



Virgil's Georgics

a new translation
by c john holcombe

ocaso press 2012

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translated by

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.

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 iuvenci;
ipse nemus linquens patrium saltusque Lycaeii,
Pan, ovium custos, tua si tibi Maenala curae,
adsis, o Tegeaee, favens, oleaeque Minerva
inventrix, uncique 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 brings the fields their joyfulness, what stars advise us turn the sod, Maecēnās? How may vines be fastened to the elm? What management will bring up cattle, breed the ox? What knowledge have the thrifty bees? With such I start my song. And you, O radiant lights that through the heavens lead the passing year, and you, both Līber and auspicious Cerēs, who have brought 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 plentifully 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 harvests 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 that lengthens out the warmth of summer months, ablaze 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 Òlysium 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 our 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 from the warm west winds, 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 particularities and local needs, what areas favour this and what do not. For here 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, Epirus victor's palms for Òlis 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, allow 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 patiere situ durescere campum;
aut ibi flava seres 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 suscitatur 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 encrusted with its mould.
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,
as will the poppies, scenting with 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 fissure-ways 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 golden Cerēs in Olympus notes, rewarding
him as he whose ploughing has the curving blade
athwart the furrows cleave the ground untouched before,
and proves by constant effort that he masters 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 inprobus 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. Most welcoming to wintry rain is wheat, as to the fields themselves. Mÿsĭa's not so famed for this, nor Gārgarus amazed by what she's grown. And need I mention one who closely follows as the seed is cast, to seal the soil and level out blocky sand, divert the streams, and have the water run through crops? And more, when soil dries up, and young shoots wither, sees from brow of hill the rivulets of brimming water spread with raucous whisperings across the stones
110. to thence gush out, and, drenching, cool the heat-cracked ground? Or one, to stop the stems from falling, overburdened fulsomely with ears of grain, will stem the growth in furrows till each shoot is level with the rest? Or one who drains off wetness, ever adding sands to marshy places, most of all in doubtful months when rivers overflow and, flooding their surrounds with mud, will leave the ditches patched with steamy pools?

notes

5. The Beginnings of Agriculture

Though through unending efforts men and ox have worked 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 fields be stirred by cares, to sharpen up men's wits, that not to heavy torpor should his realms relapse. Till time of Jove 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. But Jove put poison in the gloomy snakes, turned wolves
130. to predators, commanded seas rise up,

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
inprobus 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,
concussaque 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,
obliging us by thought and effort to create
new crafts, search out the corn-blade in the furrowed earth,
strike fire that's hidden in the vein of flint, have streams
first feel the weight of hollowed logs, have mariners
enumerate the stars, discern 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 hard blade came, 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 ceaseless toil and want when times were hard.
Cerēs it was exhorted men first turn the earth
with iron blade when acorn and the arbuté berry
failed in sacred woods and their Dōdōna gave
150. no yield at all. Yet soon those first of crops began
to fail, for slothful mildew blighted stems, and blustering
thistles challenged and made sport of crops. Throughout,
a savage growth of goosegrass burs and clivers rose,
with sterile oats and luckless darnel holding sway.
Unless and constantly your hoe will clear out weeds,
your shouts scare off the birds, your knife cut back the shade,
and prayers invoke the rain from heaven, how enviously
you'll look on riches in a neighbour's field and find
your hunger has you shaking acorns down from trees.

notes

6. The Farmers Tools

160. It is the armoury of sturdy countrymen I speak
of now, the want of which has nothing raised or sown.

vomis et inflexi primum grave robur aratri
tardaue Eleusinae matris volventia plaustra
tribulaue traheaeue 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 altaue fagus,
stivaue, quae currus a tergo torqueat imos,
et suspensa focis 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. magnaue 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 of our Æleusis mother, threshing sleighs and drags, the cruelly weighted hoes, plain wicker-ware of Celeus, the hurdles in arbutus wood, the winnower in mystery rites of Iacchus — all these you'll gather up before and store away if you would share the splendour 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

Ill now enumerate 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 tiny 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 makes his heap of grain, as ant will too, who fears the destitution of old age. Consider too 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 aristis,
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, and on the smaller fire.
I've seen the fruit of toil fall off, degenerate,
unless the choicest seed be chosen year by year
and picked out by the hand. For all things tend to worse
200. and from that flaw inside themselves will slip from us,
as will a skiff a rower drives against the stream:
for should the occupant but slacken off his strokes,
at once the forward-leaning current pushes 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 homeward sail across the 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 intractable, harsh 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 reluctant earth.

Multi ante occasum Maiae 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 imbribus 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 impellere 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,
nor scorn the care Egyptian lentils will require,
Boötēs sets with no malignant signs for you:
230. begin, and sow on to the midpart of the frosts.

notes

9. Star Lore

To that end, the golden sun commands a circuit
extending twelve fixed sectors of the constellations.
The sky itself has 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 immured 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 these great Dracō throws his glimmering coils and, like
a river, undulates both through and past the Bears,
averse to setting on the sea. For all below,
men say, is but a world of silent dark, and one
that thickens nightly to more gloomy shade, or brings
about their dawn when leaving us: for when up here
250. the dayspring touches us with panting horses' 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 into four strict seasons.

notes

10. Incidental Tasks

The freezing rains that keep the countryman indoors
260. give time to finish tasks that would be skimped 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,
while others sharpen stakes, or fashion two-pronged forks,
or ties of Umbrian willow for their drooping vines.
Now weave red briar stems to threshing baskets, by
the fire roast grain, or crush it on the grinding-stone.
The laws of god and man do not forbid you work
on holy days, nor do its articles restrict
270. your clearing ditch or building hedge about the crops,
from fashioning new snares for birds, from firing brambles,
or from immersing your whole bleating flock in wholesome
waters. Often he will load the 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, for then were pallid
Orcus and the Furies born, with evil labour
Earth brought Coeus, Īapetus and fierce
280. Typhōeus forth, brethren who would pull down Heaven.
Three times on Pēlion would they would heap up Ossa,
and onto Ossa roll the forested Olympus.
Three times our Father, with his lightning bolt, threw back

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 inspicat 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,

the structures they had 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 comes back to port and sailors, now home safely, deck 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 with 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 softens, 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 imbris 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, in which
on greenish stems the grain hangs 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 grimy
sheets, with all the heavens arrived in ruinous floods
to wreck the healthy crops, as too the 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 this,
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 leaves,
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 an awkward dancing has renewed her songs.

notes

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 imprudentibus 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
portends — 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 gather 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
leave its marsh and, lifting, flies into the clouds.
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 draws 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 spatiatur harena.

390. Ne nocturna quidem carpentes pensa puellae
nescivere hiemem, testa cum ardente viderent
scintillare oleum et putris concreescere 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 pinnae in litore pandunt
dilectae Thetidi alcyones, non ore solutos

400. inmundi meminere sues iactare manipulos.

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 singly through the seashore sands,
390. and even girls at their nocturnal spinning sense
a storm approaching from the lamplight's sputtering blaze
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 stacks of straw.
400. Yet now are mists more prone to fill the valleys, spread
on plains, and, as the sun goes down, leave rooftop owl
but little 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 have her wings abruptly cleave 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 the humid
sky brings back the threatened rain, 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,
conciipiunt: 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 capiere serенаe.
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
Glauco 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 pecorique 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 countryman,
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 shore-side vows to Panopē,
to Glaucus, and to Melicerta, Ino's son.

notes

17. Good Weather: Sun

The sun the same will give his tokens, both in rising
from and sinking in 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 voltu varios errare colores:
caeruleus pluviam denuntiat, igneus Euros;
sin maculae incipient rutilo inmiscerier igni,
omnia tum pariter vento nimisque 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 extincto miseratus Caesare Romam,
cum caput obscura nitidum ferrugine textit
inopiaque aeternam timuerunt saecula noctem.
Tempore quamquam illo tellus quoque et aequora ponti
470. obscenaque canes inportunaque 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 draw in 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 such that sun reveals. Who dares
to think the sun is false, when he and no one else
will warn when falsehood threatens, hidden unrest and
impassioned war? 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 through the 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, and unaccustomed tremors shook the Alps.
A great voice sounded through the silent groves for all
to hear, and pallid phantoms flitted through the dark,
and, worst of horrors, the very beasts had speech 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
Laomedontaeae 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 their bronzes, bathed in sweat.
And then the Po, the 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.
At which, in times to come, the farmer with his plough
will dig up javelins consumed by rust, and, stunned
by empty helmets that the hoe turns up, will stare
at giants' bones exhibited by earthy 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
a young prince rescuing a world pitched upside down.
For far too long our life-blood's paid for perjuries
of Lāomedōn at Troy: for far too long has Heaven
begrudged us Caesar, citing only need for triumphs.
In this are right for wrong reversed, and worlds at war
let wickedness adopt its many loathsome shapes.
Respect for plough is gone, our land neglected, robbed
of farmers, curving pruning blade reclaimed as sword.
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. and break their covenants, and, urging on adjoining states, loose total anarchy across the world, as will, from the opening barrier, the charioteer be whirled along in peril round the track, each horse oblivious of rider's order or the reins.

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 Lenae—tuis hic omnia plena
muneribus, tibi pampineo gravidus autumnus
florete ager, spumat plenis vindemia labris—
huc, pater o Lenae, 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 Grais 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 sudes 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. Here,
Lenaean father, all is full of your great gifts:
the fields are vine-occasioned with their autumn fruits,
and vats are filled to effervescing with the grapes —
Lenaean Father, come and fling your buskin off,
and plunge, with me, 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 radicis 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 incarnadined with stony cornel cherries.

notes

3. Proem

Farmers, learn the natural ways of trees, and bring
what's wild to cultivation, lest to 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
Chaonique 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 rursum 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 educed from solid stem.
From slips the toughest hazels spring, as does the giant
ash, whose crown has shaded Hercules. Chāonian
oaks have birth in acorns, soaring palm in seed,
as does the pine, which stares down perils of the deep.
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 is not found in 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 orchads, radii and sour Pausanian fruits,
the pears and apples, fruit of Alcinoüs gardens,
the Syrian, Crustumian and rich Volema
shoots. 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 the Ionian waves that 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 arbor 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 foveant 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.

Note too: the furthest lands are cultivated. Arabs
in their eastern home, as painted Scythians,
possess specific trees. For none but India holds
black ebony, or Sabean 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 draw 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 airy foliage tops
for all inhabitants are practiced with the bow.
Media yields a juice of lingering bitterness,
a citrus fruit, that nonetheless is antidote
to venoms 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, whose blossoms 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

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 arbor.
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, once bathed in sacred
streams, has brought a triumph home to temple gods.
Perpetual spring, and summer far beyond its natural
150. course: the herds twice breed, and twice the fruit trees bear.
No tigers terrify, nor savage lions' whelps,
nor aconite deceives its reckless gatherers,
no serpent drags its monstrous lengths across the ground,
nor will it, scaly, wind itself in endless coils.
Then add to this our cities rich in civic skills,
the towns that crown our labour on the rocky steeps
and rivers murmuring beneath their ancient walls,
the two great seas, above, below, that wash our shores,
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?
For 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 hills. So you,
Saturnian lands, the mother of such fruits and men
I praise in ancient ways, and dare through Roman towns
make Ascra'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 dulcique 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 aratri:

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, though rising southwards into
190. hills supporting ferns that 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
the farmer tear up ancient-rooted homes of birds

210. eruit; illae altum nidis petiere relictis,
at rudis enituit in pulso 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 intextet vitibus ulmos,
illa ferax oleo est, illam experire 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 iuvencis.

210. that flee their nests and take to air, and in that work
make what was wasteland gleam behind the dwindling plough.
The gravel 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 —
such rich Capūa tills, and ridged Vesuvian shores
the Clanius drains, beside unhappy Acerris.

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 wine, the other corn,
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 but 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 taller grass, 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 signior 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 arbor,
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 brachia 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—ne 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 descendents even and the roll of time.
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 autumnus 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 iuencos;
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 capreaeque 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,
when sheep and greedy heifers nibble them: indeed
no cold with whitish hoar frost or the summer heat
that hangs so heavily on crags 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 cork. 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 rich flesh afterwards we 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,
exiguum colito. Nec non etiam aspera rusci
vimina per silvam et ripis fluvialis arundo
caeditur, incultique exercet cura salicti.

Iam vinctae 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 exspectant 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 much to fear from rain of Jupiter on 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 cratere 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 thick with fruit, 430. and bird-rich haunts 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 hesitate to sow or to plant with care? 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 broadly 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 and killed wine-maddened Centaurs: Pholos and that 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 in ocean's waves must fall so fast,
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 fascēs, 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 iuvenços.

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 an alien sun.

Farmers on the contrary till the earth with curving
plough to make their work continuance for coming
grandsons, 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 agitat festos fususque per herbam,
ignis ubi in medio et socii cratera coronant,
te libans, Lenaeae, 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.

There is 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 arbutes, 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, will call
you Lord of winepress, master of the teeming herds.
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 brutally on 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 Lycaei.

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 quadriugos agitabo ad flumina currus.
Cuncta mihi Alpheum linquens lucosque Molorchi
20. cursibus et crudo decernet Graecia caestu.

Ipse 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:
the rest seem empty now, though charming once with thoughtless
song. For who's not heard of harsh Eurystheus,
of altars to the foul Busiris, youthful Hylās,
Lātōna's Dēlos, Hippodameia and Pelops,
famed for ivory shoulder and his furious horse?
I now must find some other path, that raises me
above the earth, to soar victorious from the mouths
10. of men. If life remain I'll first return to native
haunts, to lead our native Muses from Aonian
heights, be 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 Niphates, and the Parthians

fidemque 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 Cynthus auctor.
Invidia infelix Furiis 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 Olympicae 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 Cōcȳtus, 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, Tāygetus 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 Tithōnus 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 first
inspect the mother's line. 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 statues 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 biuges 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 gloomy 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 up their ears and 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
Neptunisque 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 rider 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, calls on Neptune for his ancestry.

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; furit 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 Asilus,
— Oestrus is the name in Greek — a fearsome pest
so numerous, so noisy, the tormented herd
150. in fast stampeding with their bellowing 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 orbis.
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 Alpea 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 that 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 distanced 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 exaestuatur 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 Sila's
mighty woods a lovely heifer grazes while
220. the bulls in turn do battle for her, there incurring
frequent wounds and bodies lathered thick with blood.
Horns they lock, and bellowing groans are heard
through woods reverberating to the high Olympus.
Nor will belligerents then stall as one: 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 boldly 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 at 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. straits 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
conceive without a union, a wondrous tale.
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 northwest where the Southerlies
originate to darken sky with chilly rain.
280. And only then the poisonous hippomanes — the horses'
madness as the shepherds call it — slowly dribbles
from their sex, the same hippomanes the worst
stepmothers stir with herbs and not unharmed 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 scabieaque 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 also, earnest farmers, hope of fame.
I do not doubt it's hard to capture things in words,
290. or find the 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 Milēsiān 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 amantis 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 will graze 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. Concresecunt 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 obtruncant ferro graviterque rudentis
caedunt et magno laeti clamore reportant.
Ipsi in defossis specubus secreta sub alta
otia agunt terra congestaque robora totasque
advolvere focis 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 metalled 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 robor, 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, rolling there a blazing eye both maddened by the thirst and frenzied by the heat.

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. Plunged in some pool,
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 remove 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 marrowbone
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
Bīsaltae do, the fierce Gelonians who flee
to Rhodopē, the Getae 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 corripiunt, sed tota aestiva repente,
spemque gregemque simul cunctamque ab origine gentem.

Tum sciat, aérias Alpīs 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 autumnī incanduit aestu
480. et genus omne neci pecudum dedit, omne ferarum,
corripitque 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 infuscat 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
fields but only far and wide an 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 moriturus 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 needful breath was drawn
as seeming from great depths below, with moans at times,
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 is ponderous 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 discutunt.
Nam neque erat coriis usus nec viscera quisquam
560. aut undis abolere potest aut vincere flamma;
ne tondere quidem morbo inluvieque peresa
velleram 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 nighttime 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 hospitiis 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:
Maecēnās, look with favour on this further part.
I'll show you wondrous spectacles in trifling themes —
heroic chiefs, whole habits of the tribe, pursuits
and battles — all unfolded in their proper order.
Slight the effort but not slight the fame should adverse
gods permit me, and Apollo hear my prayer.

notes

2. Position 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.
So let clear water springs be close, and mossy pools,
a rivulet that shyly runs athwart the grass,
20. and let a palm or huge, wild olive tree protect approach,
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 praiceps 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 cancos, 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 loiterers 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 newfound 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 cerintha ignobile gramen,
tinnitusque cie et Matris quate cymbala circum.
ipsae consistunt 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 obnixa 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
through radiant summer air toward the star-bright heavens,
60. a dusky torrent strangely 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
a touch of powder on them and they sink to sleep.

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 sputat 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 Priapy.
Ipsy thymum pinosque ferens de montibus altis
tecta serat late circum, cui talia curae;
ipsey labore manum duro terat, ipsey 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 here 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 luxuriated; many
of the first few blooms that chose his fruitful trees
gave 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 ore, the ox-hide 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 grey 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 clouded 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
diripuere 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 Hydaspees
that kings are shown such reverence. If he is well,
their thought is one. 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. contunosque 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 textent.
Si vero, quoniam casus apibus quoque nostros
vita tulit, tristi languerunt 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 fierce hornets
clash with unmatched 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 ways. 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 linquunt 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-keeper'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 try out 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, losing 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 Cŷrēnē 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 such hope of heaven? 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 Cŷdippē
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
acceptique 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,
 'Cÿrēnē, 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 equally he's 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 hurtling headlong on. In those vast 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 make with bowls of this Maeonian wine
to Ōceanus our libations .' She also prayed
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, his 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 cause for troubles and to change their course. 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 vinclisque 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 vinclis
410. excidet, aut in aquas tenues dilapsus abibit.
Sed quanto ille magis formas se vertet in omnes,
tam tu, nate, magis contende tenacia vincla,
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, needs must 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
Cocytii 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 Avernus.

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!

Taenarus' 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 evaded, with
a saved Eurydicē there close behind, approaching
upper air — 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 light, 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 tigres 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.
Solut 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 grasp 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 the separating 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 musing tiger and
the 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 useless
520. gift. 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 Lycae,

540. delige et intacta totidem cervice iuencas.

Quattuor his aras alta ad delubra dearum

constitue et sacrum iugulis demitte cruorem,

corporaque 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 17th 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. 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. *Mÿsĭā*: well-cultivated country in north-west Anatolia

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

[return to section](#)

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.

[return to section](#)

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).

[return to section](#)

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. *Nÿsus* . . . *Scylla*: reference to the myth of Nÿsus, 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, Nÿsus 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 Nÿsus 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.

[return to section](#)

17. Tokens of the Sun

446. *old*: my addition.

447. *Tithonus*: 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.

[return to poem](#)

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. *Panchaïa*: 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.

[return to poem](#)

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.

[return to poem](#)

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.

[return to poem](#)

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 *Amýclae*: 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.

[return to poem](#)

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.

[return to poem](#)

5. Care of the Young (Foads)

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.

[return to poem](#)

7. Care of the Young (Foads)

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.

[return to poem](#)

10 Transition

307. *Milēsiān*: 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.

[return to poem](#)

13. Wool, Milk and Dogs

405. *Molossions*: people of Epirus.

[return to poem](#)

12. Milk, Wool and Dogs

412. *she*: literally: you.

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14. Pests

438. *malignantly*: my addition.

[return to poem](#)

15. Diseases

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

[return to poem](#)

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.

[return to poem](#)

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.

[return to poem](#)

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.

291-3. [] 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. *Cyrenē*: 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. For lack of line space, the translation omits Nesaea, Spio and Thalia.

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. *Ōrithÿia*: 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. *Cōcÿtus*: 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. *Strýmon*: 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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