beaver-  
oil, Eipirus victor's palms for Ælis mares?  
60. Nature forged these binding covenants with place  
in times of old that saw Deucaliōn remake  
man's hardy race by pitching stones into the void.  
So where the earth is rich and heaviest I'd have  
the teams of oxen ploughing from the earliest months,  
and, with the furrows heaped in lines, then leave the force  
of summer sun to crumble clods to dust. But should

at si non fuerit tellus fecunda, sub ipsum  
Arcturum tenui sat erit suspendere sulco:  
illic, officiant laetis ne frugibus herbae,  
70. hic, sterilem exiguus ne deserat humor harenam.

Alternis idem tonsas cessare novalis  
et segnem patiēre situ durescere campum;  
aut ibi flava serēs mutato sidere farra,  
unde prius laetum siliqua quassante legumen  
aut tenuis fetus viciae tristisque lupini  
sustuleris fragilis calamos silvamque sonantem.  
Urit enim lini campum seges, urit avenae,  
urunt Lethaeo perfusa papavera somno:  
sed tamen alternis facilis labor, arida tantum  
80. ne saturare fimo pingui pudeat sola neve  
effetos cinerem inmundum iactare per agros.  
Sic quoque mutatis requiescunt fetibus arva;  
nec nulla interea est inaratae gratia terrae.  
Saepe etiam sterilis incendere profuit agros  
atque levem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis:  
sive inde occultas viris et pabula terrae  
pinguia concipiunt, sive illis omne per ignem  
excoquitur vitium atque exsudat inutilis humor,  
seu pluris calor ille vias et caeca relaxat  
90. spiramenta, novas veniat qua sucus in herbas,  
seu durat magis et venas adstringit hiantis,  
ne tenues pluviae rapidive potentia solis  
acrior aut Boreae penetrabile frigus adurat.  
Multum adeo, rastris glaebas qui frangit inertis  
vimineasque trahit cratis, iuvat arva, neque illum  
flava Ceres alto nequiquam spectat Olympo;  
et qui, proscisso quae suscitāt aequore terga,  
rursus in obliquum verso perrumpit aratro,  
exercetque frequens tellurem atque imperat arvis.

the land prove unrewarding all the same, it can  
be laid in shallow ridges till Arctūrus rise,  
when weeds will not there suffocate the thriving crops,  
70. nor moisture here evaporate from sandy soils.

notes

### 3. Improving Land

One year in two a field that has been harvested  
should then lie fallow, soil maturing with disuse.  
Then sow a spelt beneath the constellations changed  
from when you reaped the beanstalks with their rattling pods,  
the tiny fruit of vetch, or lupin's bitter crop  
of stems and rustling undergrowth of brittle stalks.  
If flax grown first exhausts the soil, as oats will too,  
and poppies suffocate with their forgetful sleep,  
this turn of crop will lighten toil. Be not ashamed  
80. to have your cow-pats thicken up a meagre soil,  
or scatter unclean ashes over worn-out fields, for though  
by long, incessant changes is the earth refreshed,  
she's also warmly bountiful when left asleep.  
So fire the stubble left from harvesting, and feed  
the weeds remaining to the crackling flames. By this  
it may be earth is given secret food and strength,  
or fire boils off ingested poisons, or the heat  
expels unwanted moisture from the pore-clogged ground,  
so opening cracks and branching fissureways by which  
90. in time the nutrients will find the roots, although  
it may, and equally, close up the veins, protect  
the soil from fine dispersion by the rain, as from  
the heat of sun, or chilly North Wind's depredations.  
But he who hoes and breaks the heavy clods, or drags  
a harrow made of willow over them does well,  
which radiant Cerēs on her high Olympus notes,  
and smiles at one more ploughing where the curving blade,  
athwart the furrows, cleaves the ground untouched before,  
for by such constant effort do we win our fields. notes

100. Humida solstitia atque hiemes orate serenas,  
agricolae; hiberno laetissima pulvere farra,  
laetus ager: nullo tantum se Mysia cultu  
iactat et ipsa suas mirantur Gargara messis.  
Quid dicam, iacto qui semine comminus arva  
insequitur cumulosque ruit male pinguis harenae  
deinde satis fluvium inducit rivosque sequentis  
et, cum exustus ager morientibus aestuat herbis,  
ecce supercilio clivosi tramitis undam  
elicit. illa cadens raucum per levia murmur  
110. saxa ciet, scatebrisque arentia temperat arva.  
Quid qui, ne gravidis procumbat culmus aristis,  
luxuriam segetum tenera depascit in herba,  
cum primum sulcos aequant sata. quique paludis  
collectum humorem bibula deducit harena.  
Praesertim incertis si mensibus amnis abundans  
exit et obducto late tenet omnia limo,  
unde cavae tepido sudant humore lacunae.

Nec tamen, haec cum sint hominumque boumque labores  
versando terram experti, nihil inprobis anser  
120. Strymoniaeque grues et amaris intiba fibris  
officiunt aut umbra nocet. Pater ipse colendi  
haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem  
movit agros curis acuens mortalia corda  
nec torpere gravi passus sua regna veterno.  
Ante Iovem nulli subigebant arva coloni;  
ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum  
fas erat: in medium quaerebant ipsaque tellus  
omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.  
Ille malum virus serpentibus addidit atris  
130. praedarique lupos iussit pontumque moveri,

#### 4. Irrigation

100. Farmers: pray for humid summers and for tranquil winters; spelt when grown in winter's dryness brings much brightness to the fields. Mÿsĭa's not so famed for this, nor Gārgarus amazed by what she's grown. Who is the one who follows as the seed is cast to level sand and break up lumps of sticky clay, divert the streams and have the water run through crops, that when the soil dries up, and young shoots wilt, will bring the rivulets from brimming irrigation channels down with water chattering across the stones  
110. to have it gush out, drench and cool the heat-cracked ground? And who, to stop the stems from falling, overburdened fulsomely with ears of grain, will graze the growth in furrows till each shoot is level with the rest? And he who drains off wetness, ever adding sands to marshy places, most of all in doubtful months when rivers overflow and deluge their surrounds with mud, or leave but steamy residues in pools?

notes

#### 5. The Beginnings of Agriculture

Though through unending efforts men and ox have turned the soil, there come the same voracious geese, Strÿmōnian  
120. cranes, the bitter-rooted chicory, the harm obscuring shade can do. But he himself, our honoured Father, said that husbandry should not be smooth but shaped by cares, to hone men's wits when working fields, that not to heavy torpor should his realms relapse. Until Jove's time no farmer sought to conquer fields, or dared the gods to mark them off by boundary lines, for gain was for a common end, the good of all, and earth was prodigal in wealth to all unasked. Jove it was who gave the deadly snakes their darkening  
130. venom, wolves their ravening, and sea its waves,

mellaque decussit foliis ignemque removit  
et passim rivis currentia vina repressit,  
ut varias usus meditando extunderet artis  
paulatim et sulcis frumenti quaereret herbam.  
[Ut silicis venis abstrusum excuderet ignem.]  
Tunc alnos primum fluvii sensere cavatas;  
navita tum stellis numeros et nomina fecit,  
Pleiadas, Hyadas, claramque Lycaonis Arcton;  
tum laqueis captare feras et fallere visco  
140. inventum et magnos canibus circumdare saltus;  
atque alius latum funda iam verberat amnem  
alta petens, pelagoque alius trahit humida lina;  
tum ferri rigor atque argutae lamina serrae,—  
nam primi cuneis scindebant fissile lignum  
tum variae venere artes. Labor omnia vicit  
inprobis et duris urgens in rebus egestas.  
Prima Ceres ferro mortalis vertere terram  
instituit, cum iam glandes atque arbuta sacrae  
deficerent silvae et victum Dodona negaret.  
150. Mox et frumentis labor additus, ut mala culmos  
esset robigo segnisque horreret in arvis  
carduus; intereunt segetes, subit aspera silva,  
lappaeque tribolique, interque nitentia culta  
infelix lolium et steriles dominantur avenae.  
Quod nisi et adsiduis herbam insectabere rastris,  
et sonitu terrebis aves, et ruris opaci  
falce premes umbras votisque vocaveris imbrem,  
heu magnum alterius frustra spectabis acervum,  
concussaue famem in silvis solabere quercu.

160. Dicendum et, quae sint duris agrestibus arma,  
quis sine nec potuere seri nec surgere messes:

stripped honey from the trees, took fire away, and stopped  
the wine that everywhere ran freely out in streams.  
By turns and taking thought, experience should forge  
new crafts, should seek the corn-blade in the furrowed earth,  
strike fire that's hidden in the vein of flint, have rivers  
know the hollowed alder trees of boats, and sailors  
name the patterns in the stars, the constellations  
Plēiades, Hyades, Callistō's star, the radiant  
Bear. Then came the snares for game, the treacherous lime  
140. for birds, and glades surrounded by great hunting dogs.  
And even now one casts his net on rivers, into  
pools, as will another from the sea haul up  
his dripping lines. Then came hard blade and buzzing saw —  
for men of old split wood by widening slots with wedges —  
art on art, for industry that conquered all  
was formed by endless toil and want when times were hard.  
Cerēs first arranged for men to turn the earth  
with iron blade when acorn and the arbuté berry  
failed in sacred woods and their Dōdōna gave  
150. poor food. Yet soon those first of crops began to call  
for labour: mildew blighted stems, and thistles blustered  
hoarily as goodness in the grain was sapped:  
a savage growth of goosegrass burs and clivers rose  
and oats and barren darnel spoilt the golden crop.  
Unless and constantly your hoe will clear out weeds,  
your shouts scare off the birds, your knife prune back the shade,  
and prayers successfully call down from heaven the rain,  
how enviously you'll look on neighbour's stores and find  
your hunger has you shake down acorns from the trees.

## notes

### 6. The Farmers Tools

160. It is the armoury of sturdy countrymen I speak  
of now, without which nothing can be raised or sown.



vomis et inflexi primum grave robur aratri  
tardaque Eleusinae matris volventia plaustra  
tribulaque traheaeque et iniquo pondere rastri;  
virgea praeterea Celei vilisque supellex,  
arbuteae crates et mystica vannus Iacchi.  
Omnia quae multo ante memor provisa repones,  
si te digna manet divini gloria ruris.  
Continuo in silvis magna vi flexa domatur  
170. in burim et curvi formam accipit ulmus aratri.  
Huic a stirpe pedes temo protentus in octo,  
binae aures, duplici aptantur dentalia dorso  
caeditur et tilia ante iugo levis altaque fagus,  
stivaque, quae currus a tergo torqueat imos,  
et suspensa focus explorat robora fumus.

Possum multa tibi veterum praecepta referre,  
ni refugis tenuisque piget cognoscere curas.  
Area cum primis ingenti aequanda cylindro  
et vertenda manu et creta solidanda tenaci,  
180. ne subeant herbae neu pulvere victa fatiscat,  
tum variae inludant pestes: saepe exiguus mus  
sub terris posuitque domos atque horrea fecit,  
aut oculis capti fodere cubilia talpae,  
inventusque cavis bufo et quae plurima terrae  
monstra ferunt, populatque ingentem farris acervum  
curculio atque inopi metuens formica senectae.  
Contemplator item, cum se nux plurima silvis  
induet in florem et ramos curvabit olentis.  
Si superant fetus, pariter frumenta sequentur  
190. magnaque cum magno veniet tritura calore;  
at si luxuria foliorum exuberat umbra,  
nequiquam pinguis palea teret area culmos.

The ploughshare and its heavy frame of wood, the lumbering carts that our Ēleusis mother owns, threshing sleighs, and drags, and sharply weighted hoes, plain wicker-ware of Celeus, the hurdles in arbutus wood, the winnower in mystery rites of Iacchus — all these before and carefully you must provide if you would meet the glory of our countryside. An elm that makes the plough-beam first is bent by force 170. but afterwards is trained into the plough's curved stock. An eight-foot pole is fitted to the stock, and then two earth-boards and a share-beam, double-backed. A lime that's earlier felled will make the yoke, a beech for stilt that steers the undercarriage by a rearward handle — all timber hung and seasoned on the smoky hearth.

#### notes

### 7. The Threshing Floor

I will now give the many lores come down from old unless you're loath to hear this seeming trivial stuff. First be sure the threshing floor is levelled flat with heavy roller, smoothed by hand and sealed with clay, 180. lest weeds appear, or fissures splinter into dust. And there are many nuisances: the little mouse will strive to build his home and storehouse underneath, the sightless mole dig out his chambered passages, and toads adhere to cracks, with all the pests that earth can breed. The weevil spoils the stored-up spent, as ant will too, who fears the destitution of old age. And mark as well how walnut blossoms through the wood, for if the nuts come thickly clustered on the scented boughs, the corn itself will likewise follow suit, 190. and copious threshing floor be met with copious heat. But if it's mostly leaf that makes the shade, you'll find the stalks you thresh will leave you useless chaff.

Semina vidi equidem multos medicare serentis  
et nitro prius et nigra perfundere amurca,  
grandior ut fetus siliquis fallacibus esset,  
et, quamvis igni exiguo, properata maderent  
Vidi lecta diu et multo spectata labore  
degenerare tamen, ni vis humana quot annis  
maxima quaeque manu legeret. Sic omnia fatis  
200. in peius ruere ac retro sublapsa referri,  
non aliter, quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum  
remigiis subigit, si bracchia forte remisit,  
atque illum in praeceps prono rapit alveus amni.

Praeterea tam sunt Arcturi sidera nobis  
Haedorumque dies servandi et lucidus Anguis,  
quam quibus in patriam ventosa per aequora vectis  
pontus et ostriferi fauces temptantur Abydi.  
Libra die somnique pares ubi fecerit horas  
et medium luci atque umbris iam dividit orbem,  
210. exercete, viri, tauros, serite hordea campis  
usque sub extremum brumae intractabilis imbrem;  
nec non et lini segetem et Cereale papaver  
tempus humo tegere et iamdudum incumbere aratris,  
dum sicca tellure licet, dum nubila pendent.  
Vere fabis satio; tum te quoque, Medica, putres  
accipiunt sulci et milio venit annua cura,  
candidus auratis aperit cum cornibus annum  
Taurus et averso cedens Canis occidit astro.  
At si triticeam in messem robustaque farra  
220. exercebis humum solisque instabis aristas,  
ante tibi Eoae Atlantides abscondantur  
Gnosiaque ardentis decedat stella Coronae,  
debita quam sulcis committas semina quamque  
invitae properes anni spem credere terrae.

Many a sower have I found first soaks his seed  
in alkalis and then in olive's darkened dregs,  
which fattens beans in their deceptive pods and makes  
them cook more easily if over little heat.  
I've seen the fruit of toil fall off in quality  
unless the choicest seed be chosen year by year  
and planted prudently. For all things tend to worse  
200. and from that flaw within their nature slip from us,  
as will a skiff a rower hauls against the stream:  
for should the occupant but slacken off his strokes,  
at once the unrelenting current pulls him back.

## 8. Proper Times for Tasks

Likewise we watch the stars: Arctūrus and Aurīga  
days, and Dracō of the glittering coils, as much  
as those who sail on homeward over stormy seas  
must brave the Pontus and the gorge of oyster-breeding  
Abydos. When Libra balances the day  
with sleep, makes orb of equal light and shade, then set  
210. your bulls to work, and, men, sow barley in your fields  
until the harsh, obstructing winter rains are come.  
Now lay the flax seed in the soil, with poppy Cerēs  
loves: do not delay but put the plough to work  
while soils are friable and still the clouds hang off.  
In spring sow beans, when crumbling furrows welcome them,  
and lucern, millet too that needs its annual care  
when snow-white Taurus with its gilded horns appears,  
and Dog-star, yielding, sinks before his facing beams.  
But if you work the ground for hardy wheat or spelt  
220. and nothing else, then wait until the Plēiades  
are in their morning setting and the blazing crown  
of Cretan Boreālis has retired from sight  
before to furrows you commit the seed, entrusting  
needlessly your prospects to unwilling earth.

Multi ante occasum Maiiae coepere; sed illos  
exspectata seges vanis elusit avenis.  
Si vero viciamque seres vilemque phaselum  
nec Pelusiacaе curam aspernabere lentis,  
haud obscura cadens mittet tibi signa Bootes:  
230. incipe et ad medias sementem extende pruinas.

Idcirco certis dimensum partibus orbem  
per duodena regit mundi Sol aureus astra.  
Quinque tenent caelum zonae; quarum una corusco  
semper sole rubens et torrida semper ab igni;  
quam circum extremae dextra laevaue trahuntur  
caeruleae, glacie concretae atque imbris atris;  
has inter mediamque duae mortalibus aegris  
munere concessae divom, et via secta per ambas,  
obliquus qua se signorum verteret ordo.  
240. Mundus, ut ad Scythiam Rhipaeasque arduus arces  
consurgit, premitur Libyae devexus in austros.  
Hic vertex nobis semper sublimis; at illum  
sub pedibus Styx atra videt Manesque profundi.  
Maximus hic flexu sinuoso elabitur Anguis  
circum perque duas in morem fluminis Arctos,  
Arctos Oceani metuentis aequore tingui.  
Illic, ut perhibent, aut intempesta silet nox,  
semper et obtenta densentur nocte tenebrae,  
aut redit a nobis Aurora diemque reducit;  
250. nosque ubi primus equis Oriens adflavit anhelis,  
illic, sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.  
Hinc tempestates dubio praediscere caelo  
possumus, hinc messisque diem tempusque serendi,  
et quando infidum remis inpellere marmor  
conveniat, quando armatas deducere classis,  
aut tempestivam silvis evertere pinum.

Many have begun ahead of Māia's setting,  
but found their hopes deluded them with meagre crops.  
But should you sow the vetch or common kidney bean,  
and give the care to them that Egypt's lentils see,  
Boötēs sets with no malignant signs for you:  
230. begin, and sow on to the midpart of the frosts.

### notes

## 9. Star Lore

Purposely the golden sun commands a circuit  
formed of twelve fixed sectors by the constellations.  
The sky extends in five wide zones: the central one  
is rubicund in tendency and parched by fire.  
The outermost, appearing left and right at heavenly  
bounds, are both set fast in ice and dismal storms.  
Between these outer and the central zone are kinder  
realms, the gifts of gods to feeble men. Through both  
a slanting path extends, on which the Signs progress.  
240. The world that, rising steeply to Rīphēan cliffs  
and Scythian lands, sinks down to Libya in the south.  
One pole is always high above us, while its twin  
lies darkly steeped in Styx and the infernal Shades,  
through which great Dracō throws his glimmering coils and, like  
a river, undulates both through and past the Bears —  
those stars averse to setting on a sea that either  
rims a world of soundless night and, so it's said,  
a gloom that's ever thickening beneath night's pall,  
or knows a Dawn that brings on day: for when up here  
250. the dayspring touches us with horses' panting breath,  
there evening Hesperus relights her glimmering lamp.  
From these we can foretell the seasons in unsettled  
weather, find times for harvesting and sowing seed,  
know when to strain our oars across the seas of faithless  
calms, or launch our well-rigged fleets and even tell  
the time to fell for mast the pine tree in the forest.

Nec frustra signorum obitus speculamur et ortus,  
temporibusque parem diversis quattuor annum.

Frigidus agricolam si quando continet imber,  
260. multa, forent quae mox caelo properanda sereno,  
maturare datur: durum procudit arator  
vomere obtusi dentem, cavat arbore lintres,  
aut pecori signum aut numeros impressit acervis.  
Exacuunt alii vallos furcasque bicornis  
atque Amerina parant lentae retinacula viti.  
Nunc facilis rubea texatur fiscina virga,  
nunc torrete igni fruges, nunc frangite saxo.  
Quippe etiam festis quaedam exercere diebus  
fas et iura sinunt; rivos deducere nulla  
270. religio vetuit, segeti praetendere saepem,  
insidias avibus moliri, incendere vepres,  
balantumque gregem fluvio mersare salubri.  
Saepe oleo tardi costas agitator aselli  
vilibus aut onerat pomis, lapidemque revertens  
incusum aut atrae massam picis urbe reportat.

Ipsa dies alios alio dedit ordine Luna  
felicis operum. Quintam fuge: pallidus Orcus  
Eumenidesque satae; tum partu Terra nefando  
Coeumque Iapetumque creat saevumque Typhoea  
280. et coniuratos caelum rescindere fratres.  
Ter sunt conati inponere Pelio Ossam  
scilicet, atque Ossae frondosum involvere Olympum;  
ter pater exstructos disiecit fulmine montis.

It's not in vain, therefore, we watch the rise of signs throughout a year divided in four balanced seasons.

notes

## 10. Incidental Tasks

The freezing rains that keep the countryman indoors  
260. allow him time to finish tasks he skimmed before.  
He'll hammer back to shape the ploughshare's bent old blade,  
and carve a tree trunk into cattle-troughs. He'll brand  
his herds and clearly number off his piles of grain.  
Some will sharpen stakes, or fashion two-pronged forks,  
make ties of Umbrian willow for their drooping vines,  
now weave red briar stems to threshing baskets, by  
the fire roast grain, the husks removed by grinding stone.  
On holy days the laws of god and man do not  
forbid him work, and nothing so ordained will stop  
270. him clearing ditch or building hedge around his crops,  
from fashioning new snares for birds, or firing brambles.  
Often he'll immerse his bleating flock in wholesome  
waters, load his donkey's flanks with pots of oil  
or common fruit, or from the town come burdened  
home with hammered grinding stone or block of pitch.

notes

## 11. Auspicious and Inauspicious Days

For work there are the days the moon herself has set  
as favourable. Avoid the fifth, when pallid Orcus  
and the Furies both were born, for then with monstrous  
labour Earth delivered Coeus, Īapetus and fierce  
280. Typhōeus, the brothers who would pull down Heaven.  
Three times on Pēlion they went to heap up Ossa,  
roll Olympus with its forests onto Ossa —  
and three times following, with lightning bolt, our Father



Septima post decimam felix et ponere vitem  
et prensos domitare boves et licia telae  
addere: nona fugae melior, contraria furtis.

Multa adeo gelida melius se nocte dedere,  
aut cum sole novo terras inrorat Eous.  
Nocte leves melius stipulae, nocte arida prata  
290. tondentur, noctes lentus non deficit humor.  
Et quidam seros hiberni ad luminis ignis  
pervigilat ferroque faces inspiciat acuto;  
interea longum cantu solata laborem  
arguto coniunx percurrit pectine telas,  
aut dulcis musti Volcano decoquit humorem  
et foliis undam trepidi despumat aeni.  
At rubicunda Ceres medio succiditur aestu  
et medio tostas aestu terit area fruges.  
Nudus ara, sere nudus; hiems ignava colono.  
300. Frigoribus parto agricolae plerumque fruuntur  
mutuaque inter se laeti convivia curant.  
Invitat genialis hiems curasque resolvit,  
ceu pressae cum iam portum tetigere carinae,  
puppibus et laeti nautae inposuere coronas.  
Sed tamen et quernas glandes tum stringere tempus  
et lauri bacas oleamque cruentaque myrta,  
tum gruibus pedicas et retia ponere cervis  
auritosque sequi lepores, tum figere dammas,  
stuppea torquentem Balearis verbera fundae,  
310. cum nix alta iacet, glaciem cum flumina trudent.

Quid tempestates autumnii et sidera dicam,  
atque, ubi iam breviorque dies et mollior aestas,  
quae vigilanda viris. vel cum ruit imbriferum ver,

humbled what they'd built. The seventeenth is good for planting vines, for taming oxen, weaving thread, the ninth a friend to runaways, but not to thieves.

notes

## 12. Best Times of the Day

So many things make better progress in the cool of night, or at its ending when the Dawn bedews the earth. Frail stems are better cut at night, dry meadows  
290. too, for night will help to keep their moisture in. The embers of a winter fire see one who stays awake and trims the points of torches with his knife. His wife, the while to mitigate her toil with song, sends to and fro the whispering shuttle through the weave, or at the fireside concentrates the grapey must and skims the cauldron's boiling liquid with a leaf. But Cerēs' golden grain is reaped in midday heat; in midday heat the dry head's shaken from the stalk. Half stripped they plough, half stripped they sow: in winter rest,  
300. and in the cold they chiefly congregate, enjoy their gains and make a merry interval with feasts. It is the winter's festivals that loosen cares as when, with laden hold, a ship returns to port and sailors, come home safely, decked the stern with wreaths. And winter is the time to gather acorns in, collect the bay-tree and the blood-red myrtle berries, pick the olives, catch the cranes with snares, and stags by nets, to chase the long-eared hares, and with the Balearic sling bring down the deer with whirling thongs of hemp,  
310. as snow lies thick about and rivers heave up ice.

notes

## 13. Transition: Storms

What shall I say of autumn's storms, or of the stars, which men should study as the warm days shorten, summer fades, or spring come blustering in with rainy showers,

spicea iam campis cum messis inhorruit et cum  
frumenta in viridi stipula lactentia turgent.  
Saepe ego, cum flavis messorum induceret arvis  
agricola et fragili iam stringeret hordea culmo,  
omnia ventorum concurrere proelia vidi,  
quae gravidam late segetem ab radicibus imis  
320. sublimem expulsam eruerent; ita turbine nigro  
ferret hiems culmumque levem stipulasque volantis.  
Saepe etiam inmensum caelo venit agmen aquarum  
et foedam glomerant tempestatem imbribus atris  
collectae ex alto nubes; ruit arduus aether  
et pluvia ingenti sata laeta boumque labores  
diluit; inplentur fossae et cava flumina crescunt  
cum sonitu fervetque fretis spirantibus aequor.  
Ipse pater media nimborum in nocte corusca  
fulmina molitur dextra; quo maxuma motu  
330. terra tremit; fugere ferae et mortalia corda  
per gentis humilis stravit pavor; ille flagranti  
aut Athon aut Rhodopen aut alta Ceraunia telo  
deicit; ingeminant austri et densissimus imber;  
nunc nemora ingenti vento, nunc litora plangunt.  
Hoc metuens caeli menses et sidera serva,  
frigida Saturni sese quo stella receptet,  
quos ignis caelo Cyllenius erret in orbis.  
In primis venerare deos atque annua magnae  
sacra refer Cereri laetis operatus in herbis  
340. extremae sub casum hiemis, iam vere sereno.  
Tum pingues agni et tum mollissima vina,  
tum somni dulces densaeque in montibus umbrae.  
Cuncta tibi Cererem pubes agrestis adoret;  
cui tu lacte favos et miti dilue Baccho,  
terque novas circum felix eat hostia fruges,  
omnis quam chorus et socii comitentur ovantes,  
et Cererem clamore vocent in tecta; neque ante  
falces maturis quisquam supponat aristis,  
quam Cereri torta redimitus tempora quercu  
350. det motus incompósitos et carmina dicat.

as corn is pinnacled across the fields, and on  
its long green stems the grain is swollen thick with milk?  
But often when to golden fields the farmer came  
with reapers and began to strip the barley heads  
from fragile stalks, I've seen the winds collect, bear down  
in gathered warfare and destroy the crop — remove  
320. it wholesale by the roots, and whirl it through a darkened  
sky of comminuted stems and chaff. And often  
too the sky is one accumulating drench  
of rain, the brimming clouds condensing into deadly  
sheets, with all the heavens arrived in ruinous floods  
to wreck the healthy crops, as does it ox's toil.  
The ditches fill, the rivers widen, rage and roar,  
and sea becomes one frenzied waste of froth and rain.  
Then Jupiter himself, in midnight's deep-hued clouds,  
will show his glittering hand in hurling thunderbolts:  
330. the firmament will tremble, beasts take flight, and over  
earth itself a humbling fear lay low men's hearts.  
Long shafts of fire will threaten the Ceraunian peaks,  
dash down on mounts of Athōs or of Rhodopē:  
the Southern Winds will quicken, and the rain increase,  
till woods to shores reverberate with each new blast.  
Attend the heavenly signs to be forewarned of these,  
and note what regions Saturn's cold white light withdraws  
into, what orbit erring Mercury assumes.  
Pay homage to the gods, and on the grass lay out  
340. great Cerēs' yearly sacrifice as winter goes,  
diminishing to meet the cheerful spring's approach.  
The lambs are fattened, wine grows full, and sweet is sleep  
as shadows congregate about the hills. Be sure  
your countryfolk esteem their Cerēs, soak for her  
the honeycomb in milk and mellow wine, and three  
times round the new-sown fields entice the fortune-bringing  
celebrant, while comrades sing and follow, bidding  
Cerēs come into their homes. Let none apply  
his sickle till with oak leaves he has wreathed his brows,  
350. and with a makeshift dancing has renewed her songs.

Atque haec ut certis possemus discere signis,  
aestusque pluviasque et agentis frigora ventos,  
ipse Pater statuit, quid menstrua Luna moneret,  
quo signo caderent austri, quid saepe videntes  
agricolae propius stabulis armenta tenerent.  
Continuo ventis surgentibus aut freta ponti  
incipiunt agitata tumescere et aridus altis  
montibus audiri fragor aut resonantia longe  
litora misceri et nemorum increbrescere murmur.  
360. Iam sibi tum a curvis male temperat unda carinis,  
cum medio celeres revolant ex aequore mergi  
clamoremque ferunt ad litora, cumque marinae  
in sicco ludunt fulicae notasque paludes  
deserit atque altam supra volat ardea nubem.  
Saepe etiam stellas vento inpendente videbis  
praecipitis caelo labi noctisque per umbram  
flammarum longos a tergo albescere tractus;  
saepe levem paleam et frondes volitare caducas  
aut summa nantis in aqua colludere plumas.  
370. At Boreae de parte trucis cum fulminat et cum  
Eurique Zephyrique tonat domus: omnia plenis  
rura natant fossis atque omnis navita ponto  
humida vela legit. Numquam inprudenter imber  
obfuit: aut illum surgentem vallibus imis  
aeriae fugere grues, aut bucula caelum  
suspiciens patulis captavit naribus auras,  
aut arguta lacus circumvolitavit hirundo  
et veterem in limo ranae cecinere querelam.  
Saepius et tectis penetralibus extulit ova  
380. angustum formica terens iter et bibit ingens  
arcus et e pastu decedens agmine magno  
corvorum increpuit densis exercitus alis.  
Iam variae pelagi volucres et quae Asia circum  
dulcibus in stagnis rimantur prata Caystri,  
certatim largos umeris infundere rores:

## 14. Bad Weather

That certain things may warn us of approaching heat,  
or rain, or winds that bring cold weather on, the Father  
has himself decreed what monthly signs the moon  
portend — that winds may drop, or sights so often seen  
can warn the farmer keep his cattle close to stalls.  
Immediately at wind's increase, the sea begins  
to rise and surge through troubled straits, dry thunder mutters  
on the mountain tops, or by the murmuring shores  
will gain in strength and roll resoundingly through woods.  
360. Then will the keels but badly follow waves, and broken,  
blown-back cries of seagulls echo far inland.  
Now too the coots seek refuge on dry land, the heron  
flaps to leave its marsh and lift above the storm.  
When wind is threatening, you'll often find the stars  
will hurtle headlong from the firmament, their trace  
a moment phosphorescing through the dark. And then  
quite frequently will chaff and leaves fly up, and feathers  
float and dance about the frothed-up water's top.  
But when the lightning flashes from the savage north,  
370. and thunder occupies both East and West Winds' haunts,  
the wide fields fill with water, ditches flood, and on  
the sea the sailor draw in dripping sails. Yet rain  
should not catch watchers unaware, for in advance  
the cranes come airborne to the inland vales, the heifer  
looks to heaven, her nostrils snuffing at the breeze,  
the swallow flits and twitters round the pool, and from  
the mud the frogs repeat their customary complaints.  
The ant, in wearing out her narrow path, brings eggs  
from some interior of the nest, or will some monstrous  
380. rainbow drink the rain, and rooks in battle order  
clang their wings and leave the field. You'll see the ocean's  
many birds, like those in Caÿster's temperate pools  
that rummage round the Asian fields, contending  
each with each, now splashing water on their backs,  
or plunging heads beneath the surface, or as madly

nunc caput obiectare fretis, nunc currere in undas  
et studio incassum videas gestire lavandi.

Tum cornix plena pluviam vocat improba voce  
et sola in sicca secum spatiat harena.

390. Ne nocturna quidem carpentes pensa puellae  
nescivere hiemem, testa cum ardente viderent  
scintillare oleum et putris concrecere fungos.

Nec minus ex imbri soles et aperta serena  
prospicere et certis poteris cognoscere signis:  
nam neque tum stellis acies obtunsa videtur,  
nec fratris radiis obnoxia surgere Luna,  
tenuia nec lanae per caelum vellera ferri;  
non tepidum ad solem pinnas in litore pandunt  
dilectae Thetidi alcyones, non ore solutos

400. inmundi meminere sues iactare maniplos.

At nebulae magis ima petunt campoque recumbunt,  
solis et occasum servans de culmine summo  
nequiquam seros exercet noctua cantus.

Adparet liquido sublimis in aere Nisus  
et pro purpureo poenas dat Scylla capillo:  
quacumque illa levem fugiens secat aethera pinnis,  
ecce inimicus, atrox, magno stridore per auras  
insequitur Nisus; qua se fert Nisus ad auras,  
illa levem fugiens raptim secat aethera pinnis

410. Tum liquidas corvi presso ter gutture voces  
aut quater ingeminant, et saepe cubilibus altis  
nescio qua praeter solitum dulcedine laeti  
inter se in foliis strepitant; iuvat imbribus actis  
progeniem parvam dulcisque revisere nidos;  
haud equidem credo, quia sit divinitus illis  
ingenium aut rerum fato prudentia maior;  
verum ubi tempestas et caeli mobilis humor

dashing through the thrown-up frolics of the waves  
as though a thoughtless eagerness was in this bath.  
Puffed up, with disapproving caws, the crow calls down  
the rain by strutting stoutly down dry riverbeds,  
390. and even girls at their nocturnal spinning sense  
a storm approaching from the lamplight's sputtering  
and putrid mustiness that fastens round the wick.

### notes

#### 15. After Rain

Not less, when rain has gone, can you foresee the cloudless,  
sunny days by still more signs. The star's bright edge  
will stay undimmed, the moon owe nothing to her brother's  
rays, nor fleecy clouds lie wreathed across the sky.  
Nor will the halcyons, the pride of Thētis, warm  
their outstretched wings upon the shores, nor yet the snouts  
of unclean pigs root up their bedding bales of straw.  
400. Yet now are mists more prone to fill the valleys, flood  
the plains, and, as the sun goes down, the rooftop owl  
will have no purpose giving out her warning note.  
Now Nīsus in the pitilessly limpid air  
will make poor Scylla suffer for her purple lock:  
for though she slip the air on silent feathers, loud  
and ceaselessly the hawk pursues her, buffeting  
with angry wings. But when the hawk will mount the breeze  
the dove will quickly fold her wings and quit the air.  
The rooks repeat themselves with thick-constricted throats,  
410. and in their lofty nests that give them happiness  
will call out softly, three or four times, through the leaves.  
Once rain is done, with joy they go back to their downy  
nests and broods — exhibiting, it seems to me,  
not heavenly wisdom, seeing fate in things to come,  
but finding — as the weather changes, and again  
the held-off showers come back, that Jupiter, with south  
winds drenched, goes on in bulking up what then was rare,



mutavere vias et Iuppiter uvidus austris  
denset, erant quae rara modo, et, quae densa, relaxat,  
420. vertuntur species animorum et pectora motus  
nunc alios, alios, dum nubila ventus agebat,  
conciunt: hinc ille avium concentus in agris  
et laetae pecudes et ovantes gutture corvi.

Si vero solem ad rapidum lunasque sequentis  
ordine respicies, numquam te crastina fallat  
hora neque insidiis noctis capere serenae.  
Luna, revertentis cum primum colligit ignis,  
si nigrum obscuro conprenderit aera cornu,  
maxumus agricolis pelagoque parabitur imber;  
430. at si virgineum suffuderit ore ruborem,  
ventus erit; vento semper rubet aurea Phoebe.  
Sin ortu quarto, namque is certissimus auctor,  
pura neque obtunsis per caelum cornibus ibit,  
totus et ille dies et qui nascentur ab illo  
exactum ad mensem pluvia ventisque carebunt,  
votaque servati solvent in litore nautae  
Glaucos et Panopeae et Inoo Melicertae.

Sol quoque et exoriens et cum se condet in undas  
signa dabit; solem certissima signa sequuntur,  
440. et quae mane refert et quae surgentibus astris.  
Ille ubi nascentem maculis variaverit ortum  
conditus in nubem medioque refugerit orbe,  
suspecti tibi sint imbres; namque urget ab alto  
arboribusque satisque Notus pecoribusque sinister.

and thinning it again — that minds revive, take on  
new purposes, their breasts untroubled with the winds  
420. that hitherto afflicted them by chasing clouds.  
Then comes that birdsong chorus through the fields, the sobering  
cheerfulness of lowing cattle and, above  
the rest, elated chattering of happy rooks.

notes

## 16. Good Weather: Moon

But if you note the scorching sun, successive phases  
of the moon that follow, tomorrow's hour will not  
deceive, nor unexpected come a cloudless night.  
For once the moon regains her earlier fire, if she  
disclose a gloomy mistiness between her horns,  
hard downpours wait on mariner and farmer both,  
430. but if her face should show a maiden's blush, then winds  
will come, for golden Phoebe ever reddens so.  
If on the fourth night of her rising — this is sure —  
she sail the tranquil heavens with her horns undimmed,  
that day and those that make the full course of the month  
will see no wind or rain, and sailors, safe returned  
to port, can pay their shoreside vows to Panopē,  
Glaucus, and to Melicertes, Ino's son.

notes

## 17. Good Weather: Sun

The sun the same will give his tokens, both in rising  
from and sinking to the waves: most certain are  
440. the signs exhibited at dawn and rise of stars.  
If, veiled by clouds, his morning face is blotched with dark,  
and warmth withdrawn into the centre of his disk,  
expect much rain to come, for, threatening trees  
and fields and herds, the South Wind rises from the deep.

Aut ubi sub lucem densa inter nubila sese  
diversi rumpent radii aut ubi pallida surget  
Tithoni croceum linquens Aurora cubile,  
heu male tum mitis defendet pampinus uvas:  
tam multa in tectis crepitans salit horrida grando.  
450. Hoc etiam, emenso cum iam decedit Olympo,  
profuerit meminisse magis; nam saepe videmus  
ipsius in vultu varios errare colores:  
caeruleus pluviam denuntiat, igneus Euros;  
sin maculae incipient rutilo inmiscerier igni,  
omnia tum pariter vento nimbisque videbis  
fervere. Non illa quisquam me nocte per altum  
ire, neque a terra moneat convellere funem.  
At si, cum referetque diem condetque relatum,  
lucidus orbis erit, frustra terreberet nimbis  
460. et claro silvas cernes Aquilone moveri.

Denique quid vesper serus vehat, unde serenas  
ventus agat nubes, quid cogitet humidus Auster,  
sol tibi signa dabit. Solem quis dicere falsum  
audeat. Ille etiam caecos instare tumultus  
saepe monet fraudemque et operta tumescere bella.  
Ille etiam exstincto miseratus Caesare Romam,  
cum caput obscura nitidum ferrugine texit  
inpiaque aeternam timuerunt saecula noctem.  
Tempore quamquam illo tellus quoque et aequora ponti  
470. obscenaeque canes inportunaeque volucres  
signa dabant. Quotiens Cyclosum effervere in agros  
vidimus undantem ruptis fornacibus Aetnam  
flammarumque globos liquefactaque volvere saxa!  
Armorum sonitum toto Germania caelo  
audiit, insolitis tremuerunt motibus Alpes.  
Vox quoque per lucos volgo exaudita silentis  
ingens et simulacra modis pallentia miris  
visa sub obscurum noctis, pecudesque locutae,

Or if at dawn the sunlight stream in scattered rays  
from clouds, or should Aurōra get up pale from old  
Tithōnus's saffron bed, ah then, but poorly  
will the vine leaf guard the ripened grapes when heavy  
hail comes down and rattles horribly on roofs.

450. More worth remembering, when sun has crossed the sky  
and nears his setting, is the countenance that shows.

Note well those wavering tints: dark azures speak of rain,  
bright colours eastern winds, but if the spots begin  
to mix in with the glowing fire, all nature meets  
in dreadful wind and storm. On such a night let no  
one urge me travel on the deep, or fasten cable  
far from land. Yet if the sun that ushers in  
and closes day remains unchanged, his disk still bright,  
then groundless are the fears of storms, and woods will seem

460. no more than quietly swaying in the clear north wind. notes

## 18. Portents of Rome's Disaster

The messages late evening sends, the quarter  
that the wind blows clear of clouds, the purposes the rainy  
South intends, are those the sun reveals. Who dare  
suppose the sun is false? He and no one else  
will warn when unrest threatens, treachery and hidden  
wars approach. For he it was who pitied Rome  
when Caesar died, who hid his radiance in gloom  
until a godless age must fear unending night.

And at this hour, on earth and level seas, were found  
470. ill-boding dogs and inauspicious birds. How often

Etna warned by deluging the Cyclopean  
fields, and from her shattered furnaces discharged  
great lava streams with clots of fire and molten rock.

In Germany was heard the noise of battle round  
the sky; more threatening still, the Alps were rocked by quakes.  
A great voice sounded through the silent groves for all  
to hear, and pallid phantoms flitted through the dark,  
and, worst of all, the beasts spoke out with tongues of men.

infandum! sistunt amnes terraeque dehiscunt  
480. et maestum inlacrimat templis ebur aeraque sudant.  
Proluit insano contorquens vertice silvas  
fluviorum rex Eridanus camposque per omnis  
cum stabulis armenta tulit. Nec tempore eodem  
tristibus aut extis fibrae adparere minaces  
aut puteis manare cruor cessavit et altae  
per noctem resonare lupis ululantibus urbes.  
Non alias caelo ceciderunt plura sereno  
fulgura nec diri totiens arsere cometae.  
ergo inter sese paribus concurrere telis  
490. Romanas acies iterum videre Philippi;  
nec fuit indignum superis, bis sanguine nostro  
Emathiam et latos Haemi pinguescere campos.  
Scilicet et tempus veniet, cum finibus illis  
agricola incurvo terram molitus aratro  
exesa inveniet scabra robigine pila  
aut gravibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanis  
grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulchris.

Di patrii, Indigetes, et romule Vestaque mater,  
quae Tuscum Tiberim et Romana Palatia servas,  
500. hunc saltem everso iuvenem succurrere saeclo  
ne prohibete! Satis iam pridem sanguine nostro  
Laomedonteanae luimus periuria Troiae;  
iam pridem nobis caeli te regia, Caesar,  
invidet atque hominum queritur curare triumphos;  
quippe ubi fas versum atque nefas: tot bella per orbem,  
tam multae scelerum facies; non ullus aratro  
dignus honos, squalent abductis arva colonis  
et curvae rigidum falces conflantur in ensem.  
Hinc movet Euphrates, illinc Germania bellum;

The rivers stopped, earth gaped, and ivory images  
480. in temples wept, as oozed the bronzes, bathed in sweat.  
Then Ēridanus, king of rivers, swept whole woods  
away in eddies of his swirling flood and strewed  
as flotsam herds and cattle stalls across the plain.  
Nor at that hour did dangerous fibres fail to lurk  
in murky entrails, blood itself to flow from wells,  
and in the hillside towns unceasingly the wolves  
to howl the whole night through. Then never did there fall  
more lightning from a cloudless sky, nor comets trail  
the more alarmingly across the sky. Once more  
490. would Philippi be forced to witness clash of Roman  
soldiery with close-matched arms, nor were the gods  
ashamed to have Ēmathia and the ample plain  
of Haemus twice be fattened up with human blood.  
For here, in times the come, the farmer with his plough  
will turn up javelins consumed by scarlet rust,  
or with his harrow gather empty helmets, stunned  
that bones of giants gaze at him from opened graves.

#### notes

#### 19. Prayer for Augustus

Gods of country, heroes, Romulus, and mother  
Vesta, all who Tuscan Tiber and the Roman  
500. Palatine protect, at least do not prevent  
this young prince rescuing a world turned upside down!  
For all too long Lāomedōn's great perjuries  
at Troy have called for blood, too long has Heaven begrudged  
us Caesar, claiming he had only care for triumphs.  
In this are right for wrong reversed. Gross warfare over-  
comes the world, and sin puts on her many shapes.  
Respect for plough is gone, our land neglected, robbed  
of farmers, curving pruning blade refashioned straight.  
Euphrates here, Germānia there, both rush to war.

510. vicinae ruptis inter se legibus urbes  
arma ferunt; saevit toto Mars inpius orbe;  
ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae,  
addunt in spatia et frustra retinacula tendens  
fertur equis auriga neque audit currus habenas.

510. They break their covenants, and, urging on adjoining  
states, have Mars in uproar rampage through the world,  
as, from the opening barrier, the chariot  
but races yet more reckless round the track, each horse  
oblivious of burden, rider's tangled words or rein.

notes



## LIBER II

Hactenus arborum cultus et sidera caeli,  
nunc te, Bacche, canam, nec non silvestria tecum  
virgulta et prolem tarde crescentis olivae.  
Huc, pater o Lenaeae—tuis hic omnia plena  
muneribus, tibi pampineo gravidus autumnno  
florete ager, spumat plenis vindemia labris—  
huc, pater o Lenaeae, veni nudataque musto  
tingue novo mecum direptis crura cothurnis.

Principio arboribus varia est natura creandis.  
10. namque aliae nullis hominum cogentibus ipsae  
sponte sua veniunt camposque et flumina late  
curva tenent, ut molle siler lentaeque genestae,  
populus et glauca canentia fronde salicta;  
pars autem posito surgunt de semine, ut altae  
castaneae nemorumque Iovi quae maxima frondet  
aesculus atque habitae Graeis oracula quercus.  
Pullulat ab radice aliis densissima silva,  
ut cerasis ulmisque; etiam Parnasia laurus  
parva sub ingenti matris se subicit umbra.  
20. Hos natura modos primum dedit, his genus omne  
silvarum fruticumque viret nemorumque sacrorum.  
Sunt aliae, quas ipse via sibi repperit usus.  
Hic plantas tenero abscindens de corpore matrum  
deposuit sulcis, hic stirpes obruit arvo  
quadrifidasque sudas et acuto robore vallos;  
silvarumque aliae pressos propaginis arcus

## BOOK TWO

### 1. Introduction

Thus far the tilth of fields and stars of heaven, now  
I'll sing of Bacchus, not neglecting woodland haunts,  
or olive grown but slowly from the seed. Lenaeon  
God — you are the father of such gifts. Through you  
the fields are ripe-occasioned with their autumn fruits,  
and vats are filled to effervescing with the grapes —  
Lenaeon Father, come and fling your buskin off,  
and with me plunge your naked foot into the must.

#### notes

### 2. Propagation of trees

To start with nature's ways of propagating trees —  
10. most various. Untouched by man, some grow to shade  
the fields spontaneously, and share the winding breadth  
of streams: the pliant osier does, the clinging Spanish  
broom, the poplars and the willows, silver-leafed.  
Some from fallen seeds spring up: the soaring chestnut,  
the broad-leafed oak in groves of mighty Jupiter,  
the common oak believed oracular by Greeks.  
Yet others sprout as suckers from the roots, to speak  
of elm and cherry. The sweet bay even of Parnassus  
starts as shoots beneath its widespread mother's shade.  
20. So naturally are given us our shrubs and trees,  
the sacred groves and all things green. Yet other is  
what practice finds out for itself. A mother tree is  
pollarded for slender saplings: some to plant  
among the furrows, some to put down through the fields,  
the staves then four ways split and tipped with sharpened oak.  
Still other trees are made by branches bent to earth

exspectant et viva sua plantaria terra;  
nil radices egent aliae summumque putator  
haud dubitat terrae referens mandare cacumen.  
30. Quin et caudicibus sectis—mirabile dictu—  
truditur e sicco radix oleagina ligno.  
Et saepe alterius ramos inpune videmus  
vertere in alterius mutatamque insita mala  
ferre pirum et prunis lapidosa rubescere corna.

Quare agite o proprios generatim discite cultus,  
agricolae, fructusque feros mollite colendo,  
neu segnes iaceant terrae. Iuvat Ismara Baccho  
conserere atque olea magnum vestire Taburnum.  
Tuque ades inceptumque una decurre laborem,  
40. O decus, o famae merito pars maxima nostrae,  
Maecenas, pelagoque volans da vela patenti;  
non ego cuncta meis amplecti versibus opto,  
non, mihi si linguae centum sint oraque centum,  
ferrea vox; ades et primi lege litoris oram.  
In manibus terrae; non hic te carmine ficto  
atque per ambages et longa exorsa tenebo.

Sponte sua quae se tollunt in luminis oras,  
infecunda quidem, sed laeta et fortia surgunt;  
quippe solo natura subest. Tamen haec quoque, si quis  
50. inserat aut scrobibus mandet mutata subactis,  
exuerint silvestrem animum cultuque frequenti  
in quascumque voles artis haud tarda sequentur.  
Nec non et sterilis, quae stirpibus exit ab imis,  
hoc faciat, vacuos si sit digesta per agros;

and pegged expectantly for ends to tuft with shoots.  
Still others have no roots at all, and here the pruner  
need but scatter cuttings for fresh growth to take.  
30. And when an olive trunk is cut — how strange to note  
— a root is promptly put out at the base. And often,  
harmlessly, a tree trunk turns to other types:  
a pear tree so transformed will bear engrafted apples  
and plum's encarnadined with stony cornel cherries.

### notes

#### 3. Proem

Come, farmers, learn the natural ways of trees, and bring  
what's wild to cultivation, lest in idleness  
the land be lost. Īsmara vines plant joyfully,  
and lofty Mount Taburnus clothe in olive trees.  
You, who from the start, Maecēnās, urged my labours  
40. on, and nobly are the first part of my fame,  
come, join these spreading sails and cross the sea.  
I cannot conquer all within my verse — not given  
a hundred tongues, or hundred mouths, nor voice of iron —  
but help me round the local details of the coasts,  
for now that land approaches I'll not hold you here  
in tedious songs, in long digressions, or preambles.

### notes

#### 4. Propagation of trees continued

Trees that all too hastily reach out to light  
are apt to bear no fruit, though strong and flourishing  
to take up natural vigour from the soil. Yet these,  
50. if grafted or transplanted out to well-dug trench,  
forego their woodland nature, and by frequent care  
adapt themselves to follow any path you choose.  
No less the sterile sucker sprung up from the base  
will serve if settled into open clearings where

nunc altae frondes et rami matris opacant  
crescentique adimunt fetus uruntque ferentem.  
Iam quae seminibus iactis se sustulit arbos  
tarda venit seris factura nepotibus umbram,  
pomaque degenerant sucos oblita priores  
60. et turpis avibus praedam fert uva racemos.  
Scilicet omnibus est labor inpendendus et omnes  
cogendae in sulcum ac multa mercede domandae.  
Sed truncis oleae melius, propagine vites  
respondent, solido Paphiae de robore myrtus;  
plantis et durae coryli nascuntur et ingens  
fraxinus Herculeaeque arbos umbrosa coronae  
Chaoniique patris glandes, etiam ardua palma  
nascitur et casus abies visura marinos.  
Inseritur vero et fetu nucis arbutus horrida,  
70. et steriles platani malos gessere valentis;  
castaneae fagus, ornusque incanuit albo  
flore piri glandemque sues fregere sub ulmis.

Nec modus inserere atque oculos inponere simplex.  
Nam qua se medio trudunt de cortice gemmae  
et tenuis rumpunt tunicas, angustus in ipso  
fit nodo sinus: huc aliena ex arbore germen  
includunt udoque docent inolescere libro.  
Aut rursus enodes trunci resecantur et alte  
finditur in solidum cuneis via, deinde feraces  
80. plantae inmittuntur: nec longum tempus, et ingens  
exsilit ad caelum ramis felicibus arbos  
miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma.

Praeterea genus haud unum nec fortibus ulmis  
nec salici lotoque neque Idaeis cyparissis,

the parent's foliage will not overshadow it,  
inhibiting whatever fruit it would support.  
The tree that springs up naturally from scattered seed  
will give but shade, and tardily, for late descendents.  
Slowly fruits degenerate and lose their early  
60. taste, as grapes bear tawdry clusters only fit  
for birds. Yet all require their labour just the same  
and in the trench are placed and tamed at any cost.  
The olive grows its best from staff, the vine from layers,  
the Paphian myrtle when educted from the solid  
stem. From slips tough hazels spring, as does the giant  
ash, whose crown has shaded Hercules. Chāonian  
oaks have birth in acorns, soaring palm in seed,  
and that which stares down perils of the deep, the pine.  
The rough arbutus tree is grafted with a walnut  
70. shoot; the barren plane trees yield prolific apples:  
so will chestnut flower on the beech, the pear  
on hillside ash, and pigs crunch acorns under elms.

## notes

### 5. Grafting and budding

The means to graft and bud are not the same. In one,  
a place is chosen where the buds put out from soft, young  
bark to cut a narrow slit into the knot  
and there insert a scion from some other tree  
where it can penetrate the cambium of its host.  
And in another is a knotless stock prepared  
before a solid wedge is cut into the core.  
80 A healthy shoot is put inside, when soon is born  
a riotous growth of branches reaching sky, amazed  
to find the new-grown leaf and fruitage not its own.

### 6. Variety of trees and vines

A single species does not serve for sturdy elms  
or willow, zizoufs, cypresses from Ida.

nec pingues unam in faciem nascuntur olivae,  
orchades et radii et amara pausia baca  
pomaque et Alcinoi silvae, nec surculus idem  
Crustumiiis Syriisque piris gravibusque volemis.  
Non eadem arboribus pendet vindemia nostris,  
90. quam Methymnaeo carpit de palmite Lesbos;  
sunt Thasiae vites, sunt et Mareotides albae,  
pinguibus hae terris habiles, levioribus illae,  
et passo Psithia utilior tenuisque Lageos  
temptatura pedes olim vincturaque linguam,  
purpureae preciaeque, et quo te carmine dicam,  
Rhaetica? Nec cellis ideo contende Falernis.  
Sunt et Amineae vites, firmissima vina,  
Tmolius adsurgit quibus et rex ipse Phanaeus;  
Argitisque minor, cui non certaverit ulla  
100. aut tantum fluere aut totidem durare per annos.  
Non ego te, Dis et mensis accepta secundis,  
transierim, Rhodia, et tumidis, Bumaste, racemis.  
Sed neque quam multae species nec nomina quae sint,  
est numerus; neque enim numero comprehendere refert;  
quem qui scire velit, Libyci velit aequoris idem  
discere quam multae Zephyro turbentur harenae,  
aut ubi navigiis violentior incidit Eurus,  
nosse, quot Ionii veniant ad litora fluctus.

Nec vero terrae ferre omnes omnia possunt.  
110. fluminibus salices crassisque paludibus alni  
nascuntur, steriles saxosis montibus orni;  
litora myrtetis laetissima; denique apertos  
Bacchus amat collis, aquilonem et frigora taxi.

Nor are rich olives wrought of single shape, for note  
the orchards, radii and sour Pausanian types.  
Nor are the Alcinoüs apples, nor the pears,  
the Syrian, Crustumian and rich Volema  
types. Nor are the grapes suspended from our trees  
90. the same that Lesbos gathers from Mēthymnian vines.  
Note too the Thrāsian grapes and Mareōtic white,  
one richer soils, the other light. The Psithian  
yields raisin-wine. The potent, sly Lagēan wine  
will tie your tongue or catch your feet. How speak of Purple  
and the Precia wines, do justice to the Rhaetic  
strain? Nor would I challenge our Falernian cellars.  
Our Aminnean is always sound, to which  
must bow Tmōlian and the regal Phanaean.  
I'd note the small Argitis grape, which none can match  
100. in quantity or lasting well so many years.  
The Rhodian I can't omit, that's fit for gods  
and for the banquet's second course, nor you, Būmastan,  
richly globed. There is no final count of types  
and names, nor is the effort worth our while. For he  
who seeks to know will also want to count the grains  
of sand that on the Libyan wastes the West wind rolls,  
or, when the East wind violently attacks the ships,  
how many curled Ionian waves can reach the shore.

### notes

#### 7. Different plants in different places

Not everything does well in every type of soil.  
110. The willows grow by rivers, alders muddy swamps,  
the ash upon the sterile mountain crags, the cheerful  
myrtles by the shores, and, while the vine loves open  
hills, the yew tree relishes the keen north wind.



Aspice et extremis domitum cultoribus orbem  
Eoasque domos Arabum pictosque Gelonos:  
divisae arboribus patriae. Sola India nigrum  
fert ebum, solis est turea virga Sabaeis.  
Quid tibi odorato referam sudantia ligno  
balsamaque et bacas semper frondentis acanthi?  
120. Quid nemora Aethiopum molli canentia lana,  
velleraque ut foliis depectant tenuia Seres;  
aut quos Oceano propior gerit India lucos,  
extremi sinus orbis, ubi aera vincere summum  
arboris haud ullae iactu potuere sagittae?  
Et gens illa quidem sumptis non tarda pharetris.  
Media fert tristis sucos tardumque saporem  
felicis mali, quo non praesentius ullum,  
pocula si quando saevae infecere novercae,  
miscueruntque herbas et non innoxia verba,  
130. auxilium venit ac membris agit atra venena.  
Ipsa ingens arbos faciemque simillima lauro;  
et, si non alium late iactaret odorem,  
laurus erat; folia haud ullis labentia ventis;  
flos ad prima tenax; animas et olentia Medi  
ora fovent illo et senibus medicantur anhelis.

Sed neque Medorum, silvae ditissima, terra,  
nec pulcher Ganges atque auro turbidus Hermus  
laudibus Italiae certent, non Bactra neque Indi  
totaque turiferis Panchaia pinguis harenis.  
140. Haec loca non tauri spirantes naribus ignem  
invertere satis inmanis dentibus hydri  
nec galeis densisque virum seges horruit hastis;  
sed gravidae fruges et Bacchi Massicus humor  
inplevere; tenent oleae armentaque laeta.

The wide earth's sphere has local habitats. Both Arabs  
in their eastern home, as painted Scythians,  
possess specific trees. For none but India holds  
black ebony, or Sabian lands the frankincense.  
Why tell of gum that drops from perfumed wood, acanthus  
ever green that has its scented pods? And what  
120. of Ethiopia's cotton forests clothed in white,  
or silky gossamer the Chinese comb from leaves?  
Or Indian jungles flourishing along the shore  
that makes the far edge of our world? — so tall no arrow  
ever flies above their lofty foliage tops  
for all inhabitants are practised with the bow.  
Media yields a juice of lingering bitterness,  
a citrus fruit, that nonetheless is antidote  
to poisons which stepmothers make, that evil mix  
of herbs and spells. For none will more effectively  
130 remove those dangerous toxins from the limbs. So large  
and like our laurel tree it would be doubtless seen  
as such if not possessing a distinctive smell.  
This tree, whose leaves no winds remove, as flowers will cling  
tenaciously, is used by Medes to make the breath  
smell sweet, and cure the breathing problems of the old.

### notes

#### 8. In praise of Italy 136-76

Not Persia with its sumptuous groves and soils, nor handsome  
Ganges, nor the stormy Hermus with its gold  
can match the fame of Italy. Not even Bactria,  
India, nor Panchaia with its incense sands.

140. And yet no bulls that snorted fire have ploughed this land  
and sown the monstrous dragon's teeth, nor do our fields  
spring up with bristling spears, or men sharp-helmeted,  
but swell with crops and wines of Mount Massica's grapes,  
and olive trees, and cattle in their teeming herds.

Hinc bellator equus campo sese arduus infert;  
hinc albi, Clitumne, greges et maxima taurus  
victima, saepe tuo perfusi flumine sacro,  
Romanos ad templa deum duxere triumphos.  
Hic ver adsiduum atque alienis mensibus aestas  
150. bis gravidae pecudes, bis pomis utilis arbos.  
At rabidae tigres absunt et saeva leonum  
semina nec miseros fallunt aconita legentis  
nec rapit inmensos orbis per humum neque tanto  
squameus in spiram tractu se colligit anguis.  
Adde tot egregias urbes operumque laborem,  
tot congesta manu praeruptis oppida saxis  
fluminaque antiquos subter labentia muros.  
An mare, quod supra, memorem, quodque adluit infra  
anne lacus tantos? Te, Lari maxume, teque,  
160. fluctibus et fremitu adsurgens Benace marino  
an memorem portus Lucrinoque addita claustra  
atque indignatum magnis stridoribus aequor  
Iulia qua ponto longe sonat unda refuso  
Tyrrhenusque fretis inmittitur aestus Avernis?  
Haec eadem argenti rivos aerisque metalla  
ostendit venis atque auro plurima fluxit.  
Haec genus acre virum, Marsos pubemque Sabellam  
adsuetumque malo Ligurem Volscosque verutos  
extulit, haec Decios, Marios, magnosque Camillos,  
170. Scipiadas duos bello et te, maxume Caesar,  
qui nunc extremis Asiae iam victor in oris  
inbellem avertis Romanis arcibus Indum.  
Salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus,  
magna virum; tibi res antiquae laudis et artem  
ingredior, sanctos ausus recludere fontis,  
Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen.

It's here you'll find the towering warhorse rides across  
the plain, Clitumnus's snowy herds, and here  
the noble bull, whose sacrifice has steeped with blood your sacred  
streams and brought a triumph home to temple gods.  
Here spring is ever prompt, and summer has no stinted  
150. months: the herds twice breed, and twice the fruit trees bear.  
No tigers terrify, nor savage lions' whelps,  
nor aconite send reckless gatherers to earth,  
no serpent drags its monstrous lengths across the ground,  
nor will it wind itself in scaly coils to strike.  
Then add to this our cities rich in civic skills,  
the towns that crown our labour on the rocky steep  
and rivers murmuring beneath their ancient walls,  
our two great seas that wash our shores both north and south,  
our many lakes — you, Larius, our mightiest,  
160. and you, Bēnācus, waves there roaring like the sea.  
Shall I recall the harbours, and the Lucrine bar,  
that Julian barrier that hems in scornful waves,  
until, repelled, they come on pounding back, Tyrrhenian  
tide resounding through the straits of Avernus?  
Here the land can boast its flowing silver lodes  
and mines, its floods of rich alluvial gold. Here thrive  
the fighting races: Sabines and the Marsians,  
the tough Ligurians and Volscians with spears,  
the Deciī, the Mariī, great Camilli,  
170. the battle-hardened Scipios, and you, great Caesar,  
who, having conquered Asia's furthest shores, now drive  
the craven Indian from our Roman forts. So you,  
Saturnian lands, the mother of such fruits and men  
I praise in ancient ways, and dare through Roman towns  
make Ascrea's songs reresonate in sacred springs.

notes

Nunc locus arborum ingeniis: quae robora cuique,  
quis color et quae sit rebus natura ferendis.

Difficiles primum terrae collesque maligni,  
180. tenuis ubi argilla et dumosis calculus arvis,  
Palladia gaudent silva vivacis olivae.

Indicio est tractu surgens oleaster eodem  
plurimus et strati bacis silvestribus agri.

At quae pinguis humus dulciq̄ue uligine laeta,  
quique frequens herbis et fertilis ubere campus—  
qualem saepe cava montis convalle solemus  
despicere; huc summis liquuntur rupibus amnes  
felicemque trahunt limum—quique editus austro  
et filicem curvis invisam pascit aratris:

190. hic tibi praevalidas olim multoque fluentis  
sufficiet Baccho vitis, hic fertilis uvae,

hic laticis, qualem pateris libamus et auro,  
inflavit cum pinguis ebur Tyrrhenus ad aras,  
lancibus et pandis fumantia reddimus exta.

Sin armenta magis studium vitulosque tueri  
aut ovium fetum aut urentis culta capellas,

saltus et saturi petito longinqua Tarenti  
et qualem infelix amisit Mantua campum,  
pascentem niveos herboso flumine cycnos;

200. non liquidi gregibus fontes, non gramina deerunt;  
et, quantum longis carpent armenta diebus,

exigua tantum gelidus ros nocte reponet.

Nigra fere et presso pinguis sub vomere terra  
et cui putre solum,— namque hoc imitamur arando—

optima frumentis; non ullo ex aequore cernes  
plura domum tardis decedere plaustra iuvenis;

aut unde iratus silvam devexit arator  
et nemora evertit multos ignava per annos  
antiquasque domos avium cum stirpibus imis

## 9. Types of Soil

Now for the character of soils, what strength they have,  
their hue, and natural vigour in supporting growth.

First, there's ground that's difficult, makes barren hills,  
180. with clayey soils and slopes disgraced with briars and stones.

Yet these delight Minerva's long-lived olive groves  
and here the native oleaster finds its natural  
home and heaps thick spreads of berries on the ground.

But soil that's prosperous, is sweet and moist, which makes  
the fertile meadowlands thick-padded out with grass,

— which often forms an open valley in the hills,  
one overhung with cliffs from which the streams pour out  
their fertile mud — and which, when rising into uplands

190. turned to south, grows ferns to fight the curving plough,  
will one day prove most suitable for vines, and give

abundant wines, the gift of Bacchus, luscious grapes  
that make the fine libations stood in golden cups

at altars where the stout Etruscan plays his ivory  
pipe as steaming entrails are delivered up.

But if your inclination is for cows and calves

or breeding herds of sheep and goats that damage plants,  
then seek out far Tarentum for its fields and glades,

or pastures such as hapless Mantua lost, a place

200. where snow-white swans will delve in water reeds, and herds  
will lack not grass or water, having what they eat

by day restored by touch of chilly dew at night.

An earth that's firm and dark beneath the turning blade

— that's workable, and what our ploughing seeks — is best

for corn: indeed no other ground will see more wagons  
pulled by oxen, laden, slowly home, except

where ground is stripped of trees by one incensed that woodland  
stands remain unyielding through the years, which has

210. eruit; illae altum nidis petiere relictis,  
at rudis enituit impulso vomere campus.  
Nam ieiuna quidem clivosi glarea ruris  
vix humilis apibus casias roremque ministrat;  
et tophus scaber et nigris exesa chelydris  
creta negant alios aequae serpentibus agros  
dulcem ferre cibum et curvas praebere latebras.  
Quae tenuem exhalat nebulam fumosque volucris  
et bibit humorem et, cum volt, ex se ipsa remittit  
quaeque suo semper viridi se gramine vestit  
220. nec scabie et salsa laedit robigine ferrum:  
illa tibi laetis intexet vitibus ulmos,  
illa ferax oleo est, illam experiere colendo  
et facilem pecori et patientem vomeris unci.  
Talem dives arat Capua et vicina Vesevo  
ora iugo et vacuis Clanius non aequus Acerris.

Nunc, quo quamque modo possis cognoscere, dicam.  
Rara sit an supra morem si densa requires—  
altera frumentis quoniam favet, altera Baccho,  
densa magis Cereri, rarissima quaeque Lyaeo—  
230. ante locum capies oculis alteque iubebis  
in solido puteum demitti omnemque repones  
rursus humum et pedibus summas aequabis harenas.  
Si deerunt, rarum pecorique et vitibus almis  
aptius uber erit; sin in sua posse negabunt  
ire loca et scrobibus superabit terra repletis,  
spissus ager; glaebas cunctantis crassaque terga  
expecta et validis terram proscinde iuvenis.

the farmer tear up ancient-rooted homes of birds  
210. that flee their nests and take to air, and in that work  
make what was wasteland gleam behind the dwindling plough.  
The gravels lands, in contrast, hard and steep, will scarcely  
give the bees their common spurge or rosemary.  
The shaggy clay and tufa slopes the pitch-black viper  
haunts may claim no other land produces just  
such food for them, nor twisting hollows for retreats.  
But soil exhaling mists and shifting vapours, one  
which drinks in moisture, readily discharging it,  
which always clothes itself in fresh green grass, and won't  
220. discolour blade or coat it with a salty crust,  
which joyously entwines your elms with healthy vines,  
supporting olives while yet excellent for herds,  
that patiently accepts the plough's curved thrust as well —  
Capūa is, the border of Vesuvian shores  
and lands that Clanius empties: rough Acerris flats.

### notes

#### 10. Distinguishing types of soil

I'll tell you how to recognize each type of soil.  
For if you want to know if friable or more  
compact — the one will favour corn, the other wine,  
the denser Cerēs more, the lighter Bacchus— choose  
230. a fitting place, and order that a pit be dug  
deep down into the ground. Replace the earth dug out,  
and try to tamp it down till level with your feet.  
If soil is wanting, then it's light and fit for friendly  
vines and herds. But if that seems impossible,  
and surplus soil is left about the hole and won't  
go back, expect to have resistant, thick-ridged, cloddish  
ground, which needs young, powerful oxen at the plough.



Salsa autem tellus et quae perhibetur amara,  
frugibus infelix—ea nec mansuescit arando  
240. nec Baccho genus aut pomis sua nomina servat—  
tale dabit specimen: tu spisso vimine qualos  
colaque prelorum fumosis deripe tectis;  
huc ager ille malus dulcesque a fontibus undae  
ad plenum calcentur; aqua eluctabitur omnis  
scilicet, et grandes ibunt per vimina guttae;  
at sapor indicium faciet manifestus et ora  
tristia temptantum sensu torquebit amaro.  
Pinguis item quae sit tellus, hoc denique pacto  
discimus: haud umquam manibus iactata fatiscit,  
250. sed picis in morem ad digitos lentescit habendo.  
Humida maiores herbas alit, ipsaque iusto  
laetior. Ah nimium ne sit mihi fertilis illa  
nec se praevalidam primis ostendat aristis!  
Quae gravis est, ipso tacitam se pondere prodit,  
quaeque levis. Promptum est oculis praediscere nigram,  
et quis cui color. At sceleratum exquirere frigus  
difficile est: piceae tantum taxique nocentes  
interdum aut hederæ pandunt vestigia nigrae

His animadversis terram multo ante memento  
260. excoquere et magnos scrobibus concidere montis,  
ante supinatas aquiloni ostendere glaebas,  
quam laetum infodias vitis genus. Optima putri  
arva solo: id venti curant gelidaeque pruinae  
et labefacta movens robustus iugera fossor.  
Ac si quos haud ulla viros vigilantia fugit,  
ante locum similem exquirunt, ubi prima paretur  
arboribus seges et quo mox digesta feratur,  
mutatam ignorent subito ne semina matrem.

Salt-laden soils, and any type called sour are never fit for crops — nor will more ploughing make them so, 240. or add to vineyard or an apple's reputation — but for a proof, take from the smoke-lined roof that thickly-woven mesh of twigs which serves to strain your wine, and press the said soil in. Then empty on it sweet spring water, watching then the fluid slowly struggle through, and on the twigs collect in heavy drops. In these you'll find bitterness, for, try: the taste will pucker up the mouth and turn it inside out. For rich and heavy soils, the test comes down to this: it won't completely crumble in the hand, but stick 250. as pitch will do, habitually, to fingertips. Moist ground yields fatter growth, but may as well produce too rank a growth. So let not mine be over rich and call forth promises before the ear be seen. A heavy soil in silence shows itself by weight as does a light. The eye detects a black soil easily, or any colour, but the criminally cold is much more difficult, though sometimes spruce or harmful yew will mark its presence, or black ivy growth.

## notes

### 11. Establishing a Vineyard

Now having noted this, be sure to let the ground 260. dry thoroughly, then trench through furrows and expose the clods of earth you've dug up to the keen north wind before you plant the sturdy rootstocks of the vine. Here crumbling soils are best, which wind and frost improve, and burly labourers who shake up ground they work. But men of acumen will look for spots where vines from infancy can be protected by the trees, and afterwards be planted out in such a way the move will not divorce them from the mother stock.

Quin etiam caeli regionem in cortice signant,  
270. ut, quo quaeque modo steterit, qua parte calores  
Austrinos tulerit, quae terga obverterit axi,  
restituunt: adeo in teneris consuescere multum est.

Collibus an plano melius sit ponere vitem,  
quaere prius. Si pinguis agros metabere campi,  
densa sere; in denso non segnior ubere Bacchus;  
sin tumulis adclive solum collisque supinos,  
indulge ordinibus, nec setius omnis in unguem  
arboribus positis secto via limite quadret.

Ut saepe ingenti bello cum longa cohortis  
280. explicuit legio et campo stetit agmen aperto,  
directaeque acies, ac late fluctuat omnis  
aere renidenti tellus, necdum horrida miscent  
proelia, sed dubius mediis Mars errat in armis:  
omnia sint paribus numeris dimensa viarum;  
non animum modo uti pascat prospectus inanem,  
sed quia non aliter viris dabit omnibus aequas  
terra neque in vacuum poterunt se extendere rami.  
Forsitan et scrobibus quae sint fastigia quaeras.  
ausim vel tenui vitem committere sulco.

290. Altior ac penitus terrae defigitur arbos,  
aesculus in primis, quae quantum vertice ad auras  
aetherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.

Ergo non hiemes illam, non flabra neque imbres  
convellunt; inmota manet, multosque nepotes,  
multa virum volvens durando saecula vincit.

Tum fortis late ramos et bracchia pandens  
huc illuc, media ipsa ingentem sustinet umbram.

Neve tibi ad solem vergant vineta cadentem,  
Neve inter vitis corylum sere, neve flagella

300. summa pete aut summa defringe ex arbore plantas  
tantus amor terrae—-neu ferro laede retunso  
semina, neve oleae silvestris insere truncos:

They note the quarter of the sky the bark will show  
270. that saplings keep their former orientation, face  
toward the summer heat, their rear toward the northern  
pole, so strong are innate habits' hold on young.  
It matters whether vines are planted out on slopes  
or level ground. For if the last, and soil be rich,  
then set them close: for Bacchus will not stint his wealth.  
But if the ground be hummocky or with a slope,  
allow them room. And plant rows parallel to paths  
and have their boundary squarely finished off, both straight  
and neat, as often seen in full-scale battles, where  
280. the marching column has been halted in the field  
and legion sets its cohorts out in conscious lines  
to make long waves of glinting bronze, engagement yet  
to spoil the whole as Mars goes wandering side to side  
unsure which party he's to join. So let your vines  
be set symmetrically, in conscious rank and file,  
not as a prospect pleasing merely to the eye  
but so the earth bestows on all an equal strength  
and branches grow out laterally to take in air.  
You'll want to know the planting depth: a shallow trench  
290. will suit the vine but trees need deeper anchorage:  
the oak particularly: where the roots reach down  
to Tartarus, the crown must soar to airy heaven.  
No winter storms uproot it, nor can wind or rain  
but as a rock through generations, still it stands,  
beyond the roll of witnesses or time itself.  
While from a rugged girth it throws great branches out  
it has a crown encompassing the deepest shade.  
Let not your vineyard slope toward the setting sun;  
do not plant hazel in the vines; do not attack  
300. the topmost shoot, or have your cuttings taken there,  
for vines prefer to hug the ground. Don't let blunt blades  
impair new growth, or mix in olive with the vine:

nam saepe incautis pastoribus excidit ignis,  
qui furtim pingui primum sub cortice tectus  
robora comprehendit frondesque elapsus in altas  
ingentem caelo sonitum dedit; inde secutus  
per ramos victor perque alta cacumina regnat  
et totum involvit flammis nemus et ruit atram  
ad caelum picea crassus caligine nubem,  
310. praesertim si tempestas a vertice silvis  
incubuit glomeratque ferens incendia ventus.  
Hoc ubi, non a stirpe valent caesaeque reverti  
possunt atque ima similes revirescere terra;  
infelix superat foliis oleaster amaris.  
Nec tibi tam prudens quisquam persuadeat auctor  
tellurem Borea rigidam spirante movere.  
Rura gelu tum claudit hiems nec semine iacto  
concretam patitur radicem adfigere terrae.  
Optima vinetis satio, cum vere rubenti  
320. candida venit avis longis invisae colubris,  
prima vel autumnis sub frigora, cum rapidus Sol  
nondum hiemem contingit equis, iam praeterit aestas.  
Ver adeo frondi nemorum, ver utile silvis;  
vere tument terrae et genitalia semina poscunt.  
Tum pater omnipotens fecundis imbribus Aether  
coniugis in gremium laetae descendit et omnis  
magnus alit magno commixtus corpore fetus.  
Avia tum resonant avibus virgulta canoris  
et Venerem certis repetunt armenta diebus;  
330. parturit almus ager Zephyrique tepentibus auris  
laxant arva sinus; superat tener omnibus humor;  
inque novos soles audent se germina tuto  
credere, nec metuit surgentis pampinus austros  
aut actum caelo magnis aquilonibus imbrem,  
sed trudit gemmas et frondes explicat omnis.

for then too often undamped fires are left by careless  
shepherds, which, on creeping underneath the oily  
bark, will smoulder through the stem to reach their ends,  
whence, leaping upward with a crackling roar of flame,  
will with impunity consume the topmost parts.

The tree, all trees, whole groves together, are engulfed  
in flame, and thick, dark clouds of smoke come billowing out,  
310. especially, that is, if a gale inflate the grove  
for then the wind will fan the conflagration, leaving  
stock exhausted of its strength. No cutting back  
will save them, nor can greenness rise from earth: then comes  
the useless, soar-leafed oleaster, which alone  
survives. And let no knowing fool persuade you into  
turning rock-hard terrain while the North Wind blows.

For winter grips the soil with frost and will prevent  
the plant from pushing rootlets into frozen earth.

The season best for planting vines is when the stork,  
320. that foe to snakes, arrives in earliest blush of spring,  
or onset of the autumn chill, the summer spent,  
but sun's swift horses not yet come to winter's signs.

It is the spring that leafs the forests and the woodland  
glades, that swells the soil and urges seeds to grow.

When sky, the earth's almighty father, falls as rain  
to fecundate his joyful spouse, and all her strength  
lies open to his mighty potency. For then

the brushwood, long unvisited, will fill with singing  
birds and herds renew their seasonal debt to love.

330. The fertile ground gives birth, and of the warm west wind  
the open fields avail themselves: for everywhere  
fresh moisture flows, and young things trust the sun's new warmth.

No fear have vine's fresh shoots of rising Southerlies  
nor driving rain the worst of Northern gales will give,  
but put out buds, unfolding all their soft green leaves.

Non alios prima crescentis origine mundi  
inluxisse dies aliumve habuisse tenorem  
crediderim: ver illud erat, ver magnus agebat  
orbis et hibernis parcebant flatibus Euri,  
340. cum primae lucem pecudes hausere virumque  
terrea progenies duris caput extulit arvis,  
inmissaeque ferae silvis et sidera caelo.

Nec res hunc tenerae possent perferre laborem,  
si non tanta quies iret frigusque caloremque  
inter, et exciperet caeli indulgentia terras.

Quod superest, quaecumque premes virgulta per agros,  
sparge fimo pingui et multa memor occule terra,  
aut lapidem bibulum aut squalentis infode conchas;  
inter enim labentur aquae tenuisque subibit

350. halitus atque animos tollent sata; iamque reperti,  
qui saxo super atque ingentis pondere testae  
urgerent; hoc effusos munimen ad imbris,  
hoc, ubi hiulca siti findit canis aestifer arva.

Seminibus positis superest diducere terram  
saepius ad capita et duros iactare bidentis,  
aut presso exercere solum sub vomere et ipsa  
flectere luctantis inter vineta iuvenco;

tum levis calamos et rasae hastilia virgae  
fraxineasque aptare sudas furcasque valentis,  
360. viribus eniti quarum et contemnere ventos  
adsuescant summasque sequi tabulata per ulmos.

Ac dum prima novis adolescit frondibus aetas,  
parcendum teneris, et dum se laetus ad auras  
palmes agit laxis per purum inmissus habenis,  
ipsa acie nondum falcis temptanda, sed uncis  
carpendae manibus frondes interque legendae.

On such a day, no other, was the sunlight shed  
on earth's first day, I think, and took its destined course.  
That spring it was, the one the whole world coveted,  
when East winds checked the winter's breath. The cattle there  
340. drank in that radiance, and earth's hard race of men  
could rear their heads above the stony plains. In woods  
the beasts ran free, as stars about the firmament.  
Nor had those tender beings need to labour but  
in temperate intervals between the freezing cold  
and searing heat, receive sky's kindness to earth.  
Whatever shoots you press into the earth, be sure  
to sprinkle them with rich manure, and cover them  
with soil, and dig in porous stones and scaly shells  
that water reach them and recuperating air  
350. revive their spirits. Other farmers cover them  
with stones, or pin them down with weighty slabs of tiles,  
protecting them from heavy rain, and Dog-star days  
that cause the earth to crack apart and gape with heat.  
With shoots once planted, it remains to frequently  
disturb the soil about the roots: the two-pronged hoe  
will do, or use the blunt, hard plough to turn the ground,  
the oxen labouring between long lines of vines.  
Construct then trellises with branches stripped of bark,  
and have them propped by staves of ash and sturdy forks,  
360. by which the energetic vines may climb in spite  
of winds, and occupy each tier of elm in turn.  
And, when the first, fresh leaves put forth their youth, you must  
be mindful of their tenderness, and, while the shoot  
with trusting gladness reaches out for air, put by  
the cauterizing pruning knife and with your fingers  
bent, nip out the budding shoots between the leaves.



Inde ubi iam validis amplexae stirpibus ulmos  
exierint, tum stringe comas, tum bracchia tonde—  
ante reformidant ferrum—-tum denique dura  
370. exerce imperia et ramos conpesce fluentis.

Texendae saepes etiam et pecus omne tenendum,  
praecipue dum frons tenera inprudensque laborum;  
cui super indignas hiemes solemque potentem  
silvestres uri adsidue capraeque sequaces  
inludunt, pascuntur oves avidaeque iuvencae.

Frigora nec tantum cana concreta pruina  
aut gravis incumbens scopulis arentibus aestas,  
quantum illi nocuere greges durique venenum  
dentis et admorso signata in stirpe cicatrix.

380. Non aliam ob culpam Baccho caper omnibus aris  
caeditur et veteres ineunt proscaenia ludi  
praemiaque ingeniis pagos et compita circum  
thesidae posuere atque inter pocula laeti  
mollibus in pratis unctos saluere per utres.

Nec non Ausonii, Troia gens missa, coloni  
versibus incomptis ludunt risuque soluto  
oraque corticibus sumunt horrenda cavatis  
et te, Bacche, vocant per carmina laeta tibi que  
oscilla ex alta suspendunt mollia pinu.

390. Hinc omnis largo pubescit vinea fetu,  
conplentur vallesque cavae saltusque profundi,  
et quocumque deus circum caput egit honestum.

Ergo rite suum Baccho dicemus honorem  
carminibus patriis lancesque et liba feremus  
et ductus cornu stabit sacer hircus ad aram  
pinguiaque in veribus torrebimus exta columnis.

Est etiam ille labor curandis vitibus alter,  
cui numquam exhausti satis est: namque omne quot annis  
terque quaterque solum scindendum glebaque versis

Then, later, when their sturdy shoots have grown to clasp  
the elm, you'll strip off leaves and cut back stems — and so,  
before they've learnt to dread the knife — ensure a strict  
370. authority prevents too rich a growth. You'll need  
as well to weave new fences keeping cattle out,  
and most when stems are pliant and not crabbed by use.  
For worse than unkind winter is the wakening sun,  
a time wild ox and woodland deer make sport of leaves,  
and sheep and greedy heifers nibble them: indeed  
no cold with whitish hoar frost or the summer heat  
that sinks so heavily on rocks can do the harm  
that herds will perpetrate with ravening teeth. They nip  
the shoots and, gnawing at the bark, disfigure growth.  
380. No other crime ensures a goat be sacrificed  
at every shrine to Bacchus, or that ancient plays  
appear, and Athens' men reward the rustic's wit.  
On crossing paths and in the fields with winecups strewn,  
or on a goatskin's oily skin, they celebrate.  
Ausonian farmers also, who are Trojan people,  
act rough verses out with riotous laughter, wearing  
fearful masks they've hollowed out from bark. It's you  
they call to, Bacchus, in their joyful verses, you  
they follow, hanging amulets on lofty pines.  
390. So will each vineyard fill with fruit, and ripe abundance  
bless the valleys and the wooded mountain depths,  
and all place else the god might turn his comely head.  
To Bacchus we will consecrate our native songs  
and in his honour set out dish and cakes, will lead  
by horn the goat to altar with a sacrifice  
whose entrails we shall later turn on hazel spits.

## notes

### 12. Maintenance of the vineyard

And there's another task required by vines, of which  
no one can ever do enough. For three or four  
times yearly must the soil be turned, continually

400. aeternum frangenda bidentibus, omne levandum  
fronde nemus. Redit agricolis labor actus in orbem  
atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus.

Ac iam olim, seras posuit cum vinea frondes,  
frigidus et silvis aquilo decussit honorem,  
iam tum acer curas venientem extendit in annum  
rusticus et curvo Saturni dente relictam  
persequitur vitem attondens fingitque putando.

Primus humum fodito, primus devecta cremato  
sarmenta et vallos primus sub tecta referto;

410. postremus metito. Bis vitibus ingruit umbra,  
bis segetem densis obducunt sentibus herbae;  
durus uterque labor: laudato ingentia rura,  
exiguam colito. Nec non etiam aspera rusci  
vimina per silvam et ripis fluvialis arundo  
caeditur, incultique exercet cura salicti.

Iam vincetae vites, iam falcem arbusta reponunt,  
iam canit effectos extremus vinitor antes:  
sollicitanda tamen tellus pulvisque movendus  
et iam maturis metuendus Iuppiter uvis.

420. Contra non ulla est oleis cultura; neque illae  
procurvam expectant falcem rastrosque tenacis,  
cum semel haeserunt arvis aurasque tulerunt;  
ipsa satis tellus, cum dente recluditur unco,  
sufficit humorem et gravidas, cum vomere, fruges.  
Hoc pinguem et placitam Paci nutritor olivam.

400. the clods be broken up with the two-pronged hoe, and vines unburdened of their leaves. In this the farmer's work returns as does the year that follows on its natural course.

And once the vineyard has let drop its leaves, and chilly, keen North winds have stripped the glory from the woods, the prudent farmer thinks towards the coming year and with his curving Saturn's blade attacks the stems of vines, and prunes them back to proper shape. Be first

to dig the ground, the first to bear the cuttings off

and burn them, under cover drag the stakes, but yet

410. be last to harvest. Twice will shadow threaten vines and twice will weeds and briars choke the ground. Both call for heavy work: so praise a large estate but farm

a small one. Forests must be cleared of spiky butcher's

broom and reeds be cut back on the river banks, and then unruly osiers will need your care.

Now vines are tied, and pruning knife is laid aside, now vineyard worker sings to see his finished rows,

but still there's soil to turn, the dust to stir, and work to keep the rain of Jupiter from ripening grapes.

### notes

#### 13. Olives, fruit trees, forest trees

420. Olives, on the contrary, will need no care, and do not wait on sickle or determined hoe, for once they're rooted in the soil and take the air, the earth itself, if ploughed or cut by hoe's curved teeth, provides sufficient moisture for the leaves and fruit.

So cultivate rich olive trees that speak of Peace.

Poma quoque, ut primum truncos sensere valentis  
et viris habuere suas, ad sidera raptim  
vi propria nituntur opisque haud indiga nostrae.  
Nec minus interea fetu nemus omne gravescit  
430. sanguineisque inculta rubent aviaria bacis.  
Tondentur cytisi, taedas silva alta ministrat,  
pascunturque ignes nocturni et lumina fundunt.  
Et dubitant homines serere atque inpendere curam  
quid maiora sequar?—salices humilesque genestae  
aut illae pecori frondem aut pastoribus umbram  
Sufficiunt saepemque satis et pabula melli—  
et iuvat undantem buxo spectare Cytorum  
naryciaeque picis lucos, iuvat arva videre  
non rastris, hominum non ulli obnoxia curae.  
440. Ipsae Caucasio steriles in vertice silvae,  
quas animosi Euri adsidue franguntque feruntque,  
dant alios aliae fetus, dant utile lignum  
navigiis pinus, domibus cedrumque cupressosque.  
Hinc radios trivere rotis, hinc tympana plaustris  
agricolae et pandas ratibus posuere carinas,  
viminibus salices fecundae, frondibus ulmi,  
at myrtus validis hastilibus et bona bello  
cornus, Ituraeos taxi torquentur in arcus.  
Nec tiliae leves aut torno rasile buxum  
450. non formam accipiunt ferroque cavantur acuto.  
Nec non et torrentem undam levis innatat alnus,  
missa Pado; nec non et apes examina condunt  
corticibusque cavis vitiosaeque ilicis alvo.  
Quid memorandum aequae Baccheia dona tulerunt  
Bacchus et ad culpam causas dedit; ille furentis  
centauros leto domuit, Rhoetumque Pholumque  
et magno Hylaeum Lapithis cratera minantem.

The fruit trees also spring up with a natural strength  
towards the stars when sensing trunk's correctly placed  
and reach maturity without much help from us.  
No less, meanwhile, are wildernesses rich with fruit  
430. and haunts of birds caparisoned with crimson berries.  
So the trefoil gives its grazing, pine its torch,  
by which nocturnal fires are fed and grant their light.  
How could men doubt to plant and care and do their part?  
Why talk of mightier trees? The willow and the humble  
broom provide both feed for cattle and for shepherd  
shade, a hedge for crops and food for bees. How good  
to gaze on Cytōrus's rolling boxwood slopes  
or on Nārycian of pitch-pine groves. What joy  
to look on fields that know no work of hoe or man.  
440. For even storm-tossed forests on the barren mountain  
tops of Caucasus, though buffeted, attacked  
and broken by the eastern gales, will give their woods:  
their pine for ships, for house construction cedarwood  
and cypresses: their woods for husbandmen to chamfer  
spokes, make wheels for carts, lay upward curving keel  
for boats. The willow's rich in shoots, the elm in leaves:  
the myrtle and the cornel cherry, brave in war,  
make sturdy shafts for spears; the Syrian bow is bent  
of yew. Smooth lime and box are turned by lathe to shape,  
450. their insides chiselled out with implements. So too  
some trifling alder that the tumbling Po will bear  
has use, and cork-tree cavities, and rotting holes  
in oaks that swarming bees will occupy. What gifts  
so worth our praise has Bacchus brought? His gifts have led  
to crime, for he it was subdued to death wine-maddened  
Centaur: Pholos and Rhoetus, Hylaeus  
that with a heavy drinking bowl had threatened Lapiths.

notes

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,  
agricolas! quibus ipsa procul discordibus armis  
460. fundit humo facilem victum iustissima tellus.  
Si non ingentem foribus domus alta superbis  
mane salutantum totis vomit aedibus undam,  
nec varios inhiant pulchra testudine postis  
inlusasque auro vestes Ephyreiaque aera,  
alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana veneno  
nec casia liquidi corrumpitur usus olivi:  
at secura quies et nescia fallere vita,  
dives opum variarum, at latis otia fundis—  
speluncae vivique lacus et frigida Tempe  
470. mugitusque boum mollesque sub arbore somni—  
non absunt; illic saltus ac lustra ferarum  
et patiens operum exiguoque adsueta iuventus,  
sacra deum sanctique patres; extrema per illos  
iustitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.

Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musae,  
quarum sacra fero ingenti percussus amore,  
accipiant caelique vias et sidera monstrent,  
defectus solis varios lunaeque labores;  
unde tremor terris, qua vi maria alta tumescant  
480. obicibus ruptis rursusque in se ipsa residant,  
quid tantum Oceano properent se tinguere soles  
hiberni, vel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet.  
Sin, has ne possim naturae accedere partis,  
frigidus obstiterit circum praecordia sanguis:

#### 14. Country versus city

How blessed would farmers be to know their happiness,  
to sense that, far from war, the earth, unprompted, gives  
460. its easy sustenance to all. Not theirs the fine  
address to vomit from its lofty gate the hosts  
of morning clients come to madden round its floors  
nor do they gape at posts inlaid with tortoiseshell,  
at dress in cloth of gold, or at Ephyra bronze:  
nor is their white wool thickly steeped in Tyrian dyes  
nor oil adulterated with a cassia touch.  
But peace they have, a life not fraudulent but blessed  
with rich variety: the leisure of a land  
that's theirs, its lakes and caves, the Tempē filled with shade,  
470. and lowing cattle, slumbering on beneath the trees.  
Theirs too the open woodlands and the haunts of beasts,  
where youth, with patient effort and inured to want,  
reveres the gods, defers to age, and finds the last  
of footprints Justice left us when she quit the earth.

#### notes

#### 15. Poet's hope: ideal country life

As for me, I pray the Muses, whose most holy  
rites I celebrate, will now accept me as  
their own, their acolyte, and show me heaven's roads  
and stars, the sun's eclipses and the labouring moon,  
what makes the earth to tremble, and the swelling seas  
480. to burst their bounds and backward sink into themselves,  
why winter suns must fall so fast in ocean's waves,  
and obstacles retard slow-moving nights. But if  
I cannot apprehend the reach of nature, held  
by chilliness of blood about my heart, then may



rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes,  
flumina amem silvasque inglorius. O ubi campi  
Spercheosque et virginibus bacchata Lacaenis  
Taygeta! O, qui me gelidis convallibus Haemi  
sistat et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra!  
490. Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,  
atque metus omnis et inexorabile fatum  
subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari.  
Fortunatus et ille, deos qui novit agrestis,  
panaque Silvanumque senem Nymphasque sorores:  
illum non populi fasces, non purpura regum  
flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres  
aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,  
non res Romanae perituraque regna; neque ille  
aut doluit miserans inopem aut invidit habenti  
500. quos rami fructus, quos ipsa volentia rura  
sponte tulere sua, carpsit; nec ferrea iura  
insanumque forum aut populi tabularia vidit.  
sollicitant alii remis freta caeca ruuntque  
in ferrum, penetrant aulas et limina regum;  
hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque Penatis,  
ut gemma bibat et Sarrano dormiat ostro;  
condit opes alius defossoque incubat auro;  
hic stupet attonitus rostris; hunc plausus hiantem  
per cuneos—geminatus enim plebisque patrumque—  
510. corripuit; gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum,  
exsilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant  
atque alio patriam quaerunt sub sole iacentem.  
Agricola incurvo terram dimovit aratro:  
hinc anni labor, hinc patriam parvosque nepotes  
sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuencos.

the country and the valley-irrigating streams  
console me: may I love, unknown to fame, the woods  
and streams. O plains, the Sperchēus, the Spartan virgins'  
Bacchic rites of Tāygetus! Who'll set me down  
in cooling valleys of the Haemus, there to lie  
beneath the vast protection of the branches' shade?

490. Happy one who knows the cause of things, who casts  
beneath him fear and unrelenting fate, the greedy  
clasp of Acherōn. And fortunate is one  
who knows as well the woodland deities, knows Pan  
and old Sylvanus, and the sisterhood of Nymphs.  
No honour common folk can give him, nor the purple  
moves him, nor can discord of fraternal strife,  
nor Danube steeped in Dācian conspiracies,  
nor wealth of Rome or doom of other states. The poor  
he does not grieve for, nor of others nurse an envy.

500. Fruit he gathers his own trees and fields have borne.  
No heartless rigour of the law he sees, or Forum's  
madness, nor in public archives learns one vexed  
the undiscovered seas with oars, outbraved the sword  
and forced the entrances and halls reserved for kings,  
one sacked a city and poor homes for no more cause  
then drink from jewelled goblets and on Tyrian sleep,  
how one has hoarded wealth to gloat on buried gold,  
or one run marvelling at what the Rostra hears,  
applause re-echoing the length of theatre stalls,

510. how some will bathe in their own brother's blood, and some  
will change for banishment their own sweet hearth and choose  
to live in some strange place beneath a distant sun.

Farmers on the contrary but till the earth with curving  
plough to make their work continuance for sons  
to come, for homeland, herds of cattle and their bulls,

Nec requies, quin aut pomis exuberet annus  
aut fetu pecorum aut cerealis mergite culmi,  
proventuque oneret sulcos atque horrea vincat.  
Venit hiems: teritur Sicyonia baca trapetis,  
520. glande sues laeti redeunt, dant arbuta silvae;  
et varios ponit fetus autumnus et alte  
mitis in apricis coquitur vindemia saxis.  
Interea dulces pendent circum oscula nati,  
casta pudicitiam servat domus, ubera vaccae  
lactea demittunt pinguesque in gramine laeto  
inter se adversis luctantur cornibus haedi.  
Ipse dies agit festos fususque per herbam,  
ignis ubi in medio et socii cratera coronant,  
te libans, Lenaee, vocat pecorisque magistris  
530. velocis iaculi certamina ponit in ulmo,  
corporaque agresti nudant praedura palaestrae.  
Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini,  
hanc Remus et frater, sic fortis Etruria crevit  
scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma,  
septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces.  
Ante etiam sceptrum Dictaei regis et ante  
in pia quam caesis gens est epulata iuvenis,  
aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat;  
necdum etiam audierant inflari classica, necdum  
540. inpositos duris crepitare incudibus enses.  
Sed nos inmensum spatium confecimus aequor,  
et iam tempus equum fumantia solvere colla.

yet know no rest if year's to overflow with fruit,  
the herds spawn young, the fields with Cerēs' sheaves of stalks  
be filled to furrow's width and heaped up high the barns.  
So winter comes, and Sicyōn's olive into oil  
520. is pressed, the acorn-gladdened pigs return, the woods  
give arbutus, autumn sheds its windfall fruits, and high  
on sunny rocks the grapes will ripen into wine.  
The children meanwhile hang upon his kiss; the home,  
unsullied, keeps its purity; the cattle yield  
their milky udders; youthful goats upon the grass  
go horn to horn and butt each other. He himself  
keeps holiday and on the ground about the fire,  
with mixing bowl extended to his friends, he calls  
you Lord of winepress, handing out his own libation.  
530. Then elm is made the target of contesting spears,  
and for a rugged country wrestling bout they strip.  
A life that once the ancient Sabines lived, as Remus  
and his brother did. Etrūria grew strong:  
our Rome in truth became the loveliest of things  
and held all seven hills within her single wall.  
Such was the case before the rule of Cretan Jove,  
or slaughtered bullocks served to feed a sinful race,  
when Saturn lived upon our golden earth and none  
were startled by the blare of trumpets, none by ring  
540. of sword-blades hammered on the brutal anvil's length.  
But now we've covered such a vast expanse, it's time  
to rest the foaming horses and unhitch their yokes.

notes

## LIBER III

Te quoque, magna Pales, et te memorande canemus  
pastor ab Amphryso, vos, silvae amnesque Lycae.

Cetera, quae vacuas tenuissent carmine mentes,  
omnia iam volgata: quis aut Eurysthea durum  
aut inlaudati nescit Busiridis aras?

Cui non dictus Hylas puer et Latonia Delos  
Hippodameque umeroque Pelops insignis eburno,  
acer equis? Temptanda via est, qua me quoque possim  
tollere humo victorque virum volitare per ora.

10. Primus ego in patriam mecum, modo vita supersit,  
Aonio rediens deducam vertice Musas;

primus Idumaeas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas,  
et viridi in campo templum de marmore ponam  
propter aquam. Tardis ingens ubi flexibus errat  
Mincius et tenera praetexit arundine ripas.

In medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit:

illi victor ego et Tyrio conspectus in ostro

centum quadriiugos agitabo ad flumina currus.

Cuncta mihi Alpheum linquens lucosque Molorchi

20. cursibus et crudo decernet Graecia caestu.

Ipsae caput tonsae foliis ornatus olivae

dona feram. Iam nunc sollemnis ducere pompas

ad delubra iuvat caesosque videre iuencos,

vel scaena ut versis discedat frontibus utque

purpurea intexti tollant aulaea Britanni.

In foribus pugnam ex auro solidoque elephanto

Gangaridum faciam victorisque arma Quirini,

atque hic undantem bello magnumque fluentem

Nilum ac navali surgentis aere columnas.

30. Addam urbes Asiae domitas pulsumque Niphaten

# BOOK THREE

## 1. Prologue

I sing of you, great Palēs, you the famous shepherd  
of Amphrysus, you, Lycaeus woods and streams.  
How dated now the themes that charmed by mind with thoughtless  
song. For who's not heard of harsh Eurystheus,  
of altars to the foul Busīris, youthful Hylās,  
Lātōna's Dēlos, Hippodameīa and Pelops,  
famed for ivory shoulder and his furious horse?  
Some other path is called for where I rise above  
the earth and soar victorious from the mouths of men.  
10. If spared, I'll be the first returning to my native  
haunts, to lead from their Aonian heights our native  
Muses, first to bring them victory palms, and build  
in Mantua a marble temple by the stream.  
For where the broad and slowly winding Mincius  
meanders through its water-reeded banks shall Caesar  
stand as deity, and in his honour, robed  
in Tyrian purple, I shall drive a hundred four-horsed  
chariots along its banks. And for my games  
the Greeks shall leave Alphēus and their famed Nemean  
20. groves, contest the running race and, donning rawhide  
gloves, compete in boxing bouts. Myself will wear  
the close-trimmed olive wreath and lead the solemn rites.  
What joy to see the bullocks led to sacrifice,  
to watch the theatre turn its varied scenes, and have  
the cloth-enwoven Britons rise in crimson drapes.  
Its doors in gold and solid ivory will show  
the Orient clash with all-victorious Roman arms,  
and Nile, tempestuous in its heavy flood of war.  
Its columns, topped with prows of bronze, will show the Asian  
30 cities conquered, slain Niphrates, and the Parthians

fidentemque fuga Parthum versisque sagittis,  
et duo rapta manu diverso ex hoste tropaea  
bisque triumphatas utroque ab litore gentes.  
Stabunt et Parii lapides, spirantia signa,  
Assaraci proles demissaeque ab Iove gentis  
nomina, Trosque parens et Troiae Cynthius auctor.  
Invidia infelix Furias amnemque severum  
Cocyti metuet tortosque Ixionis anguis  
immanemque rotam et non exsuperabile saxum.  
40. Interea Dryadum silvas saltusque sequamur  
intactos, tua, Maecenas, haud mollia iussa.  
Te sine nil altum mens incohat; en age segnis  
rumpe moras; vocat ingenti clamore Cithaeron  
Taygetique canes domitrixque Epidaurus equorum  
et vox adsensu nemorum ingeminata remugit.  
Mox tamen ardentis accingar dicere pugnas  
Caesaris et nomen fama tot ferre per annos,  
Tithoni prima quot abest ab origine Caesar.

Seu quis Olympiacae miratus praemia palmae  
50. pascit equos seu quis fortis ad aratra iuencos,  
corpora praecipue matrum legat. Optuma torvae  
forma bovis, cui turpe caput, cui plurima cervix,  
et crurum tenuis a mento palearia pendent;  
tum longo nullus lateri modus; omnia magna,  
pes etiam; et camuris hirtae sub cornibus aures.  
Nec mihi displiceat maculis insignis et albo,  
aut iuga detractans interdumque aspera cornu  
et faciem tauro propior, quaeque ardua tota,  
et gradiens ima verrit vestigia cauda,  
60. Aetas Lucinam iustosque pati hymenaeos  
desinit ante decem, post quattuor incipit annos;  
cetera nec feturae habilis nec fortis aratris.

who, turning, flee to trust in backward arrow's flight.  
By this, two trophies wrested from opposing arms  
and double triumphs won from nations shores apart.  
Here breathing images in Parian stone shall stand:  
Assaracus's lineage, names of races sprung  
from Jove, the Cynthian who founded Troy and Father  
Trōs. How Envy fears the Furies and the grim,  
dark river of Cōcÿtus, Ixiōn's twisted snakes,  
the monstrous wheel and not-to-be contented stone.  
40. But let's to Dryad woods and untouched forest glades,  
for no light task, Maecēnās, have you have laid on me,  
and, lacking you, my mind attempts no lofty theme.  
So come, be done with sluggishness, for Cithaerōn  
loud summons us, Tāÿgetus hounds, and Argolis,  
the tamer of the horse: in calls re-echoing  
the wood assent. For soon I tell of Caesar's blazing  
wars, and bear his famous story on through time  
as far as was Tīthōnus back from Caesar's birth.

## notes

### 2. Breeding Stock

He who'd rear the horse to win the Olympian palm  
50. or raise the sturdy bullock for the plough, should look  
at mother's lineage first. It's true the champion cow  
looks somewhat grim: an ugly head, thick neck, and dewlaps  
pendulous from chin to feet. Her long flanks too  
will have no end to them, with all things cumbersome,  
including feet. Beneath bent horns are shaggy ears,  
and not unfavourable are white, unsightly spots,  
or times she shirked the yoke or threatened with her horns:  
a face formed like a bull's, the whole frame tall, and lengthy  
tail that sweeps out footprints as she walks. The rites  
60. of Hymen and of bearing start her fourth year out,  
and then are over by her tenth: she's after that  
unsuitable for breeding or the heavy plough.



Interea, superat gregibus dum laeta iuventas,  
solve mares; mitte in Venerem pecuaria primus,  
atque aliam ex alia generando suffice prolem.  
Optuma quaeque dies miseris mortalibus aevi  
prima fugit; subeunt morbi tristisque senectus  
et labor, et durae rapit inclementia mortis.  
Semper erunt, quarum mutari corpora malis:  
70. semper enim refice ac, ne post amissa requiras,  
ante veni et subolem armento sortire quotannis.  
Nec non et pecori est idem dilectus equino.  
Tu modo, quos in spem statuas submittere gentis,  
praecipuum iam inde a teneris impende laborem.  
Continuo pecoris generosi pullus in arvis  
altius ingreditur et mollia crura reponit;  
primus et ire viam et fluvios temptare minaces  
audet et ignoto sese committere ponti  
nec vanos horret strepitus. Illi ardua cervix  
80. argutumque caput, brevis alvus obesaque terga,  
luxuriatque toris animosum pectus. Honesti  
spadices glaucique, color deterrimus albis  
et gilvo. Tum, si qua sonum procul arma dedere  
stare loco nescit, micat auribus et tremit artus  
collectumque premens volvit sub naribus ignem.  
Densa iuba, et dextro iactata recumbit in armo;  
at duplex agitur per lumbos spina, cavatque  
tellurem et solido graviter sonat ungula cornu.  
Talis Amyclaei domitus Pollucis habenis  
90. Cyllarus et, quorum Grai meminere poetae,  
Martis equi biuuges et magni currus Achilli.  
Talis et ipse iubam cervice effundit equina  
coniugis adventu pernix Saturnus et altum  
Pelion hinnitu fugiens implevit acuto.

And so, before the cattle's youthful lives be lost,  
loose bulls among them, and ensure from first that loves'  
sweet intercourse will fruitfully renew the herd.  
The best of days for humankind are first to go,  
and pass to sickness, suffering and saddened age,  
until, implacably, stern death will bear us off.  
Among the animals come always those of sickly  
70. character, so change them promptly to avoid  
regrets, that annually new stock rebuild the herd.  
The same selection is required in breeding horses,  
but in raising healthy progeny be sure  
to spend your foremost efforts on their early years.  
Note from the first how one is more the thoroughbred —  
a higher step in fields, a touch more delicate  
in placing hooves, the first to risk the road or threatening  
stream, to trust a bridge, not shy at empty noise.  
He's one with neck held high, a shapely head, a stomach  
80. short, the buttocks plump, a chest that fairly thrums  
with muscles. Chestnut and the grey are best in coat;  
the worst are white and dun. The worthiest, if they  
should hear the distant sound of arms, are ever restive:  
prick their ears up, stand there with their limbs aquiver,  
while from their nostrils snorts a pent-up fire. Their manes  
are thick, and fall back on the right when tossed. Along  
their loins there runs a double ridge; their hooves will scoop  
the ground out with a reassuring, solid sound.  
For so Cyllarus was, whom Pollux of Amÿclae  
90. tamed, and those the Grecian poets praised: the pair  
of Mars, the team we're told that great Achilles drove.  
Such too was swift-hoofed Saturn at his wife's approach  
who spread his mane about his horse's neck and filled  
the heights of Pēlion with neighings as he fled.

notes

Hunc quoque, ubi aut morbo gravis aut iam segnior annis  
deficit, abde domo nec turpi ignosce senectae.  
frigidus in Venerem senior, frustra que laborem  
ingratum trahit, et, si quando ad proelia ventum est,  
ut quondam in stipulis magnus sine viribus ignis,  
100. incassum furit. Ergo animos aevumque notabis  
praecipue; hinc alias artis prolemque parentum  
et quis cuique dolor victo, quae gloria palmae.  
Nonne vides, cum praecipiti certamine campum  
corripuere ruuntque effusi carcere currus,  
cum spes arrectae iuvenum, exsultantiaque haurit  
corda pavor pulsans? Illi instant verbere torto  
et proni dant lora, volat vi fervidus axis;  
iamque humiles, iamque elati sublime videntur  
aera per vacuum ferri atque adsurgere in auras;  
110. nec mora nec requies; at fulvae nimbus harenae  
tollitur, umescunt spumis flatuque sequentum:  
tantus amor laudum, tantae est victoria curae.  
Primus Erichthonius currus et quattuor ausus  
iungere equos rapidusque rotis insistere victor  
Frena Pelethronii Lapithae gyrosque dedere  
impositi dorso atque equitem docuere sub armis  
insultare solo et gressus glomerare superbos.  
Aequus uterque labor, aequae iuvenemque magistri  
exquirunt calidumque animis et cursibus acrem,  
120. quamvis saepe fuga versos ille egerit hostis  
et patriam Epirum referat fortisque Mycenae  
Neptunique ipsa deducat origine gentem.

### 3. Youth and Spirit of the Stallion

Shut up the horse that's worn by sickness, slow with years,  
and do not pardon its senility. For age  
will not bear young, and therefore thanklessly attacks  
a hopeless task, and in a battle, as the flames  
about a stubble field will rage but harmlessly,  
100. will sink to impotence. But note with care their years  
and spirit, pedigree and other gifts: their pain  
at losing, pride in winning palm. For you have seen  
the chariots in bursting from the gates, devour  
the distances in headlong rivalry, when hopes  
of charioteers are at their height, all fear that would  
undo their swelling hearts is drained. They onward race,  
apply the whip and, leaning prone to loose the reins,  
the axle glowing red, now up, now down, they seem  
to conquer air itself, and lacking curb or need  
110. for rest, go thundering on amongst the yellow dust  
with foam and breath of those pursuing at their backs —  
so dear is glory to them and their need to win.  
Erichthonius was the first dare yoke four horse  
to chariot, and stand triumphant over turning  
wheels. The Thessalonian Lapiths, mounted on  
the horses' back, gave bridle and the riding  
ring: they taught the armoured horse to scorn the earth  
and proudly rein in arrogance. Both trials are hard,  
and trainers want a youthful horse, whose fiery spirit  
120. takes to racing, though an older horse has routed  
foes and, coming from Ēpīrus or renown  
Mycēnae, truthfully counts Neptune in his line.

notes

His animadversis instant sub tempus et omnis  
impendunt curas denso distendere pingui,  
quem legere ducem et pecori dixere maritum;  
florentisque secant herbas fluviosque ministrant  
farraque, ne blando nequeat superesse labori  
invalidique patrum referant ieiunia nati.  
Ipsa autem macie tenuant armenta volentes,  
130. atque, ubi concubitus primos iam nota voluptas  
sollicitat, frondesque negant et fontibus arcent.  
Saepe etiam cursu quatiunt et sole fatigant,  
cum graviter tunsis gemit area frugibus et cum  
surgentem ad Zephyrum paleae iactantur inanes.  
Hoc faciunt, nimio ne luxu obtunsior usus  
sit genitali arvo et sulcos oblimet inertis,  
sed rapiat sitiens Venerem interiusque recondat.

Rursus cura patrum cadere et succedere matrum  
incipit. Exactis gravidae cum mensibus errant,  
140. non illas gravibus quisquam iuga ducere plaustris,  
non saltu superare viam sit passus et acri  
carpere prata fuga fluviosque innare rapacis.  
Saltibus in vacuis pascunt et plena secundum  
flumina, muscus ubi et viridissima gramine ripa,  
speluncaeque tegant et saxea procubet umbra.  
Est lucos Silari circa ilicibusque; virentem  
plurimus Alburnum volitans, cui nomen asilo  
Romanum est, oestrum Grai vertere vocantes,  
asper, acerba sonans, quo tota exterrita silvis  
150. diffugiunt armenta; furi mugitibus aether  
concussus silvaeque et sicci ripa Tanagri.  
Hoc quondam monstro horribilis exercuit iras  
Inachiae Iuno pestem meditata iuvencae.

#### 4. Care of Sire and Dam

Knowing this, as time draws near, all trainers turn  
to building up the body of whatever horse  
assume the leadership and head of herd. They cut  
him flowering grasses, feed him corn, from streams  
bring water, lest in his delightful task he prove  
too frail and leave in foal poor mark of parentage.  
The mares are purposely kept slim, and, when is seen  
130. some indication they would mate, they thin the feed  
out further, place a stream between to segregate  
the two, and through the heat will often run them out  
of breath — though all the while the threshing floor is heaped  
with grain, and chaff is in the Zephyr's winnowed breath.  
All this they do lest field's fertility be dulled  
by pampering, its furrows filled with too much dross  
to snatch at seed and gladly force it deep inside.

#### 5. Care of the Dam

When care for sire declines, then that for dam will start.  
Becoming swollen with their young and near their time,  
140. let none require they strain at heavy carts, nor let  
them leap about the roads or in the meadows race,  
nor breast the dangerous turbulence of streams in spate,  
but pasture them in open fields, by brimming streams  
where fields are green with moss and plumpest grass, where caves  
may shelter them, and rocks extend their furthest shade.  
But in Silārus groves, and at Alburnus, green  
with ilex, swarms the fly the Romans call Asīlus,  
— Oestrus is the name in Greek — a fearsome pest  
so numerous, so noisy, the tormented herd  
150. in fast stampeding with their bellowings will make  
the parched Tanagra shudder: banks and trees and air.  
With such a monster Juno harassed Īō once,  
the daughter of Īnachus she reduced to cow.

Hunc quoque, nam mediis fervoribus acrior instat,  
arcebis gravido pecori, armentaque pasces  
sole recens orto aut noctem ducentibus astris.

Post partum cura in vitulos traducitur omnis,  
continuoque notas et nomina gentis inurunt  
et quos aut pecori malint submittere habendo  
160. aut aris servare sacros aut scindere terram  
et campum horrentem fractis invertere glaebis.  
Cetera pascuntur viridis armenta per herbas:  
Tu quos ad studium atque usum formabis agrestem,  
iam vitulos hortare viamque insiste domandi,  
dum faciles animi iuvenum, dum mobilis aetas.  
Ac primum laxos tenui de vimine circlos  
cervici subnecte; dehinc, ubi libera colla  
servitio adsuerint, ipsis e torquibus aptos  
iunge pares et coge gradum conferre iuencos;  
170. atque illis iam saepe rotae ducantur inanes  
per terram et summo vestigia pulvere signent;  
post valido nitens sub pondere faginus axis  
instrepat et iunctos temo trahat aereus orbes.  
Interea pubi indomitae non gramina tantum  
nec vescas salicum frondes ulvamque palustrem,  
sed frumenta manu carpes sata; nec tibi fetae  
more patrum nivea implebunt mulctraria vaccae,  
sed tota in dulcis consument ubera natos.

Sin ad bella magis studium turmasque ferocis,  
180. aut Alpheia rotis praelabi flumina Pisae  
et Iovis in luco currus agitare volantis:  
primus equi labor est, animos atque arma videre

Keep your pregnant herd from such afflictions, grown more virulent with midday heat, by grazing them in early sunlight or when stars lead out the night.

### notes

#### 6. Care of the Young (Calves)

When birth is done with, care transfers itself to calves. At once they're branded with the herd's own name, with signs denoting which are fit for breeding, which reserved 160. for altar's sacrifice, and which assigned to break up clods of earth and cleave with ploughs the unkempt fields. But while the main herd grazes on the fresh green grass you must attend to those reserved for husbandry and train them in submissiveness while still their youth accept it, and their spirit prove amenable. So, first about their necks you'll hang a ring of osier twigs, and later, necks grown used to servitude, you'll yoke the animals in twos and have the bullocks pull at empty carts together, close in steps 170. that leave light prints behind them in the dust. At length they'll pull a truly heavy load that has the beech wood axle creaking, and the wheels there yoked so tight that both are haltered by the same, dragged metallated pole. Meanwhile, do not attempt to rear the untamed young on grass alone, or meagre willow leaves or marshland sedge but feed them hand-plucked standing corn, for cows, on giving birth, will not as old fill up the milking pail but save their sweetest udders for the young.

#### 7. Care of the Young (Foals)

But if your aim be battles, warlike troops or wheels 180. that run beside the Pisan river Alphēus, or chariots that race through groves of Jupiter, your foal's first task is watching fights, of stomaching



bellantum lituosque pati tractuque gementem  
ferre rotam et stabulo frenos audire sonantis;  
tum magis atque magis blandis gaudere magistri  
laudibus et plausae sonitum cervicis amare.  
Atque haec iam primo depulsus ab ubere matris  
audeat, inque vicem det mollibus ora capistris  
invalidus etiamque tremens, etiam inscius aevi.  
190. At tribus exactis ubi quarta accesserit aestas,  
carpere mox gyrum incipiat gradibusque sonare  
compositis sinuetque alterna volumina crurum  
sitque laboranti similis; tum cursibus auras,  
tum vocet, ac per aperta volans ceu liber habenis  
aequora vix summa vestigia ponat harena;  
qualis Hyperboreis Aquilo cum densus ab oris  
incubuit, Scythiaeque hiemes atque arida differt  
nubila: tum segetes altae campique natantes  
lenibus horrescunt flabris summaeque sonorem  
200. dant silvae longique urgent ad litora fluctus;  
ille volat simul arva fuga, simul aequora verrens  
Hinc vel ad Elei metas et maxuma campi  
sudabit spatia et spumas aget ore cruentas,  
Belgica vel molli melius feret esseda collo.  
Tum demum crassa magnum farragine corpus  
crescere iam domitis sinito: namque ante domandum  
ingentis tollent animos prensique negabunt  
verbera lenta pati et duris parere lupatis.

Sed non ulla magis viris industria firmat,  
210. quam Venerem et caeci stimulos avertere amoris,  
sive boum sive est cui gratior usus equorum.  
Atque ideo tauros procul atque in sola relegant  
pascua post montem oppositum et trans flumina lata,  
aut intus clausos satura ad praesepia servant.

the blaring trumpet's call, the heavy groan the dragged  
wheels make, the din of jingling harness in the stall;  
to more and more enjoy the trainer's soft, caressing  
voice, and when his neck is patted, love the sound.  
When once from mother's milk he's weaned he must attend  
the trials and yield his mouth to easy halters, still  
unsteady though, and weak and ignorant of life.  
190. But when three springs are past, and as the fourth arrives  
you'll let him start to pace the ring, with feet that fall  
to natural rhythm, tracing out a twofold arc  
until he's easy at the task. Then send him off  
to chase the winds, unbridled through the plains, until  
his hoofprints leave but merest touch-marks in the dust.  
So fleets the brooding, Hyperborean, harsh  
North Wind that scurries dry and wintry Scythian clouds  
across the plains, when oceans of the standing corn  
will start to tremble at the gusts until whole groves  
200. are agitated, treetops tossing to the shore.  
As winds traverse both sea and land, so will the horse  
sweat on along the Ælis track to turning mark  
with blood-flecked foaming mouth, or, better still,  
will bear the Belgic chariot with graceful neck.  
But only feed them fattening mash when broken in  
to let the bodies swell to total girth, for else  
they grow too wild and mettlesome, and so are apt  
to scorn both pliant whip and harshest bridle's bit.

### notes

#### 8. Dangers of Desire

But whether your concern is horse or breeding cattle,  
210. nothing toughens up their strength so gainfully  
as fending off the goads that Venus takes to them.  
For this are bulls retired to far-off, lonely fields,  
or separated by some hill or daunting width of stream  
or into stalls and well-provisioned pen locked up.

Carpit enim viris paulatim uritque videndo  
femina nec nemorum patitur meminisse nec herbae  
dulcibus illa quidem inlecebris, et saepe superbos  
cornibus inter se subigit decernere amantis.

Pascitur in magna Sila formosa iuvenca:

220. illi alternantes multa vi proelia miscent  
volneribus crebris, lavit ater corpora sanguis,  
versaue in obnixos urgentur cornua vasto  
cum gemitu, reboant silvaeque et longus Olympus

Nec mos bellantis una stabulare, sed alter  
victus abit longeque ignotis exulat oris,  
multa gemens ignominiam plagasque superbi  
victoris, tum, quos amisit inultus, amores;  
et stabula aspectans regnis excessit avitis.

Ergo omni cura viris exercet et inter

230. dura iacet pernix instrato saxa cubili  
frondibus hirsutis et carice pastus acuta,  
et temptat sese atque irasci in cornua discit  
arboris obnixus trunco ventosque lacessit  
ictibus et sparsa ad pugnam proludit harena.

Post ubi collectum robur viresque relectae  
signa movet praecepsque oblitum fertur in hostem:  
fluctus uti medio coepit cum albescere ponto  
longius ex altoque sinum trahit, utque volutus  
ad terras immane sonat per saxa neque ipso

240. monte minor procumbit, at ima exaestuat unda  
verticibus nigramque alte subiectat harenam.

Omne adeo genus in terris hominumque ferarumque,  
et genus aequoreum, pecudes pictaeque volucres,  
in furias ignemque ruunt. Amor omnibus idem.

Tempore non alio catulorum oblita leaena  
saevior erravit campis, nec funera volgo  
tam multa informes ursi stragemque dedere  
per silvas; tum saevus aper, tum pessima tigris;  
heu male tum Libyae solis erratur in agris.

A view of females sets their strength alight, to burn  
there uselessly. And she, alluringly, does not  
allow them easy thoughts of wood or field, but often  
forces proud-horned lovers fight for her. In Sīla's  
mighty woods a lovely heifer grazes while  
220. the bulls do violent battle round about, incurring  
savage wounds and bodies lathered thick with blood.  
Horns they lock, and bellowing groans are heard  
through woods reverberating to the high Olympus.  
Nor do belligerents accept defeat: far off  
will go the conquered one, to exile and to hidden  
shores, lamenting wounds and insults given him.  
Consumed by love that's unavenged, he looks his last  
on stall as though relinquishing ancestral realms.  
Thereafter, all his effort goes to train his strength.  
230. On broken rocks he makes his bed; on prickly  
foliage feeds and pointed sedge. By hardship he  
will test himself, and through the horn will learn to thrust  
his rage, to press on tree trunks and to gore the air  
and paw the sand in practice for the fight. At last,  
his powers collected and with strength renewed, he sallies  
out and rushes at the still-unthinking foe —  
as will a breaking wave, far out to sea, begin  
to curl, and from the depths draw up its curving strength,  
and roll, now shoreward-roaring, sheer against the rocks  
240. to break in welled-up mountains falling into frothy  
depths that end ejecting clumps of darkened sand.  
So all things on the earth — its men and beasts and herds,  
the creatures of the deep, the richly plumaged birds —  
are to this madness driven, for love compels them all.  
No other season sees the lioness, neglecting  
young, so fiercely prowl the wilds, nor unkempt bears  
so boldy spread their death and terror through the woods,  
nor boars so savage, tiger pitiless. Ah! folly  
then it is to wander Libya's wastes alone.

250. Nonne vides, ut tota tremor pertemptet equorum  
corpora, si tantum notas odor attulit auras?

Ac neque eos iam frena virum neque verbera saeva  
non scopuli rupesque cavae atque obiecta retardant  
flumina correptosque unda torquentia montis.

Ipsae ruit dentesque Sabellicus exacuit sus  
et pede prosubigit terram, fricat arbore costas  
atque hinc atque illinc umeros ad volnera durat.

Quid iuvenis, magnum cui versat in ossibus ignem  
durus amor? Nempe abruptis turbata procellis

260. nocte natat caeca serus freta; quem super ingens  
porta tonat caeli et scopulis inlisa reclamant  
aequora; nec miseri possunt revocare parentes  
nec moritura super crudeli funere virgo.

Quid lynces Bacchi variae et genus acre luporum  
atque canum? Quid, quae imbelles dant proelia cervi?

Scilicet ante omnis furor est insignis equarum;  
et mentem Venus ipsa dedit, quo tempore Glauci  
Potniades malis membra absumpsere quadrigae.

Illas ducit amor trans Gargara transque sonantem

270. Ascanium; superant montis et flumina tranant.

Continuoque avidis ubi subdita flamma medullis,  
vere magis, quia vere calor redit ossibus: illae  
ore omnes versae in Zephyrum stant rupibus altis,  
exceptantque levis auras et saepe sine ullis  
coniugiis vento gravidae, mirabile dictu,  
saxa per et scopulos et depressas convallis  
diffugiunt, non, Eure, tuos, neque solis ad ortus,  
in Borean caurumque, aut unde nigerrimus auster  
nascitur et pluvio contristat frigore caelum.

280. Hic demum, hippomanes vero quod nomine dicunt  
pastores, lentum destillat ab inguine virus,  
hippomanes, quod saepe malae legere novercae  
miscueruntque herbas et non innoxia verba

250. The stallion shakes excitedly through all his limbs  
if wind should bring a hint of that familiar scent.  
No longer can the rider's curb or savage blow restrain  
that lust: not rock nor cliff nor river's width, that force  
that in its whirling currents sweeps whole hills away.  
The Sabine boar will hurl itself to water, wet its tusks,  
attack the ground and, rubbing tusks against a tree,  
will toughening up all trace of former shoulder wounds.  
Leander, too, whose very bones had felt the force  
of love's fierce blaze, must dare the storms and swim the troubled  
260. straights so late at night. Above his head the portal  
of the heavens thunders, waves against the rocks  
cry out. His wretched parents cannot call him back,  
nor can the girl who on his battered corpse will die.  
Then what of spotted lynxes, dear to Bacchus, savage  
packs of wolves and dogs, the battles waged by timid  
stags? The rage of mares is surely worst of all.  
For Venus gave her fury to the Potnian horse,  
four-charioted, attacking Glaucus with their teeth.  
For love it is that leads them over Gārgarus,  
270. across the loud Ascānius, to scale the heights  
and brave the rivers. Once that flame has fastened in  
their core (for spring assists: its very warmth awaking  
fire in bones) they stand on rocky heights and, with  
the west wind in their faces, drink in air, at times  
conceiving without union, there miraculously.  
And so they haste through rocks and hills and lowland valleys —  
not toward your rising, East Wind, nor the sun  
but to the north or north-west where the Southerlies  
originate to darken sky with chilly rain.  
280. And only then the poisonous hippomanes — horses'  
madness as the shepherds call it — slowly dribbles  
from their sex: that hippomanes which the worst  
stepmothers stir with herbs and their most evil spells.

notes

Sed fugit interea, fugit inreparabile tempus,  
singula dum capti circumvectamur amore.  
Hoc satis armentis: superat pars altera curae,  
lanigeros agitare greges hirtasque capellas.  
Hic labor, hinc laudem fortes sperate coloni.  
Nec sum animi dubius, verbis ea vincere magnum  
290. quam sit, et angustis hunc addere rebus honorem;  
sed me Parnasi deserta per ardua dulcis  
raptat amor; iuvat ire iugis, qua nulla priorum  
Castaliam molli devertitur orbita clivo.  
Nunc, veneranda Pales, magno nunc ore sonandum.

Incipiens stabulis edico in mollibus herbam  
carpere ovis, dum mox frondosa reducitur aestas,  
et multa duram stipula filicumque manipulis  
sternere subter humum, glacies ne frigida laedat  
molle pecus scabiemque ferat turpisque podagras.  
300. Post hinc digressus iubeo frondentia capris  
arbuta sufficere et fluvios praebere recentis  
et stabula a ventis hiberno opponere soli  
ad medium conversa diem, cum frigidus olim  
iam cadit extremoque inrorat Aquarius anno.  
Haec quoque non cura nobis levioere tuendae,  
nec minor usus erit, quamvis Milesia magno  
vellera mutantur Tyrios incocta rubores:  
densior hinc suboles, hinc largi copia lactis;  
quam magis exhausto spumaverit ubere mulctra,  
310. laeta magis pressis manabunt flumina mammis.  
Nec minus interea barbas incanaque menta  
Cinyphii tondent hirci saetasque comantis  
usum in castrorum et miseris velamina nautis.

## 9. Transition

But time the meanwhile passes on, without recall,  
as I in loving detail stay engrossed. So let's  
now leave the herds. Another subject waits for me:  
the care of woolly flocks and hairy goats. Much labour  
here, but earnest farmers, heap up hopes of fame  
in these. Though hard I know the capture is in words,  
290. or finding honour in so low a theme, yet rapt  
by sweet ambition still I haunt the lonely steeps  
of high Parnassus, thence attaining the Castalian  
spring by downward paths no foot has trod before.  
So let me, gracious Palēs, try the higher song.

### Notes

## 10. Care of Sheep and Goats

Firstly: sheep should graze contentedly on herbs  
in pens until the leafy summer has returned.  
Hard ground beneath them should be strewn with ferns and bales  
of straw, lest chilling frost should irritate their tender  
skins, producing mange, or foot-rot's foul disease.  
300. Now passing on, I recommend that goats receive  
their arbute leaves, with water fresh from streams. Their pens,  
affording shelter from the winds, should face the winter  
sun and midday warmth when cold Aquarius  
sinks down to chilly wetness as he quits the year.  
For goats require no less our care, and also give  
a tidy gain, for all that prices reach their best  
in rich Milēsian fleeces steeped in Tyrian red.  
Goats produce more offspring, so in turn more milk —  
indeed as richer foams the milking pail from emptied  
310. udders, creamier comes the milk from teats when pressed.  
No less important are the hoary and projecting  
beards and bristles of Cinyphian goats, employed  
in camps or coverings that wretched sailors use.



Pascuntur vero silvas et summa Lycae  
horrentisque rubos et amanti ardua dumos:  
atque ipsae memores redeunt in tecta suosque  
ducunt et gravido superant vix ubere limen.  
Ergo omni studio glaciem ventosque nivalis  
quo minor est illis curae mortalis egestas,  
320. avertes victumque feres et virgea laetus  
pabula, nec tota claudes faenilia bruma.  
At vero Zephyris cum laeta vocantibus aestas  
in saltus utrumque gregem atque in pascua mittet,  
Luciferi primo cum sidere frigida rura  
carpamus, dum mane novum, dum gramina canent,  
et ros in tenera pecori gratissimus herba.  
Inde ubi quarta sitim caeli collegerit hora  
et cantu querulae rumpent arbusta cicadae,  
ad puteos aut alta greges ad stagna iubebo  
330. currentem ilignis potare canalibus undam;  
aestibus at mediis umbrosam exquirere vallem,  
sicubi magna Iovis antiquo robore quercus  
ingentis tendat ramos, aut sicubi nigrum  
ilicibus crebris sacra nemus accubet umbra;  
tum tenuis dare rursus aquas et pascere rursus  
solis ad occasum, cum frigidus aera vesper  
temperat et saltus reficit iam roscida luna  
litoraque alcyonem resonant, acalanthida dumi.

Quid tibi pastores Libyae, quid pascua versu  
340. prosequar et raris habitata mapalia tectis?  
Saepe diem noctemque et totum ex ordine mensem  
pascitur itque pecus longa in deserta sine ullis  
hospitiis: tantum campi iacet. Omnia secum

They graze the woods and heights of Lycaeus, among  
the thorns and briars that make this habitat, though ever  
mindful they must lead the young ones home themselves  
though heavy udders scarce will let them mount the step.  
Protect them primarily from icy winds and frost  
for all they seem to ask no care, and with a liberal  
320. hand provide them provender of leafy twigs,  
and do not close your haylofts to them through the winter  
months. When Zephyrs call, and joyful summer sends  
the flocks of sheep and goats to glades and meadowlands,  
you'll rouse them when the morning star appears, and lead  
them out to cooling fields while still the day is fresh,  
and crisp white dew accentuate the taste of tender  
grass. But when the fourth hour has increased their thirst  
and querulous cicadas fill the woods, I'd bring  
them back to wells and pools and to the waters cleanly  
330. running through the holm-oak chutes. At midday heat  
I'd let them look for some deep valley's shade, some place  
where Jupiter's great oak has shading boughs, or groves  
of ilexes, where darkness seems to congregate  
and give an air of holiness to shadowed depths.  
Once more then let them drink from trickling stream and graze  
until the sun is setting. Evening cools the air,  
the moon-shed dew refreshes fields, and gulls call out  
across the shore as finches twitter through the briars.

### notes

#### 11. Libya and Scythia

Why should my verse continue with the Libyan herdsmen,  
340. tell of fields and lives bound up with scattered huts?  
Whole days and nights together flocks diverge across  
those desert lands without a pen to hold them in,  
so far that waste extends. The African who tends them

armentarius Afer agit, tectumque laremque  
armaque Amyclaeumque canem Cressamque pharetram;  
non secus ac patriis acer Romanus in armis  
iniusto sub fasce viam cum carpit et hosti  
ante expectatum positus stat in agmine castris.  
At non, qua Scythiae gentes Maeotiaque unda,  
350. turbidus et torquens flaventis Hister harenas,  
quaque redit medium Rhodope porrecta sub axem.  
Illic clausa tenent stabulis armenta, neque ullae  
aut herbae campo apparent aut arbore frondes;  
sed iacet aggeribus niveis informis et alto  
terra gelu late septemque adsurgit in ulnas.  
Semper hiemps, semper spirantes frigora cauri.  
Tum Sol pallentis haud umquam discutit umbras,  
nec cum invectus equis altum petit aethera, nec cum  
praecipitem Oceani rubro lavit aequore currum.  
360. Concrescunt subitae currenti in flumine crustae  
undaque iam tergo ferratos sustinet orbis,  
puppibus illa prius, patulis nunc hospita plaustris;  
aeraque dissiliunt vulgo vestesque rigescunt  
indutae caeduntque securibus umida vina  
et totae solidam in glaciem vertere lacunae  
stiriaque impexis induruit horrida barbis.  
Interea toto non setius aere ninguit:  
intereunt pecudes, stant circumfusa pruinis  
corpora magna boum, confertoque agmine cervi  
370. torpent mole nova et summis vix cornibus extant.  
Hos non immissis canibus, non cassibus ullis  
puniceaeve agitant pavidos formidine pennae,  
sed frustra oppositum trudentis pectore montem  
comminus obruncant ferro graviterque rudentis  
caedunt et magno laeti clamore reportant.  
Ipsi in defossis specubus secreta sub alta  
otia agunt terra congestaque robora totasque  
advolvere focus ulmos ignique dedere.

carries with him hut and personal gods, for arms  
his Spartan dog and Cretan quiver, copying  
that toughened legionary of Roman fame, who, burdened  
with his weapons on the roads, before the foe  
expect him, stands in columns with his campsite built.  
Not so where dwell the Scythian tribes, Maeōtis  
350. flows, or foaming Danube churns through yellow sands,  
or Rhodopē unwinds beneath the northern pole.  
Here flocks are always penned, for on the plains no grass  
appears, nor even sprouts of leaves, but far and wide,  
the land lies shapeless under covering snow, and ice  
itself forms ridges towering seven ells high. This place  
is ever winter: ever freezing with its north-west  
wind, nor can the pallid sun break through the mists,  
not when his horses raise him through the sky, nor when  
his chariot wheels are washed by Ocean's reddened waves.  
360. First ice floes form, and suddenly the water once  
of running streams will bear the metall'd axle's weight,  
and welcome once afforded boats is given carts.  
All metal cracks with cold, and clothes will stiffen even  
as they're worn, and wine need hewing out with axe.  
Whole lakes will turn to gleaming ice, and on men's straggly  
beards the icicles will bristly hideously.  
Meanwhile the heavens seem immured in snow, the cattle  
die, the oxen stand benumbed in icy coats,  
and deer in herds are left lethargic under such  
370. a snowy weight that only tips of antlers show.  
On these they do not loose the hounds, nor drive them, panic-  
stricken, into nets, or scare with crimson-feathered  
cord, but with their breasts pressed hard against the snow  
they thrust at them with knives and, when the animals  
with pain are bellowing, with shouts of joy then bear  
them home. Secure in deep-set chambers underground  
they live at ease and roll an elm log from the store  
or maybe tree trunk whole into the glowing hearth.

Hic noctem ludo ducunt et pocula laeti  
380. fermento atque acidis imitantur vitea sorbis.  
Talis Hyperboreo septem subiecta trioni  
gens effrena virum Rhiphaeo tunditur euro  
et pecudum fulvis velatur corpora saetis.

Si tibi lanitium curae, primum aspera silva,  
lappaeque tribolique, absint; fuge pabula laeta;  
Continuoque greges villis lege mollibus albos.  
Illum autem, quamvis aries sit candidus ipse,  
nigra subest udo tantum cui lingua palato,  
reice, ne maculis infuscet vellera pullis  
390. nascentum, plenoque alium circumspice campo.  
Munere sic niveo lanae, si credere dignum est,  
Pan deus Arcadiae captam te, Luna, fefellit  
in nemora alta vocans; nec tu aspernata vocantem.  
At cui lactis amor, cytisum lotosque frequentis  
ipse manu salsasque ferat praesepibus herbas.  
Hinc et amant fluvios magis et magis ubera tendunt  
et salis occultum referunt in lacte saporem.  
Multi iam excretos prohibent a matribus haedos  
primaque ferratis praefigunt ora capistris.  
400. Quod surgente die mulsero horisque diurnis,  
nocte premunt; quod iam tenebris et sole cadente,  
sub lucem exportant calathis adit oppida pastor;  
aut parco sale contingunt hiemique reponunt.

Nec tibi cura canum fuerit postrema, sed una  
velocis Spartae catulos acremque Molossum

.  
Here they spend long nights and gladly imitate  
380. our wine with cups of ale and bitter service berries.  
So live the wild tribes of the furthest north, beneath  
the small Bear's seven stars, Rīphēan winds about  
them buffeting, and clad in long-haired tawny hides.

### notes

## 12. Tending Flocks

If breeding sheep for wool, clear first the land of burrs  
and briars, and do not pasture them in richer fields,  
but start by choosing those with whitest wool, both thick  
and smooth, and with the ram, however white, reject  
him if so much his tongue be black beneath his mouth's  
moist roof (for he will stain the herd with dusky spots)  
390. and find a worthier candidate within your flocks.  
With such a gift of snowy wool, so ran the story,  
Pan, the god of Arcady, among the woods  
beguiled the Moon, nor was it offer she refused.  
Those wanting milk should bring by hand abundant clover,  
lotuses and salty grasses to the pens.  
Indeed more eagerly they drink the streams, the more  
will udders swell, and saltiness will season milk.  
Here some by fastening muzzles on their mouths will bar  
the kids from mother's tending soon as born. The milk  
400. that's drawn at dawn or daylight hours they press to cheese  
at night. That drawn at night is carried off at dawn  
in baskets (when the shepherd goes to town) or with  
a saltiness is put by for the winter months.

### notes

## 13. Wool, Milk and Dogs

Do not forget to care for dogs, but feed with fattening  
whey the fierce Molossions and the frisky Spartan

pasce sero pingui. Numquam custodibus illis  
nocturnum stabulis furem incursusque luporum  
aut impacatos a tergo horrebis Hiberos.  
Saepe etiam cursu timidos agitabis onagros  
410. et canibus leporem, canibus venabere dammas,  
saepe volutabris pulsos silvestribus apros  
latratu turbabis agens montisque per altos  
ingentem clamore premes ad retia cervum.

Disce et odoratam stabulis accendere cedrum  
galbaneoque agitare gravis nidore chelydros.  
saepe sub immotis praesepibus aut mala tactu  
vipera delituit caelumque exterrita fugit,  
aut tecto adsuetus coluber succedere et umbrae,  
pestis acerba boum, pecorique aspergere virus,  
420. vit humum. Cape saxa manu, cape robora, pastor,  
tollentemque minas et sibila colla tumentem  
deice. Iamque fuga timidum caput abdidit alte,  
cum medii nexus extremaeque agmina caudae  
solvuntur, tardosque trahit sinus ultimus orbis  
Est etiam ille malus Calabris in saltibus anguis,  
squamea convolvens sublato pectore terga  
atque notis longam maculosus grandibus alvum  
qui, dum amnes ulli rumpuntur fontibus et dum  
vere madent udo terrae ac pluvialibus austris  
430. stagna colit, ripisque habitans hic piscibus atram  
improbis ingluviem ranisque loquacibus explet;  
postquam exusta palus, terraeque ardore dehiscunt,  
exsilit in siccum et flammantia lumina torquens  
saevit agris asperque siti atque exterritus aestu.

pups. With them as guards you need not fear the nighttime thefts from stables, or wolves, or fierce Iberian gangs that plunder everything behind your back. With dogs you'll often set the shy wild ass in flight, 410. or hunt down hare or chase the fallow deer. As often, too, you'll rouse the boar from woodland lair, with baying packs will chase him on, and drive with shouts the antlered stag, across high mountain tops to waiting nets.

## notes

### 14. Pests

Learn how to smoulder fragrant cedar in your stalls and so with fumes repel the venomous water snakes. For often, under long-untended stalls, withdrawn from light, there lurks a viper that is death to touch. Both on the ground and hung up from the roof, a shadowed adder threatens ox, or on the cattle stalled 420. will spray its venom. Farmer: take up stones and staves and, as he hisses, rises, neck inflated, have him down. See how, for flight, he has his timid head retired, and, loosening middle coils, withdrawing tail, makes glistening spirallings slow glide away. Calabrian glens will find that most detested snake that from its scaly convolutions rises up to show great maculations down its belly's length. When rivers seep from any source and soak the ground, or soil is moistened with the Southern rains, its home 430. is pools or on the banks around, to cruelly lurk and fill dark jaws with fish or croaking frogs. But then, when habitat is baked and broken into cracks, it slithers field-wards, maddened by the thirst, to roll a blazing eye and strike with terror all about.



Ne mihi tum mollis sub divo carpere somnos  
neu dorso nemoris libeat iacuisse per herbas,  
cum positis novus exuviis nitidusque iuventa  
volvitur, aut catulos tectis aut ova relinquens  
arduus ad solem et linguis micat ore trisulcis.

440. Morborum quoque te causas et signa docebo.

Turpis ovis temptat scabies, ubi frigidus imber  
altius ad vivum persedit et horrida cano  
bruma gelu, vel cum tonsis inlotus adhaesit  
sudor et hirsuti secuerunt corpora vepres.

Dulcibus idcirco fluviis pecus omne magistri  
perfundunt, udisque aries in gurgite villis  
mersatur missusque secundo defluit amni;  
aut tonsum tristi contingunt corpus amurca  
et spumas miscent argenti et sulfura viva

450. Idaeasque pices et pinguis unguine ceras  
scillamque elleborosque gravis nigrumque bitumen.  
Non tamen ulla magis praesens fortuna laborum est,  
quam si quis ferro potuit rescindere summum  
ulceris os: alitur vitium vivitque tegendo,  
dum medicas adhibere manus ad volnera pastor  
abnegat et meliora deos sedet omnia poscens.

Quin etiam, ima dolor balantum lapsus ad ossa  
cum furit atque artus depascitur arida febris,  
profuit incensos aestus avertere et inter

460. ima ferire pedis salientem sanguine venam,  
Bisaltae quo more solent acerque Gelonus;  
cum fugit in Rhodopen atque in deserta Getarum  
et lac concretum cum sanguine potat equino.

Quam procul aut molli succedere saepius umbrae  
videris aut summas carpentem ignavius herbas  
extremamque sequi aut medio procumbere campo  
pascentem et serae solam decedere nocti:

So never let me slumber underneath the sky,  
or on some woodland pasture lie at ease, for, having  
sloughed its skin, and afresh with youth, its eggs and young  
ones left in nest, malignantly it rises dark  
against the sun and flickers out a three-forked tongue.

## notes

### 15. Diseases

440. And now I come to foul diseases, both their symptoms  
and their causes. Most are sheep at risk from mange  
when chilling rain or bristling frost pierce through their hide,  
or unwashed sweat still clings to bodies sheared, or briars  
have cut them. Shepherds therefore seek to soak their flocks  
completely in the running streams. Puffed up in fleece  
the ram is dowsed, and thence goes floating down the stream;  
Or, after shearing, will they smooth their hides with bitter  
lees, will blend in silvery foam and natural sulphur,  
450. adding pitch from Ida, or thick oily fat,  
with bitumen, or squill or potent hellebore.  
But nothing's so effective as immediately  
to take a knife to sore and clean cut off its weeping  
head. Prompt action kills what otherwise, concealed,  
will fester on, and any shepherd loath to act  
may call on gods without result to mend his luck.  
Indeed, when pain has soaked into the marrow bone  
and with its desiccating fire consumes the limbs,  
it may be wise to draw that heavy fever off  
460. and cut the throbbing vein inside their hooves. For so  
Bīsaltæ do, the fierce Gelonians who flee  
to Rhodopē, the Getæ in the Thracian wilds  
who live on milk congealed with horses' blood. But should  
you see a sheep too much withdrawn to shade, or one  
that grazes lazily on grass's tips, or ever lags  
behind the herd, or in the middle of the field  
sits down, or comes back late and on its own at night,

continuo culpam ferro compesce, prius quam  
dira per incautum serpant contagia volgus.  
470. Non tam creber agens hiemem ruit aequore turbo,  
quam multae pecudum pestes. Nec singula morbi  
corpora corripunt, sed tota aestiva repente,  
spemque gregemque simul cunctamque ab origine gentem.

Tum sciat, aeras Alpis et Norica si quis  
castella in tumultis et Iapydis arva Timavi  
nunc quoque post tanto videat desertaque regna  
pastorum et longe saltus lateque vacantis.  
Hic quondam morbo caeli miseranda coorta est  
tempestas totoque autumnu incanduit aestu  
480. et genus omne neci pecudum dedit, omne ferarum,  
corruitque lacus, infecit pabula tabo.  
Nec via mortis erat simplex, sed ubi ignea venis  
omnibus acta sitis miseros adduxerat artus,  
rursus abundabat fluidus liquor omniaque in se  
ossa minutatim morbo collapsa trahebat.  
Saepe in honore deum medio stans hostia ad aram  
lanea dum nivea circumdatur infula vitta,  
inter cunctantis cecidit moribunda ministros.  
Aut si quam ferro mactaverat ante sacerdos  
490. inde neque impositis ardent altaria fibris  
nec responsa potest consultus reddere vates,  
ac vix suppositi tinguntur sanguine cultri  
summaque ieiuna sanie infusatur harena.  
Hinc laetis vituli volgo moriuntur in herbis  
et dulcis animas plena ad praesepia reddunt;  
hinc canibus blandis rabies venit et quatit aegros  
tussis anhela sues ac faucibus angit obesis.  
Labitur infelix studiorum atque immemor herbae  
victor equus fontisque avertitur et pede terram  
500. crebra ferit; demissae aures, incertus ibidem

then take up knife at once and end the danger, lest  
the sickness spread throughout the unsuspecting flock.

470. No winter storm at sea will strike so furiously  
as pestilence attack a flock. Nor will it fell  
them one by one, but a stroke, the summer's fold  
be carried off, the present and the future hopes.

### notes

#### 16. Plague in Norricum

For proof of this, see even now beneath the soaring  
Alps, the Noric hill forts or Timavus fields,  
and after this long interval of time, no herdsman's  
rule in fields but only dearth and emptiness.

For here the heavens occasioned once a deadly spell  
when earth was warm at summer's end. It struck all types  
480. of animals, both tame and wild. The plague made foul  
the lakes, and filled the very feed with pestilence.

Nor took that death an undemanding course, for first  
a burning thirst throughout the veins slimmed down the frame,  
then brought its change: a liquid filled the bones, and body,  
bit by bit dissolving, sank into its fetid

self. Then often, led in worship to the gods,  
the victim sank at altar while bewildered priests  
would try to fix the snowy fillet on its head.

Or if the ministrants had made the sacrifice,  
490. no fire consumed the entrails in its flames, nor could  
the seer consulted give a customary response:

the sacrificial knife was scarcely tinged with blood  
and thin effusions dribbled on the sand about.

The calves meanwhile had swooned among the healthy grass  
or at their full-stocked mangers gave up sweetest breaths.

A madness seized the formerly submissive dogs,  
and pigs had rasping coughs that filled their swollen throats.

The victor's horse went tottering, avoided grass  
and streams to paw and feebly at the ground. His ears  
500. fell drooping, wet as finally the sweat broke out,

sudor et ille quidem morituris frigidus, aret  
pellis et ad tactum tractanti dura resistit.  
Haec ante exitium primis dant signa diebus;  
sin in processu coepit crudescere morbus,  
tum vero ardentis oculi atque attractus ab alto  
spiritus, interdum gemitu gravis, imaque longo  
ilia singultu tendunt, it naribus ater  
sanguis et obsessas fauces premit aspera lingua.

Profuit inserto latices infundere cornu  
510. Lenaeos; ea visa salus morientibus una;  
mox erat hoc ipsum exitio, furiisque relecti  
ardebant ipsique suos iam morte sub aegra,  
di meliora piis erroremque hostibus illum,  
discissos nudis laniabant dentibus artus.

Ecce autem duro fumans sub vomere taurus  
concidit et mixtum spumis vomit ore cruorem  
extremosque ciet gemitus. It tristis arator  
maerentem abiungens fraterna morte iuvenum,  
atque opere in medio defixa relinquit aratra.

520. Non umbrae aliorum nemorum, non mollia possunt  
prata movere animum, non qui per saxa volutus  
purior electro campum petit amnis; at ima  
solvuntur latera atque oculos stupor urguet inertis  
ad terramque fluit devexo pondere cervix.

Quid labor aut benefacta iuvant? Quid vomere terras  
invertisse gravis? Atqui non Massica Bacchi  
munera, non illis epulae nocuere repostae:  
frondibus et victu pascuntur simplicis herbae,  
pocula sunt fontes liquidi atque exercita cursu

530. flumina, nec somnos abrumpit cura salubris.  
Tempore non alio dicunt regionibus illis  
quaesitas ad sacra boves Iunonis et uris

and cooled with coming death. The skin, uncomfortable,  
both dry and hard, could not now easily be stroked.  
Such were the foremost symptoms of approaching death,  
but, as the sickness started on its savage course,  
the eyes blazed out in pain, and breath was drawn with hardship,  
seeming from great depths below, with moans sometimes,  
or even sobs that racked the body from the groin  
to flanks — when from the nostrils trickled darkened blood,  
and tongue was roughened, swollen and thick-plugged the throat.  
510. Some thought to ease distress by putting in a horn  
and pouring wine, but even this device but brought  
on death more furiously and in their frenzy — may  
the gods be kinder to the good, and leave such ends  
for enemies — they gouged at bodies with their teeth.  
So steamed the bull that stood before the heavy plough  
but now brought down with blood still foaming from the mouth  
to groan his last. How sadly must the ploughman loose the yoke  
from off the mate who mourns his death, and leave the plough  
immured in earth and halfway through its task. No shade  
520. from sombre woods or pleasant meadowlands revives  
his heart, nor can the water coursing through the plains  
that falls as quick electrum over tinkling rocks.  
With flanks unstrung a listless stupor clouds his eyes,  
the neck hangs woodenly and sinks to earth. What good  
are toil and service now? Or strength with which he ploughed?  
Yet neither Massic wine nor self-indulgent feast  
had ever touched these gentle occupants of fields,  
that munched on simple grass or leaves, put mouth to limpid  
springs or drank at ever-running streams, and in  
530. their innocence found nothing to disturb their sleep.  
And never through these realms before, they say, were oxen  
sought in vain for Juno's rites, nor were the carts

imparibus ductos alta ad donaria currus.  
Ergo aegre rastris terram rimantur et ipsis  
unguibus infodiunt fruges montisque per altos  
contenta cervice trahunt stridentia plaustra.  
Non lupus insidias explorat ovilia circum  
nec gregibus nocturnus obambulat; acrior illum  
cura domat; timidi dammae cervique fugaces  
540. nunc interque canes et circum tecta vagantur.  
Iam maris immensi prolem et genus omne natantum  
litore in extremo, ceu naufraga corpora, fluctus  
proluit; insolitae fugiunt in flumina phocae.  
Interit et curvis frustra defensa latebris  
vipera et attoniti squamis adstantibus hydri.  
Ipsis est aer avibus non aequus et illae  
praecipites alta vitam sub nube relinquunt.  
Praeterea iam nec mutari pabula refert  
artes nocent quaesitaeque; cessere magistri  
550. Phillyrides Chiron Amythaoniusque Melampus.  
Saevit et in lucem Stygiis emissa tenebris  
pallida Tisiphone Morbos agit ante Metumque,  
inque dies avidum surgens caput altius effert:  
Balatu pecorum et crebris mugitibus amnes  
arentesque sonant ripae collesque supini:  
Iamque catervatim dat stragem atque aggerat ipsis  
in stabulis turpi dilapsa cadavera tabo  
donec humo tegere ac foveis abscondere discut.  
Nam neque erat coriis usus nec viscera quisquam  
560. aut undis abolere potest aut vincere flamma;  
ne tondere quidem morbo inluvieque peresa  
vellera nec telas possunt attingere putris;  
verum etiam invisos si quis temptarat amictus,  
ardentes papulae atque immundus olentia sudor  
membra sequebatur nec longo deinde moranti  
tempore contactos artus sacer ignis edebat.

so drawn by ill-matched buffaloes to her high shrines,  
nor men indeed so pitifully dragged their hoes  
across the ground, sowed seeds by hand, and up the arduous  
hills need haul with straining neck their creaking carts.  
The wolf no longer warily encircles fold,  
or night time prowls among the flocks: a sharper care  
subdues him now. The timid deer and running stag  
540. lie down with dogs, or come as waifs about the house.  
The offspring of the sea's colossal depths lie beached  
on shores, like shipwrecked corpses spewed up by the waves,  
and, oddly, seals inhabit saltless streams. So dies  
the viper unprotected by her winding lair,  
so dies the water-snake, its scales erect in fright.  
Unkind to birds is air itself, and so they fall  
from what was living happiness beneath the clouds.  
No change of pasture aids, and remedies are worse.  
Helpless seem the great physicians: Chīrōn, son  
550. of Phillyra, Melampūs, Amythāōn's son.  
Let loose from Stygian darkness, pale Tisiphonē  
drives Plague and Fear before her. Day by day she grows  
more huge, to rear up hideously her hungry head.  
The dried-up river banks and low surrounding hills  
complain with herds distressed and bleating flocks of sheep.  
The plague brings havoc to the herds: within the pens  
the bodies, piled up, putrify — and bring disease  
till men have learnt to lay on soil or in deep pits  
quick bury them. Nor can the hides or flesh be used,  
560. though washed in streams or cooked on fires. The fleece cannot  
be shorn, so threadbare is its filth, nor should the rot  
be touched. Indeed, should anyone employ the hateful  
stuff, at once will sores and suppurating sweat  
erupt to overwhelm his foully reeking limbs,  
and no long interval elapse before that dreadful  
fire burst forth to greedily consume him whole.

notes



## LIBER IV

Protinus aerii mellis caelestia dona  
exsequar: hanc etiam, Maecenas, adspice partem.  
Admiranda tibi levium spectacula rerum  
magnanimosque duces totiusque ordine gentis  
mores et studia et populos et proelia dicam.  
In tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria, si quem  
numina laeva sinunt auditque vocatus Apollo.

Principio sedes apibus statioque petenda,  
quo neque sit ventis aditus—nam pabula venti  
10. ferre domum prohibent—neque oves haedique petulci  
floribus insultent aut errans bucula campo  
decutiat rorem et surgentes atterat herbas.  
Absint et picti squalentia terga lacerti  
pinguibus a stabulis meropesque aliaeque volucres  
et manibus Procne pectus signata cruentis;  
omnia nam late vastant ipsasque volantes  
ore ferunt dulcem nidis immitibus escam.  
At liquidi fontes et stagna virentia musco  
adsint et tenuis fugiens per gramina rivus,  
20. palmaque vestibulum aut ingens oleaster inumbret,  
ut, cum prima novi ducent examina reges  
vere suo ludetque favis emissa iuventus,  
vicina invitet decedere ripa calori,  
obviaque hospitii teneat frondentibus arbos.  
In medium, seu stabit iners seu profluet umor,  
transversas salices et grandia conice saxa,  
pontibus ut crebris possint consistere et alas

# BOOK FOUR

## 1. Introduction

And now of Heaven's honey from the air I tell.  
Again, Maecēnās, look with favour on my task.  
I'll show you spectacles of marvels based on smallest  
things — brave chiefs, whole habits of the tribe, pursuits  
and battles — labours it will seem as spent on nothings.  
But not then nothing is the fame should unpropitious  
gods permit me, and Apollo hear my prayer.

### notes

## 2. Siting and Care of the Apiary

First you need a site for bees where winds do not  
intrude, for winds prevent their flying home with food  
10. and one where sheep or skittish kid do not disturb  
the flowers, or heifer straying through the fields brush off  
the dew or trample down the springing grass. And let  
no brightly coloured lizard with its scaly back  
approach, bee-eaters either, nor the other birds,  
nor Procnē with her breast besmirched with bloodied hands,  
for each spreads havoc generally, and on the wind  
will snatch at bees and feed them to their greedy chicks.  
But let there be clear streams nearby, and mossy pools,  
a rivulet that shyly runs athwart the grass,  
20. or let a palm or huge, wild olive tree protect some part,  
so when the leaders of the swarm fly forth in spring,  
and young from tending honeycombs will come and play,  
the neighbouring river bank attract them with its shade,  
hospitably, the leaves protecting from the heat.  
And in the midst of water, whether streams be swift  
or sluggish, see that willows stretch across, large stones  
be laid, and many bridges where they'll rest their wings

pandere ad aestivum solem, si forte morantes  
sparserit aut praeceps Neptuno immerserit Eurus.

30. Haec circum casiae virides et olentia late  
serpylla et graviter spirantis copia thymbrae  
floreat inriguumque bibant violaria fontem.

Ipsa autem, seu corticibus tibi suta cavatis,  
seu lento fuerint alvaria vimine texta,  
angustos habeant aditus: nam frigore mella  
cogit hiems, eademque calor liquefacta remittit.

Utraque vis apibus pariter metuenda; neque illae  
nequiquam in tectis certatim tenuia cera  
spiramenta linunt fucoque et floribus oras

40. explent collectumque haec ipsa ad munera gluten  
et visco et Phrygiae servant pice lentius Idae.

Saepe etiam effossis, si vera est fama, latebris  
sub terra fovere larem, penitusque repertae  
pumicibusque cavis exesaeque arboris antro.

Tu tamen et levi rimosa cubilia limo  
ungue fovens circum et raras superinice frondes.

Neu propius tectis taxum sine, neve rubentes  
ure foco caneros, altae neu crede paludi,

aut ubi odor caeni gravis aut ubi concava pulsu

50. saxa sonant vocisque offensa resultat imago.

Quod superest, ubi pulsam hiemem sol aureus egit  
sub terras caelumque aestiva luce reclusit,

illae continuo saltus silvasque peragrant  
purpureosque metunt flores et flumina libant  
summa leves. Hinc nescio qua dulcedine laetae  
progeniem nidosque foveant, hinc arte recentes  
excudunt ceras et mella tenacia fingunt.

and take up warmth if caught out by the eastern wind  
that's seized the loiters and thrust them in the stream.  
30. And let around them grow green cassia, a wealth  
of thyme and savory that fills the air with pungent  
scent, and violets that drink from bubbling springs.  
The hives themselves, if made from hollow cork or matted  
osier stems, need narrow entrances, for as  
the cold congeals the honey, so will heat return  
it to liquid state. Both forms are dangerous  
to bees, and not for nothing do they imitate  
each other lining every cell's thin wall with wax  
and patching up each crevice in the hive with gum  
40. derived from flowers and stored, a substance stickier  
than birdlime is, or pitch that Phrygian Ida yields.  
Another well-known preference they have in hiding  
places is for tunnels underground, snug homes  
they make of voids in pumice-stone or holes in trees.  
And you must give their crannied dormitories warmth  
by smearing clay and over it a skin of leaves.  
Do not allow a yew tree near the hive, or roast  
red crabs on open hearths. Beware of swamps around  
and smell of mud, for that strong odour chills the air,  
50. and curved rocks, too, that, struck, will send an echo back.

## notes

### 3. Outside the Hive

But when the aureate sun has driven winter under  
ground, the heavens arrayed with summer's light, the bees  
will roam the woodlands, visiting bright flowers, and as  
they skim the water surfaces will thereby drink.  
Now curiously imbued with unknown joy they care  
for young ones in the hive, and with a new-found art  
refashion wax and honey to their sticky shapes.

Hinc ubi iam emissum caveis ad sidera caeli  
nare per aestatem liquidam suspexeris agmen  
60. obscuramque trahi vento mirabere nubem,  
contemplator: aquas dulces et frondea semper  
tecta petunt. Huc tu iussos adsperge sapes,  
trita melisphylla et cerinthae ignobile gramen,  
tinnitusque cie et Matris quate cymbala circum.  
ipsae consident medicatis sedibus, ipsae  
intima more suo sese in cunabula condent.

Sin autem ad pugnam exierint, nam saepe duobus  
regibus incessit magno discordia motu,  
continuoque animos vulgi et trepidantia bello  
70. corda licet longe praesciscere; namque morantes  
Martius ille aeris rauci canor increpat et vox  
auditur fractos sonitus imitata tubarum;  
tum trepidae inter se coeunt pennisque coruscant  
spiculaque exacuunt rostris aptantque lacertos  
et circa regem atque ipsa ad praetoria densae  
miscentur magnisque vocant clamoribus hostem.  
Ergo ubi ver nactae sudum camposque patentes,  
erumpunt portis; concurritur, aethere in alto  
fit sonitus, magnum mixtae glomerantur in orbem  
80. praecipitesque cadunt; non densior aere grando,  
nec de concussa tantum pluit ilice glandis.  
ipsi per medias acies insignibus alis  
ingentes animos angusto in pectore versant,  
usque adeo obnixi non cedere, dum gravis aut hos  
aut hos versa fuga victor dare terga subegit.  
Hi motus animorum atque haec certamina tanta  
pulveris exigui iactu compressa quiescent.

So when you see the swarm relinquish hive and rise  
up through the radiant summer air toward the star-bright  
60. heavens, a dusky torrent blown so by the wind,  
you need to track them closely: water or some leafy  
haunt they seek. Then scatter scents that I prescribe:  
crushed balm and lowly tufts of honeywort, and have  
the dissonance of Cybelē's soft cymbals sound.  
For soon they settle in their sleeping hordes and sink,  
as is their usual custom, into secret nests.

### notes

#### 4. The Fighting Swarms

But if for battle bees have issued forth, as happens  
when two kings divide the hive against itself,  
at once and from a distance you will sense the furious  
70. hum and agitation of their pulsing hearts.  
A brassy, heavy sound will scold the lingerers  
and then a noise like broken trumpet blasts will bring  
them fearsomely together with their rush of wings.  
They use their mouths to sharpen stings, then test their strength  
and, congregating round their general's tent of war,  
will loudly hurl their execrations at the foe.  
So when they've found a clear spring day and open field  
they fly the gates and gather: high in air is heard  
the sound of their commingling into one great sphere  
80. and then they headlong fall. Not thicker from the sky  
comes pelting hail or acorns shaken from the oak.  
The chiefs move through the middle ranks on rich-barred wings  
their mighty souls invigorating fainter hearts:  
for, steadfast, they'll not yield until the conqueror  
has forced this host or that to show its rear in flight.  
Though fierce the battle and their fiery passions, pour  
but powder on them and they settle into dust.

Verum ubi ductores acie revocaveris ambo,  
deterior qui visus, eum, ne prodigus obsit,  
90. dede neci; melior vacua sine regnet in aula.  
Alter erit maculis auro squalentibus ardens;  
nam duo sunt genera: hic melior, insignis et ore  
et rutilis clarus squamis, ille horridus alter  
desidia latamque trahens inglorius alvum.  
Ut binae regum facies, ita corpora plebis.  
Namque aliae turpes horrent, ceu pulvere ab alto  
cum venit et sicco terram sput ore viator  
aridus; elucent aliae et fulgore coruscant  
ardentes auro et paribus lita corpora guttis.  
100. Haec potior suboles, hinc caeli tempore certo  
dulcia mella premes, nec tantum dulcia, quantum  
et liquida et durum Bacchi domitura saporem.  
At cum incerta volant caeloque examina ludunt  
contemnuntque favos et frigida tecta relinquunt,  
instabiles animos ludo prohibebis inani.  
Nec magnus prohibere labor: tu regibus alas  
eripe; non illis quisquam cunctantibus altum  
ire iter aut castris audebit vellere signa.

Invitent croceis halantes floribus horti  
110. et custos furum atque avium cum falce saligna  
Hellespontiacy servet tutela Priapi.  
Ipse thymum pinosque ferens de montibus altis  
tecta serat late circum, cui talia curae;  
ipse labore manum duro terat, ipse feraces  
figat humo plantas et amicos inriget imbres.  
Atque equidem, extremo ni iam sub fine laborum  
vela traham et terris festinem advertere proram,  
forsitan et, pingues hortos quae cura colendi  
ornaret, canerem, biferique rosaria Paesti,

Now when you've culled both captains from the battle, choose  
the weaker one to put to death: avoid the waste  
90. and let the victor rule his realm alone. The better  
shows his maculation brimmed in gleaming gold.  
For bees are of two types. Where one, the better sort,  
resplendently is dressed in reddish scales, the other's  
slow and drags ingloriously a heavy paunch.  
As kings may differ, so do bodies they control.  
Where some are coarse and ugly, like a travel-stained  
and weary soul that, dust begrimed, must spit out dirt  
from dried up mouth, the others gleam with brilliancy,  
ablaze in gold, their bodies showing equal spots.  
100. This is the worthier kind, and at the sky's due season  
will yield on pressing sweetest honey, bright and clear,  
which you will need to tame the ragged edge of wine.  
And when the swarms are flying aimlessly, as though  
they have no cells to go to, and the hive is cold,  
you must restrain their spirits from such play. An easy  
thing to do: retrieve the leaders when they've dropped  
and tear off wings. The others will not dare to fly  
while these remain as standards now confined to camp.

## notes

### 5. Surrounding Gardens

And let there be a garden rich with saffron flowers  
110. and watchman Priāpus, who guards the Hellespont  
from thieves and birds, protecting with his yellow hook.  
And from the uplands regions let the keeper bring  
wild thyme and pine tree saplings, planting them around  
the hive with his own toughened hands, there digging in  
the fruitful slips, and he himself to water them.  
Myself, if not approaching here the end of toil  
with sail unfurled and prow set onward to the shore,  
would tell how cultivation adds its ornament  
to garden riches, Paestum's roses, flowering twice,



120. quoque modo potis gauderent intiba rivis  
et virides apio ripae, tortusque per herbam  
cresceret in ventrem cucumis; nec sera comantem  
narcissum aut flexi tacuissem vimen acanthi  
pallentesque hederas et amantes litora myrtos.  
Namque sub Oebaliae memini me turribus arcis,  
qua niger umectat flaventia culta Galaesus,  
Corycium vidisse senem, cui pauca relict  
iugera ruris erant, nec fertilis illa iuven  
nec pecori opportuna seges nec commoda Baccho.

130. Hic rarum tamen in dumis olus albaque circum  
lilia verbenasque premens vescumque papaver  
regum aequabat opes animis seraque revertens  
nocte domum dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis.  
Primus vere rosam atque autumno carpere poma,  
et cum tristis hiems etiamnum frigore saxa  
rumperet et glacie cursus frenaret aquarum,  
ille comam mollis iam tondebat hyacinthi  
aestatem increpitans seram Zephyrosque morantes.

Ergo apibus fetis idem atque examine multo  
140. primus abundare et spumantia cogere pressis  
mella favis; illi tiliae atque uberrima pinus,  
quotque in flore novo pomis se fertilis arbor  
induerat, totidem autumno matura tenebat.  
Ille etiam seras in versum distulit ulmos  
eduramque pirum et spinos iam pruna ferentes  
iamque ministrantem platanum potantibus umbras.  
Verum haec ipse equidem spatiis exclusus iniquis  
praetereo atque aliis post me memoranda relinquo.

120. how endive revels in the streams it drinks, how parsley  
greens its banks, and gourd in tumbling over grass  
distends its paunch. I'd not omit narcissi, late  
in flowering, or acanthus with its curling stem,  
or pale-leafed ivy, or the seashore loving myrtle  
flowers. For I remember, under high Tarentum  
towers, where dark Galaesus waters yellow fields,  
I watched an old Cōrycian with patchy fields  
that were not worth the ploughing by young bulls, to pasture  
quite unsuited, and for vines unfit, go planting  
130. vegetables among the brambles, setting lilies  
palely round them, vervain and the poppy, slender  
stemmed: all meet for kings, he thought, and coming home  
at night, would load his table with unpurchased feasts.  
He was the first to gather roses in the spring,  
pick apples in the autumn, and, when gloomy winter  
split the rocks with frost and froze the running streams,  
was cutting tender hyacinths, though calling summer  
slow to come, and Zephyr winds too late arrived.  
He was the first to be endowed by kindly bees,  
140. so rich the swarms and more the honey from their combs.  
His bay trees and the limes rewarded him, and many  
blooms would choose for preference his fruitful trees:  
a ripe abundance when the autumn came. Moreover,  
he had planted out slow-growing elms in rows,  
and hardwood pears and blackthorns bearing sloes, and planes  
that gave to travellers who drank there welcome shade.  
But barred by lack of space I pass from this, and leave  
to others after me to render their account.

notes

Nunc age, naturas apibus quas Iuppiter ipse  
150. addidit, expediam, pro qua mercede canoros  
Curetum sonitus crepitantiaque aera secutae  
Dictaeo caeli regem pavere sub antro.  
Solae communes natos, consortia tecta  
urbis habent magnisque agitant sub legibus aevum,  
et patriam solae et certos novere penates,  
venturaeque hiemis memores aestate laborem  
experiuntur et in medium quaesita reponunt.  
Namque aliae victu invigilant et foedere pacto  
exercentur agris; pars intra saepta domorum  
160. Narcissi lacrimam et lentum de cortice gluten  
prima favis ponunt fundamina, deinde tenaces  
suspendunt ceras: aliae spem gentis adultos  
educunt fetus, aliae purissima mella  
stipant et liquido distendunt nectare cellas.  
Sunt quibus ad portas cecidit custodia sorti,  
inque vicem speculantur aquas et nubila caeli  
aut onera accipiunt venientum aut agmine facto  
ignavum fucos pecus a praesepibus arcent.  
Fervet opus, redolentque thymo fragrantia mella.  
170. ac veluti lentis Cyclopes fulmina massis  
cum properant, alii taurinis follibus auras  
accipiunt redduntque, alii stridentia tingunt  
aera lacu; gemit impositis incudibus Aetna;  
illi inter sese magna vi bracchia tollunt  
in numerum versantque tenaci forcipe ferrum:  
non aliter, si parva licet componere magnis,  
Cecropias innatus apes amor urget habendi,  
munere quamque suo. Grandaevis oppida curae  
et munire favos et daedala fingere tecta.

## 6. Natural History of the Hive

To come now to the qualities of bees, which Jove  
150. has given them in gratitude. For they, beneath  
the harsh, concealing clangour the Cūrētes made,  
sustained the king of heaven in the Dictēan cave.  
For bees alone hold children and their roofs in common,  
and live beneath the majesty of one wide law.  
They have one country only and its household gods,  
and are aware that winter comes, and so, the summer  
through, will labour for the general good of all. While some  
are diligent to gather foodstuffs, others work  
by covenant in fields: and some, walled in at home,  
160. will lay the first foundations of the comb: with tears  
of the narcissi flowers or with a tree bark's sluggish  
gum they fix the sticky wax. Some educate  
the young, their nation's hope, some pack the cells with sweetest  
honey, fragrant nectar filling up the tiny cells.  
By lot it falls to some to guard the gates; they watch  
in turn for rain or cloudy skies, while some accept  
full loads from those returning, or by closing ranks  
prevent that idle crowd of drones' return to hive.  
With fervent work the honey's fragrance fills with thyme.  
170. For, like the Cyclōpes that, forging thunderbolts  
with rapid strokes upon the tardy ore, the bellows  
blasting air, some dip the hissing bronze into  
the trough, as Aetna groaning on the anvils sees  
now one and now another lift its arms with mighty  
force and turn the metal round with gripping tongs.  
And so, comparing small things with the great, an innate  
love of manufacture drives Cecropian bees,  
and each in its own way. The aged plan the hive  
and intricately make its walls and honeycombs.

180. At fessae multa referunt se nocte minores,  
crura thymo plenae; pascuntur et arbuta passim  
et glaucas salices casiamque crocumque rubentem  
et pinguem tiliam et ferrugineos hyacinthos.

Omnibus una quies operum, labor omnibus unus:  
mane ruunt portis; nusquam mora; rursus easdem  
vesper ubi e pastu tandem decedere campis  
admonuit, tum tecta petunt, tum corpora curant;  
fit sonitus, mussantque oras et limina circum.

Post, ubi iam thalamis se composuere, siletur

190. in noctem fessosque sopor suus occupat artus.

Nec vero a stabulis pluvia impendente recedunt  
longius aut credunt caelo adventantibus Euris,  
sed circum tutae sub moenibus urbis aquantur,  
excursusque breves temptant et saepe lapillos,  
ut cumbae instabiles fluctu iactante saburram,  
tollunt, his sese per inania nubila librant.

Illum adeo placuisse apibus mirabere morem,  
quod neque concubitu indulgent nec corpora segnes  
in Venerem solvunt aut fetus nixibus edunt:

200. verum ipsae e foliis natos, e suavibus herbis  
ore legunt, ipsae regem parvosque Quirites  
sufficiunt aulasque et cerea regna refigunt.

\*Saepe etiam duris errando in cotibus alas  
attrivere ultroque animam sub fasce dedere:  
tantus amor florum et generandi gloria mellis.

Ergo ipsas quamvis angusti terminus aevi  
excipiat, neque enim plus septima ducitur aestas,  
at genus immortale manet multosque per annos  
stat fortuna domus et avi numerantur avorum.

180. The youths, returning tired to hives at night, will ferry  
thyme's rich pollen in their thighs: they range arbutus  
trees and pale green willows, cassia and red-tipped  
crocus, lime tree blooms and purple hyacinths.  
For everyone a time to rest and time to work.  
At dawn all quit the gates, no loiterers, until  
the star of evening signals a return from fields,  
when all come home again to rest themselves. At gates  
and entrances there first appears a humming sound;  
then afterwards, within their chambers, all is still  
190. as night comes on and sleep invades their wearied limbs.  
Not far from home they roam when rain is threatening  
nor trust the sky at Eastern gales, but congregate  
about the city walls in safety, venturing out  
on short flights only, getting water, and as boats  
unsteady on the tossing waves will take on weight,  
lift tiny stones for balancing through misted air.

### notes

#### 7. Natural History on a higher level

You'll marvel also at their chastity: these creatures  
never marry, nor to concupiscence give  
themselves, nor by labour do they bring forth young  
200. but bear them in their mouths to scented herb and leaves.  
Alone they have their king and tiny citizens  
and make in miniature their court and waxy realms  
in which they serve: indeed at times about the rocks  
they'll bruise their wings or give up life itself to bear  
their loads, so selflessly attuned to flowers and making  
honey. So, although their span of life is short,  
and not exceeding seven summers, still the race  
goes on, continually, and annals of the hive  
amount to generations born of generations.

210. Praeterea regem non sic Aegyptus et ingens  
Lydia nec populi Parthorum aut Medus Hydaspes  
observant. Rege incolumi mens omnibus una est;  
amisso rupere fidem constructaque mella  
diripere ipsae et crates solvere favorum.  
Ille operum custos, illum admiruntur et omnes  
circumstant fremitu denso stipantque frequentes  
et saepe attollunt umeris et corpora bello  
obiectant pulchramque petunt per vulnera mortem.  
His quidam signis atque haec exempla secuti  
220. esse apibus partem divinae mentis et haustus  
aetherios dixere; deum namque ire per omnes  
terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum.  
Hinc pecudes, armenta, viros, genus omne ferarum,  
quemque sibi tenues nascentem arcessere vitas;  
scilicet huc reddi deinde ac resoluta referri  
omnia nec morti esse locum, sed viva volare  
sideris in numerum atque alto succedere caelo.

Siquando sedem angustam servataque mella  
thesauris relines, prius haustu sparsus aquarum  
230. ora fove fumosque manu praetende sequaces.  
Bis gravidos cogunt fetus, duo tempora messis,  
Taygete simul os terris ostendit honestum  
Pleas et Oceani spretos pede reppulit amnes,  
aut eadem sidus fugiens ubi Piscis aquosi  
tristior hibernas caelo descendit in undas.  
Illis ira modum supra est, laesaeque venenum  
morsibus inspirant et spicula caeca relinquunt  
adfixae venis animasque in vulnere ponunt.

210. Indeed, it's not in Egypt or the Lydian realms,  
in Parthian tribes or Median Hydaspsēs  
that kings are shown such reverence. If he is well,  
then all is well. But if he perishes they break  
their faith, destroying hives and honeycombs they've built.  
He is the guardian of their needs, and murmuringly  
they cluster thick about him, often raise him up  
and to the battle fray will gladly give themselves,  
when by those injuries they have a noble death.  
By signs as these and instances it has been thought  
220. that some divine intelligence attends the bees,  
a draft of that ethereal strain, the god that lives  
in earth itself and boundless seas and depths of sky.  
From him come flocks and herds and men and all the feral  
beasts, who at their birth drink in his breath, returning  
it, to be dispersed, restored, made whole at last:  
for death is no real place, but some long journeying  
to reach the stars or that most lofty part of heaven.

### notes

#### 8. Honey harvest and disease

But when you would unseal their narrow entrances  
and take their honey, wet your mouth with water first  
230. and from your hand let loose a penetrating smoke.  
It's twice a year that farmers harvest heavy yields:  
the first when Tāygetē the Plēiad's shown her honest  
face to earth and with a scornful foot has spurned  
the seas, and second when she leaves the rainy Fishes'  
sign and sinks with sorrow into wintry seas.  
Their rage is all consuming when they're hurt. They stab  
in venom hard, and on a vein will leave their sting,  
so in that wounding silently give up their lives.



Sin duram metues hiemem parcesque futuro  
240. contunsoque animos et res miserabere fractas,  
at suffire thymo cerasque recidere inanes  
quis dubitet? nam saepe favos ignotus adedit  
stellio et lucifugis congesta cubilia blattis  
immunisque sedens aliena ad pabula fucus  
aut asper crabro imparibus se immiscuit armis,  
aut dirum tiniae genus, aut invisae Minervae  
laxos in foribus suspendit aranea casses.  
Quo magis exhaustae fuerint, hoc acrius omnes  
incumbent generis lapsi sarcire ruinas  
250. complebuntque foros et floribus horrea texent.  
Si vero, quoniam casus apibus quoque nostros  
vita tulit, tristi languebunt corpora morbo—  
quod iam non dubiis poteris cognoscere signis:  
continuo est aegris alius color, horrida vultum  
deformat macies, tum corpora luce carentum  
exportant tectis et tristia funera ducunt;  
aut illae pedibus conexae ad limina pendent,  
aut intus clausis cunctantur in aedibus, omnes  
ignavaeque fame et contracto frigore pigrae.  
260. Tum sonus auditur gravior, tractimque susurrant,  
frigidus ut quondam silvis immurmurat Auster,  
ut mare sollicitum stridit refluentibus undis,  
aestuat ut clausis rapidus fornacibus ignis:  
hic iam galbaneos suadebo incendere odores  
mellaque harundineis inferre canalibus, ultro  
hortantem et fessas ad pabula nota vocantem.  
Proderit et tunsum gallae admiscere saporem  
Arentesque rosas aut igni pingua multo  
defruta vel psithia passos de vite racemos  
270. Cecropiumque thymum et grave olentia centaurea.  
Est etiam flos in pratis, cui nomen amello  
fecere agricolae, facilis quaerentibus herba;  
namque uno ingentem tollit de caespite silvam,  
aureus ipse, sed in foliis, quae plurima circum  
funduntur, violae sublucescunt purpura nigrae;

Yet none, though pitying what winter's hardship brings  
240. in broken hopes and lives, will hesitate to smoke  
them softly out with fragrant thyme, and cut away  
unwanted cells with care. For often newts have nibbled  
combs, or in their sleeping chambers have the beetles,  
shunning light, constructed nests, or idle drones  
secured themselves some other's meal. Or then ferocious  
hornets match their arms, or moths appear, or yet  
Minerva's foe, the spiders, over doorways hang  
their filmy nets. The more their stores are drained, the more  
in eagerness they make up what was lost, the rows  
250. rebuilt in rich accumulations drawn from flowers.  
But if — since life for bees brings troubles as for man —  
their bodies languish, blighted by disease, the illness  
shows itself in no uncertain signs. Their hue  
is first to suffer as they fail, and then a ragged  
leanness mars their looks; in sad processions  
they bear the lifeless corpses from the hive, or leave  
in doorways, hung in clusters by their feet. Whole hives  
may be to dwelling places then confined, by want  
emaciated, cramped or shrivelled by the cold.  
260. Finally is heard a surrusation, hum  
the cold South Winds occasion in surrounding woods,  
or troubled seas made mutinous by waves' return,  
or sound of flames when roaring through a furnace flue.  
And here I'd counsel you to heat up fragrant gums  
or bring them honey wrapped in hollow pipes of reed:  
to listless bees encouragement and natural food.  
Be sure to add dried petals of the rose with pounded  
oak gall's essence, syrups made by boiling wines  
to must, or raisins made from clustered Psithian grapes,  
270. and smell of Attic thyme and pungent centaury.  
There is a flower that grows in meadows too: Amellus  
being what the rustics call it: one you'll quickly  
find: it forms dense clumps about a single stem,  
the centre gold, but showing more a dusky blue  
or violet sheen on petals clustered further out.

[saepe deum nexis ornatae torquibus arae;]  
asper in ore sapor; tonsis in vallibus illum  
pastores et curva legunt prope flumina Mellae.  
Huius odorato radices incoque Baccho  
280. pabulaque in foribus plenis adpone canistris.

Sed siquem proles subito defecerit omnis,  
nec genus unde novae stirpis revocetur habebit,  
tempus et Arcadii memoranda inventa magistri  
pandere, quoque modo caesis iam saepe iuvenicis  
insincerus apes tulerit cruor. Altius omnem  
expediam prima repetens ab origine famam.  
Nam qua Pellaei gens fortunata Canopi  
accolit effuso stagnantem flumine Nilum  
et circum pictis vehitur sua rura phaselis,  
290. quaque pharetratae vicinia Persidis urget,  
[et viridem Aegyptum nigra fecundat harena,  
et diversa ruens septem discurrit in ora  
usque coloratis amnis devexus ab Indis]  
omnis in hac certam regio iacit arte salutem.  
Exiguus primum atque ipsos contractus in usus  
eligitur locus; hunc angustique imbrice tecti  
parietibusque premunt artis et quattuor addunt,  
quattuor a ventis obliqua luce fenestras.  
Tum vitulus bima curvans iam cornua fronte  
300. quaeritur; huic geminae nares et spiritus oris  
multa reluctanti obstruitur, plagisque perempto  
tunsa per integram solvuntur viscera pellem.  
Sic positum in clauso linqunt et ramea costis  
subiciunt fragmenta, thymum casiasque recentes.  
Hoc geritur Zephyris primum impellentibus undas,  
ante novis rubeant quam prata coloribus, ante  
garrula quam tignis nidum suspendat hirundo.

[The altars of the gods are often decked with it,  
in woven garlands.] Bitter to the taste, it's picked  
by shepherds tending flocks by Mella's winding streams.  
You boil its roots in richly scented wine, and then,  
280. as basketfuls of food at doorways, leave it out.

## notes

### 9. The Last Resort

But should the hive entirely fail, and ignorant  
of how to generate new stock, I'd recommend  
what wise Arcadian masters taught, and have new bees  
produced from stagnant blood of young bulls killed. This tale  
you'll find along the Macedonian Canopus  
where folk beside the overflowing Nile can sail  
about their fields in painted skiffs, for all that Persia's  
arrow-threatening frontier presses close. [Unfolding  
all the tale, I'll follow it as from the source  
290 among the dark-skinned races on to where the river,  
opening out to seven mouths, makes floods of silt  
ensure the richness of green Egypt's fields.] Indeed  
whole realms around depend on this bee-keepers's art,  
which gives them sure prosperity. So, first they choose  
a site, which must be small, indeed restricted to  
this very purpose, roofing it with narrow tiles.  
Then in the walls they cut four windows where the slanting  
light from all four corners of the sky comes in.  
That done, they find a bull-calf horned with two year's growth  
300. and, overcoming fierce resistance, mouth and nostrils  
quite stop up. And when they've beaten this poor beast  
to death, its body pulped beneath unbroken hide,  
they drag it to this little room and lay beneath  
it branches, thyme and fresh-picked cassia. This needs  
be done when first the Zephyrs ruffle waves, before  
the meadowlands are richly clothed in spring's fresh tints  
or from the rafters chattering swallows hang their nests.

Interea teneris tepefactus in ossibus umor  
aestuat et visenda modis animalia miris,  
310. trunca pedum primo, mox et stridentia pennis,  
miscentur tenuemque magis magis aera carpunt,  
donec, ut aestivis effusus nubibus imber,  
erupere aut ut nervo pulsante sagittae,  
prima leves ineunt si quando proelia Parthi.

Quis deus hanc, Musae, quis nobis extudit artem?  
Unde nova ingressus hominum experientia cepit?  
Pastor Aristaeus fugiens Peneia Tempe,  
amissis, ut fama, apibus morboque fameque,  
tristis ad extremi sacrum caput adstitit amnis  
320. multa querens atque hac adfatus voce parentem:  
`Mater, Cyrene mater, quae gurgitis huius  
ima tenes, quid me praeclara stirpe deorum,  
si modo, quem perhibes, pater est Thymbraeus Apollo,  
invisum fatis genuisti? aut quo tibi nostri  
pulsus amor? quid me caelum sperare iubebas?  
En etiam hunc ipsum vitae mortalis honorem,  
quem mihi vix frugum et pecudum custodia sollers  
omnia temptanti extuderat, te matre relinquo.  
Quin age et ipsa manu felices erue silvas,  
330. fer stabulis inimicum ignem atque interfice messes,  
ure sata et validam in vites molire bipennem,  
tanta meae si te ceperunt taedia laudis.'  
At mater sonitum thalamo sub fluminis alti  
sensit. Eam circum Milesia vellera Nymphae  
carpebant hyali saturo fucata colore,  
drymoque Xanthoque Ligeaque Phyllodoceque,  
caesariem effusae nitidam per candida colla,  
Nesaeae Spioque Thaliaque Cymodoceque,

In time the moisture in the softened bones ferments,  
and creatures marvellous to look on, lacking feet  
310. at first, but soon with bustling wings, emerge  
to more and more essay the air around, till like  
a deluge out of summer clouds they stream, as thick  
as arrows sped from the resounding bow with which  
the Parthian horsemen, lightly-armed, begin their fight.

## notes

### 10. Aristaeus and Cyrene

What god, then, Muses, gave this craft to us? And how  
arose this new experience for man? It's said  
the shepherd Aristaeus, leaving the Penean  
Tempē, lost his bees to famine and disease,  
had come in sadness to the sacred spring. Complaining  
320. to the one who gave him birth, he said, 'Why did  
you, mother, my Cÿrēnē mother, living in  
these river depths, conceive me of divinity —  
Apollo of Thymbraeus fathered me, you claim —  
if fate will spurn me so? And why withhold your love  
but still invest me with immortal life? This crown  
I've gained by care and constant toil, by husbandry  
of crops and herds, for all you stay my mother yet,  
I hereby will renounce. So, come: with your own hand  
tear up my fruiting trees, incinerate my folds,  
330. destroy my corn, my seedlings, with your two-edge sword  
hack down my vines if you disparage what I've done.  
Within her chambered river depths his mother heard,  
the Nymphs around her carding their Milesian fleeces  
dyed with many colours of the sea. For here  
was Drymo found, and Xanthō, Phyllodocē  
and Ligēa, all with shining locks of hair  
about their snowy shoulders. Here was Cÿdippē  
and yellow-haired Lycōrias: one a virgin,

Cydippeque et flava Lycorias, altera virgo,  
340. altera tum primos Lucinae experta labores,  
Clioque et Beroe soror, Oceanitides ambae,  
ambae auro, pictis incinctae pellibus ambae,  
atque Ephyre atque Opis et Asia Deiopea  
et tandem positis velox Arethusa sagittis.  
Inter quas curam Clymene narrabat inanem  
Vulcani Martisque dolos et dulcia furta,  
aque Chao densos divum numerabat amores  
carmine quo captae dum fuis mollia pensa  
devolvunt, iterum maternas impulit aures  
350. luctus Aristaei, vitreisque sedilibus omnes  
obstipuere; sed ante alias Arethusa sorores  
prospiciens summa flavum caput extulit unda  
et procul: `O gemitu non frustra exterrita tanto,  
Cyrene soror, ipse tibi, tua maxima cura,  
tristis Aristaeus Penei genitoris ad undam  
stat lacrimans et te crudelem nomine dicit.'  
Huic percussa nova mentem formidine mater,  
`duc, age, duc ad nos; fas illi limina divum  
tangere,' ait. Simul alta iubet discedere late  
360. flumina, qua iuvenis gressus inferret. At illum  
curvata in montis faciem circumstetit unda  
accepitque sinu vasto misitque sub amnem.  
Iamque domum mirans genetricis et umida regna  
speluncisque lacus clausos lucosque sonantes  
ibat et ingenti motu stupefactus aquarum  
omnia sub magna labentia flumina terra  
spectabat diversa locis, Phasimque Lycumque  
et caput, unde altus primum se erumpit Enipeus  
unde pater Tiberinus et unde Aniena fluenta  
370. saxosusque sonans Hypanis Mysusque Caicus,  
et gemina auratus taurino cornua vultu

other new acquainted with Lucina's pains.

340. Here Cliō sat, her sister Beroē, and both  
were Ocean's sisters, robed in gold and mottled skins,  
Ephyrē, Opis, and the Asian Deïopēa,  
Arethusa, that swift huntress, with her arrows  
laid aside. But all were listening, working wool  
on turning spindles, as Clymenē told her story:  
tales of Vulcan's vain precautions, wiles of Mars,  
the stolen joys and ever-tangled loves of gods,  
innumerable, from Chaos down. But then once more  
his mother heard her Aristaeus cry, when all  
350. were startled, sat in wonder on their glassy thrones.  
Arethusa was the first to look, and, raising  
golden head above the waves, she turned and said,  
'Cyrēnē, sister: it is Aristaeus calling,  
he who should be foremost in your cares. He stands  
in tears beside the river of your sire Peneus,  
and much in bitterness becalls your name.' At once,  
so struck with terror was her mind, his mother said,  
'Then fetch him here, for he like us is ever one  
allowed to walk the threshold of the gods.' At this  
360. she opened up a pathway for the youth to enter —  
when the river, wound into a hill above him,  
straightway took him in its mighty coils and sent  
him ever hurtling headlong on. In torrents lost,  
he'll look in wonder on his mother's throne, her water  
realms, her pools with caves for roof, and groves so filled  
to echoing with muffled sounds. Beneath the earth  
he sees the rivers in their plunging courses: Phāsis,  
Lycus, source of deep Enīpeus, now father  
370. Tiber, brooks of Anio, the rock-resounding  
Hypanis, Mysian Caīcus, Ēridanus,



Eridanus, quo non alius per pingua culta  
in mare purpureum violentior effluit amnis.  
Postquam est in thalami pendentia pumice tecta  
perventum et nati fletus cognovit inanes  
Cyrene, manibus liquidos dant ordine fontes  
germanae tonsisque ferunt mantelia villis;  
pars epulis onerant mensas et plena reponunt  
pocula, Panchaeis adolescentunt ignibus arae;  
380. et mater, `Cape Maeonii carchesia Bacchi:  
Oceano libemus,' ait. Simul ipsa precatur  
Oceanumque patrem rerum Nymphasque sorores  
centum quae silvas, centum quae flumina servant.  
Ter liquido ardentem perfundit nectare Vestam,  
ter flamma ad summum tecti subiecta reluxit.  
Omne quo firmans animum sic incipit ipsa:  
`Est in Carphatio Neptuni gurgite vates  
caeruleus Proteus, magnum qui piscibus aequor  
et iuncto bipedum curru metitur equorum.  
390. Hic nunc Emathiae portus patriamque revisit  
Pallenen, hunc et Nymphae veneramur et ipse  
grandaevus Nereus; novit namque omnia vates,  
quae sint, quae fuerint, quae mox ventura trahantur;  
quippe ita Neptuno visum est, immania cuius  
armenta et turpes pascit sub gurgite phocas.  
Hic tibi, nate, prius vinclis capiendus, ut omnem  
expediat morbi causam eventusque secundet.  
Nam sine vi non ulla dabit praecepta, neque illum  
orando flectes; vim duram et vincula capto  
400. tende; doli circum haec demum frangentur inanes.  
Ipsa ego, te, medios cum sol accenderit aestus,  
cum sitiunt herbae et pecori iam gratior umbra est,  
in secreta senis ducam, quo fessus ab undis  
se recipit, facile ut somno adgrediare iacentem.

that hard, bull-headed river with its golden horns  
than which no other butts so fiercely through the fertile  
lands to flood into the dark-blue sea. At last  
he reached the pumice-pendant chamber of his mother.  
She, on finding that his grief was needless, had  
her sisters bathe his hands with sweet spring water, bring  
him towels of close-shorn nap, and, with a cloth laid out  
for lavish banquet, liberally have wine cups filled.  
The altars blazed with their Panchāen spice: his mother  
380. spoke: 'Now take the bowls of this Maeonian wine  
and pour to Ōceanus our libations — prayers  
to father Ocean and the sisterhood of Nymphs  
that guard the hundred forests and the hundred streams.'  
Three times she sprinkled nectar on the glowing hearth  
and three times brightness leapt up to the roof to give  
a cheering omen to the heart. At length she spoke:  
'Within the vast Carpathian deeps there lives a seer,  
the sea-blue Prōteus, whose chariot is borne  
vast distances by fishes and by two-hoofed horse.  
390. He currently is visiting Ēmathian harbours  
and Pallenē, place of birth. Reverence  
we do him, Nymphs, and old Nereus even. He  
can see the present, past and what's to come — ordained  
by Neptune so, whose monstrous herd of seals  
and sea cows Prōteus must tend beneath the waves.  
My son, you need to seize and hold him fast to have  
a useful answer to your present troubles. Without  
that action he will never answer, nor to prayers  
will ever yield. Apply strong force and binding shackles  
400. that all his wily stratagems be rendered vain.  
And when the sun has kindled into midday heat,  
the grass is dried up, herd athirst for the shade, I'll take  
you to the ancient one's retreat when tired of waves,  
and readily you can approach him as he lies asleep.

Verum ubi correptum manibus vinculisque tenebis,  
tum variae eludent species atque ora ferarum  
Fiet enim subito sus horridus atraque tigris  
squamosusque draco et fulva cervice leaena,  
aut acrem flammae sonitum dabit atque ita vinculis  
410. excidet, aut in aquas tenues dilapsus abibit.  
Sed quanto ille magis formas se vertet in omnes,  
tam tu, nate, magis contende tenacia vincula,  
donec talis erit mutato corpore, qualem  
videris, incepto tegeter cum lumina somno.  
Haec ait et liquidum ambrosiae defundit odorem,  
quo totum nati corpus perduxit; at illi  
dulcis compositis spiravit crinibus aura  
atque habilis membris venit vigor. Est specus ingens  
exesi latere in montis, quo plurima vento  
420. cogitur inque sinus scindit sese unda reductos,  
deprensus olim statio tutissima nautis;  
intus se vasti Proteus tegit obice saxi.  
Hic iuvenem in latebris aversum a lumine Nympha  
collocat; ipsa procul nebulis obscura resistit.  
Iam rapidus torrens sitientes Sirius Indos  
ardebat, caelo et medium sol igneus orbem  
hauserat; arebant herbae et cava flumina siccis  
faucibus ad limum radii tepefacta coquebant:  
cum Proteus consueta petens e fluctibus antra  
430. ibat; eum vasti circum gens umida ponti  
exsultans rorem late dispergit amarum.  
Sternunt se somno diversae in litore phocae.  
Ipse, velut stabuli custos in montibus olim,  
vesper ubi e pastu vitulos ad tecta reducit,  
auditisque lupos acuunt balatibus agni,  
considit scopulo medius numerumque recenset.

But, once within your hands and fetters, forms most strange  
he'll make, with shapes of beasts confounding you. You'll meet  
a fearsome tiger, scaly serpent, bristly boar,  
or lioness that sports a tawny mane. He'll flare  
up into fire, or, by dissolving into ever  
410. formless water, will elude you and be gone.  
The more he changes into diverse form, the more  
you must refasten every bond you make, until  
the last of changes brings him back to what he was  
when first encountered, sleep upon his heavy lids.'  
With this she pours out fragrant ambergris to have  
the whole of her son's body lathed, ensuring as  
his hair exhaled a sweetened odour so his limbs  
took up their supple strength. There is a cave recessed  
into the mountain flanks where waves are often driven  
420. deep by winds, and so diverted to secluded  
coves: the sailors' haven when they're tempest tossed.  
Behind a mighty rock is home to Prōteus,  
and here the Nymph conceals her son. She then withdraws,  
averse to light, to be aloft and veiled in mist.  
The Dog-star with its scorching heat afflicting thirsty  
Indians stood blazing in the heavens, and half  
his circuit had the fiery sun consumed. The grass  
was tinder dry, the sun baked rivers down to mud,  
when Prōteus came out from the waves to seek his usual  
430. haunt. Around him tribal creatures of the deep  
cavorted in their splash and play. The seals were lost  
in slumber here and there along the beach though now  
their guardian acts the tender on the hills who, when  
the evening star has beckoned calves' return from fields,  
and sounds of bleating flocks awaken wolf, and whet  
his appetite, must then sit down and number them.

Cuius Aristaeo quoniam est oblata facultas,  
vix defessa senem passus componere membra  
cum clamore ruit magno manicisque iacentem  
440. occupat. Ille suae contra non immemor artis  
omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum,  
ignemque horribilemque feram fluviumque liquentem.  
Verum ubi nulla fugam reperit fallacia, victus  
in sese redit atque hominis tandem ore locutus:  
` Nam quis te, iuvenum confidentissime, nostras  
iussit adire domos? Quidve hinc petis?' inquit. At ille:  
` Scis, Proteu, scis ipse; neque est te fallere quicquam  
sed tu desine velle. Deum praecepta secuti  
venimus hinc lapsis quaesitum oracula rebus.  
450. Tantum effatus. Ad haec vates vi denique multa  
ardentes oculos intorsit lumine glauco  
et graviter frendens sic fatis ora resolvit.

Non te nullius exercent numinis irae;  
magna luis commissa: tibi has miserabilis Orpheus  
haudquaquam ob meritum poenas, ni fata resistant,  
suscitat et rapta graviter pro coniuge saevit.  
Illa quidem, dum te fugeret per flumina praeceps,  
immanem ante pedes hydrum moritura puella  
servantem ripas alta non vidit in herba.  
460. At chorus aequalis Dryadum clamore supremos  
implerunt montes; flerunt Rhodopeiae arces  
altaque Pangaea et Rhesi mavortia tellus  
atque Getae atque Hebrus et Actias Orithyia.  
Ipse cava solans aegrum testudine amorem  
te, dulcis coniunx, te solo in litore secum,  
te veniente die, te decedente canebat.

Here Aristaeus saw his chance at once. Before  
the old man wearily could rest his limbs, he burst  
in straightway on him and, shouting, bound him fast  
440. His prey had not a whit forgotten his strange arts,  
and changed at once to fearsome shapes: he was a fire,  
ferocious beast and then a river flowing on.  
But when no guile achieved its end, sad-spirited,  
he came back to his former shape, and with a human  
voice, replied at last, 'Who told you to invade  
my home? What can you want, presumptuous youth?'  
'You know already, Prōteus. For such as you  
can none deceive. Give up your wiles. The gods require  
I seek in oracle an answer to my wronged  
450. affairs.' Such were his words. The seer, twisting round  
beneath his bonds, now turned his blazing grey-green eyes  
on him, and, gnashing teeth, responded with his fate.

## notes

### 11. Orpheus and Eurydicē

'Not for nothing do the wrathful powers pursue,  
and great the crime for which you pay, which would  
be worse had fate not intervened. It's Orpheus  
in piteous grieving for his wife intends this curse.  
For she, the death-doomed girl, in headlong flight, escaping  
you along the riverbank, did not beneath  
her feet observe the river snake within the grass.  
460. Her friends, the water Dryads filled the mountain tops  
with their lament: the crags of Rhodopē and high  
Pangaeus wept, the Rhēsus warrior lands, Getae  
and Hebrus and the Actian Ōrithÿia.  
In solace on that lonely shore, continually  
of his sweet wife he sang, on lute of tortoiseshell,  
from daylight's first of dawning till the day retired.

Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis,  
et caligantem nigra formidine lucum  
ingressus manesque adiit regemque tremendum  
470. nesciaque humanis precibus mansuescere corda.

At cantu commotae Erebi de sedibus imis  
umbrae ibant tenues simulacraque luce carentum,  
quam multa in foliis avium se milia condunt  
vesper ubi aut hibernus agit de montibus imber,  
matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita  
magnanimum heroum, pueri innuptaeque puellae,  
impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum,  
quos circum limus niger et deformis harundo  
Cocyti tardaue palus inamabilis unda  
480. alligat et noviens Styx interfusa coercet.

Quin ipsae stupuere domus atque intima Leti  
tartara caeruleosque implexae crinibus angues  
Eumenides, tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora  
atque Ixionii vento rota constitit orbis.

Iamque pedem referens casus evaserat omnes;  
redditaque Eurydice superas veniebat ad auras,  
pone sequens, namque hanc dederat Proserpina legem,  
cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem,  
ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere manes.

490. Restitit Eurydicenque suam iam luce sub ipsa  
immemor heu! victusque animi respexit. Ibi omnis  
effusus labor atque immitis rupta tyranni  
foedera, terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernis.

Illa, Quis et me, inquit, miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu,  
quis tantus furor? En iterum crudelia retro  
Fata vocant, conditque natantia lumina somnus.

Iamque vale: feror ingenti circumdata nocte  
invalidasque tibi tendens, heu non tua, palmas!

Taenarum' jaws he braved, the lofty gate of Dīs,  
and, through the groves of gloomy horror, on he went  
to where the powers of Hades dwell, its fearsome king  
470. holds court, and hearts can never yield to human prayer.  
There, song-awoken, came the insubstantial shades  
of Erebus, the wraiths of those deprived of light,  
innumerable as birds find refuge in the leaves  
when evening comes, or wintry rain will clothe the hills:  
men, matrons, noble-hearted heroes, boys,  
unmarried girls and youths conveyed to funeral pyres  
amid their parents' tears — all that the black mud  
and loathsome reeds of Cōcȳtus within the sluggish  
waters of that hated lake bind fast, and which  
480. the Styx imprisons with its ninefold twisting coils.  
Then spellbound stood those very halls of death, the pit  
of Tartarus, and Furies with their serpent-twisted  
locks. With triple mouths agape stood Cerberus.  
The winds fell silent. Still was Ixiōn's turning wheel.  
But when, returning, each false step avoided, with  
a saved Eurydicē there close behind him pressing  
to the light — for so had ordered Proserpine  
— a sudden madness fell on Orpheus, no doubt  
excusable, if spirits had that power to grant.  
490. He stopped, and on his loved Eurydice, at that  
first threshold of the air, looked back — when all was lost,  
immediately the treaty with that ruthless king  
lay abrogated and undone. Thrice thunder rolled  
above the dark Avernian pool. "What madness has destroyed  
both me," in misery she said, "and Orpheus?  
Relentlessly the fates recall me and my eyes  
once more are veiled in sleep. Farewell, for into darkness  
I am borne away, and hands outstretched to me



dixit et ex oculis subito, ceu fumus in auras  
500. commixtus tenues, fugit diversa, neque illum,  
prensantem nequiquam umbras et multa volentem  
dicere, praeterea vidit, nec portitor Orci  
amplius obiectam passus transire paludem.  
Quid faceret? Quo se rapta bis coniuge ferret?  
Quo fletu Manis, quae numina voce moveret?  
Illa quidem Stygia nabat iam frigida cumba.  
Septem illum totos perhibent ex ordine menses  
rupe sub aerea deserti ad Strymonis undam  
flesse sibi et gelidis haec evolvisse sub antris  
510. mulcentem tigris et agentem carmine quercus;  
qualis populea maerens philomela sub umbra  
amissos queritur fetus, quos durus arator  
observans nido implumes detraxit; at illa  
flet noctem ramoque sedens miserabile carmen  
integrat et maestis late loca questibus implet.  
Nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei.  
Solus Hyperboreas glacies Tanaimque nivalem  
arvaque Rhipaeis numquam viduata pruinis  
lustrabat raptam Eurydicen atque inrita Ditis  
520. dona querens; spretae Ciconum quo munere matres  
inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia Bacchi  
discerptum latos iuvenem sparsere per agros.  
Tum quoque marmorea caput a cervice revulsum  
gurgite cum medio portans Oeagrius Hebrus  
volveret, Eurydicen vox ipsa et frigida lingua  
ah miseram Eurydicen! anima fugiente vocabat:  
Eurydicen toto referebant flumine ripae.

Haec Proteus, et se iactu dedit aequor in altum,  
quaque dedit, spumantem undam sub vertice torsit.

can no more meet than mine." Then into nothingness  
500. she faded out, like fumes dissolving into air.  
And though long afterwards he'd clutch at shadows, yearn  
for message, never did she see him more. Nor did  
the Orcus ferryman allow him one more time  
a passage through that sundering marsh. To find again  
his wife what could he do? What powers were there,  
what words to say? The Stygian boat conveyed her off,  
by then both still and cold. For seven long months, beneath  
a soaring rock, beside the lonely Strýmon, under  
freezing stars, it's said, he sat and wept his sorrows  
510. out, the words but heard by tiger and the quivering  
oaks. So mourns the nightingale within the poplar's  
shade for brood she's lost to that rough-hearted lout  
who, spying young, will pluck them, unfledged, from the nest.  
All night she weeps, and from a branch the plaintive song  
pours out to fill the fields and woodlands far about.  
No thoughts of love or bridal song now move his soul:  
through Hyperboreal ice and snows of Tanais,  
Rīphēan lands forever locked in frost, he goes  
still mourning his Eurydicē and Pluto's sundered  
520. vow. At last the Thracian women, scorned amid  
their sacred orgies to nocturnal Bacchus, seized  
the youth and scattered pieces of him through the fields.  
But even then, the head torn off from marble neck  
and midway floating down the Oegrian Hebrus stream,  
the voice cried out : "Eurydicē", and from his ice-  
cold lips and fleeting breath "Eurydicē" was heard  
reverberating and murmuring down the river's length.'

## notes

### 12. Aristaeus and Cyrene Continued

So Prōteus, who straightway plunged into the sea  
and churned the water depths beneath to foaming eddies.

530. At non Cyrene; namque ultro adfata timentem:

`Nate, licet tristes animo deponere curas.

Haec omnis morbi causa; hinc miserabile Nymphae,

cum quibus illa choros lucis agitabat in altis,

exitium misere apibus. Tu munera supplex

tende petens pacem et faciles venerare Napaeas;

namque dabunt veniam votis irasque remittent.

Sed modus orandi qui sit, prius ordine dicam.

Quattuor eximios praestanti corpore tauros,

qui tibi nunc viridis depascunt summa Lycaeï,

540. delige et intacta totidem cervice iuencas.

Quattuor his aras alta ad delubra dearum

constitue et sacrum iugulis demitte cruorem,

corporeaue ipsa boum frondoso desere luco.

Post, ubi nona suos Aurora ostenderit ortus,

inferias Orphei Lethaea papavera mittes

et nigram mactabis ovem lucumque revises:

placatam Eurydicen vitula venerabere caesa.

Haud mora; continuo matris praecepta facessit;

ad delubra venit, monstratas excitat aras,

550. quattuor eximios praestanti corpore tauros

ducit et intacta totidem cervice iuencas.

Post, ubi nona suos Aurora induxerat ortus,

inferias Orphei mittit lucumque revisit.

Hic vero subitum ac dictu mirabile monstrum

adspiciunt, liquefacta boum per viscera toto

stridere apes utero et ruptis effervere costis,

immensasque trahi nubes, iamque arbore summa

confluere et lentis uvam demittere ramis.

530. But not Cŷrēnē. To the fearful youth she said:  
'My son, now put aside your gloomy thoughts. The Nymphs  
Eurydicē was wont to dance with in the woods  
have brought this trouble on your bees. You can  
be reconciled with them, and acting suppliant,  
conciliate these deities with gifts of peace,  
when readily they'll pardon and remit their wrath.  
Your means of best proceeding I shall now describe.  
First, from out your herd select four peerless bulls  
that now are grazing on the heights of green Lycaeus,  
540. equally four matchless heifers not yet yoked.  
Set up four altars at the deity's own shrines,  
and from the throats of victims drain the sacred blood  
but have their bodies left within the leafy grove.  
Lastly, when the ninth day's dawn shall show its beams,  
you'll bring Lēthēan poppies as a funeral gift  
to Orpheus. Then sacrifice a jet-black ewe,  
and, back to that same grove, appease Eurydicē  
by sacrificing one more calf.' Without delay  
he does his mother's will: he comes and builds those altars,  
550. to them leads four bulls of peerless form, and with  
them heifers also, not yet yoked. And when the ninth  
day's dawn has ushered in the light, to Orpheus  
he brings his funeral gifts and at that grove is met  
with sudden wonder, marvellous to tell, for from  
the rotting carcasses of bulls, in swarms from bellies  
and their ruptured sides, the bees emerge. Dense trails  
they form and, circling upwards through the trees, collect  
till branches strain to bear their heavy clusters' weight.

Haec super arborum cultu pecorumque canebam  
560. et super arboribus, Caesar dum magnus ad altum  
fulminat Euphraten bello victorque volentes  
per populos dat iura viamque adfectat Olympo.  
Illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat  
Parthenope studiis florentem ignobilis oti,  
carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa,  
566. Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.

### 13. Epilogue

And so I've sung of husbandry of fields and herds,  
560. of care for trees when Caesar, victor on the wide  
Euphrates, hurled the thunderbolts of war. While he,  
who gave his laws to willing nations, started on  
a path to heaven, I in Parthenopē's flowery  
lap, have learned the undistinguished arts of peace.  
So Virgil: a youth once dallying with shepherd's lays,  
who sang of Tityrus beneath the beech tree's shade.

notes

### 3. GLOSSARY

Allusions can be looked up in classical dictionaries, but I also been helped by Janet Lembke's *Virgil's Georgics*, R.A.B. Mynor's *Virgil Georgics*, Michael C.J. Putnam's *Virgil's Poem of the Earth*, and L.P. Wilkinson's *The Georgics of Virgil: A Critical Survey*.

#### BOOK ONE

##### 1. Invocation

3-4. Most translators add a missing 'habendis' to make *experientia* belong to the bee-keepers, when the lines run:

how cattle must be tended, or the ox be bred,  
what trials are needed to attract the thrifty bees:

But there seems no reason why Virgil, an extraordinarily careful writer, should have left matters open in this way, and I follow Putnam (p.17) in translating only what the text gives, when we are also free to emphasize what he regards as important in this opening summary: man, the earth and heaven, care and effort, and what nature imparts to man, this last being here the skill, experience or knowledge possessed by bees.

5. *Maecēnās*: Virgil's patron.

7. *Līber*: Latin equivalent of Bacchus. *Cerēs*: goddess of crops and harvest, the Latin equivalent of Demeter.

8. *Chāonian*: Epirus district of Greece where traditionally humans once lived on acorns.

9. *Archeloüs*: an ancient river in Greece. The word has four syllables.

14. *dweller of the woods*: reference to Aristaeus, a farmer who lost and then magically recovered his bees.

15. *Ceōs*: the Cyclades.

16. *Tegean*: of a town in Arcadia.

17. *Maenales*: a mountain range in Arcadia. *Lycaeus groves*: alternative home of Pan

19. *young man*: reference to Triptolemus, given a plough and seed grain by Demeter and sent to instruct mankind in agriculture.

20. *Sylvānus*: Italic god associated with forests and uncultivated ground.

28. *mother's myrtle crown*: the Julii claimed descent from Venus.

30. *Thulē*: northernmost inhabitable place: Iceland, Shetlands or Britain. *Tēthys*: consort of Ocean and bearer of rivers.

32. *which lengthens out the warmth of*: literally: to slow.

37. *Tartarus*: deepest portion of Hades.

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## 2. Spring Ploughing

56. *Tmōlus*: mountain in Lydia famous for its wines.

58. *Chalybes*: a rough people on the south shore of the Euxine who mined and forged iron.

59. *Ēlis*: brood mares that consistently won prizes at the Olympics.

61. *Deucaliōn* and Pyrra repopled the world after the flood by throwing bones of their mother (i.e. stones) into the void.

68. *Arctūrus*: star rising just before the sun on September 17<sup>th</sup> generally presages bad weather (L80).

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## 3. Preparation of the Land

73. *spelt*: a wheat species grown in Europe since 5000 BC.

78. *and poppies suffocate with their forgetful sleep*: rather free rendering: literally: fume of poppy fill with Lēthēan sleep. Lethe is the river of forgetfulness bounding the Underworld.



82-3. another free rendering: most authors hazard something like: but do not suppose that all this time your fallows, though idle, are doing no good.

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#### 4. Irrigation

103. *Mÿsĭa*: well-cultivated country in north-west Anatolia

104. *Gārgarus*: a peak in the Ida range of central Anatolia, apparently famous for its harvests.

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#### 5. The Beginnings of Agriculture

120. *Strÿmōnian*: the crane in migrating from Africa to nest in northern Europe often breaks its journey on the River Strymon, between Thrace and Macedonia. *bitter-rooted chicory*: literally 'bitter chicory': I have expanded the phrase as it is the long roots and side shoots that make this weed such a problem, not its bitter taste.

138-9. *Plēiades*: constellation. Hyades: star group in Taurus, also known as the 'Rainers'. *Callisto's star, the radiant Bear*: Jove turned Callisto, Lycaon's daughter, into the bright Bear.

149. *Dōdōna*: oracular oaks of Dodona in Epirus.

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#### 6. Tools and Tasks

163. *Ēleusis*: refers to the mystery rites of Eleusis, performed to Demeter, the Greek equivalent of Cerēs.

165. *Celeus*: refers to the mythic king Celeus, also associated with the Eleusinian rites.

167. winnower in mystery rites of Iacchus: a winnowing basket, another reference to the Eleusinian mysteries, where Iacchus was a figure commonly identified with Bacchus.

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## 8. Proper Times for Tasks

204-5. *Arctūrus, Aurīga days and Dracō*: Arctūrus is a first-magnitude star in Taurus whose morning rising in September indicates the onset of autumn, and whose evening rising in February indicates that winter is past. The rising and setting of Aurīga, (two stars of the Kids) is associated with storms. Dracō is a noble constellation, but never sets, and so has no calendar uses.

207. *Pontus*: province to the south of the Black Sea.

208. *Abydus*: on the southern shore of the Hellespont at its narrowest point.

217-8: *Taurus*. . . *Dog-star*: Taurus rise in April and the Dogstar, Canis, sets.

220. *Plēiades*: literally: Atlas' daughter.

222. *Cretan Borealis*: reference to Ariadne, daughter of King Minos of Crete: at her death on Naxos, Zeus transformed her to the Northern Crown constellation.

225. *Māia*: a star in the Pleiades.

226. *meagre crops*: literally: empty reeds.

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## 9. Star Lore

240-1. *Rīphēan cliff*: mythic range making the northernmost edge of Roman world, later relocated in Scythia.

241. *Libya*: Saharan Africa.

251. *glimmering*: text says 'crimson', which Mynors reads as 'bright' (p.57), arguing that the Evening Star is never 'blushing' or 'crimson'. I have compromised, imagining the star as it first appears in the evening sky.

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## 10. Incidental Tasks

265. *Umbrian*: text says 'Amerian': Ameria was an Umbrian town apparently well endowed with willows, the stems of which were used to tie up grapevines.

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## 11. Auspicious and Inauspicious Days

277. *Orcus*: god of the underworld, personifying death.

279. *Coeus, Īapetus*: Titans: Iapetus fathered Prometheus, Epimetheus and Atlas.

280. *Typhōeus*: a snake monster: the unnamed brothers were Otus and Ephialtes.

284. *humbled what they'd built*: literally: threw down the mountains.

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## 12. Best Times of the Day

308. *Balearic*: Majorca, Minorca and Ibiza islands in the western Mediterranean.

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## 13. Storms

332. *Ceraunian peaks*: mountain range in the Caucasus.

333. *Athōs*: mountain on the easternmost of the three prongs that Chalcidice projects into the northern Aegean. *Rhodopē*: mountain range in western Thrace.

340. *Cerēs' yearly sacrifice*: several festivals have been conflated here: the Cerealia of April 12-19 (line 339), the Ambarvalia of late May (lines 341-7), and the beginning of harvest (lines 347-50), a typical example of Virgil's liking for synthetic description (Wilkinson p.149).

347. *celebrant*: literally: sacrifice.

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## 14. Weather Signs: Moon and Sun

382. *Caÿster*: an Anatolian town noted for its swan population. (L83). antiquity (M84).

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## 15. After Rain

397. *halcyons*: mythical bird that calms the sea for the fourteen days needed to make its nest and raise its young. *Thetis*: first of the sea-dwelling Nereids and mother of Achilles.

403-8. *Nīsus* . . . *Scylla*: reference to the myth of Nīsus, King of Corinth who possessed a purple-red lock of hair on which his life and kingdom depended. His daughter, Scylla, falling in love with King Minos of Crete who was besieging Corinth, cut off the magical lock. At his death, Nīsus was changed into a sea-hawk. Scylla was jilted by Minos, and changed into a cirrus, a small white bird forever pursued by her father. Translators vary in their rendering, some maintaining Virgil's mythology, and others changing Nīsus and Scylla into 'hawk' and 'dove' for the benefit of a contemporary audience. I have done both, providing the mythological setting, and then a picture of the natural world.

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## 16. Tokens of the Moon

431. *golden Phoebus*: here the moon, with a reference to Diana.

436. *Glaucus, Panopēa*: sea gods.

437. *Melicerta*: son of Io and daughter of Cadmus who founded Thebes.

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## 17. Tokens of the Sun

446. *old*: my addition.

447. *Tithōnus*: husband of the Dawn in Homer.

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## 18. Portents at Caesar's Death

471. *Cyclopes*: these one-eyed giants were said to have worked their furnaces inside mount Etna.

480. *as oozed the bronzes, bathed in sweat*: literally: the bronzes sweated.

481. *Ēridanus*: ancient name of the river Po.

490. *once again*: only one battle was in fact fought at Philippī, in 42 BC, when Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus defeated the conspirators Cassius and Brutus. Virgil is including another battle, also fought in Macedonia, that of Pharsalas in 48 BC, when Caesar defeated Pompey.

490. *Ēmathia*: Macedonia. *Haemus*: a mountain range in the present-day Balkans.

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## 19. Prayer for the Success of Augustus

498. *Romulus*: mythical founder, with Remus, of Rome.

499. *Vesta*: goddess who oversaw the safety of Rome.

500. *Palatine*: one of the seven hills of Rome, and home of Augustus.

502-3. *Laomedon's deceits*: Laomedon, father of King Priam, promised Apollo and Poseidon payment for building the walls of Troy, but reneged on the contract, causing the outraged gods to support the Greeks in the Trojan War.

504. *shying*: literally: refusing.

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## BOOK TWO

### 1. Introduction

4. *pater Lenaeae*: father of the winepress: Bacchus.

7. *buskins*: thick-soled, laced boots worn by Greek and Roman actors.

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### 2. Propagation of Trees

16. *Dodona*: see [note 1.149](#)

18. *laurel*: reference to mount Parnasus, sacred to Apollo.

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### 3. Poem

38. *Note*: my addition.

38-46. section invokes the support of Maecenas.

37. *Īsmara*: mountain in Thrace notable for its wines.

38. *Taburnus*: Italian mountain noted for its olives.

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### 4. Propagation of Trees Continued

66. *poplar*: Hercules was associated with the poplar tree.

67. *Chaonia*: see [note 1.149](#).

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## 6. Variety of Trees and Vines

87. *Alcinoüs*: a king famed for his gardens and orchards bearing fruit the year round.

91. *Thasian*: *Thasos* is an island in the Aegean. *Mareōtic*: of a lake in Egypt.

96. *Rhaetica*: Rhaetian Alps lie just north of Verona, a region then famed for vineyards. *Falernian*: Falernus is a district in northern Campania.

97. *Aminnean*: an area in Umbria that stretched eastward to the Adriatic coast.

98. *Tmōlius*, *Phanaeus*: both wine districts, the first in Lydia, western Anatolia, the second on the island of Chios.

99. *Argitis*: a white grape.

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## 7. Different Plants in Different Places

115. *Geloni*: a Scythian tribe in the present-day Ukraine.

121. *Seres*: a people living in Scythia and India supposed responsible for silk cultivation.

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## 8. In Praise of Italy

136. *Media*: part of present-day Iraq.

137. *Hermus*: a river in Lydia.

138. *Bactra*: a Parthian province in present-day Afghanistan.

139. *Panchaia*: an imaginary island in the Indian Ocean.

140-41. *bulls*. . . *dragon's teeth*: two of the tasks set Jason in his search for the Golden Fleece.

143. *Massic*: mount Massicus was famed for its vineyards and wine.

155-7: cities and towns listed belong to the Jovian era, which demanded hard work from men.

158. *sea above. . . sea below*: Adriatic and Tyrrhenian Seas respectively.

159. *Larus*: Lake Como.

160. *Bēnācus*: Lake Garda.

161. *Lucrine*: salt-water lagoon near the resort town of Baiae in Campania.

164. *Averno*: fetid lake near Lucrino, reputedly a portal to the underworld.

167-8. *Sabines, Marsians, Ligurians, Volscians, Decii*: ancient peoples originally hostile to Rome. *Marius*: Gaius Marius (157-86 BC): famous general and 'third founder' of Rome. *Scipios*: famous generals: Publius Cornelius Scipio (236-183 BC) and Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemelianus (185-129 BC).

173-4. *land of Saturn*: reference to a golden, ideal epoch.

176. *have Ascra's songs reresonate in sacred springs*: literally: open sacred springs and sing Ascra's song. *Ascra's song* is a reference to Hesiod's *Works and Days*, a didactic poem written slightly later than Homer, which instructs farmers in their various tasks and calls on assistance from the gods.

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## 9. Types of Soil

181. *Palladian olives*: associated with Pallas Athena, or the Roman goddess Minerva.

197. *Tarantum*: famous for fine sheep.

198. *hapless Mantua*: reference to land given over by Octavian to decommissioned soldiers.

199. *a place*: my addition



214. water snakes: Italy has only one poisonous snake, the viper: its water snakes are non-venomous.

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## 10. Distinguishing Types of Soil

229. *Bacchus*: literally: Lyaeus, the 'body relaxer': another name for Bacchus.

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## 11. Establishing a Vineyard

294. *rock*: literally: unmoved.

307. *consume*: my addition: text simply says reign.

319. *stork*: literally: long white bird.

349. *life-giving*: my addition.

382. *Athens'*: literally: sons of Theseus: Theseus was the mythical founder of Athens.

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## 12. Maintenance of the Vineyard

407. *Saturn's curved pruning hook*: recalls castration of Uranos by Cronus, with whom a pre-Jovian Saturn may be identified.

411. *segetem*: here translated as ground, but would normally mean grain or crops.

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## 13. Olives, Fruit Trees and Forest Trees

433. Probably an interpolated line.

437. *Cytōrus*: a mountain in Anatolia.

438. *Nārycia*: a town in Calabria.

448. *Ituraean bows*: the Ituraeans were a people living in what is now Syria.

451. *is carved*: my addition.

452. *has use*: my addition.

455-7. *Rhoetus, Pholus, Hylaeus*: Centaurs who made unwelcome advances to Hippodameia at her wedding to the Lapith Pirithous. Hylaeus tried to rape Atalanta as she hunted a dangerous boar: she shot him with an arrow. Pholus was the son of Ixion, perpetually tortured on a revolving wheel in Hades.

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#### 14. Country Versus City

469. *filled with shade*: literally: cool.

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#### 15. Poet's Hope: the Ideal Country Life

487. *Spercēus*: a river in Thessaly.

488. *Haemus*: a mountain range in the present-day Balkans.

488. *Tāygetus*: a Spartan mountain range.

497. *Dācians*: wild tribes living the lower Danube.

513. *on the contrary*: my addition.

519. *Sicyōn*: capital of Sicyonia in the Peloponnesus.

533. *Etrūria*: district in north-west Italy.

532-40. Refers to three ages: those of the Sabines, of the foundation of Rome with Remus and Romulus, and Saturn's golden age.

535-6. *Cretan Jove*: literally Dictē's king: Jupiter was reared on Mount Dictē in Crete.

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## BOOK THREE

### 1. Prologue

1. *Pales*: goddess of Shepherds: a Roman deity.

2. *Amphrysus*: a river in Thessaly where Apollo once served King Admetus as a shepherd. *Lycaeus woods and streams*: a reference to Pan, the deity of Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia.

4-5. *Eurystheus . . . Pelops*. King Eurystheus of Argos assigned the twelve labours of Hercules. *Busiris* was an Egyptian king who sacrificed strangers to his realms (and brother to Antaeus, whom Hercules overcame). *Hylās* is the beautiful youth, friend to Hercules, who was abducted by the water nymphs. *Latona's Delos* is the island on which Latona gave birth to Apollo. Pelops whirled *Hippodameia* away to marriage by swift horses. He himself was once cooked and served to the gods by Tantalus: only the shoulder was eaten, the gods replacing it by an ivory imitation.

11. *Aonian heights*: district of Boeotia holding Mount Helicon, sacred to the Muses.

12. *victory palms*: literally Idumean palms, in Roman Palestine or Judea.

13. *Mincius*: tributary of the Po.

19. *Alpheus*: river of Olympia. *Nemean groves*: groves of Molochus, host to Hercules, where he killed the lion and founded the Nemean games.

30. *Niphates*: branch of the Taurus mountains in Armenia, here referring to the Parthians (who, contrary to the poem, overwhelmingly defeated Crassus shortly afterwards).

35-6. *Assaracus . . . Cynthia: Trōs*, who gave his name to Troy, was a great-grandson of Zeus, and fathered *Assaracus*. *Cynthian* refers to Apollo: Apollo and Diana were born on Mount Cynthus on Delos.

37-9. *Envy* is not a statue in the Mantuan temple, but the general envy (supposedly) felt at Octavian's achievements. *Cōcȳtus* is the river of

Hades, *Ixiōn* was strapped by snakes to a perpetually revolving wheel because he tried to seduce Hera, and the *stone* refers to the punishment of Sisyphus.

43. *Cithaerōn*: mountain in Boeotia associated with the Muses and worship of Bacchus.

44. *Tāygetus hounds*: Spartan mountain range where hunting with hounds was popular. *Argolis*: famed for horse breeding (text says Epidaurus, located in Argolis).

48. *Tithonus*: consort of the Dawn, unhappily given eternal life.

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## 2. Breeding Stock

71. *that annually new stock rebuild the herd*: literally: select new stock for breeding from the herd.

89. *Cyllarus*: stallion given Castor and Pollux by Juno, who had received it from Neptune.

90 *Amŷclae*: town in Laconia and birthplace of Castor and Pollux.

92-4. *Saturn*: On being found by his wife in flagrante with the nymph Philyra, Saturn changed himself into a horse and fled the scene. *Pēlium* is a mountain in Thessaly.

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## 3. Youth and Spirit of the Stallion

113. *Erichthoneus*: ancient king of Athens.

115. *Thessalonian*: strictly of Pelethronia, a place supposedly in Thessaly.

122. *Neptune*: the horse was reputedly created when Neptune struck his trident in the earth.

146-7. *Silārus*: modern Sele, in Campania. *Alburnus*: a mountain in the Roman province of Lucania.

148. *Asīlus*: the modern-day gad-fly.

151. *Tanagra*: possibly the modern Negro in Lucania. *banks through trees to air*: literally: banks and trees and air.

152-3. *Īō . . . Īnachus*: Priestess whom Jupiter seduced: his wife Juno changed her to a heifer, and pursued her with gad-flies through Egypt and beyond.

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## 5. Care of the Young (Fools)

180. *Alpheus*: river that flows through Olympia.

196. *Hyperborean* shores: Hyperboreans were fabled people living at the north pole.

197. *Scythian*: country to the north of the Caspian Sea.

204. *Belgic*: warlike people inhabiting northern Gaul.

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## 7. Care of the Young (Fools)

180. *Alphēus*: river flows through Olympia: Virgil is supposing his games at Pisa to be as important.

202. *Ēlis*: turning point for chariot races at Olympia.

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## 8. Dangers of Desire

219. *Sīla*: a mountain in present-day Calabria, then with extensive forests.

235-6. *sallies / out*: literally: moves his camp.

257. *previous*: my addition.

258. *Leander*: swam the Hellespont nightly to his beloved Hero: text says simply 'the young man'.

264. By legend, when Bacchus discovered wine making, an angry Juno drove him mad and sent him wandering to India. Her mother restored his sanity and brought him back to Greece, allegedly in a chariot drawn by lynxes and tigers.

267-70. *Potnian . . . Ascānius*. Glaucus, son of Sisyphus, was punished by Venus for keeping his horses from breeding to preserve their strength. They tore him to death with their teeth. *Gārgarus* is a peak in Crete, and *Ascānius* is a river flowing into the Black Sea.

281. *hippomanes*: a creamy liquid produced by a mare's vulva when on heat.

283. *most evil*: literally: not unevil

9 Transition

294. *Palēs*: Roman goddess of shepherds and cattle.

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10 Transition

307. *Milēsian*: refers to Miletus in south-western Anatolia, noted for its fine, soft wool.

311. *Cinyphian*: Libyan.

328. *I'd*: literally I'll: changed to maintain tense.

331. *I'd*: as 328.

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11. Libya and Scythia

346. *Spartan dog and Cretan quiver*: unlikely aids: reference unclear.

349. *Maeōtis*: Sea of Azov.

351. *Rhodopē*: Thracian mountain range.

382. *small Bear's*: my addition

383. *Rīphaean*: mountain range in northern Scythia.

393. *she*: literally: you.

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13. Wool, Milk and Dogs

405. *Molossions*: people of Epirus.

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12. Milk, Wool and Dogs

412. *she*: literally: you.

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14. Pests

438. *malignantly*: my addition.

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15. Diseases

461-2. *Bīsaltae*: a people of Macedonia. *Gelonians*: a people of Scythia.  
*Getae*: a people inhabiting the lower Danube.

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16. Plague at Noricum

475. *Noricum*: an Alpine territory now in Austria. Timavus: river flowing into the Gulf of Trieste.

526. *Massic*: refers to Mount Massicus in Campania, famed for its wines and vineyards.

547. *living happiness*: literally: life.

549-51. : *Chīrōn* . . . *Tisiphonē*. The centaur *Chīrōn* taught Asclepius medicine. *Melampūs* was supposedly the first physician, and was endowed with the gift of prophecy. *Tisiphonē*: one of the Furies.

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## BOOK FOUR

### 1. Introduction

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### 2. Siting and Care of Apiary

15. *Procnē* married King Tereus of Daulis in Thrace and bore him a son, Itys. On learning of her husband's infidelity with her sister, Philomel, and having her tongue cut to prevent her talking, Procne killed Itys and served him up as a dish to her erring husband. In revenge he chased both sisters with an axe, but all three were changed into birds before the blow fell.

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### 3. Outside the Hive

64. *Cybelē*: literally: earth mother: an eastern deity whose worshippers clashed cymbals in their processions.

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### 4. The Fighting Swarms

69. Contemporaries viewed the queen bee as king, i.e. male.

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### 5. Surrounding Gardens

110. *Priāpus*, son of Venus and Bacchus, was a garden deity who carried a pruning hook.

119. *Paestum*, near Naples, was famous for its rose gardens.

125. *Tarentum*: present-day Tarento.



126. *Galaesus*: reference to Sparta, where Galaesus is now Galeno.

127. *Cōrycian*: reference to a town in Cilicia, now south-eastern Turkey.

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## 6. Natural History of the Hive

151-2. Jupiter was hidden in cave in *Dictē*, Crete, from his father, Saturn, who swallowed his offspring to prevent the prophesy coming about and their dethroning him. The Cretans clashed cymbals (*Cūrētes*) to mask Jupiter's cries, and the bees fed him with honey, for which they were rewarded by their industrious natures.

177. *Cecropian*: Athenian: Mount Hymettus was famous for its honey.

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## 7. Natural History on a Higher Level

211. *Median Hydaspes*: river (present-day Behut in Pakistan) that flowed through the Median kingdom and joined the Indus.

225. *made whole*: my addition.

226. *some long journeying*: literally: they fly aloft

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## 8. Honey Harvest and Disease

232-5. *Tāygetē*: a star in the Pleiades, which rise in spring and set in November, a rainy season in Italy.

234. *fishes'*: literally: Pisces.

247. Arachne challenged Minerva to a weaving contest. The goddess changed her into a web-weaving spider.

250. *rich accumulations drained*: literally: stores

269. *Psithian*: type of grape.

272. *amellus*: purple Italian star-wort.

278. *Mella*: river cannot now be identified.

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## 9. The Last Resort

283. *Arcadian master*: Aristaeus, the hero of the story beginning on line 317.

287-93. Rough boundaries of Egypt. *Canopus* making the northern limit was city near Alexandria at the mouth of the Nile, called Macedonian because the recent rulers of Egypt were the Ptolemies. The Nile was supposed to originate in India, which thus formed its southern boundary. Persia lay to the east.

291. *dark-skinned races*: literally Indians: see immediately above.

291-4. [ ] Section transposed by modern scholarship.

298. *corners*: literarily: winds

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## 10. Aristaeus and Cyrene

317-8. *Penean Tempē*: valley of the river Peneus, present-day Piniós, which flows into the Gulf of Salonica.

321. *Cýrēnē*: a nymph: mother of Aristaeus who was fathered by Apollo.

324. *Thymbraeus*: a town near Troy famous for its shrine to Apollo.

335. *Milesian*: reference to an area of Anatolia famous for its wool.

335-43. *Drymo . . . Arethusa*: names of seventeen nymphs.

362. *straightway*: my addition

367-70. Important rivers. *Phāses* is the present-day Rion that flows into the Black Sea through Georgia. *Lycus* is the Zab of western Turkey. *Enīpeus* is a tributary of the present day Piniós. The *Tiber* and *Anio* are both Italian, as is *Ēridanus*, the modern Po. *Hypanis* is the Bug separating Poland the Ukraine and *Caīcus* is the modern Bakir of north-western Turkey.

379. *Panchāen*: Arabian

380. *Maeonian*: Lydian

387. *Carpathian*: reference to Carpathus, an island between Crete and Rhodes.

388. *Prōteus*: sea-god who could assume many shapes.

390. *Ēmathian*: Macedonian. *Pallenē*: north-eastern Greece.

452. *submitting*: literally: opened his mouth.

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## 11. Orpheus and Eurydice

454-9. Original compressed. Aristaeus is being punished for trying to rape Eurydice. In fleeing him, she trod on a snake, which bit and killed her.

461. *Rhodopē*: mountain range in Thrace.

462. *Pangaeus*: another mountain range in Thrace. *Rhēsus* was a Thracian king robbed of horses and killed by Diomedes and Ulysses. The Getae were a people of the lower Danube.

463. *Hebrus* is a Thracian river. *Ōrithyia*: daughter of Erechtheus and Boreas.

465. continually: my addition.

466. *her . . . her*: literally: you . . .you

472. *Erebus*: god of darkness.

477. *amid their parents' tears*: literally: before their parents' eyes.

478. *Cōcȳtus*: river of the lower world.

480. *Styx*: chief river of the underworld.

482. *Tartarus*: deepest layer of hell.

483. *Cerberus*: three-headed dog that guarded the entrance to Hades.

484. *Ixiōn*: son of king Phelgyas of the Lapiths: bound to revolving wheel in Hades for attempting to rape Juno.

493. *and undone*: my addition.

508. *Strÿmon*: present-day Strouma river.

515. country depths: literally: wide area

517. *Hyperboreal*: of the north pole.

518. *Tanais*: the modern river Don. *Rīphēan*: of a mountain range in northern Scythia.

520. *At last*: my addition.

524. *Oegian Hebrus*: Oeagrus was the father of Orpheus and king of Thrace, through which the Hebrus flowed.

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### 13. Epilogue

563. *Parthenope*: name of a siren thought to be buried at Naples: a reference to Virgil's then home.

566. Tityrus: name of elderly shepherd appearing in the first line of Virgil's Eclogue.

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