

The Love Poems

The Amores

Ars Amatoria

Remedia Amoris



Ovid

A Translation into English by

A. S. KLINE

POETRY IN TRANSLATION

www.poetryintranslation.com

© Copyright 2001 A. S. Kline

Cover design by Poetry in Translation

Digital reproductions of art in the main text are courtesy of the public domain collections of the Rijksmuseum (www.rijksmuseum.nl), the US National Gallery of Art (images.nga.gov), the Statens Museum for Kunst (www.smk.dk) and the Yale Center for British Art (collections.britishart.yale.edu)

All rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions.

Textual content of this work may be freely reproduced, stored and transmitted, electronically or otherwise, for any non-commercial purpose. Restrictions apply to adaptation of the work. Usage of any material for commercial purposes resulting in direct, indirect or incidental commercial gain requires permission to be sought and granted in writing from the copyright holder. Refer to the Poetry in Translation copyright statement (www.poetryintranslation.com/Admin/Copyright.htm)

Any statements or opinions expressed in this book reflect the views of the author alone. Although the author has made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at the time of going to press, the author does not assume and hereby disclaims any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause

Please direct sales or editorial enquiries to:

tonykline@poetryintranslation.com



This digital edition is published by
Poetry In Translation (www.poetryintranslation.com),

ISBN-10: 1507893221
ISBN-13: 978-1507893227

Contents

The Amores	7
Book I	13
Book II	45
Book III	79
Ars Amatoria	117
Book I	121
Book II	157
Book III	193
Remedia Amoris	231

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) was born in Sulmo, Italy in 43BC. Intended for the law he instead took up poetry, writing the *Amores*, and the *Art of Love* (*Ars Amatoria*), works which caused offence in some quarters, including amongst the ruling dynasty. Ovid made amends, to a degree, in the *Metamorphoses*, where Augustus and Livia are echoed in Jupiter and Juno, and marriage is celebrated in key moments of the text.

Involved on the fringes of power and politics, it seems that Ovid saw but was not directly implicated in some event that antagonised the Emperor. Ovid was banished in 8AD, to Tomis (now Constanta, in Romania) on the Black Sea coast. In his letters from exile he claims his punishment was for a poem, probably the *Art of Love*, and an error. The details of the error remain unknown.

Prevented from returning to his beloved Rome, but still continuing to write from an alien land, Ovid outlived Augustus, and died at Tomis in 17AD.

ABOUT THIS WORK

The *Amores* was Ovid's first book of poetry, consisting of love elegies, involving the possibly-fictitious *Corinna*. Mildly subversive it was published in 16BC, in five books, but later edited by Ovid into its surviving three-book form. Ovid makes extensive use of humour and parody to celebrate the elegy as a creative mode as deserving of immortality as the Virgilian epic. His gentle humanism is always evident throughout.

The *Art of Love*, *Ars Amatoria*, was written in 2AD as a series of elegies purporting to teach young men and women how to succeed in the game of lovemaking. Provocative and light-hearted in tone, it caused offence, and was possibly a factor in, or at least an excuse for, Ovid's later banishment by Augustus. The whole work gives a lively view of Augustan Rome, while exhibiting the typical charm and beauty of Ovid's verse.

The *Cures for Love*, *Remedia Amoris*, is a companion piece to the *Art of Love*, suggesting ways of evading the pain of love, and ending relationships. However subtle use of the elegiac form tends to operate counter to this aim, rendering the work as much a celebration of relationship as a series of poems against it. Ovid, the 'Master of Love', is here the Doctor, though one in whose cures one suspects he himself placed little faith.

The Amores



Venus and Adonis - Abraham Bloemaert (Dutch, 1566 - 1651)

Statens Museum for Kunst

Contents

His Epigram.....	11
Book I Elegy I: The Theme of Love	13
Book I Elegy II: Love's Victim	16
Book I Elegy III: His Assets as a Lover.....	18
Book I Elegy IV: The Dinner-Party	19
Book I Elegy V: Corinna in an Afternoon.....	22
Book I Elegy VI: The Doorkeeper	23
Book I Elegy VII: The Assault.....	26
Book I Elegy VIII: The Procuress.....	29
Book I Elegy IX: Love is War	33
Book I Elegy X: The Poet's Gift.....	35
Book I Elegy XI: His Note to Her	37
Book I Elegy XII: Her Reply.....	38
Book I Elegy XIII: The Dawn	39
Book I Elegy XIV: Her Hair	41
Book I Elegy XV: His Immortality.....	43
Book II Elegy I: The Readership He Desires.....	47
Book II Elegy II: Bagoas the Servant.....	49
Book II Elegy III: The Eunuch.....	51
Book II Elegy IV: His Susceptibility	52
Book II Elegy V: Her Kisses	54
Book II Elegy VI: The Death of Corinna's Pet Parrot	56
Book II Elegy VII: Her Jealousy	58
Book II Elegy VIII: Cypassis!.....	59
Book II Elegy IXa: A Reproach to Cupid	60
Book II Elegy IXb: His Addiction.....	61
Book II Elegy X: Two at Once	62
Book II Elegy XI: Corinna's Voyage.....	64

Book II Elegy XII: His Triumph.....	66
Book II Elegy XIII: The Abortion.....	67
Book II Elegy XIV: Against Abortion.....	68
Book II Elegy XV: The Ring.....	70
Book II Elegy XVI: Sulmo.....	71
Book II Elegy XVII: His Slavery.....	73
Book II Elegy XVIII: The Death of Tragedy.....	75
Book II Elegy XIX: Make Her Hard to Get.....	77
Book III Elegy I: Elegy versus Tragedy.....	81
Book III Elegy II: At the Races.....	84
Book III Elegy III: She's Faithless.....	87
Book III Elegy IV: Adultery.....	89
Book III Elegy V: The Dream.....	91
Book III Elegy VI: The Flooded River.....	93
Book III Elegy VII: A Problem!.....	97
Book III Elegy VIII: The Curse of Money.....	100
Book III Elegy IX: Elegy for the Dead Tibullus.....	102
Book III Elegy X: No Sex- It's the Festival of Ceres.....	104
Book III Elegy XIa: That's Enough!.....	106
Book III Elegy XIb: The Conflict of Emotions.....	108
Book III Elegy XII: It Serves Me Right!.....	109
Book III Elegy XIII: The Festival of Juno.....	111
Book III Elegy XIV: Discretion Please!.....	113
Book III Elegy XV: His Fame to Come.....	115

HIS EPIGRAM

*We who were once five books are now three:
The author preferred the work this way.
Now, if it's no joy to you to read us,
still it's a lighter punishment with two books less.*

Book I



Venus - Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones (British, 1833 - 1898)

National Gallery of Art

BOOK I ELEGY I: THE THEME OF LOVE



ust now, I was preparing to start with heavy fighting
and violent war, with a measure to fit the matter.

Good enough for lesser verse – laughed Cupid
so they say, and stole a foot away.

‘Cruel boy, who gave you power over this song?

Poets are the Muses’, we’re not in your crowd.

What if Venus snatched golden Minerva’s weapons,
while golden Minerva fanned the flaming fires?

Who’d approve of Ceres ruling the wooded hills,
with the Virgin’s quiver to cultivate the fields?

Who’d grant long-haired Phoebus a sharp spear,
while Mars played the Aonian lyre?

You’ve a mighty kingdom, boy, and too much power,
ambitious one, why aspire to fresh works?

Or is everything yours? Are Helicon’s metres yours?

Is even Phoebus’s lyre now barely his at all?

I’ve risen to it well, in the first line, on a clean page,
the next one’s weakened my strength:

and I’ve no theme fitting for lighter verses,
no boy or elegant long-haired girl.’

I was singing, while he quickly selected an arrow
from his open quiver, to engineer my ruin,
and vigorously bent the sinuous bow against his knee.
and said, ‘Poet take this effort for your song!’

Woe is me! That boy has true shafts.

I burn, and Love rules my vacant heart.

My work rises in six beats, sinks in five:
farewell hard fighting with your measure!

Muse, garland your golden brow with Venus’s myrtle
culled from the shore, and sing on with eleven feet!

BOOK I ELEGY II: LOVE'S VICTIM



How to say what it's like, how hard my mattress
seems, and the sheets won't stay on the bed,
and the sleepless nights, so long to endure,
tossing with every weary bone of my body in pain?
But, I think, if desire were attacking me I'd feel it.
Surely he's crept in and skilfully hurt me with secret art.
That's it: a slender arrow sticks fast in my heart,
and cruel Love lives there, in my conquered breast.
Shall I give in: to go down fighting might bank the fires?
I give in! The burden that's carried with grace is lighter.
I've seen the torch that's swung about grow brighter
and the still one, on the contrary, quenched.
The oxen that shirk when first seized for the yoke
get more lashes than those that are used to the plough.
The hot steed's mouth is bruised from the harsh curb,
the one that's been in harness, feels reins less.
Love oppresses reluctant lovers more harshly and insolently
than those who acknowledge they'll bear his slavery.
Look I confess! Cupid, I'm your latest prize:
stretching out conquered arms towards your justice.
War's not the thing – I come seeking peace:
no glory for you in conquering unarmed men.
Wreath your hair with myrtle, yoke your mother's doves:
Your stepfather Mars himself will lend you a chariot,
and it's fitting you go, the people acclaiming your triumph,
with you skilfully handling the yoked birds.
leading captive youths and captive girls:
that procession will be a magnificent triumph.
I myself, fresh prize, will just now have received my wound
and my captive mind will display its new chains.

The Love Poems

You'll lead Conscience, hands twisted behind her back,
and Shame, and whoever Love's sect includes.
All will fear you: stretching their arms towards you
the crowd will cry 'hurrah for the triumph!
You'll have your flattering followers Delusion and Passion,
the continual crew that follows at your side.
With these troops you overcome men and gods:
take away their advantage and you're naked.
Proudly, your mother will applaud your triumph
from high Olympus, and scatter roses over your head
You, with jewelled wings, jewels spangling your hair,
will ride in a golden chariot, yourself all golden.
And then, if I know you, you'll inflame not a few:
and also, passing by you'll deal out many wounds.
You can't, even if you wish, suspend your arrows:
your fiery flames scorch your neighbours.
Such was Bacchus in the conquered land by Ganges:
you drawn by birds, he by tigers.
So since I will be part of your sacred triumph,
victorious one, spend your powers frugally on me now!
Look at Caesar's similar fortunes of war –
what he conquers, he protects with his power.

BOOK I ELEGY III: HIS ASSETS AS A LOVER



Be just, I beg you: let the girl who's lately plundered me,
either love me, or give cause why I should always love her!
Ah, I ask too much – enough if she lets herself be loved:
Cytherea might listen to all these prayers from me!
Hear one who serves you through the long years:
hear one who knows how to love in pure faith!
If no great names of ancient ancestors commend me,
if the creator of my blood was from the equestrian order,
if there aren't innumerable ploughmen to refresh my fields,
my parents are both temperate and careful with wealth –
but Phoebus, his nine companions, the creator of the vine,
they made me as I am, and Amor, who gives me to you,
and unceasing loyalty, sinless morals,
naked simplicity, noble honour.
Not for me to satisfy thousands, I'm not a fickle lover:
you'll be, for me, trust me, my eternal care.
With you, all the years the Sister's thread might grant me,
partaking of life, and you'll grieve at my death!
You'll grant me a happy theme for singing –
reasons for song, worthy of you, will rise.
These have a name in song, frightened Io of the horns,
and she who played by the stream with the adulterous bird,
and she who was carried by that false bull over the waves,
that virgin holding tight to a crooked horn.
I too will be sung likewise through all the world,
and my name will always be linked to yours.

BOOK I ELEGY IV: THE DINNER-PARTY



our husband too will be present at my banquet –
I pray it's his last meal, that man of yours!
Shall I look at my beloved girl, like any guest?
One of you will be touching what he pleases, and will you
the other, rightly subject, be cherishing your love?
If he wishes, may he throw his arms round your neck?
I cease to wonder that the Centaurs full of wine
snatched up lovely Hippodamia in their arms.
I don't live in the woods, or have limbs like a horse
but I can barely contain my hands when I see you!
Still, know what you must do, and don't let
the east or the south wind go carrying off my words!
Arrive before your husband – not that I see what's do-able
if you do come first, but still come before him.
When he sinks on the couch, as you recline at the table
there be the face of modesty itself – secretly touch my foot!
Watch me and my nods, and loquacious expression:
pick up their secret messages and yourself reply.
Voiceless, I'll speak eloquent words with eyebrows:
my fingers will write words, words traced out in wine.
When the lasciviousness of our lovemaking occurs to you,
touch your radiant cheek with a delicate thumb.
If it's some silent complaint against me you have in mind,
shadow your earlobe with a tender hand.
When what I do, and say, pleases you, light of my life,
keep continually twisting a ring with your fingers.
Touch your hands on the table, in the manner of prayer,
when you wish your husband many well-earned evils.
What he mixes for you, you know, order him to drink:
lightly ask the boy for what you wish, yourself.

What you give up to the boy I'll take again first,
and, where you'll drink from, I'll sip from there.
If by chance he offers you what he's tasted himself,
reject the gift of food from his mouth.
Don't let him drape his arms around your neck,
or lay your gentle head on his firm chest,
or your breasts or convenient nipples accept his fingers.
Don't, above all, be willing to yield a single kiss!
If you surrender kisses, I'll make it clear I'm your lover,
and say 'they're mine!', and take possession.
Still all this I can see, but what the cloth may well hide
that's the cause of my secret fears.
Don't touch thigh to thigh, or mingle legs,
or join the hard and the tender foot to foot.
Wretch, I fear everything, who've boldly done it all,
behold, I'm tormented by fear of my own example.
Often my girl and I, with quick pleasure,
completed the sweet work, the cloth covering us.
You won't do that: but, so you're not thought to have done,
remove that guilty cloth from your table.
Always suggest he drinks – but lips, disappoint his prayers!
While he drinks, if you can, in secret, add neat wine.
If he lies there sedately full of drink and sleep,
the time and place will give us wisdom.
When you and I and all get up to leave for home,
remember to be in the middle of the moving crowd.
I'll find you in that procession, or you me:
whenever you've a chance to touch me, touch away.
Alas for me! I'm reminded, I only gain a few hours:
I'll be separated, on night's orders, from my girl.
The man shuts you in at night, I sad, with welling tears,
as is right, always haunt that cruel entrance.
now he exacts kisses, now not merely kisses,
what you give me secretly, you give him by force of law.
But give them reluctantly –you can do it – as if forced,

The Love Poems

hold back blandishments, and let Venus be stingy.
If my prayers have power, I wish no pleasure for either:
if not that, then at least no pleasure for you!
But still whatever fortune brings tonight, tomorrow
to me, with constant voice, deny you gave him anything!

BOOK I ELEGY V: CORINNA IN AN AFTERNOON



It was hot, and the noon hour had gone by:
I was relaxed, limbs spread in the midst of the bed.
One half of the window was open, the other closed:
the light was just as it often is in the woods,
it glimmered like Phoebus dying at twilight,
or when night goes, but day has still not risen.
Such a light as is offered to modest girls,
whose timid shyness hopes for a refuge.
Behold Corinna comes, hidden by her loose slip,
scattered hair covering her white throat –
like the famous Semiramis going to her bed,
one might say, or Lais loved by many men.
I pulled her slip away – not harming its thinness much;
yet she still struggled to be covered by that slip.
While she would struggle so, it was as if she could not win,
yielding, she was effortlessly conquered.
When she stood before my eyes, the clothing set aside,
there was never a flaw in all her body.
What shoulders, what arms, I saw and touched!
Breasts formed as if they were made for pressing!
How flat the belly beneath the slender waist!
What flanks, what form! What young thighs!
Why recall each aspect? I saw nothing lacking praise
and I hugged her naked body against mine.
Who doesn't know the story? Weary we both rested.
May such afternoons often come for me!

BOOK I ELEGY VI: THE DOORKEEPER



Doorkeeper – shameful! – bound by a harsh chain,
open that door with the hinge that’s hard to move!
What I ask is nothing – make an entrance, a little crack
half-open, that a body gets through sideways.
Love has thinned my body with such long usage,
and given me limbs that lose weight.
He’ll show you how to go softly past watchful sentries:
he directs your inoffensive feet.
Now once I was scared of the night and vain phantoms:
I was amazed at anyone who went out in the dark.
Cupid laughed, so I heard, and his tender mother,
and said lightly, ‘You too can become brave.’
Without delay, love came – I don’t fear clutching hands
in my fate, or the flitting shadows of night.
You, so slow, you I fear: you’re the one to flatter:
you keep the bolt that can finish me off.
Look – you can see, then, undo the lock –
the doorway’s wet with my tears!
Surely, when you stood quivering, stripped for flogging,
I spoke words to your mistress on your behalf.
So isn’t the favour that you once valued – oh what a crime!
- not worth something of equal value to me, now?
Repay the service in kind! You’ll easily get what you want.
The night is passing: throw open the door!
Open! Then, I say, you’ll be eased of your long bondage,
and you won’t drink slave’s water for ever!
Like iron you listen uselessly to my prayers, doorkeeper,
the door’s barred solidly with tough wood.
Barred gates are of use to a city under siege:
what arms do you fear in the midst of peace?

What will you do to your enemies, who shut out lovers so?
The night's passing: throw open the door!
I don't come accompanied by armies and weapons:
I was alone till cruel Love arrived.
I couldn't dismiss him even if I wanted:
I'd first have to separate myself from my limbs.
So Love, and a modicum of wine going round in my head,
is here with me, dew-drenched hair with a wreath askew.
Who's afraid of an army like this? Who isn't open to them?
The night is passing: throw open the door!
You're slow: or asleep, do lovers who curse you,
throw words to the winds, lost to your ears?
But, I remember, when I wanted to hide from you,
you kept good vigil under the midnight stars.
Perhaps a little friend stays with you now –
alas, your fate is better than mine!
As long as it's so, pass your harsh chains to me!
The night is passing: throw open the door!
Am I wrong, or didn't the door resound with turning hinges,
giving out the strident noise of panels thrown back?
I am wrong – the entrance was struck by an airy blast.
Ah me, how the far-off breeze carries my hopes!
Boreas, if the memory of raped Orithyia, is enough,
come here and beat with your gale on these deaf posts!
All the city's silent, and wet with glassy dewfall
the night is passing: throw open the door!
Or I'm ready now myself with the sword and fire
that I hold, to attack this proud house.
Night and desire and wine don't urge moderation:
She quenches shame, Bacchus and Love the fear.
I've tried it all: neither threats nor prayers
move you, harder than your doors themselves.
It doesn't suit you, guarding lovely girls' thresholds,
you're worthy of some securer prison.
Soon Lucifer moves day's frosted axles,

The Love Poems

and the birds rouse poor wretches to their work.
But you, garland removed from an unhappy brow,
lie there, all night, on the cruel threshold!
To my mistress, when she sees you thrown there at dawn,
you'll bear witness of so many evil hours consumed.
Farewell, anyway, and know your duty's over:
it's no disgrace to admit lovers slowly, so goodbye!
You too, cruel doorposts with an inflexible threshold
and the tough wood of fellow-slaves, farewell, you doors!

BOOK I ELEGY VII: THE ASSAULT



f there's a friend here, tie my hands –
they merit chains – while my fury wanes!
Just now my fury thoughtlessly struck my girl:
my darling's weeping, wounded by my mad hands.
Then I could have done violence to my dear parents
or savagely taken a scourge to the sacred gods!
Well? Didn't Lord Ajax of the seven-layered shield
lay out the sheep he caught all over the fields,
and didn't lawless Orestes, avenging his father
on his mother, dare to call up a spear for the secret Sisters?
So can't I tear at her done-up hair?
or unravel the girl's flying locks?
She was lovely like that. I'd say like Schoeny's daughter,
Atalanta, hunting game in Maenalian hills:
or like Ariadne weeping as the south wind
blew away perjured promises and Theseus's sails:
or who but Cassandra with sacred ribbons in her hair,
on the ground, in your temple, chaste Minerva.
Who'll not say 'madman, barbarian!' to me?
She said nothing: her mouth slackened by trembling fear.
But her silent face still showed reproof:
she accused me with speechless mouth, in tears.
I'd sooner have wished my arms to fall from my body:
easier to have lost a part of myself.
I had a madman's strength to my cost
and the force of my punishment was in it.
What are you to me, wicked and murderous tools?
Submit to the binding fetters, sacrilegious hands!
If I'd struck the least citizen of the Roman masses,
I'd be punished – had I any more right to hit her?

Tydeus, the wretch, left behind the worst example.
He was the first to strike a goddess – then me!
And he did less harm. I hurt what I professed
to love: Tydeus was cruel to the enemy.
Go, now, Conqueror, devise a great triumph,
wreath your hair with laurel, and give thanks to Jove,
all the surging crowd, following your chariot,
calling ‘Bravo! The great man who conquered a girl!’
She’ll go ahead, sad dishevelled captive,
all pale, except for her wounded cheeks.
Lips bruised black would have been more apt
and love-bites marking her neck.
Lastly, if I had to act like a swollen torrent,
and my blind anger make her my prey,
wouldn’t it have been enough to shout at the frightened girl,
or thunder away with harsh threats,
or shamefully tear her tunic from throat to waist?
- Only her waistband would have felt my strength.
Instead I held her by the hair I grabbed at her brow
marked those delicate cheeks with cruel nails.
She stood there, stupefied, with pale and bleeding face,
as if cut from everlasting Parian marble.
I saw her terrified body, her limbs trembling –
like a breeze blowing through the poplar leaves,
or a soft west wind troubling the slender reeds,
or the tips of the waves touched by a warm southerly:
at length, the brimming tears flowed down her face,
as water runs from the melting snow.
Then for the first time I began to realise her hurt –
the tears I had made her shed were my blood.
Three times I tried to kneel at her feet in supplication:
three times she pushed away those repulsive hands.
Well, don’t hesitate, girl – revenge will lessen the grief –
go at my face with your nails straightaway.
don’t spare my hair or my eyes:

The Amores – Book I

Anger adds what you will to weak hands:
don't let so much as one sad sign of my wickedness remain,
put your hair back in place like it was before!

BOOK I ELEGY VIII: THE PROCURESS



There's a certain – Listen! Anyone who wants to know
of a procuress! – there's a certain old woman called Dipsas.
She gets her name from the thing – she never saw Dawn
with her rosy horses, mother of dark Memnon, while sober.
She's learnt the Magi's tricks and Circe's Aean charms
and her art can make rivers flow back to their source:
She knows what herbs to use, how to whirl the bullroarer
and the value of the slime from a mare on heat.
When she wants, she can make cloud gather in the sky:
when she wants, she brightens the day with a full sun.
If you can believe it, I've seen the stars drip blood:
blood-red was the very face of the Moon.
I suspect she changes, at will, in the shadows of night
and her old woman's body grow feathers.
I suspect it, and that's the rumour. Her eyes shine too
with double pupils, and twin lights come from the orbs.
She calls up ancient ancestors, ghosts from the grave
and with long-winded charms splits solid earth.
She herself set out to desecrate our chaste bed:
nor did she lack an eloquent tongue for doing harm.
Chance made me witness to her speech: her instructions
went just like this – the double doors hid me:
'You know, the other day, light of my life, you pleased
the rich young man? He's always here, hangs on your look.
And why shouldn't he? With beauty second to none:
alas, you lack the training worthy of your body.
I wish you to be as happy as you're lovely –
I'll not be poor if you get rich.
That opposing planet Mars was doing you harm.
Mars transited: now Venus is right for you.

Her move benefits you, come and see! A rich lover
desires you: he's got attentions for you, those you lack.
he's even handsome too, a match for you:
if he didn't want to win you, Venus has fixed it.'
Someone blushed. 'True, modesty suits a pale face,
and good if you simulate it: reality often harms us.
It's well to keep your eyes looking down at your lap,
the response should be according to what he brings.
Perhaps under Tatius's rule the unwashed Sabine women
were unwilling to handle several men:
but now Mars exerts his mind on foreign warfare
and Venus rules in Aeneas's city.
Lovely girls play: she's chaste, whom nobody asks –
she asks herself, if naivety doesn't prevent her.
Look at those too that walk round with serious faces:
lots of crimes arise behind those frowns.
Penelope tested the young mens' strength with the bow:
it was a bow of horn that proved the best.
Secretly gliding, the circling years deceive us
and, quickly sliding, the river's waters go by.
Bronze gleams with use, a nice dress looks to be worn,
a house that's left in a sorry state ages –
Beauty, unless you allow it, withers without exercise.
Just one or two occasions are not enough.
It's better and not so invidious to take from many.
The wolf eats best that preys on the whole flock.
Look, what does that poet of yours give you
but new verses? Choose from a thousand lovers.
Look at the god of poets himself with a golden robe,
he performs on the strings of a gilded lyre.
He who gives should be greater for you than Homer:
believe me, giving is the clever thing.
And don't despise a slave who's bought his freedom:
chalked feet from the market-place are no crime.
And don't let ancestral portraits round the atrium fool you.

The Love Poems

Impoverished lover, remove yourself, and your fathers too!
The one, who's handsome, who, gift-less, asks for a night,
ask him in front of his lover, what he'll give!
Don't ask a great reward, while you spread your net,
lest they fly: once captive oppress them with your law!
No harm in pretending love: but, if he thinks himself loved,
beware lest he sets the price of your love at nothing!
Often deny him nights. Pretend you've a headache,
or it's the days of Isis, to give him a reason.
Receive him again soon, don't let him get used to suffering,
lest love slacken through often being repulsed.
Let your door be deaf to prayers: welcome the giver:
let the one you receive hear the words of those outside:
and, as if you were hurt first, sometimes in anger hurt him –
the blame vanishes when you repay with blame.
But never spend too long a time being angry:
often an angry manner makes for quarrels.
Rather learn to cry with forced tears,
and make him, or yourself, end with wet cheeks:
and if you're cheating don't let perjury scare you –
Venus ensures the gods are deaf to her games.
A page or sometimes a clever maid should appear,
who has learned what gifts are fitting for you:
and let them ask little for themselves – if they often ask,
little stalks soon grow to a vast heap.
Your sister and mother and nurse can all fleece a lover:
booty can be gathered quickly by many hands.
When you're lacking in reasons for asking gifts,
swear it's your birthday, and here's the cake!
Beware of letting him love securely, rival-free:
love never lasts if you take away competition.
Let him see signs of activity in your bed,
and show lascivious marks on your bruised neck.
Above all show him the gifts others have given.
If no one's given, get some from the Via Sacra.

When you've taken a lot, so he shouldn't seem to give all,
ask him to oblige with a loan, you'll never repay!
Please him with your tongue and hide your feelings –
hurt him with flattery: foul poison hides under sweet honey.
I offer you all this learning from long experience,
don't let the winds and the breeze blow my words away,
living, you'll often say good things of me, and often pray,
that my bones rest softly after I'm dead.'
Her voice was running on, when my shadow betrayed me,
since my hands could scarcely contain themselves,
ready to tear at those sparse white locks, and eyes
full of drunken tears, and wrinkled cheeks.
May the gods grant her an old age without roof or wealth,
and endless winters and perpetual thirst!

BOOK I ELEGY IX: LOVE IS WAR



Every lover's in arms, and Cupid holds the fort:
Atticus, believe me, every lover's in arms.
The age that's good for war, is also right for love.
An old soldier's a disgrace, and an old lover.
That spirit a commander looks for in a brave army,
a lovely girl looks for in a love partner.
Both keep watch: both sleep on the ground,
one serves at his lady's entrance, the other his general's.
A long road's a soldier's task: but send the girl off,
and a restless lover will follow her to the end.
He'll go against mountains and bend into stormy rivers,
he'll push his way through swollen snowdrifts,
he'll not rely on excuses, like angry northerlies,
or waiting for suitable stars to take to the waves.
Who but a soldier or lover could endure
cold nights or dense snow mixed with rain?
One's sent out to spy on attacking forces:
the other keeps eye on his rival, his enemy.
This one lays siege to strong cities, that one his harsh friend's
entrance: one breaks down gates, the other doors.
Often it helps to attack a sleeping enemy,
and strike the unarmed mass with armed hand.
That's how Rhesus and his fierce Thracians were killed
and forfeited the leader's captured mares.
Lovers, for sure, will make use of a husband's sleep
and employ their arms while the enemy slumbers.
Getting past watchman's hands, and enemy sentinels
is work for soldiers and wretched lovers.
Mars is chancy, Venus uncertain: the fallen can rise again,
while those you think could never be thrown are beaten.

So if you've called all lovers idlers, forget it.
Love is all experience and ability.
Great Achilles burns for stolen Briseis –
while you can Trojans, smash the Argive wall!
Hector went into battle from Andromache's arms,
it was the wife who placed the helmet on his head.
The great lord Atrides, they say, seeing Cassandra
that Trojan Maenad, was enraptured by her flowing hair.
Mars too, surprised, felt the blacksmith's chain mesh:
there was never a greater scandal in heaven.
I myself was lazy and born to idle leisure:
bed and shade both softened my mind.
Love for a lovely girl soon drove the idler
and ordered him off to earn his pay in camp.
Now see me, active and fighting nocturnal wars.
If you don't want to be idle, fall in love!

BOOK I ELEGY X: THE POET'S GIFT



like the woman carried by the ships from Eurotas
to Troy, the cause of war between two husbands:
like Leda to whom the adulterous god made love,
craftily hidden, disguised in white plumage:
like Amymome wandering through arid fields,
with a water-pot on top of her head –
such were you: I feared eagles and bulls, for you,
and whatever else great Jupiter might make love as.
Now all fear's gone, my mind is healed of error,
now your beauty can't captivate my eyes.
Why am I changed, you ask? Because you want gifts.
That's the cause that stops you from pleasing me.
Once you were innocent, I loved you body and soul:
now your beauty's flawed by this defect of mind.
Love is a child and naked: without the shabbiness of age
and without clothing, so he's all openness.
Why tell Venus's son to sell himself for cash?
Where can he keep cash, he's got no clothes!
Neither Venus nor Venus's son carry arms –
unwarlike gods don't merit soldier's pay.
Even the whore who's buyable for money,
and seeks alas to command wealth with her body:
nevertheless curses a grasping pimp's orders,
and is forced to do, what you do by choice.
Think about unreasoning creatures for example:
it's a disgrace, if the beasts are better natured than you.
Mares don't ask gifts of stallions, cows of bulls:
rams don't capture pleasing ewes with gifts.
Only a woman delights in taking spoils from her mate,
only she hires out her nights, comes for a price,

and sells what this one demands, what that one seeks,
or gives it as a gift, to please herself.
When making love pleases both partners alike,
why should she sell and the other buy?
When a man and a woman perform a joint act
why should the pleasure hurt me and profit you?
It's wrong for witnesses to perjure themselves for gain,
it's wrong to open the purse of the chosen judges.
It's a disgrace to defend the accused with a bought tongue:
a disgraceful court makes itself wealthy:
it's wrong to swell family wealth with the bed's proceeds,
or prostitute your good looks for money.
un-purchased, things deserve our thanks, on merit:
no thanks for the evil of a bought bed.
The buyer loosens all bonds: freed by payment
he no longer remains a debtor in your service.
Beware, you beauties, bargaining gifts for a night:
you'll have no good outcome from sordid presents.
Sabine bracelets weren't worth so much
when weapons pressed down on the sacred virgin's head:
and Eriphyle died, her son's sword through her body,
a necklace the reason for her punishment.
Still there's nothing unworthy in asking gifts of the rich:
those who can give have presents demanded of them.
Pick your grapes from the most loaded vines:
Alcinous's fruitful orchard offers its apples!
Count on a poor man for duty, loyalty, devotion:
what a man has, let him gather it all for his lady.
My gift then's to celebrate worthy girls in my song:
those that I wish, are made famous by my art.
dresses crumble, gold and gems are worn down:
but the tribute of song brings eternal fame.
It's not giving, it's being asked for a gift I loathe and scorn:
Stop wanting what I refuse to supply, and I'll give!

BOOK I ELEGY XI: HIS NOTE TO HER



killed at gathering unruly hair and setting it in place
Nape's not just an ordinary lady's maid,
she's known to be useful in the secret service
of night: clever at carrying messages between us:
often exhorting a hesitant Corinna to come:
often faithfully labouring to find things out for me –
here take these wax tablets by hand to my lady
and be sure to avoid obstructions and delay!
There's no stony vein or harsh metal in your breast,
older than the others, there's no foolishness in you.
It's easy to believe that you've felt Cupid's arrows –
see the traces of your battles in me!
If she asks how I am, say I live in hope at night:
you'll carry the rest in your hand, flattering waxen words.
While I speak, time flies. Give her them when she's free,
Make sure though that she reads them straight away.
Watch her eyes and brow as she chews them over:
and know that a silent face may show the future.
When she's read it I need a long reply, and no delay:
I hate it when the clear wax is mostly empty.
Let her squeeze the lines in ranks, and hold my eyes
with letters that graze the edges of the margins.
Why should she weary her fingers holding a pen?
One word can take up the whole tablet: 'Come!'
I won't hesitate to wreath the victorious tablets with laurel
and set them up in the centre of Venus's temple.
I'll write: 'Naso dedicates these loyal servants to Venus,
these tablets that till now were worthless maple-wood.'

BOOK I ELEGY XII: HER REPLY



WEEP for my misfortune – the miserable tablets returned
with a wretched message saying: ‘Can’t manage today.’
Omens mean something. Just now when she wished to leave
Nape stopped when she stubbed her toe on the threshold.
Remember next time you’re sent out, crossing the doorsill,
pick your feet up, carefully and soberly!
Away with these surly tablets of funereal wood,
and you, wax, filled with your negative message! –
Extracted I bet from honey of long hemlock flowers
made by the infamous Corsican bees.
Just as if you’d blushed, steeped in deep dye –
that colour indeed was truly bloody.
Useless wood, I’ll throw you out at the crossroads,
so the weight of a passing wheel can smash you!
Even the man who carved you for use, from the tree,
I’m convinced the man had impure hands.
That tree held some wretch hung by the neck,
it offered itself as dread executioner’s crosses:
it gave vile shade to the screeching owls,
and carried their eggs and vultures in its branches.
Madman, did I give these to my lady, trusting
my love to them, to carry my gentle words?
This wax is more fitted to garrulous words of bail,
to be read aloud by some hard mouthed attorney:
or better to throw these tablets among the accounts,
where a miser goes weeping for his lost wealth.
So I judge you, two-faced things by nature.
The number itself is in no way auspicious.
How to curse you, in anger, other than crumbling age
might rot you, and whiten your wax in a filthy place?

BOOK I ELEGY XIII: THE DAWN



Now she rises over the ocean, come from her aged husband,
the golden girl, who brings day to the frozen sky.
'Why hurry, Aurora? Wait! – so the bird, Memnon's shade,
can perform the annual sacrificial rite!
Now I delight to lie in my girl's soft arms:
now she's so sweetly joined to my side.
now sleep's still easy, and the air is cool,
and the bird sings in full flow from a clear throat.
Why hurry, unwelcome to men, unwelcome to girls?
Restrain those dewy reins with rosy fingers!
Before you rise the sailor more easily watches for his stars
and wanders less unknowingly in the deep:
the traveller, however weary, rises at your coming,
and the fierce soldier takes his weapon in hand.
You first see the farmer burdened with his hoe in the field:
you first call the tardy oxen to couple beneath the yoke.
You rob boys of sleep and send them to their masters,
and submit the tender ones to the lash of a savage hand.
You send the heedless guarantor before that court,
where a single word carries a heavy price.
No eloquence for you from pleaders and lawyers,
you force them both to rise to new litigation.
You, when the labours of women might cease,
call back the spinner's hand to her duty.
I could endure it all – but for girls to rise early,
who'd bring that about but one who's not a girl?
The number of times I've begged night not to yield to you,
and the circling stars not to flee before your face!
The number of times I've begged a storm to crack your axle
or your wayward horses to fall through thick cloud!

What, did she never burn for Cephalus?
Does she think that wickedness is unknown?
Hostile one, why hurry? Because your son is black
is that the colour of your maternal heart?
I wish Tithonus would tell the truth about you:
there'd be no more disgraceful tale in heaven.
Now you flee him, who's so much older than you,
early in mounting the chariot, hateful to the old man.
But if you were leaving Cephalus, caught in your arms,
you'd cry out: "Run slow, O horses of the night!"
Why should I be punished in love, if your husband
faints with age? Did you marry the old man on my advice?
Look what a sleep the Moon allowed her lover! –
And she's not second to you in beauty.
The father of the gods himself, so as not to see you so often,
joined two nights together, in his longing.'
I'd ended the brawl. You'll know I'd dared: she blushed –
but still the day rose as usual, no more slowly!

BOOK I ELEGY XIV: HER HAIR



said: 'Stop dyeing your hair!'
Now you've no hair left to colour.
Since it was so luxuriant, why not have let it be?
It stretched right down, and touched your sides.
Why? - If it was so fine, and you were scared to dress it.
It was like a coloured veil of Chinese silk,
or the slender thread spun by a spider,
when she ties her fine work to some deserted rafter.
It wasn't black: it wasn't golden, however,
not quite either, a colour mixed from both –
like a tall cedar, stripped of its bark,
in a dewy valley of mountainous Ida.
Add that it was docile, and fit for a hundred styles,
and was never a cause of grief to you.
No pin or tooth of a comb ever broke it.
The maid doing your hair kept her skin whole:
often in front of my eyes, no, never a pin
tore your maid's arm with a wound.
Often, with your hair still uncombed
you lay reclining on a bed of purple.
But even neglected like that it was lovely, like a weary
Thracian Maenad's, lying heedless on the emerald grass.
Still, the hairs were fine, like fleece,
alas, what suffering they had to bear!
How they offered themselves patiently to the steel and fire,
as their waves were twisted and tied in ringlets!
I cried: 'That's wicked, wicked to scorch your hair!
It's fine as it is: go carefully with the steel!
Take the pressure away! No one ought to burn it:
your hair itself teaches others how to pin theirs.'

Fear for the lovely hair – that Apollo or Bacchus
would wish to have on their heads!
I might have gathered it, like naked Venus's,
painted, she holding it in her drenched hand.
Why search your neat hair for what's vilely lost?
Silly girl why hold the mirror sadly in your hand?
It's no use contriving to stare at yourself:
you need to forget about yourself, to please.
No mistress of magic herbs has wounded you,
no Thessalian witch soaked you in treacherous water:
no illness's power has touched you – perish the thought! –
No evil tongue has thinned your dense hair.
Your hand did it and you're paying for your crime:
Now you'll send for the hair of German prisoners:
you'll be safe, with the gift of conquered peoples.
O how often you'll blush when someone praises your hair,
and say: 'Now I'm counting the cost of buying it,
I don't know if they praise the Sygambri instead of me.
It's fame will be remembered with mine.'
Alas! She scarcely contains her tears and with her hand
hides her delicate cheeks painted with blushes.
She holds her former hair in her lap, and stares at it,
ah me, a tribute not fitting for that place!
Calm yourself, doing your face! The harm's reparable.
Shortly your natural hair will be seen again.

BOOK I ELEGY XV: HIS IMMORTALITY



nawing Envy, why reproach me with an indolent life:
and call the work of my genius idle song?
Is it that I don't follow the custom of the country,
seek the dusty reward of army life while I'm young?
That I don't study wordy laws,
or prostitute my voice in the forum?
The work you seek is mortal. I seek eternal fame,
to be sung throughout the whole world forever.
Homer will live, while Ida and Tenedos stand,
while Simois still runs swiftly to the sea:
Hesiod, as well, while the vintage ripens,
while the crops fall to the curving blade.
Callimachus will always be sung throughout the world:
not because of his imagination, but his art.
The tragedies of Sophocles will never be lost:
nor Aratus as long as there's a sun and moon:
While devious slaves, stern fathers, cruel pimps,
and enticing whores live, so will Menander:
Artless Ennius, and brave-voiced Accius
have names that no time will erase.
What age will not know Varro's tale of the first ship,
and Jason leading the quest for the Golden Fleece?
Then, the works of sublime Lucretius will endure,
while there's a day left till the world's ruin.
Virgil's pastorals, and the Aeneid will be read,
while Rome triumphs over the world:
While Cupid's weapons are still the torch and arrows,
they'll speak your measures, elegant Tibullus:
Gallus will be renowned in the west, Gallus in the east,
and Lycoris will be famous with her Gallus.

So, while granite, while the unyielding ploughshare
perish with the years, poetry will not die.
Leaders and countries yield to the triumphs of song,
and the lavish waters of gold-bearing Tagus yield!
Let the masses gaze at trash: let golden-haired Apollo
offer me a brimming cup of Castalian waters,
and I'll wear a wreath of myrtle, that hates the cold,
and be read by many an anxious lover!
Envy feeds on the living: it's quiet after death,
while everyone who's dead gets their due honours.
So even when I'm given to the final flames,
I'll live, and the better part of me will survive.

Book II



Statue of Venus de 'Medici, Johan Teyler (Dutch, 1648 – 1709)

The Rijksmuseum

BOOK II ELEGY I: THE READERSHIP HE DESIRES



, that poet Naso, born by Pelignian waters,
also composed these, my naughtinesses.
Here too Love commands – go far, stay far, you puritans!
You're not fit audience for the erotic mode.
Let the virgin who's not frigid, who's betrothed, read me,
and the inexperienced boy unused to the touch of love:
and let some other youth, now I'm wounded by the bow,
acknowledge the shared sign of his passion,
and gazing long at it say: 'what betrayal has he learnt,
this poet, that he's written about my misfortunes?'
I remember, I dared to speak about celestial war
and hundred-handed Gyas – that was enough effrontery –
with Earth herself's fell vengeance, and Ossa
and steep Pelion piled on high Olympus.
And I had Jupiter, with thunder and lightning, in hand,
the things he throws with such effect through the sky –
my lover closed the door! I dropped Jove and the lightning:
my genius let fall Jupiter himself.
Jupiter, forgive me! Your weapons were no help:
her entrance was even closed to your mightier bolt.
I resumed my weapons, light flattering elegies:
gentle words can soften harsh doors.
Songs can draw down the blood-red moon,
and call the sun's white stallions from their journey:
Serpents' jaws are forced apart by song,
and fountains flow backwards to their source.
Doors yield to song, and the bolt rammed home,
however hard it is, is conquered at last by charms.
What does it profit me to sing of swift Achilles?
what use to me one or the other Atrides,

whoever that was who wasted years on war and wandering,
or sad Hector dragged behind the Thessalian horses.
but her face often praised, the beautiful girl herself
comes for the poet, the reward for song.
A great prize won! Bright heroic names farewell:
your rewards are not adequate for me!
Songs bring the beautiful girls to my shining face,
songs that Love dictates to me!

BOOK II ELEGY II: BAGOAS THE SERVANT



While I'm passing a brief, appropriate, moment with you,
Bagoas, how anxious your mistress is at being watched!
I saw the girl yesterday in the light, walking there
where the portico displays the line of Danaids.
Straightaway, since she pleased me, I sent her a proposition.
She wrote back nervously: 'It's not allowed!'
And, querying why it wasn't, I got the reply
that your excessive annoying care is the girl's trouble.
O watchman, believe me, if you're wise, you'll desist
from incurring hatred: we wish those we fear would vanish.
Her husband's also not wise: why labour to watch
something when nothing's lost if you don't?
But it humours the madman to think that his love
who delights many, is in fact chaste:
let your girl be given liberty in secret,
what you give her, she'll repay you.
You choose to know – then the lady's in debt to the servant:
you're afraid to know – it's alright to dissimulate.
She reads a note by herself – think that her mother sent it!
Some unknown comes – he'll soon become known to you.
She pretends to go to see a friend who isn't ill,
it's fine! Your judgement is she's ill.
If she's late, don't weary yourself waiting forever,
you can snore with your head between your knees.
Don't ask what happens in the temple of linen-clad Isis,
and don't be worried by the theatre's arch!
One in the know constantly takes away gains he gathers –
equally how much less is the labour of the silent?
He pleases and lives in the house and doesn't feel the lash:
he's powerful – the others lie there a squalid crowd.
Concoct idle things to hide true motivations:

and what satisfies her will satisfy them both.
While her husband pulls a face and frowns,
the lovely woman does what she'd like to do.
Still now and then she needs to pick a quarrel with you too,
and simulate tears and call you a scoundrel.
You bring a charge against her, that she can wholly explain,
and with a false accusation you'll hide the truth.
So your esteem and your savings grow.
Do this and you'll be free in no time at all.
You see the informers with chains around their necks?
There's a squalid prison for disloyal hearts.
His garrulous tongue left Tantalus searching
for water amongst the waters and fruit that fled.
Juno's watchman guarded Io too well,
and died before his time: while she's a goddess!
I've seen fetters worn on livid legs,
from a husband's being made to learn of un-chastity.
The crime deserved no less. Bad tongues are doubly evil:
the husband grieves, the girl's reputation is harmed.
Believe me, crimes like this don't please a husband,
they're no help to you, even if he listens.
If he's indifferent, you speak your words to heedless ears:
if he's in love, your officiousness will sadden him.
Most crime however obvious is unproven:
his judgement always comes to favour her.
Though he sees it himself, he'll believe her denials
and condemn his own eyesight, and fool himself.
Seeing the woman's tears, he'll weep himself,
and say: 'Punish that informer!'
Why start an unequal fight? Beaten, you'll be lashed,
and she'll be sitting on the judge's lap.
We're not taking to crime, we're not uniting to mix
poisons, no drawn dagger gleams in my hand.
We're looking for some safe love-making thanks to you.
What could be more innocuous than our prayers?

BOOK II ELEGY III: THE EUNUCH



h me, that you, neither man nor woman, serve the lady
you who can't know the mutual delights of Venus!
Whoever first cut off a boy's genitals, that one,
who made the wound, should suffer it himself.
You'd be more gently compliant, facilitate my requests,
if you'd ever glowed with love before.
You weren't born to ride a horse, or use heavy weapons:
a warlike spear would not be fitting in your hand.
Let men handle that: you can forget manly hopes.
your camp is with your lady.
Work your service there, you'll benefit from her thanks:
What use would you be if you didn't have her?
She's lovely, the right age for play:
a disgrace to waste that beauty through sheer neglect.
She could have deceived you, however irksome you are:
Two, who want to, won't fail to achieve it.
Still as it was fitting to try a request, so I'm asking,
while you've a good chance of gaining a reward.

BOOK II ELEGY IV: HIS SUSCEPTIBILITY



I wouldn't dare defend my suspect morals
or falsely move to protect my vices.
I confess – if it's any use to confess a sin:
I acknowledge the foolish guilt now in myself.
I hate to desire, but can't not be what I hate:
ah, what a painful burden to throw off what you love!
I lack all power and authority to control myself:
carried away like a boat, swept swiftly through the water.
It's not one kind of beauty that excites my desires –
there's a hundred reasons why I'm always in love.
If it's one with modest eyes cast on the ground,
I burn, and her shyness sets a trap for me:
or if it's one who's bold, I'm taken, sophisticated,
giving hope of being sweetly nimble in bed.
If she looks severe, and strict as a Sabine,
I think she wants it, but hides it, being noble.
If you're learned, you please me with rare arts:
if you're naive, your innocence pleases.
Then there's the girl who says that Callimachus's songs
are rough beside mine – she who I please soon pleases me.
Even she who castigates me and my poems –
I long to endure her critical thighs.
She walks sweetly – I like the motion: another's hard –
but she could be sweeter at a man's touch.
This one who sings divinely and smoothly alters pitch,
I want to give stolen kisses as she sings:
She who strikes plaintive chords with practised fingers –
who could not love such knowledgeable hands?
She who pleases with her postures, and waves her arms
in rhythm, and twists her tender body with sweet art? –

The Love Poems

Be silent about me, who's enticed by everything,
but put chaste Hippolytus by her, and he'd be Priapus!
You, who are so tall, are like the ancient heroines
and can lie the full length of the bed.
This one's small size is manageable. I'm ruined by both:
tall and short agree with my desire.
She's not cultured – come, she could take up culture:
she's well-equipped - she can display her gifts herself.
Fair ones capture me: I'm captured by golden girls,
but Venus is still pleasing when darkly coloured.
If dark tresses hang on a snowy neck,
then Leda was famed for her black hair:
If they're golden, Aurora's saffron hair pleases.
My desire adapts itself to all the stories:
Young girls entice me: older ones move me:
she pleases with her body's looks, she with its form.
In short, whichever girls one might approve of in the city,
my desire has ambitions on them all.

BOOK II ELEGY V: HER KISSES



o love is worth this – away, Cupid's quiver! –
so that death has often been my greatest wish.
Death is my wish, when I recall your deceptions,
O girl born to be my eternal misfortune!
It wasn't a half-erased tablet that laid bare your acts,
no furtive gifts gave away your crime.
Oh I wish if I were to argue my case I couldn't win it!
Woe is me! Why's my story so good?
Happy the man who can strongly defend what he loves,
whose little friend can say 'I didn't do it!'
He's harsh and exercises his grief too much
who seeks the victor's palm drenched in blood.
I saw your crime myself you wretch, sober,
when you thought I was asleep with wine.
I saw the many messages from those flickering eyebrows:
a good part of your speech was in your nods.
Your eyes never silent, nor letters under your fingers,
writing on the table with your wine.
Effecting secret messages, that go unseen,
the words prescribed meaning definite things.
And then the crowd of guests had left the table:
a few boys there left laid out together.
Then I truly saw her locked in sinful kisses –
tongues were entwined, that was clear to me –
not like a sister greeting her sober brother,
but an eager lover greeting his sweet friend:
It's not credible that Phoebus would kiss Diana that way,
but Mars often does that with his Venus.
'What are you up to?' I cried, 'spreading my joys around?'
I claim jurisdiction over my girl!

What's yours is shared with me, what's mine with you –
Why has some third come into our property?'
I said this with a sorrowful tongue:
and a blush of shame came to her guilty face,
as the sky is tinged red by Tithonus's bride,
or like a young girl seeing her betrothed:
like roses glowing bright among the lilies,
or when the Moon labours with charmed horses,
or as Lydian women stain oriental ivory
so that it's not yellowed by the years.
That was the colour of her face or something like it,
and she had never looked more beautiful.
She looked at the ground – it became her to look down:
Sadness was in her face – sadness was becoming.
It was as if I wanted to tear her hair, all done up as it was,
and tear her tender cheeks, with anger, in my passion –
But I saw her beauty, and the strength of my arm abated:
the girl's the weapon of her own defence.
I who was savage a moment ago, begged her as a suppliant
to give me no worse a set of kisses.
She laughed, and gave them with true spirit – such as can
counter the triple-forked bolt of angry Jove:
I was tormented, unhappy, lest that other felt such joy,
and I wished their quality wasn't as good as it was.
Also these were so much better, where had she learnt?
And something new seemed to be added to them.
What pleases too much is bad, as when your whole tongue
is admitted by my lips, and mine by yours.
Nor do I grieve at that alone – I don't just lament
at mouths being so joined, I lament what else is joined too:
She could have been taught nowhere but in bed.
I don't know which grand master has his reward.

BOOK II ELEGY VI: THE DEATH OF CORINNA'S PET PARROT



Parrot, the mimic, the winged one from India's Orient,
is dead – Go, birds, in a flock and follow him to the grave!
Go, pious feathered ones, beat your breasts with your wings
and mark your delicate cheeks with hard talons:
tear out your shaggy plumage, instead of hair, in mourning:
sound out your songs with long piping!
Philomela, mourning the crime of the Thracian tyrant,
the years of your mourning are complete:
divert your lament to the death of a rare bird –
Itys is a great but ancient reason for grief.
All who balance in flight in the flowing air,
and you, above others, his friend the turtle-dove, grieve!
All your lives you were in perfect concord,
and held firm in your faithfulness to the end.
What the youth from Phocis was to Orestes of Argos,
while she could be, Parrot, turtle-dove was to you.
What worth now your loyalty, your rare form and colour,
the clever way you altered the sound of your voice,
what joy in the pleasure given you by our mistress? –
Unhappy one, glory of birds, you're certainly dead!
You could dim emeralds matched to your fragile feathers,
wearing a beak dyed scarlet spotted with saffron.
No bird on earth could better copy a voice –
or reply so well with words in a lisping tone!
You were snatched by Envy – you who never made war:
you were garrulous and a lover of gentle peace.
Behold, quails live fighting amongst themselves:
perhaps that's why they frequently reach old age.
Your food was little, compared with your love of talking
you could never free your beak much for eating.

Nuts were his diet, and poppy-seed made him sleep,
and he drove away thirst with simple draughts of water.
Gluttonous vultures may live and kites, tracing spirals
in air, and jackdaws, informants of rain to come:
and the raven detested by armed Minerva lives too –
he whose strength can last out nine generations:
but that loquacious mimic of the human voice,
Parrot, the gift from the end of the earth, is dead!
The best are always taken first by greedy hands:
the worse make up a full span of years.
Thersites saw Protesilaus's sad funeral,
and Hector was ashes while his brothers lived.
Why recall the pious prayers of my frightened girl for you –
prayers that a stormy south wind blew out to sea?
The seventh dawn came with nothing there beyond,
and Fate held an empty spool of thread for you.
Yet still the words from his listless beak astonished:
dying his tongue cried: 'Corinna, farewell!'
A grove of dark holm oaks leafs beneath an Elysian slope,
the damp earth green with everlasting grass.
If you can believe it, they say there's a place there
for pious birds, from which ominous ones are barred.
There innocuous swans browse far and wide
and the phoenix lives there, unique immortal bird:
There Juno's peacock displays his tail-feathers,
and the dove lovingly bills and coos.
Parrot gaining a place among those trees
translates the pious birds in his own words.
A tumulus holds his bones – a tumulus fitting his size –
whose little stone carries lines appropriate for him:
'His grave holds one who pleased his mistress:
his speech to me was cleverer than other birds'.

BOOK II ELEGY VII: HER JEALOUSY



So I'm always to be accused of some new crime?
Even if I win I hate fighting my case so often.
If I glance up at the heights of the marbled theatre,
you pick someone out, so you can choose to be pained:
If some lovely girl looks at my expressionless face,
secret messages are deduced from its lack of expression.
If I praise someone, you try to tear my hair out:
if I damn her, you think I'm covering up a crime.
If my colour's good, I'm also cold towards you,
if pale, pronounced to be dying for another.
And I wish I had some guilty secret!
Those who merit punishment take it calmly:
but you accuse me rashly and, groundlessly believe it all,
you stop your own anger carrying weight.
Look, pity the long-eared ass's fate,
continually beaten to tame him, he goes slow!
Behold a new crime! With that clever dresser Cypassis,
I'm reproached for defiling the bed of our mistress.
Think better of me than that, if I wronged you in passion,
than to joy in a common girl with a contemptible fate!
What free man would want to take up with a slave,
and embrace the scars on her whipped back?
Added to which she takes pains to dress your hair,
and a well-taught servant is dear to you –
Of course, I'd beg it of a maid so faithful to you!
What! So she could tell you she'd spurned my offer?
I swear by Venus, and the bow of her winged boy,
I won't allow myself to be accused of crime!

BOOK II ELEGY VIII: CYPASSIS!



Cypassis, expert at setting hair in a thousand styles,
worthy to adorn none but the goddesses,
and in no way naive as I know from our stolen meetings
suited to your mistress, but more suited to me –
who was it informed on our entwined bodies?
How did Corinna know about our union?
I didn't blush? Surely no loose word at all
gave away knowledge of our secret coupling?
Why did I say anyone would be lacking in wits
if he could commit the offence with a maidservant?
Achilles burnt for the beauty of Briseis his slave,
Agamemnon made love to captive Cassandra.
I'm no greater than Achilles or Atrides:
Why should I think what suited those heroes a crime?
Anyway, when she fixed angry eyes on you,
I saw you blush all over your cheeks:
if by chance you recall, it was my great presence of mind,
to swear faithfulness by the vast power of Venus!
You, goddess, prescribe that the perjury of my chaste spirit
be blown out to sea on a warm southerly from the Aegean.
For my service to you repay me, with a sweet reward,
and sleep with me today, dark Cypassis!
Why, ungrateful girl do you refuse, and find new fears?
Only one of us is satisfied with your service.
If you say no, foolish girl, I'll say what we've done before,
and become the betrayer of my own crime,
and the place where we were, and how often, Cypassis:
I'll tell your mistress how many times, and in what ways!

BOOK II ELEGY IXA: A REPROACH TO CUPID



nothing can express my indignation enough Cupid,
at the way you idle around in my heart –
Why annoy me, a soldier who's never left your standard,
and let me be injured in my own camp?
Why does your torch blaze, your bow bend against friends?
There's more glory in beating those who fight.
What of Achilles helping Telephus, struck by his spear,
healing his wounds quickly with its power?
The hunter chases what runs: leaves what he's captured
and often searches for another quarry.
It's we, the crowd dedicated to you, who feel your weapons:
your hand's slack against enemies that fight.
What joy has a barbed arrow in being blunted on bone?
Love's left my bones stripped naked of flesh.
There are so many men without love, so many girls! –
There you can triumph with the greatest praise.
If Rome had not spread her power to the wide world
she'd still to this day be just huts roofed with straw,
The weary soldier retires to the fields he's given:
free of the starting line the racehorse is put out to grass:
after long service the warship is secretly beached,
the discharged man's sword is safely laid away.
Me too, who've earned it so often, by loving girls:
time for me to be discharged and live in peace.

BOOK II ELEGY IXB: HIS ADDICTION



If a god said 'Live, and set love aside' I'd say 'no'!
Girls are such sweet misfortune.
When I'm truly weary, and ardour has died in my spirit,
I'm driven on by who knows what force in my poor mind.
It's like a hard-mouthed horse carrying off its rider
headlong, as he hauls on the foaming bit in vain:
or a ship, suddenly, on the point of touching land,
when a squall in harbour drags it into the deep –
That's how Cupid's inconstant winds drive me back,
and noble Love takes up his familiar arrow.
Pierce me, boy! I'm offered naked to your weapons:
this is your power, this is what your strength does:
as if your arrows came here now fired by themselves –
their quiver is scarcely more familiar than me!
Unhappy, the man who spends the night in slumber,
and calls sleep itself the greatest of gifts!
Foolish, what's sleep but the image of frozen death!
The grave grants us enough time for sleep.
Now my girl's lying words deceive me:
I still live in hope of great delight.
Now she flatters me: now she contrives to quarrel:
I often enjoy my girl: I'm often shut out.
Mars gets inconstancy from you, Cupid, his stepson:
your stepfather wields his arms by your example.
You're unreliable, far more fickle than your wings,
and give and deny your delights with dubious loyalty.
If you still hear me, Cupid, and your lovely mother,
establish your rule in my un-forsaken heart!
Let girls enter your country, that oh-so-fickle crowd!
Then you'll be worshipped by both your subject peoples.

BOOK II ELEGY X: TWO AT ONCE



It was you, Graecinus, you, I remember, for certain,
denied that one man could love two girls at once.
Deceived through you, through you caught defenceless –
behold, disgrace, I love two at the same time!
Both are lovely, the pair are sophisticated:
it's doubtful, between her and her, who's most artful.
She's beautiful: she's also beautiful:
she pleases me a lot, and she does too!
I sway, like a yacht caught by opposing winds,
and desire is divided between the two.
Venus, why endlessly double my problems?
Wasn't there enough trouble with the one girl?
Why leaf the trees, why fill the sky with stars,
why add water you've gathered to the deep sea?
Still this is better, since I'm not despised and love-less –
let the sober life happen to my enemies!
Let my enemies sleep on a couch, bereft,
and relax their limbs in the midst of the bed!
But let wild love shatter my indolent slumber:
let me not be the only one weighing the mattress down!
Don't let my girl spoil it, nothing forbidden –
if one can satisfy, fine, if not, then two!
I'll manage – my limbs are slender but not without strength:
my body's light but not lacking in power:
and pleasure secretly nourishes my forces.
No girl's been disappointed by my performance:
often I've spent the whole night in play,
and was capable and resolute at dawn.
Happy the man, who dies in Love's mutual battle!
Let the gods make that the cause of my death!

The Love Poems

Let the soldier's breast oppose the enemy missiles
and buy a lasting name with his blood.
Let the greedy seek wealth, and weary with voyaging,
shipwrecked, let their lying mouths drink brine.
But let me be taken fainting in Venus's act,
when I die: freed in the midst of it, the work half-done:
and someone will say, weeping, at my funeral:
'That death was *so* appropriate to his life!'

BOOK II ELEGY XI: CORINNA'S VOYAGE



he worst evil told of was that ship, pine felled on Pelion,
amazing the sea-lanes, among the ocean waves,
tossed about rashly between the clashing rocks
in its quest for the notorious Golden Fleece.

O I wish, if men had to cut the seas with oars, at least,
that Argo, crushed, had drunk funereal waters!

Behold, Corinna's preparing to go on a tricky voyage,
and flee the familiar bed and our shared household gods.

Ah me, how I'll fear, with you, the west and east wind,
the frozen north wind, and the cooling south!

No cities there, no woods for you to gaze at:
only the blue form of the cruel sea.

Mid-ocean has no delicate shells or coloured pebbles:
their natural place is by the thirsty shore.

Girls, imprint the sands with marble feet:
the beach is safe – the rest's a dark journey.

Let others tell you of the battles of the winds:
whom Scylla attacks, and whom Charybdis's waters:
and what rocks jut out from violent Ceraunian coasts:
what large and small bays lie hidden on that of Syrtes.

Let others report it to you: what ever they say
believe! No storms will harm your credulity.

Too late to look back at shore, when the ropes are loosed
and the curved ship sails over the immense sea:

while the worried sailor trembles at adverse winds
and sees the water near, as near as death.

And if Triton provokes the breaking waves,
the colour will drain completely from your face!

Then you'll call on the noble stars of fertile Leda
and say 'Happy, the one who stayed on shore!'

It's safer to stay in bed, read your books,
make your Thracian lyre quiver with your fingers.
But if my words are carried in vain on the winged storm,
let Galatea still favour your ship's sailing!
You'll be guilty of shaking my girl about so much
Nereids, goddesses, and you, father of the Nereids.
Go on remembering me, return with a following wind:
let the breeze more strongly fill your sails!
May great Nereus drive the seas towards this shore:
let the winds blow this way, and the tides run!
Beg, yourself, and a west wind will fill your canvas,
you yourself lend a hand with the swelling sails!
I'll be the first to sight your boat from the shore,
and say: 'It carries my goddess!'
I'll bear you to land on my shoulders, snatch disordered
kisses. I'll offer the sacrifice promised for your return:
and we'll make a couch of the soft sand,
and some dune can be our table.
There you'll sit drinking wine and tell me –
how your ship was nearly wrecked in mid-ocean:
that, hastening to me, you weren't frightened
by iniquitous nights or headlong southerlies.
Let me believe it's all true: fiction's worthwhile –
why shouldn't I please myself with my dreams?
Lucifer, bright in the sky, with your galloping horses,
bring me that moment, as quickly as you can.

BOOK II ELEGY XII: HIS TRIUMPH



o wreath my brows with triumphal laurel!
I've won: behold, Corinna, in my arms,
whom husband, watchman, firm doors, all those enemies
guarded: she couldn't be kept prisoner by their art!
Here's a victory worthy of a major triumph,
where, whatever else it is, the gain is bloodless.
Not shallow walls, not some town encircled
with a narrow ditch, my general-ship won a girl!
When Troy fell, conquered after a ten-year war,
how much of the honour was due to Atrides?
But my fine glory's not shared with any soldiers,
no one else has a right to the prize.
I made supreme commander here: I was the soldier,
the cavalry itself, the infantry: I was the standard-bearer.
And there's no good fortune mixed in with my acts –
O triumph of mine you are due to all my care!
Nor is there any new reason for war here. If Helen
hadn't been snatched, Europe and Asia had been at peace.
A woman made the woodland Lapiths, and the Centaurs,
shamefully turn to weapons, in the midst of the wine:
a woman incited the Trojans to a second war
in your kingdom, just Latinus:
Roman women, when it was still new-founded,
let in their fathers-in-law and gave them cruel weapons.
I've seen bulls fighting over a snow-white heifer:
watching, she herself aroused their passion.
Cupid orders me too, with many others,
without shedding blood though, to join his army.

BOOK II ELEGY XIII: THE ABORTION



Corinna lies there exhausted in danger of her life,
after rashly destroying the burden of an unborn child.
I should be angry: she took that great risk
and hid it from me: but anger's quelled by fear.
All the same it's me by whom she conceived – or I think so:
I often take things for facts that only might be.
Isis, of Paraetionium, and the joyful fields of Canopus,
you who protect Memphis, and palmy Pharos,
and the land where the swift Nile spreads in its wide delta,
its waters flowing through seven mouths to the sea,
by your sistrum I pray, by the sacred head of Anubis –
so may Osiris love your holy rites for ever,
and the slow serpent glide about your altar,
and the horned Apis follow your procession!
Turn your face towards us, and spare both in one!
Then you will grant life to her, and she to me.
Often she's taken pains to attend your special days,
when Gallic laurel crowns your worshippers.
And you, Ilythia, who pity girls struggling in labour,
whose hidden child strains their reluctant body,
be gentle with her and hear my prayers!
It's proper for you to demand gifts for yourself.
I myself, in white, will burn incense on your smoking altars,
I myself will lay at your feet the gifts I vowed.
I'll add an inscription: 'Naso, for saving Corinna!'
Make that occasion soon, for the inscription and the gifts.
If it's still possible to warn you, girl, in such a state of fear,
let it be enough for you to have fought this one battle!

BOOK II ELEGY XIV: AGAINST ABORTION



here's the joy in a girl being free from fighting wars,
unwilling to follow the army and their shields,
if without battle she suffers wounds from her own weapons,
and arms unsure hands to her own doom?

Whoever first taught the destruction of a tender foetus,
deserved to die by her own warlike methods.

No doubt you'd chance your arm in that dismal arena
just to keep your belly free of wrinkles with your crime?

If the same practice had pleased mothers of old,

Humanity would have been destroyed by that violation,
and we'd need a creator again for each of our peoples
to throw the stones that made us onto the empty earth.

Who would have shattered the wealth of Priam, if Thetis,
the sea goddess, had refused to carry her rightful burden?

If Ilia had murdered the twins in her swollen womb,
the founder of my mistress's City would have been lost.

If Venus had desecrated her belly, pregnant with Aeneas,
Earth would have been bereft of future Caesars.

You too, with your beauty still to be born, would have died,
if your mother had tried what you have done:

I myself would be better to die making love
than have been denied the light of day by my mother.

Why rob the loaded vine of burgeoning grapes,
or pluck the unripe apple with cruel hand?

Let things mature themselves – grow without being forced:
life is a prize that's worth a little waiting.

Why submit your womb to probing instruments,
or give lethal poison to what is not yet born?

Medea is blamed for sprinkling the blood of her children,
and Itys, slain by his mother, is lamented with tears:

both cruel parents, yet both had bitter reason
to shed blood, revenge on a husband.
Say, what Tereus, what Jason incites you
to pierce your troubled body with your hand?
No tiger in its Armenian lair would do it,
no lioness would dare destroy her foetus.
But tender girls do it, though not un-punished:
often she who kills her child, dies herself.
She dies, and is carried to the pyre with loosened hair,
and whoever looks on cries out: 'She deserved it!'
But let these words vanish on the ethereal breeze,
and let my imprecations have no weight!
You gods, prosper her: let her first sin go, in safety,
and be satisfied: you can punish her second crime!

BOOK II ELEGY XV: THE RING



ing, to encircle my beautiful girl's finger,
appreciated only in terms of the giver's love,
go as a dear gift! Receiving you with glad heart,
may she slide you straightaway over her knuckle:
May you suit her as well as you suit me,
and smoothly fit the right finger with your true band!
Lucky ring, to be touched by my lady:
now I'm sadly envious of my own gift.
O if only I could, suddenly, be my present,
by the art of Circe or old Proteus!
Then, when I wanted to touch my girl's breasts
and slip my left hand into her tunic,
I'd glide from her finger, however tight and clinging,
and with wonderful art fall into the loose folds.
Again, so I could seal a secret letter,
the sticky wax not freeing from a dry gem,
I'd be touched first by the lovely girl's wet lips –
so that sealing the work would give me no pain.
If I were to be plunged in your purse, I'd refuse to go,
I'd cling, a shrinking ring, to your finger.
I'll never be an embarrassment to you, mea vita,
so your tender finger refuses to carry the weight.
Wear me, when you drench your body in the hot shower,
and let the falling water run beneath the jewel –
though, I think, your naked limbs would rouse my passion,
and, as that ring, I'd carry out a man's part.
A vain wish? Off you go then little gift:
show her that true loyalty comes with you!

BOOK II ELEGY XVI: SULMO



'm at Sulmo, it's a third of Paelignian country –
small, but a region of refreshing health-giving waters.
Though the full sun cracks the earth in season,
and the violent star in Orion's Dog flashes,
clear waters wander through Sulmo's fields,
and lush grass grows green in gentle soil.
The ground's heavy with crops, heavier still with vines:
here and there the land shows an olive-grove:
and where resurgent rivers slide through the meadows
grassy turf casts a shade on the damp earth.
But my flame's absent. One word of that's misleading! –
What kindles the fire is distant. The passion's here.
Even if I were set between Castor and Pollux, I'd
not wish to be anywhere in the heavens without you.
May those who carved the world into long roads,
lie restless, pressed down under uneven ground.
If they were carving long roads through the earth
they should have said girls must travel with their men!
Then if I were crossing the shivering windy Alps,
with my girl there, the road would still be kind.
With my girl, I'd dare to force a way through Syrtes's sands
and spread full sails before the wild south winds.
I'd not fear the monsters yelping from Scylla's virgin groin,
nor would I fear your folds, curved Cape Malea:
nor Charybdis's mouth gluttoned with wrecked ships
spewing out and sucking back the flooding waters.
But should Neptune's stormy powers triumph,
and the gods that aid us be carried off by the waves,
you'd throw your white arms about my shoulders:
I'd bear your sweet body's burden easily.

Young Leander often swam the waves seeking Hero,
then swam again, but the sea-road was dark.
But without you here, though the busy vineyards
occupy me, though the countryside's flowing with rivers,
and countrymen summon flowing water to their streams,
and cool breezes caress the leafy trees,
I don't think of celebrating Sulmo's healthiness,
that's its my native place, ancestral country –
it's Scythia, with wild Cilician pirates, painted Britons,
or the Promethean rocks dyed red with blood.
Elm loves vines, vines never desert their elm:
why should I be so often parted from my girl?
And you swore that you would stay with me forever –
by me you swore, and by your eyes, my stars!
Vain the words of girls, lighter than falling leaves,
carried off, as we see, by wind and wave.
But if you've still a true care for me, abandoned,
begin to put your promises in action.
First your little chariot and swift Gallic horses,
crack the whip yourself over their galloping manes!
And, as for the ways, you come by, may swelling hills
subside, and the winding valleys be easy!

BOOK II ELEGY XVII: HIS SLAVERY



If there's anyone who thinks it's disgraceful
to be slave to a girl, he'll judge me guilty and disgraced!
Disrepute's alright, so long as I'm less scorched
by her who holds Paphos and sea-washed Cythera.
And, since I'm to be a lovely woman's prize,
I wish I was also the prize of a gentler girl!
Beauty brings pride. Corinna's tempestuous with beauty –
Ah me! How does she know herself so well?
No doubt she gets her disdain from her mirror's image,
and never looks at it until she's ready!
If your beauty gives you pride and shows your power –
O beauty born to command my eyes! –
You don't for that reason have to scorn me,
little things go well alongside the great.
The nymph Calypso was captivated by love of a mortal,
and held on to the reluctant man, it's said.
A Nereid of the ocean shared her bed with Peleus,
that's the story, Egeria hers with Numa the Just,
Venus with Vulcan, though when he leaves his anvil,
he's shamefully defective with a crippled foot.
My kind of verse is just as unbalanced: but still fitting,
joining the heroic with the shorter line.
You too - accept me, mea lux, on whatever terms:
you're suited to laying the law down in a public place.
I won't be a reproach to you, one you'd be pleased to lose:
this love of ours will never be one to disown.
Instead of wealth I possess joyful song,
and many a girl hopes for fame through me:
I know one who spreads it around she's Corinna.
What wouldn't she give for it to be so?

The Amores – Book II

But cold Eurotas, far-off poplar-fringed Eridanus
can't both slide between the same shores,
and no one but you will be sung in my verses:
you alone give me a chance to show my wit.

BOOK II ELEGY XVIII: THE DEATH OF TRAGEDY



While in your poem you get to the Anger of Achilles,
and entangle your sworn heroes in a war,
Macer, I'm loitering in Venus's idle shadows,
and sweet Love's spoiling my sublimer ventures.
I've often told my girl 'It's final, off you go' –
straight away she's sitting in my lap again.
Often I've said 'I'm ashamed!' – 'Ah me!' she said,
scarce holding back tears, 'Ashamed now of loving me?'
And wound her arms around my neck,
and gave me a thousand kisses that destroyed me.
I'm conquered, call back my wits from the war I started,
and, you, my lovely verses, gabble about things at home.
Still I grabbed the sceptre, and a tragedy flourished
in my care, and I was as suited as you like to doing it.
Love laughed at my cloak, and high, coloured boots,
and the sceptre I'd quickly grasped in my humble hand.
Here too my girl's unfair power deflected me,
and Love has triumphed over the tragic poet.
I turn instead to what's allowed, the arts of sweet loving –
ah me, burdened by my own precepts, myself! –
or I pen the words Penelope wrote Ulysses
and your tearful ones, deserted Phyllis,
the ones Paris, and Macareus, and ungrateful Jason,
and Hippolytus's father, Theseus, and Hippolytus read,
what poor Dido said with the sword tight in her hand
or that lover from Ionian Lesbos with her lyre.
How soon Sabinus, my poet friend, you returned
carrying replies from lands scattered through the world!
Fair Penelope knew the seal of Ulysses:
Hippolytus's stepmother recognised his script.

Dutiful Aeneas has replied to wretched Dido,
Phyllis, if she's alive, has a note too.
A sad note from Jason reaches Hypsipyle:
the lover of Lesbos offers Phoebus her lyre.
Nor Macer, are you, in the midst of war's martial song
silent, as far as is safe, about Love's splendour.
Paris is there and the adulteress, guilty and famous,
and Laodamia faithful companion to the end.
If I know you, you'd be happier with that than war,
and you'll be coming from your camp over to mine.

BOOK II ELEGY XIX: MAKE HER HARD TO GET



ool, if you don't want to guard the girl for your own sake,
still, guard her for mine, it makes me desire her more!
What's allowed is no fun: what isn't burns more fiercely.
He's cold who loves what some one else allows:
lovers hope and fear, in equal amounts.
and the occasional rebuff leaves room for prayer.
What use is she to me if she can't be bothered to cheat me?
And I can't love what never causes pain!
Clever Corinna saw that weakness in me,
and knew how to work it craftily to catch me.
Oh, the number of times she invented a headache
and ordered me away when I lingered with tardy feet!
Oh, the number of times, she invented a crime,
however innocent, to give the appearance of hurting!
Then when she'd vexed me, and relit the dying flames,
vowed herself my friend again, that she's right for me.
What flattery, what sweet words she prepared for me,
what quantity and quality of kisses she gave!
You too, who lately drew my eyes to you,
must often pretend to fear, often say no when asked:
and let me lie on the threshold at your entrance
suffering cold frost the whole night through.
So my love will last and grow stronger through the years:
I enjoy it: it's food for my spirit.
Love that's too free and easy makes me weary
and harms me as over-rich food does the stomach.
If Danae had never been shut in the brazen tower,
Danae would never have been impregnated by Jove:
when Juno guarded Io with added horns,
Io was made more pleasing to Jove than before.

What's allowed and easy - if that's what you want
pluck leaves from trees, drink water from the wide river.
If she wants to rule a long time, she must cheat her lover.
Ah me, may my advice not torture me!
Whatever occurs, indulgence only hurts me –
what follows me, I flee: what flees, I follow.
And you, so careless of your lovely girl,
start locking your door at early evening.
Start asking who knocks in secret so often at the window,
and why dogs bark in the silence of night,
what messages the maid carries and brings back,
and why She so often sleeps alone in bed.
Let these worries sometimes pierce your marrow,
and give me space and matter for my deceptions.
He's only stealing sand from the empty beach,
the man who makes love to the wife of a fool.
I give you due warning: if you don't start to guard the girl
she'll start to leave off being mine!
I've stood it long enough: often I've hoped there'd be
a time when you guarded well, so I could truly deceive.
You're dull, and allow what no husband should allow:
while for me freedom puts an end to love!
Will I never be stopped from coming, unhappy man?
Will my nights always be vengeance-free?
Will I never be scared? Will I never have nights of sighs?
Will you never give me a reason for wishing you dead?
What use to me is an easy, pandering husband?
His defects are ruining my delight.
Why not find someone who enjoys such forbearance?
If you enjoy having me for a rival, deny!

Book III



Venus Aphrodite

Richard James Lane after John Flaxman (British, 1800 – 1872)

The National Gallery of Art

BOOK III ELEGY I: ELEGY VERSUS TRAGEDY



There's an old wood untouched for many years:
you'd believe a god lives in the place.
There's a sacred spring at its centre and a cave
of overhanging rock, and birds sing sweetly all around.
While I was walking there privately in the wooded shade –
wondering what project my Muse might be engendering –
Elegy arrived, her perfumed hair in a knot,
and with one foot, I think, shorter than the other.
Her form was lovely, her dress refined, her looks loving,
and even the defect of her foot was a source of charm.
And stormy Tragedy appeared with giant strides:
forehead wild with hair, robe trailing the ground:
her left hand waving a royal sceptre about,
high-soled Lydian boots fastened to her feet.
And she spoke first, saying: 'O sluggish poet,
will you ever stop taking love as your subject?
They talk of your worthlessness at drunken banquets,
they talk of it passing the crossroads on every street.
Often someone points out the poet as well,
and says: "That's him, the one wild Love inflames!"
You're the common talk of the whole city, and don't see it,
while you tell of your doings, with their past shame.
It's time you waved your wand to a weightier beat:
you've lazed about long enough – start a mightier work!
Your content cramps your genius. Sing the deeds of heroes.
"This gives me scope for my spirit!" is what you'll say.
Your Muse was playing, singing tender girls,
and the first acts of youth in your verses.
Then I'll be famous for Roman Tragedy through you!
Your spirit will itself discharge my principles.'

At that, balancing on her ornate shoes,
she nodded her head with its weight of hair.
Then Elegy laughed with sidelong eyes, if I recall it –
and was that a myrtle wand in her right hand?
'Why crush me with your weighty words, proud Tragedy?'
she said, 'and why is it you can never take a lighter tone?
All the same you've deigned to speak unequal lines:
you've used my own metre to attack me.
I'd not compare my things with your high song:
your Imperial palace overshadows my little threshold.
I'm light, and my dear Cupid shares my lightness:
I'm no mightier than my theme itself.
The mother of impudent Amor would be innocent
without me, I appear as her companion and go-between.
What your heavy shoes can't break down
is an open door to my blandishments:
indeed I've earned more than you have by suffering
many things your arrogance would not stand.
Corinna learnt from me how to cheat her guard,
and seduce the loyalty that locks the door,
to slip from her bed clothed in a loose dress
and move in the night with noiseless step.
The times I've been left hanging at a hard doorpost,
not afraid to be read aloud by passers-by!
Why I remember hiding between a maid's breasts,
poor me, until the savage porter left.
And when you sent birthday greetings by me,
and she tore me, wild girl, and drenched me with water.
I inspired the first fruits of your mind:
if she's after you now, you've me to thank.'
She finished. I began: 'I ask indulgence of you both,
fearful my words will escape your ears.
One honours me with the sceptre and platform shoes:
just now high song rose to the lips at her touch.
The other gives my love eternal fame –

The Love Poems

come then, and add the short lines to the long!
Tragedy grant the poet a breathing space!
Your work is endless: what she wants is brief.'
With a gesture she gave permission – while there's time,
quick, tender Amores: a greater work's pushing on behind!

BOOK III ELEGY II: AT THE RACES



I'm not sitting here studying the horses' form:
though I still pray that the one you fancy wins.
I come to speak to you, and sit with you,
lest you don't notice how my love's on fire.
You watch the course, and I watch you: we'll both
see what delights us, and both feast our eyes.
Happy the charioteer that you fancy!
What's he got, to make him dear to you?
Let it be me, hurled from the starting gate,
I'd be the brave rider pressing the horses onward,
now I'd give rein, now touch their backs with the whip,
now scrape the turning post with my nearside wheel.
If I caught sight of you as I rushed by, I'd falter,
and the slack reins would fall from my hands.
As when the Pisan's spear nearly killed Pelops,
when he glanced at your face, Hippodamia!
Of course he still won because of his girl's favour.
May each of us win through the favour of his lady!
Why edge away, in vain? The rows force us together.
The circus grants something useful from its rules –
you on the right though, whoever you are, be careful
of my girl: the poking of your elbow's hurting her.
You too, sitting behind us, if you've any shame,
draw your legs up, don't press with your bony knees!
But your dress is trailing on the ground too much.
Gather it up – or I'll lift it with my fingers!
You're a jealous dress to hide such lovely legs:
the more you look – you are a jealous dress!
Just like the legs of swift-footed Atalanta,
that Milanion longed to hold in his hands.

Just like the legs of Diana, her dress tucked-up,
chasing the wild beasts, wilder still herself.
I blazed when I couldn't see them: what shall I do now?
you add fire to the fire, water to the sea.
I suspect from these that the rest might please,
what's well hidden, concealed by your thin dress.
Would you like a quick breeze stirred while you wait?
One I can make with the programme in my hand.
Or is the heat more in my mind than in the air,
my captive heart scorched by love of a girl?
While I spoke, a speck of dust settled on your white dress.
Vile dust, away from her snowy body!
But now the procession comes – silence minds and tongues!
Time for applause – the golden procession comes.
Victory's in the lead, with outstretched wings –
approach Goddess, and make my love conquer!
Cheer for Neptune, you who trust the waves too much!
No sea for me: my country captivates me.
Soldiers, cheer for Mars! I hate all warfare:
I delight in peace, and to find love in its midst.
Phoebus for the augurs, Phoebe the huntsmen!
Let craftsmen turn their hands to you, Minerva!
Let farmers honour Ceres and tender Bacchus!
Boxers please Pollux: horsemen please Castor!
I cheer for you, charming Venus, and the boy
with the powerful bow: Goddess help this venture
and change my new girl's mind! Let her agree to be loved!
She nodded, and gave me a favourable sign.
What the goddess promised, I ask you to promise:
don't talk of Venus, you'll be a greater goddess.
I swear to you, by the crowd and the gods' procession,
I want you to be my girl for all time!
But your legs are dangling. Perhaps it would help
to stick your toes on the rail in front.
Now the track is clear for the main event,

the praetor's started the four-horse chariots.
I can see yours. Let the one you fancy, win.
The horses themselves seem to know what you want.
Oh dear, he's taking the turning post too wide!
What are you doing? The next chariot's overtaking.
What are you doing, fool? You'll lose the girl's best hopes.
Curses, pull hard on the left rein with your hand!
We've backed a nobody – call them back, Citizens,
everyone give the signal by waving their togas!
Yes, they're recalled! – But don't let those togas
ruin your hair, hide deep in my cloak, that's fine.
Now the starting gates are open again:
the horses fly out, a multi-coloured throng.
Now take the lead, and fly into empty space!
Make my hopes, and my girl's, a sure bet!
My girl's hopes are certain, mine are unsure.
He wins the palm: my palm's still to win.
She smiled, and promised something with those bright eyes.
That's enough now, pay me the rest elsewhere!

BOOK III ELEGY III: SHE'S FAITHLESS



ods exist, go on, believe it – she broke the promise
she made and is still as lovely as she was before!
The long hair she had when she wasn't a liar,
is just as long after she's offended the gods.
Her radiance was whiteness tinged with a rosy blush
before – the blush shines on amongst the snow.
Her feet were slender – her feet are delicately formed.
She was tall and graceful – tall and graceful she remains.
Bright-eyes she had – they are radiant as stars,
with which she so often deceived me with her lies.
No doubt the eternal gods allow girls to swear
falsely too, and beauty has divinity.
I remember she swore by her eyes the other day,
and by mine: look, it is mine that felt the pain!
Tell me, gods, if she cheated you with impunity
why did I deserve punishment instead?
But didn't innocent virgin Andromeda die by your order,
for her mother's crime of boastful beauty?
Not enough for you, that I find you worthless witnesses,
but she laughs at me, and you, playful gods, unpunished?
By my punishment do I redeem her lying:
shall I be victim, deceived by the deceiver?
Either a god's a thing of no account, an idle fear,
stirring the crowd through their foolish credulity:
or if there's a true god, he loves tender girls,
and allows them all excessive liberties.
For us Mars straps on his deadly sword:
for us the hand of Pallas lifts the unfailing spear.
For us the pliant bow of Apollo's bent:
for us Jove's lofty right hand holds the fire.

The gods, offended, are scared to offend these beauties
and, besides, they fear those who don't fear them.
And who should bother to burn incense on their altars?
We men it's true need to show more spirit!
Jupiter blasts his own groves and hills with fire,
and neglects to hurl his bolts at perjured girls.
So many deserved it – but poor Semele was burned!
Her punishment was of her own making:
but if she'd withdrawn from her lover's coming,
no father would have played mother to Bacchus.
Why complain and abuse all of heaven?
The gods too have eyes: the gods have hearts!
If I were a god, I'd let girls with lying lips
deceive my divinity without punishment:
I'd swear, myself, the girls were swearing truly
and I'd not be a god who spoke sourly.
Still, girl, you should use their gift in moderation –
or at least spare these eyes of mine!


BOOK III ELEGY IV: ADULTERY



Harsh man, it's no use guarding a tender girl:
your best protection lies in her disposition.
She who's chaste without dread, is truly chaste:
she who's not allowed to do it, she does it!
Though you guard the body well: the mind's adulterous:
you can't set a guard on what she desires, at all.
Nor can you guard her body, though all doors are barred:
though everyone's shut out, the adulteress is within.
Who allows the crime, lessens the crime: opportunity
makes the seeds of naughtiness less potent.
Leave off, believe me, denial sparks the sin:
your indulgence is more likely to win her over.
I saw just recently a tight-reined mare,
fighting the bit, bolt away like lightning:
as soon as she felt the reins slacken she halted,
and they lay quiet on her flowing mane!
We always strive for what's forbidden: want what's denied:
so the sick man longs for the water he's refused.
Argus had a hundred eyes, at front and back –
but Love alone often deceived them:
Danae in her room of eternal iron and stone,
was imprisoned, a virgin, yet became a mother:
While, however much she lacked guards, Penelope
remained untouched among the young princes.
What's guarded we want the more, precautions
themselves lure the thief: few love what another allows.
It's not her beauty pleases, but her husband's love:
they believe there's something there that captivates you.
She isn't made good, whom a husband guards: adultery's
made costly: fear more than form makes the prize greater.

Like it or not, forbidden passion delights us:
she only pleases if she can say: 'I'm afraid!'.
Nor is it right to lock up a freeborn girl –
that fear fills the bodies of foreign peoples!
No doubt you want her guard to be able to say: 'I did it.'
her chastity will be to your slave's glory?
He's so provincial who's hurt by his wife's adultery,
and he's not observed the ways of Rome enough,
where Romulus and Remus were born illegitimate,
Ilia's bastard twins begotten by Mars.
Why have beauty, if only chastity pleases you?
There's no way they can go together.
If you're wise, indulge the girl: forgo harsh frowns,
and don't enforce the rights of an inflexible man,
and cultivate the friends your wife will bring you –
she'll bring a lot. So great gifts come with little labour:
and you'll always be able to join the youngsters' revels,
and see lots of gifts, you didn't give her, at home.

BOOK III ELEGY V: THE DREAM

It was night, and sleep drowned my weary eyes:
such a dream it was terrified my mind:
 a dense grove of holm-oaks under a sunlit hill,
and many birds hidden among the branches.
a wide lush green space beneath it, grassy meadow,
wet with the sounds of gently dripping water.
I escaped the heat under the leafy trees –
under a leafy tree but it was still burning hot –
Behold! A white heifer appeared in front of my eyes,
searching for grasses among the scattered flowers,
whiter than snow, when it has just fallen,
that lingers, not yet turned to running water,
whiter than milk, that just now was hissing foam,
and in a moment will leave the ewe drained.
A bull was her companion there, her fortunate mate,
and lay beside his bride on the soft earth.
While he lay and slowly chewed the grassy cud
and ate again the food he'd already eaten,
I saw sleep come and steal away his powers,
bowing his horned head to the ground.
Then a light-winged crow slid from the air
and settled cawing on the green turf,
and three times poked the snowy heifer's front
with impudent beak, tearing away a tuft of white hair.
Lingering a long time, she abandoned bull, and meadow –
but carrying on her chest a black bruise:
and seeing bulls grazing the pasture far away –
bulls do graze rich pastures far away –
she hurried to them, and joined their herd,
and looked for earth with greener grass.

Say now, interpreter of midnight dreams, whoever,
what does this dream mean, if dreams have truth.'
So I spoke: so the interpreter of midnight dreams replied,
pondering over each word in his mind:
'When you sought shelter under the fickle leaves,
but sheltered uselessly, that was love's heat.
The heifer is your girl – a fitting colour for your girl:
you were her mate, a bull matched to a heifer.
The crow with sharp beak that pecked her breast,
an old procuress that addled your mistress's wits.
That your heifer lingered a while then left the bull,
means that you'll be left cold in your bed.
The bruise and the black blemish on her breast
says that her heart's not free of adultery's stain.'
His interpretation done, blood fled from my cold cheeks,
and deepest night stood there before my eyes.

BOOK III ELEGY VI: THE FLOODED RIVER



top, you reed-filled river with muddy shores,
I'm hurrying to my girl – wait for a little, waters!
You've neither a bridge, nor a roped ferryboat,
to carry me across, without a stroke of the oar.
I remember you as little, and didn't fear to ford you,
and the tops of your waves barely touched my ankles.
Now you rush by, full of melted snow from the mountain,
and your swollen waters roll on, in murky flood.
What use was my haste, the scant hours given to rest,
that merged the night with daylight,
if I still wait here, if there's no art on offer
to allow me to set foot on the other bank?
Now I need the winged sandals Perseus had,
when he carried the dreadful head wreathed with snakes,
now I want the chariot in which Ceres's seeds
were first sent to reach the untilled ground.
All marvellous untruths told by ancient poets:
things that never existed and never will.
I'd rather you, flooding river with roomy shores –
may you be such forever - flowed within your bounds!
Believe me you'll not be able to endure the hatred,
if it's said, torrent, you by chance barred a lover's way.
Rivers should help young people in love:
rivers themselves have known what love is.
Inachus ran pale for Melie the Bithynian
they say, and his icy waves grew warm.
The ten-year war at Troy was not yet done,
when Neaera dazzled your eyes, Xanthe.
Why? Wasn't it true love for the Arcadian virgin
that drove Alpheus to flow to alien shores?

You too Peneus, spirited away Creusa,
to Phthian country, she betrothed to Xutho.
Why should I recall Asopus, whom Mars's daughter Thebe
captivated, Thebe the future mother of five daughters?
If I ask you, Achelous, where your horns are now,
you'll complain that Hercules broke them off in anger.
Calydon was not worth it, nor all Aetolia,
Deinara alone was worth it, all the same.
Rich Nile that flows through seven mouths,
who hides so well the source of all his waters,
could not conquer the flame Evanthe kindled, they say,
with his swirling flood, she the daughter of Asopus.
Enipeus ordered his waters to abate, to embrace Salmonis,
on dry land: he commanded and the waters receded.
And don't forget Anio, rolling in his stony bed,
bringing water to the orchards of Tibur,
he was charmed by Ilia, though she was so dishevelled,
hair torn by her nails, cheeks marked by them.
She mourned her uncle's crime and Mars's wrongdoing,
wandering barefoot through the wilderness.
Anio saw her from his swift-flowing waters
and lifted himself from the waves, calling loudly:
'Why wear away my banks so anxiously,
Ilia, child of Laomedon's Troy?
Why so dishevelled? Why wandering alone,
with no white ribbon to tie back your hair?
Why do you weep, reddening your wet eyes with tears,
and why do you beat your naked breasts in frenzy?
He who can look with indifference at the tears
on your sweet face, has a heart of iron and flint.
Ilia, have no fears! My palace waits for you,
my waves will cherish you. Ilia, have no fears!
You'll rule over more than a hundred nymphs:
for more than a hundred nymphs live in my waves.
Don't spurn me so, I beg you, child of Troy:

you'll have gifts greater than these I promised.'
He spoke. She cast her modest gaze on the ground
and sprinkled a shower of tears on her tender breast.
Three times she tried to run, three times stood rooted,
by those deep waters, fear robbing her of strength to flee.
Then, at last, tearing her hair with angry fingers,
with trembling mouth, she spoke these words of shame:
'O I wish my bones had been gathered while I was virgin,
and preserved on a bier in my father's tomb!
Why, am I offered marriage, a Vestal, now
disgraced, and denied by Ilium's sacred flame?
Why linger, be pointed out as an adulteress by the crowd?
Let the face of infamy die, that carries the mark of shame!
With that she held her dress against her swollen eyes,
and threw herself, lost, into the swift flood.
They say the river placed his slippery hands on her breast,
and gave her command over his marriage bed.
I believe you also were warmed by some girl:
but woods and groves hide your crime.
Even as I speak your swelling waves spread wider,
your deep bed can't hold your surging waters.
Why rage at me? Why delay shared delights?
Why rudely interrupt the road I started on?
Why? If you were a true river, if you were a noble stream,
if you were widely known throughout the world –
you're unknown, a gathering of fallen waters,
neither your source nor your springs are certain!
For springs you have the inflow of rain and melting snow,
the riches that slow winter supplies you with:
if it's the days of solstice your course flows muddy,
if it's the arid days you're pressed into dusty earth.
What thirsty passer-by could drink from you?
What grateful voice, say: 'Live for ever'?
Your flow's harmful to herds, more so to farmland.
Perhaps that worries others: I'm worried by my own woes.

Alas for me then! Madly telling the loves of rivers!
A shame to let fall such names disgracefully.
Letting an unknown flood consider Achelous, Inachus,
and, Nile, I've even recalled your name!
For your services, I wish you, unclear torrents,
devouring suns, and ever thirsty winters!

BOOK III ELEGY VII: A PROBLEM!



Not that I think she isn't lovely, and so cultured,
not that I haven't often wished for her in my dreams!
Yet I held her, all in vain, completely slack,
lay there a limp reproach, a burden to the bed:
though I really wanted it, and the girl wanted it too,
I could get no more from my exhausted parts.
She threw her ivory arms around my neck,
arms whiter than the Scythian snows,
struggling, she mingled tongues in eager kisses,
and slipped a wanton thigh beneath my thigh,
and spoke coaxing words, called me her master,
and all those usual words that might help.
Yet my member, as if touched by cold hemlock,
was sluggish and denied my every effort:
I lay an inert body, a sham, a useless weight,
unsure whether I was a body or a ghost.
What old age will come, to me, if it does come,
when youth itself fails me in this way?
Ah, I'm ashamed of my years: why youth and strength
if my girl can't feel my youth or strength?
She rose like a holy priestess going to the eternal flame,
like an elder sister leaving a beloved brother.
Yet I lately had golden Chlide twice, Pitho
the beautiful and Libas, three times without stopping:
I remember Corinna, in one short night, demanded
I keep it up for her nine times together.
Has some Thessalian poison weakened my cursed body?
Do charms and herbs hurt my poor self now,
some witch transfixes my name in scarlet wax
and sticks fine needles right into my liver?

Charms turn the stricken wheat to barren grasses,
charms stop the stricken waters at their source,
through incantations oaks drop acorns, vines their grapes,
and the apples fall down without being shaken.
Why shouldn't I be stopped, and my vigour numbed
by magic arts, my body by that made unable to endure?
Add shame to it: the shame itself, of it, hurt me:
that was the secondary cause of my failure.
But what a girl, whom I only saw and touched!
Just as her slip itself touches her.
At her touch Nestor might be made young again,
and Tithonus stronger in old age.
I held her, but she did not hold a man.
What can I think of now to beg for in prayer?
I think the great gods were sorry they gave the gift
that I've made use of so shamefully.
I wanted to be welcomed – I was truly welcome:
to kiss – I kissed: to be near her – I was.
What was such good luck worth? Why have and not enjoy?
Why eager for wealth and not possess its power?
I'm parched like Tantalus, silent now, in the midst
of fruit and water, he who can never touch it.
Has anyone ever risen early from his girl
so he can go straight to the gods and pray?
No, she's seductive: squandered so many kisses on me:
urged me on with every one of her powers!
She could have moved heavy oak-trees,
stirred hard adamant, or the deafest stones.
She'd have moved all men, all living things for sure:
but I was neither man nor living, as once before.
What joy can deaf ears have when Phemis sings?
What joy can blind Thamyras have in painted things?
But what silent delights my mind invented!
What did I not imagine, all the various ways!
But still my sex lay there prematurely dead,

The Love Poems

shamefully, limper than a rose picked yesterday –
Look, now, he's lively at the wrong time, able,
now he's demanding work and service.
Why can't you lie down modestly, worst part of me?
You've caught me like this with your promises before.
You failed your master: I was left weaponless, through you,
enduring sad hurt and great embarrassment.
Not even this did my girl disdain to try,
to rouse me with her gently moving hand:
but when she couldn't make me rise, with her art,
and saw it sink down there, ignoring her,
'Why toy with me, why, if you're sick,' she said,
'did you invite your unwilling body to my bed?
Either some Circean sorceress has bewitched you,
or you come here wearied by another lover.'
With that, she leapt up, veiled by her loose slip –
and how her fleeing naked feet became her! –
And lest her servants thought that all was chaste,
I scattered water there, to cover the disgrace.

BOOK III ELEGY VIII: THE CURSE OF MONEY



Does anyone admire the noble arts these days,
or think that talent's displayed in tender verse?
Once genius was rated more than gold:
but now to have nothing shows plain stupidity.
Though my lovely girl's delighted with my books,
where the books can go, I can't go myself:
while she praised them, her door closed as she praised.
Shamefully, clever, I go here and there.
Look, some newly-rich blood-drenched knight
made wealthy by his wounds grazes my pastures!
Can you hug him in your lovely arms, my sweet life?
Life of mine, can you lie there in his embrace?
If you don't know, that head once wore a helmet:
there was a sword bound to that thigh that serves you:
that left hand, that new-won gold suits so badly,
held a shield: touch his right – it was stained with blood!
Can you touch that right hand by which others perished?
ah, where is that tender-heartedness of yours?
See the scars, the marks of former battles –
whatever he has, he earned with his body.
Perhaps he'll tell you how many men he's murdered!
Avaricious girl, can you touch those revealing hands?
Am I, the pure priest of Apollo and the Muses,
to sing idle songs at unyielding doors?
If you're wise, learn, not what we sluggards know,
but the dangers of battle and the rough camp,
forming lines of spears instead of good verses!
Homer, the night can be yours, if you wage war.
Jupiter, realising nothing's more powerful than gold,
turned himself to coinage to seduce a virgin.
Without that wealth, father was harsh, she severe,

the doors were bronze, and the tower was iron.
But when the adulterer knowingly came as cash,
she offered love herself and saying 'give', she gave.
Yet when ancient Saturn ruled the heavens,
Earth covered all her wealth in deep darkness.
She stored the copper and silver, gold and heavy iron,
among the shades, there were no ingots then.
She gave better things – crops without curved ploughs,
and fruits, and honey found in the hollow oaks.
No one scarred the earth with a strong blade,
no measurer of the ground marked out limits.
no dipping oars swept the churning waves:
then the longest human journey ended at the shore.
Human nature, you've been skilful, against yourself,
and ingenious, in excess, to your own harm.
What use to you are towns encircled with turreted walls?
What use to you to add the discord of arms, at hand?
When was the sea yours – land should have contented you!
Why not seek out a third region then in the sky?
Though you honour the sky too – Romulus,
Bacchus, Hercules, Caesar now have temples.
We dig the earth for solid gold not food.
Soldiers possess the wealth they get by blood.
The Senate's shut to the poor – money buys honours:
here a grave judge, there a sober knight!
Let them have it all: let arena and forum serve them,
let them conduct merciless war or manage peace.
So long as they don't bid greedily for our lovers,
and – it'll do – if something's left for the poor!
Now, though she may be as sour as a Sabine,
he, who can give much, rules her like a slave.
The porter shuts me out: for me, she fears her husband:
but if I gave, those two would quit the house!
O if only some god, avenger of neglected lovers,
would turn their ill-gotten wealth to dust!

BOOK III ELEGY IX: ELEGY FOR THE DEAD TIBULLUS



f his mother grieved for Memnon: his mother for Achilles,
and sad fate thus can touch the great goddesses,
weep, Elegy, and loose your tight-bound hair!
ah, only too truly from this was your name taken! –
Tibullus, your own poet, your own glory,
burns, a worthless corpse, on the tall pyre.
Look, Venus's boy carries an upturned quiver,
his bow is broken, his torch without its flame:
see, how he goes sadly with drooping wings,
and how he beats his naked breast with fierce hand!
His tears are caught in the hair scattered about his neck,
and break in resounding sobs from his mouth.
So he looked, they say, at his brother Aeneas's funeral,
when it left your palace, glorious Iulus:
and Venus is no less grieved by Tibullus's death,
than when the wild boar gashed Adonis's thigh.
And poets are called sacred, and beloved of the gods:
there are also those who grant us divine inspiration.
Yet greedy death profanes all sacred things:
of all things his shadowy hands take possession!
What help were his divine parents to Thracian Orpheus,
or his songs that overcame the astonished creatures?
And Apollo, father of Linus also, in the deep woods,
cried 'aelinon!' they say, as he struck the reluctant lyre.
And Homer, by whom poet's mouths are moistened
as if by an eternal stream from the Muse's fountains –
he also at day's end sank down to dark Avernus.
Poetry alone escapes the greedy pyre:
The poets works survive, the tale of Troy's sufferings
and the nocturnal guile that un-wove the tardy web.
So Nemesis, and Delia, will have a name forever,

the last your recent worship, the other your former love.
What use are your rituals? What use the Egyptian
sistrum? What use those nights sleeping in an empty bed?
When evil fate drags down the good – forgive my words! –
it incites me to believe there are no gods.
Live piously – you die: obey the rites piously, obeying
death drags you from the temple's echo to the hollow tomb:
Place your faith in poetry's truth – look, there, Tibullus lies:
of all there hardly remains what might fill a little urn!
Did the funeral fires consume you, sacred poet,
that had no fear of feeding on your heart?
Flames that could commit such wickedness
would burn the golden shrines of the sacred gods!
Venus, who holds the heights of Eryx turned away her face:
some say she could not hold back her tears.
But still it is better so, than that Corfu's earth
had covered you, unknown, with common soil.
Here, your mother closed your wet eyes in death
and paid the last rites to your ashes:
Here your sister, with torn and unkempt hair,
came to share her sorrowing mother's grief,
Your Delia said: 'I am lucky, to have been loved by you,'
stepping from the pyre: 'you lived when I was your flame.'
while Nemesis said: 'Why is my hurt your grief?'
His failing hand held me as he died.'
Yet if anything is left of us but a shadow and a name
Tibullus lives in some valley of Elysium.
You come to meet him, ivy wreathing your young brows,
learned Catullus, with your Calvus:
and you, also, Gallus, too free with your blood and life,
if that charge is false of violating Caesar's friendship.
Your spirit will accompany them: if the body ends as spirit,
gracious Tibullus, added to the numbers of the blessed.
I pray that your bones rest, at peace, in their protecting urn,
and that the earth lies lightly on your grave!

BOOK III ELEGY X: NO SEX- IT'S THE FESTIVAL OF CERES



ere comes the annual festival of Ceres:
my girl lies alone in an empty bed.
Golden Ceres, fine hair wreathed with ears of wheat,
why must your rituals spoil our pleasure?
All peoples, wherever, speak of your bounty, Goddess,
no other begrudges good to humanity less.
Before you, the bearded farmers parched no corn,
the word threshing-floor was unknown on the Earth,
but oak-trees, the first oracles, carried acorns:
these and tender herbs in the grass were our food.
Ceres first taught the seeds to swell in the fields,
and first with sickles cut the ripened sheaves:
first bowed the necks of oxen under the yoke,
and scarred the ancient earth with curved blade.
Can anyone believe she delights in lovers' tears
that right worship lies in torment and lonely beds?
Still, though she loves fertile fields, she's no rustic,
nor does she have a heart bereft of love.
The Cretans are witness – Cretans' don't always lie.
Crete was proud to nurse the infant Jove.
There, he who steers the world's starry courses,
sucked milk, with tender mouth as a little child.
Proof from a mighty witness: witnessed by his praise.
I think Ceres might confess to the charge I make.
She saw Iasus on the slopes of Cretan Mount Ida,
slaughtering the game with unerring hand.
She saw him, and flames pierced her to the marrow,
from there, love, partly drove out her shame.
Shame quelled by love: you could see parched furrows
and the sowing itself gave the least of returns.

The Love Poems

Though the fields were struck with well-aimed mattocks,
and the soil was broken with the curving plough,
and the seed scattered evenly over wide acres,
the farmers were cheated of their useless prayers.
Deep in the woods the goddess of fertility lingered:
the garland of wheat-ears slipping from her long hair.
Only Crete was enriched by a fruitful year:
Wherever the goddess showed herself, there was harvest:
Ida itself, home of forests, was white with crops,
and the wild boars reaped corn in the woods.
Minos the law-giver prayed for more such years:
he should have wished for Ceres's love to last forever.
Because you were sad on lonely nights, golden goddess,
why should I be forced now to endure your rites?
Why should I be sad, when your daughter's found again,
her fate to rule a kingdom second only to Juno's?
This festive day calls for loving, and poetry, and wine:
these are the gifts it's right to carry to the gods.

BOOK III ELEGY XIA: THAT'S ENOUGH!



I've endured too much, too long: my patience is defeated
by her offences: heart dead with weariness, vile love!
There's no doubt I'm free now and have slipped my chain,
and what I wasn't ashamed to bear, I'm ashamed I bore.
I've won and love is tamed, trampled under my feet:
at last true horns have appeared on my head.
Endure it and stand firm! This pain in the end will help you:
often bitter medicine brings strength to the weary.
So why did I endure it, so often shut out from your gate,
laying my delicate body on the hard floor?
So why did I keep watch, for him you held in your arms,
like a slave outside your closed door?
I saw, when your lover appeared weary, at your door,
found wanting, and his body all exhausted:
but it's still worse that I was seen by him –
let that shame happen to my enemies!
When did I not cling patiently to your side,
your true guardian, your lover, friend?
And of course you pleased people through my friendship:
my love was the reason for your many lovers.
What, shall I say now, of your vile lies, your idle tongue,
and the gods perjured to harm me?
What of the silent nods of youths at parties,
and the deceptive words of secret messages?
They told me she's ill – I ran, in a hurry, a madman:
I arrived, and she wasn't too ill for my rival!
I'm hardened by this: by things unsaid I've often suffered:
find someone instead of me, who can endure it.
Now my vessel's crowned with votive wreaths
calmly braving the ocean's swelling waves.

The Love Poems

Leave off your flatteries and your once powerful words,
forget them – now I'm not the fool I used to be!

BOOK III ELEGY XIb: THE CONFLICT OF EMOTIONS



struggle, and my fickle heart is pulled both ways,
now by love, now hate, but I think love wins.
I'll hate if I can do: if not, I love unwillingly.

No ox loves the yoke: yet he still suffers what he hates.

I flee your wickedness – your beauty draws me back:

I loathe your guilty ways – I love your body.

So I can't live with you or without you,

and don't seem to know my own mind.

I wish you were less beautiful or less wanton:

such a lovely form doesn't go with such bad ways.

Actions worthy of hatred, a face that begs for love –

ah me, she's worth so much more than her vices!

Oh, spare me, by the shared promises of our bed,

by all those gods who so often let you cheat them,

by your face that to me approaches the divine,

by those eyes of yours that ravished mine!

Be what you will, you will be mine for ever:

you choose then, shall I love freely too or be constrained!

Let me spread sail and enjoy the flowing breezes,

or, if I may not, to want what I'm forced to love.

BOOK III ELEGY XII: IT SERVES ME RIGHT!



What day was it, dark bird, when you sounded
your omen for this eternally melancholy lover?
What star should I believe has opposed my destiny,
what god should I complain of, warring against me?
She who was once spoken of as mine, whom I loved,
first, alone, I fear, along with many others, I consider mine.
Am I mistaken, or have my books made her famous?
so it shall be – she'll be advertised by my art.
And it serves me right! For didn't I trumpet her beauty?
It's my fault if the girl's been rendered marketable.
It pleased me to be go-between, guide to lovers I attracted,
the entrance was thrown open by my hand.
And I doubt the use of verse that's always harmed me:
it made men envious of my success.
Despite Thebes, and Troy, and Caesar's actions,
only Corinna inspired my genius.
I wish a hostile Muse had struck my verse,
that Apollo had forsaken my works' beginnings!
Yet it's not the custom to listen to poets as witnesses:
I'd rather less weight was given to my words.
Through us Scylla stole her father's precious lock of hair,
and set rabid dogs at her thighs and groin:
we granted feet wings, and hair snakes:
and Perseus, the hero, a winged horse.
Tityus too we stretched out over vast spaces,
and made the snaky Cerberus three-headed:
we made thousand handed Enceladus throw spears,
captured heroes with the songs of bird-footed virgins.
We shut the winds of Aeolus in Ulysses's bag:
showed Tantalus parched in the midst of water.

Made a bear of a girl, a rock out of Niobe.
A bird, once Thracian Philomela, sang for Itys:
Jupiter transformed himself to bird or gold,
or cut the waves, as a bull, with a girl on his back.
Shall I speak of Proteus, the teeth the Theban sowed:
bulls there were breathing flames from their mouths:
Charioteer, your sisters with eyes weeping amber:
what were once ships, now sea goddesses:
the sun turning away from Atreus's vile feast,
and solid stones following the sounding lyre?
The poet's creative licence embraces everything,
nor are his words obliged to be true to history.
and you ought to have seen that my praise of the woman
was fiction: now your credulity has hurt me.

BOOK III ELEGY XIII: THE FESTIVAL OF JUNO



My wife and I came to fruitful Falerii, where she was born,
the town you conquered once, Camillus.
Priests were preparing Juno's chaste festival,
the celebrated games, and sacrifice of a local heifer:
despite the difficult mountain ways this road offers
to witness the rites was worth the delay.
There stood the ancient gloomy grove dense with trees:
look at it – and you'll agree there's a goddess in the place.
The altar receives prayers and votive incense from the pious
an altar made by ancient hands, without high art.
Here the annual procession passes through garlanded ways,
where the flute sounds out, with solemn chants:
white heifers are led by, to the crowd's applause,
that browse Falerian grass in their own fields,
and horned bullocks, whose foreheads don't threaten yet,
and lesser victims, pigs from humble sties,
and rams, with curving horns on their solid brows.
Only the she-goat's hateful to the great goddess:
They say one came upon her in the deep woods,
and betrayed her, aborting her incipient flight.
Now the informer's attacked by boys with spears,
and she's given as a prize to the one who wounds her.
When the goddess comes, youths and timid girls
go before her, with robes that sweep along the streets.
The girls' hair is burdened with gold and jewels,
and noble gowns brush their gilded feet:
Veiled in white clothes in the ancient Greek fashion
they carry the sacred vessels on their heads.
The crowd is hushed when she comes with golden pomp,
drawn along behind her priestesses.

The style of the procession is from Argos: Halaesus fled
from sin, and his father's wealth, at Agamemnon's murder,
then wandering in exile, over land and sea,
he founded these high walls, with fortunate hand.
He taught the rites of Juno to his Falerians.
Let her always be a friend to her people, and to me!

BOOK III ELEGY XIV: DISCRETION PLEASE!



don't say 'don't sin', since you're beautiful,
but there's no need for me, poor fool, to know:
and no censure of mine demands that you're chaste,
it only asks that you try and conceal it.
She didn't sin, if she can deny she sinned,
only confession makes crimes notorious.
What madness to expose, by day, what midnight hides:
why make what's secret into a well-known fact?
Some whore who couples with a nameless citizen
moves away from the crowd before it's too late.
Will you prostitute your sins for worthless fame
and talk about what you've done to fuel opinion?
Improve your ways: at least pretend you're chaste,
and I can approve, thinking you what you're not.
What you do, keep doing it: just deny it,
and don't be ashamed to speak modestly in public!
If there's a place demands naughtiness: then fill it
with all delights, let shame be far away!
Likewise when you leave off, straightaway forget
all lasciviousness: leave the sin there, in your bed.
There, don't let your slip make you over-shy,
or not allow your thigh to press against a thigh:
there, let my tongue be buried between your rosy lips,
and let desire shape a thousand ways to love:
there, don't let your words and sounds of delight cease,
let the naughty bed tremble at your agility!
Then, with your dress, put on the face that fears sin,
and let shame disown the works of obscenity:
Tell me, tell people anything: let me err without knowing,
and let me enjoy a fool's credulity!

Why do I see so many notes received and given?
Why are the pillow and the sheet wrinkled?
Why do I have to see such obvious love-bites on your neck,
and your hair disturbed by more than sleep?
You only hide the sin itself from my eyes:
If you hesitate to spare your reputation, well spare me!
My mind's gone, I'm dying, when you confess your crimes,
and the blood runs cold in my whole body.
Then I love, and hate, in vain, what I have to love:
then I wish, with you, that I was dead!
For my part I'll not enquire, not seek to know
what you hide, and treat deception as a gift.
But if I catch you in the guilty act,
and your shame's visible to my eyes,
deny I've really seen what I've really seen –
I'll accept your words and not my sight.
It's easy for you to win the palm if I want to be beaten,
just remember to say the words: 'I didn't!'
While you succeed in winning with those two words,
though you've no case, you'll conquer the judge too!

BOOK III ELEGY XV: HIS FAME TO COME



Find a new poet, mother of gentle Love!
My elegies have scraped past the last turning-post:
I composed them, child of Pelignian country –
and my pleasures have not led me astray –
For what it's worth, I'm heir to an ancient line,
not a knight fashioned by the whirlwind of war.
Mantua celebrates Virgil, Verona Catullus:
I'll be known as the glory of Peligni's people,
who won honourable freedom with their arms,
when Rome was fearful of their collective force.
And some stranger, seeing the walls of watery Sulmo,
and how small a measure of land it occupies,
will say 'What a great poet you were able to bear:
I'll call you great, however small you are.'
Graceful boy, and, you, the graceful boy's Cyprian mother,
take away your golden standard from my field!
Horned Bacchus rebukes me with his weightier rod:
there's a greater space beaten by greater steeds.
Unwarlike elegies, joyful Muse, farewell,
this work that will still stand forever, when I'm dead.

Ars Amatoria

The Art of Love



Venus and Adonis - Josse de Pape (Belgian, 1615 - 1646)

The Rijksmuseum

Contents

Book I Part I: His Task	123
Book I Part II: How to Find Her.....	125
Book I Part III: Search while you're out Walking.....	126
Book I Part IV: Or at the Theatre	127
Book I Part V: Or at the Races, or the Circus.....	129
Book I Part VI: Triumphs are Good too!.....	131
Book I Part VII: There's always the Dinner-Table.....	133
Book I Part VIII: And Finally There's the Beach.....	134
Book I Part IX: How To Win Her	135
Book I Part X: First Secure the Maid	138
Book I Part XI: Don't Forget Her Birthday!.....	140
Book I Part XII: Write and Make Promises	142
Book I Part XIII: Be Where She Is	144
Book I Part XIV: Look Presentable	145
Book I Part XV: At Dinner Be Bold	146
Book I Part XVI: Promise and Deceive.....	150
Book I Part XVII: Tears, Kisses, and Take the Lead.....	151
Book I Part XVIII: Be Pale: Be Wary of Your Friends	153
Book I Part XIX: Be Flexible	155
Book II Part I: His Task.....	159
Book II Part II: You Need Gifts of Mind	162
Book II Part III: Be Gentle and Good Tempered.....	164
Book II Part IV: Be Patient and Comply	166
Book II Part V: Don't be Faint-Hearted.....	168
Book II Part VI: Win Over the Servants	169
Book II Part VII: Give Her Little Tasteful Gifts.....	170
Book II Part VIII: Favour Her and Compliment Her	171
Book II Part IX: Comfort Her in Sickness.....	172

Book II Part X: Let Her Miss You: But Not For Long.....	173
Book II Part XI: Have Other Friends: But Be Careful.....	175
Book II Part XII: Aphrodisiacs?.....	177
Book II Part XIII: Stir her Jealousy	178
Book II Part XIV: Be Wise and Suffer	181
Book II Part XV: Respect Her Freedom.....	183
Book II Part XVI: Keep It Secret.....	185
Book II Part XVII: Don't Mention Her Faults	187
Book II Part XVIII: Don't Ask About Her Age	188
Book II Part XIX: Don't Rush	190
Book II Part XX: The Task's Complete...But Now.....	192
Book III Part I: It's Time to Teach You Girls.....	195
Book III Part II: Take Care with How You Look	198
Book III Part III: Taste and Elegance in Hair and Dress	200
Book III Part IV: Make-Up, but in Private	202
Book III Part V: Conceal Your Defects	204
Book III Part VI: Be Modest in Laughter and Movement.....	205
Book III Part VII: Learn Music and Read the Poets	207
Book III Part VIII: Learn Dancing, Games.....	209
Book III Part IX: Be Seen Around.....	211
Book III Part X: Beware of False Lovers.....	213
Book III Part XI: Take Care with Letters	215
Book III Part XII: Avoid the Vices, Favour the Poets.....	217
Book III Part XIII: Try Young and Older Lovers	219
Book III Part XIV: Use Jealousy and Fear.....	220
Book III Part XV: Play Cloak and Dagger	222
Book III Part XVI: Make Him Believe He's Loved.....	224
Book III Part XVII: Watch How You Eat and Drink.....	227
Book III Part XVIII: And So To Bed.....	228

Book I



Venus Genetrix

Joseph Adolf Schmetterling (Dutch, 1751 - 1828)

The Rijksmuseum

BOOK I PART I: HIS TASK



Should anyone here not know the art of love,
read this, and learn by reading how to love.
By art the boat's set gliding, with oar and sail,
by art the chariot's swift: love's ruled by art.
Automedon was skilled with Achilles' chariot reins,
Tiphys in Thessaly was steersman of the Argo,
Venus appointed me as guide to gentle Love:
I'll be known as Love's Tiphys, and Automedon.
It's true Love's wild, and one who often flouts me:
but he's a child of tender years, fit to be ruled.
Chiron made the young Achilles perfect at the lyre,
and tempered his wild spirits through peaceful art.
He, who so terrified his enemies and friends,
they say he greatly feared the aged Centaur.
That hand that Hector was destined to know,
was held out, at his master's orders, to be flogged.
I am Love's teacher as Chiron was Achilles',
both wild boys, both children of a goddess.
Yet the bullock's neck is bowed beneath the yoke,
and the spirited horse's teeth worn by the bit.
And Love will yield to me, though with his bow
he wounds my heart, shakes at me his burning torch.
The more he pierces me, the more violently he burns me,
so much the fitter am I to avenge the wounds.
Nor will I falsely say you gave me the art, Apollo,
no voice from a heavenly bird gives me advice,
I never caught sight of Clio or Clio's sisters
while herding the flocks, Ascra, in your valleys:
Experience prompts this work: listen to the expert poet:
I sing true: Venus, help my venture!

Far away from here, you badges of modesty,
the thin headband, the ankle-covering dress.
I sing of safe love, permissible intrigue,
and there'll be nothing sinful in my song.
Now the first task for you who come as a raw recruit
is to find out who you might wish to love.
The next task is to make sure that she likes you:
the third, to see to it that the love will last.
That's my aim, that's the ground my chariot will cover:
that's the post my thundering wheels will scrape.

BOOK I PART II: HOW TO FIND HER



While you're still free, and can roam on a loose rein,
pick one to whom you could say: 'You alone please me.'
She won't come falling for you out of thin air:
the right girl has to be searched for: use your eyes.
The hunter knows where to spread nets for the stag,
he knows what valleys hide the angry boar:
the wild-fowler knows the woods: the fisherman
knows the waters where the most fish spawn:
You too, who search for the essence of lasting love,
must be taught the places that the girls frequent.
I don't demand you set your sails, and search,
or wear out some long road to discover them.
Perseus brought Andromeda from darkest India,
and Trojan Paris snatched his girl from Greece,
Rome will grant you lots of such lovely girls,
you'll say: 'Here's everything the world has had.'
Your Rome's as many girls as Gargara's sheaves,
as Methymna's grapes, as fishes in the sea,
as birds in the hidden branches, stars in the sky:
Venus, Aeneas's mother, haunts his city.
If you'd catch them very young and not yet grown,
real child-brides will come before your eyes:
if it's young girls you want, thousands will please you.
You'll be forced to be unsure of your desires:
if you delight greatly in older wiser years,
here too, believe me, there's an even greater crowd.

BOOK I PART III: SEARCH WHILE YOU'RE OUT WALKING



ust walk slowly under Pompey's shady colonnade,
when the sun's in Leo, on the back of Hercules's lion:
or where Octavia added to her dead son Marcellus's gifts,
with those rich works of foreign marble.

Don't miss the Portico that takes its name
from Livia its creator, full of old masters:
or where the daring Danaids prepare to murder their poor husbands,
and their fierce father stands, with out-stretched sword.

And don't forget the shrine of Adonis, Venus wept for,
and the sacred Sabbath rites of the Syrian Jews.

Don't skip the Memphite temple of the linen-clad heifer:
she makes many a girl what she herself was to Jove.

And the law-courts (who'd believe it?) they suit love:
a flame is often found in the noisy courts:

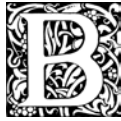
where the Appian waters pulse into the air,
from under Venus's temple, made of marble,

there the lawyer's often caught by love,
and he who guides others, fails to guide himself:

in that place of eloquence often his words desert him,
and a new case starts, his own cause is the brief.

There Venus, from her neighbouring temples, laughs:
he, who was once the counsel, now wants to be the client.

BOOK I PART IV: OR AT THE THEATRE



ut hunt for them, especially, at the tiered theatre:
that place is the most fruitful for your needs.
There you'll find one to love, or one you can play with,
one to be with just once, or one you might wish to keep.
As ants return home often in long processions,
carrying their favourite food in their mouths,
or as the bees buzz through the flowers and thyme,
among their pastures and fragrant chosen meadows,
so our fashionable ladies crowd to the famous shows:
my choice is often constrained by such richness.
They come to see, they come to be seen as well:
the place is fatal to chaste modesty.
These shows were first made troublesome by Romulus,
when the raped Sabines delighted unmarried men.
Then no awnings hung from the marble theatre,
the stage wasn't stained with saffron perfumes:
Then what the shady Palatine provided, leaves
simply placed, was all the artless scene:
The audience sat on tiers made from turf,
and covered their shaggy hair, as best they could, with leaves.
They watched, and each with his eye observed the girl
he wanted, and trembled greatly in his silent heart.
While, to the measure of the homely Etruscan flute,
the dancer, with triple beat, struck the levelled earth,
amongst the applause (applause that was never artful then)
the king gave the watched-for signal for the rape.
They sprang up straightaway, showing their intent by shouting,
and eagerly took possession of the women.
As doves flee the eagle, in a frightened crowd,
as the new-born lamb runs from the hostile wolf:

so they fled in panic from the lawless men,
and not one showed the colour she had before.
Now they all fear as one, but not with one face of fear:
Some tear their hair: some sit there, all will lost:
one mourns silently, another cries for her mother in vain:
one moans, one faints: one stays, while that one runs:
the captive girls were led away, a joyful prize,
and many made even fear itself look fitting.
Whoever showed too much fight, and denied her lover,
he held her clasped high to his loving heart,
and said to her: 'Why mar your tender cheeks with tears?
as your father to your mother, I'll be to you.'
Romulus, alone, knew what was fitting for soldiers:
I'll be a soldier, if you give me what suits me.
From that I suppose came the theatres' usual customs:
now too they remain a snare for the beautiful.

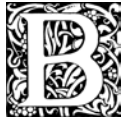
BOOK I PART V: OR AT THE RACES, OR THE CIRCUS



Don't forget the races, those noble stallions:
the Circus holds room for a vast obliging crowd.
No need here for fingers to give secret messages,
nor a nod of the head to tell you she accepts:
You can sit by your lady: nothing's forbidden,
press your thigh to hers, as you can do, all the time:
and it's good the rows force you close, even if you don't like it,
since the girl is touched through the rules of the place.
Now find your reason for friendly conversation,
and first of all engage in casual talk.
Make earnest enquiry whose those horses are:
and rush to back her favourite, whatever it is.
When the crowded procession of ivory gods goes by,
you clap fervently for Lady Venus:
if by chance a speck of dust falls in the girl's lap,
as it may, let it be flicked away by your fingers:
and if there's nothing, flick away the nothing:
let anything be a reason for you to serve her.
If her skirt is trailing too near the ground,
lift it, and raise it carefully from the dusty earth:
Straightaway, the prize for service, if she allows it,
is that your eyes catch a glimpse of her legs.
Don't forget to look at who's sitting behind you,
that he doesn't press her sweet back with his knee.
Small things please light minds: it's very helpful
to puff up her cushion with a dextrous touch.
And it's good to raise a breeze with a light fan,
and set a hollow stool beneath her tender feet.
And the Circus brings assistance to new love,
and the scattered sand of the gladiator's ring.

Venus' boy often fights in that sand,
and who see wounds, themselves receive a wound.
While talking, touching hands, checking the programme,
and asking, having bet, which one will win,
wounded he groans, and feels the winged dart,
and himself becomes a part of the show he sees.
When, lately, Caesar, in mock naval battle,
exhibited the Greek and Persian fleets,
surely young men and girls came from either coast,
and all the peoples of the world were in the City?
Who did not find one he might love in that crowd?
Ah, how many were tortured by an alien love!

BOOK I PART VI: TRIUMPHS ARE GOOD TOO!



Behold, now Caesar's planning to add to our rule
what's left of earth: now the far East will be ours.
Parthia, we'll have vengeance: Crassus's bust will cheer,
and those standards wickedly laid low by barbarians.
The avenger's here, the leader, proclaimed, of tender years,
and a boy wages war's un-boy-like agenda.
Cowards, don't count the birthdays of the gods:
a Caesar's courage flowers before its time.
Divine genius grows faster than its years,
and suffers as harmful evils the cowardly delays.
Hercules was a child when he crushed two serpents
in both his hands, already worthy of Jupiter in his cradle.
How old were you, Bacchus, who are still a boy,
when conquered India trembled to your rod?
Your father's years and powers arm you, boy,
and with your father's powers and years you'll win:
though your first beginnings must be in debt to such a name,
now prince of the young, but one day prince of the old:
Your brothers are with you, avenge your brothers' wounds:
your father is with you, keep your father's laws.
Your and your country's father endowed you with arms:
the enemy stole his kingship from an unwilling parent:
You hold a pious shaft, he a wicked arrow:
Justice and piety stick to your standard.
Let Parthia's cause be lost: and their armies:
let my leader add Eastern wealth to Latium.
Both your fathers, Mars and Caesar, grant you power:
Through you one is a god, and one will be.
See, I augur your triumph: I'll reply with a votive song,
and you'll be greatly celebrated on my lips.

You'll stand and exhort your troops with my words:
O let my words not lack your courage!
I'll speak of Parthian backs and Roman fronts,
and shafts the enemy hurl from flying horses.
If you flee, to win, Parthia, what's left for you in defeat?
Mars already has your evil eye.
So the day will be, when you, beautiful one,
golden, will go by, drawn by four snowy horses.
The generals will go before you, necks weighed down with chains,
lest they flee to safety as they did before.
The happy crowd of youths and girls will watch,
that day will gladden every heart.
And if she, among them, asks the name of a king,
what place, what mountains, and what stream's displayed,
you can reply to all, and more if she asks:
and what you don't know, reply as memory prompts.
That's Euphrates, his brow crowned with reeds:
that'll be Tigris with the long green hair.
I make those Armenians, that's Persia's Danaan crown:
that was a town in the hills of Achaemenia.
Him and him, they're generals: and say what names they have,
if you can, the true ones, if not the most fitting.

BOOK I PART VII: THERE'S ALWAYS THE DINNER-TABLE



he table laid for a feast also gives you an opening:
There's something more than wine you can look for there.
Often rosy Love has clasped Bacchus's horns,
drawing him to his gentle arms, as he lay there.
And when wine has soaked Cupid's drunken wings,
he's stayed, weighed down, a captive of the place.
It's true he quickly shakes out his damp feathers:
though still the heart that's sprinkled by love is hurt.
Wine rouses courage and is fit for passion:
care flies, and deep drinking dilutes it.
Then laughter comes, the poor man dons the horns,
then pain and sorrow leave, and wrinkled brows.
Then what's rarest in our age appears to our minds,
Simplicity: all art dispelled by the god.
Often at that time girls captivated men's wits,
and Venus was in the vine, flame in the fire.
Don't trust the treacherous lamplight overmuch:
night and wine can harm your view of beauty.
Paris saw the goddesses in the light, a cloudless heaven,
when he said to Venus: 'Venus, you win, over them both.'
Faults are hidden at night: every blemish is forgiven,
and the hour makes whichever girl you like beautiful.
Judge jewellery, and fabric stained with purple,
judge a face, or a figure, in the light.

BOOK I PART VIII: AND FINALLY THERE'S THE BEACH



Why enumerate every female meeting place fit for the hunter?
The grains of sand give way before the number.
Why speak of Baiae, its shore splendid with sails,
where the waters steam with sulphurous heat?
Here one returning, his heart wounded, said:
'That water's not as healthy as they claim.'
Behold the suburban woodland temple of Diana,
and the kingdom murder rules with guilty hand.
She, who is virgin, who hates Cupid's darts,
gives people many wounds, has many to give.

BOOK I PART IX: HOW TO WIN HER



So far, riding her unequal wheels, the Muse has taught you
where you might choose your love, where to set your nets.
Now I'll undertake to tell you what pleases her,
by what arts she's caught, itself a work of highest art.
Whoever you are, lovers everywhere, attend, with humble minds,
and you, masses, show you support me: use your thumbs.
First let faith enter into your mind: every one of them
can be won: you'll win her, if you only set your snares.
Birds will sooner be silent in the Spring, cicadas in summer,
an Arcadian hound turn his back on a hare,
than a woman refuse a young man's flattering words:
Even she you might think dislikes it, will like it.
Secret love's just as pleasing to women as men.
Men pretend badly: she hides her desire.
If it was proper for men not to be the first to ask,
woman's role would be to take the part of the asker.
The cow lows to the bull in gentle pastures:
the mare whinnies to the hoofed stallion.
Desire in us is milder and less frantic:
the male fire has its lawful limits.
Remember Byblis, who burned with incestuous love,
for her brother, and bravely punished herself with the noose?
Myrrha loved her father, but not as a daughter should,
and then was hidden by the covering bark:
oozing those tears, that pour from the tree as fragrance,
and whose droplets take their name from the girl.
Once, in the shady valleys of wooded Ida
there was a white bull, glory of the herd,
one small black mark set between his horns:
it the sole blemish, the rest was milky-white.

The heifers of Cnossos and Cydon longed
to have him mount up on their backs.
Pasiphae joyed in adultery with the bull:
she hated the handsome heifers with jealousy.
I sing what is well-known: not even Crete, the hundred-citied,
can deny it, however much Cretans lie.
They say that, with unpractised hands, she plucked
fresh leaves and tenderest grasses for the bull.
She went as one of the herd, unhindered by any care
for that husband of hers: Minos was ousted by a bull.
Why put on your finest clothes, Pasiphae?
Your lover can appreciate none of your wealth.
Why have a mirror with you, when you seek highland cattle?
Why continually smooth your hair, you foolish woman?
But believe the mirror that denies you're a heifer.
How you wish that brow of yours could bear horns!
If you'd please Minos, don't seek out adulterers:
If you want to cheat your husband, cheat with a man!
The queen left her marriage bed for woods and fields,
like a Maenad roused by the Boeotian god, they say.
Ah, how often, with angry face, she spied a cow,
and said: 'Now, how can she please my lord?
Look, how she frisks before him in the tender grass:
doubtless the foolish thing thinks that she's lovely.'
She spoke, and straightaway had her led from the vast herd,
the innocent thing dragged under the arching yoke,
or felled before the altar, forced to be a false sacrifice,
and, delighted, held her rival's entrails in her hand.
The number of times she killed rivals to please the gods,
and said, holding the entrails: 'Go, and please him for me!'
Now she claims to be Io, and now Europa,
one who's a heifer, the other borne by the bull.
Yet he filled her, the king of the herd, deceived
by a wooden cow, and their offspring betrayed its breeding.
If Cretan Aerope had spurned Thyestes's love

(and isn't it hard to forego even one man?),
the Sun would not have veered from his course mid-way,
and turned back his chariot and horses towards Dawn.
The daughter who savaged Nisus's purple lock
presses rabid dogs down with her thighs and groin.
Agamemnon who escaped Mars on land, Neptune at sea,
became the victim of his murderous wife.
Who would not weep at Corinthian Creusa's flames,
and that mother bloodstained by her children's murder?
Phoenix, Amyntor's son wept out of sightless eyes:
Hippolytus was torn by his fear-maddened horses.
Phineus, why blind your innocent sons?
That punishment will return on your own head.
All these things were driven by woman's lust:
it's more fierce than ours, and more frenzied.
So, on, and never hesitate in hoping for any woman:
there's hardly one among them who'll deny you.
Whether they give or not, they're delighted to be asked:
And even if you fail, you'll escape unharmed.
But why fail, when there's pleasure in new delights
and the more foreign the more they capture the heart?
The seed's often more fertile in foreign fields,
and a neighbour's herd always has richer milk.

BOOK I PART X: FIRST SECURE THE MAID



ut to get to know your desired-one's maid
is your first care: she'll smooth your way.
See if she's close to her mistress's thoughts,
and has plenty of true knowledge of her secret jests.
Corrupt her with promises, and with prayers:
you'll easily get what you want, if she wishes.
She'll tell the time (the doctors would know it too)
when her mistress's mind is receptive, fit for love.
Her mind will be fit for love when she luxuriates
in fertility, like the crop on some rich soil.
When hearts are glad, and nothing sad constrains them,
they're open: Venus steals in then with seductive art.
So Troy was defended with sorrowful conflict:
in joy, the Horse, pregnant with soldiers, was received.
She's also to be tried when she's wounded, pained by a rival:
make it your task then to see that she's avenged.
The maid can rouse her, when she combs her hair in the morning,
and add her oar to the work of your sails,
and, sighing to herself in a low murmur, say:
'But I doubt that you'll be able to make her pay.'
Then she should speak of you, and add persuasive words,
and swear you're dying, crazed with love.
But hurry, lest the sails fall and the breeze dies:
anger melts away, with time, like fragile ice.
You ask perhaps if one should take the maid herself?
Such a plan brings the greatest risk with it.
In one case, fresh from bed, she'll get busy, in another be tardy,
in one case you're a prize for her mistress, in the other herself.
There's chance in it: even if it favours the idea,
my advice nevertheless is to abstain.

The Love Poems

I don't pick my way over sharp peaks and precipices,
no youth will be caught out being lead by me.
Still, while she's giving and taking messages,
if her body pleases you as much as her zeal,
make the lady your first priority, her companion the next:
Love should never be begun with a servant.
I warn you of this, if art's skill is to be believed,
and don't let the wind blow my words out to sea:
follow the thing through or don't attempt it:
she'll endure the whispers once she's guilty herself.
It's no help if the bird escapes when its wings are limed:
it's no good if the boar gets free from a loosened net.
Hold fast to the stricken fish you've caught on the hook:
press home the attempt, don't leave off till you've won.
She'll not give you away, sharing the guilt for the crime,
and you'll know whatever your lady's done, and said.
But hide it well: if the informer's well hidden,
you'll always secretly know your mistress's mind.

BOOK I PART XI: DON'T FORGET HER BIRTHDAY!



It's a mistake to think that only farmers working the fields,
and sailors, need to keep an eye on the season:
Seed can't always be trusted to the furrow,
or a hollow ship to the wine-dark sea,
It's not always safe to capture tender girls:
often the time itself makes for success.
If her birthday's here, or the April Kalends,
that delight in joining months, Venus's to Mars,
or if the Circus is decorated, not as before
with clay figurines but with the wealth of kings,
delay the thing: then winter's harsh, the Pleiades are here,
then the tender Kid is merged with the ocean wave:
it's best to hold off then: then he who trusts the deep,
can scarcely save the wreckage of his mangled boat.
It's fine to start on that day of tears when the Allia
flowed with the blood poured from Roman wounds,
or when the Sabbath day returns, the holy day
of the Syrian Jews, less suitable for *buying* things.
Let your mistress's birthday be one of great terror to you:
that's a black day when anything has to be *given*.
However much you avoid it, she'll still win: it's
a woman's skill, to strip wealth from an ardent lover.
A loose-robed pedlar comes to your lady: she likes to buy:
and explains his prices while you're sitting there.
She'll ask you to look, because you know what to look for:
then kiss you: then ask you to buy her something there.
She swears that she'll be happy with it, for years,
but she needs it now, now the price is right.
If you say you haven't the money in the house, she'll ask
for a note of hand – and you're sorry you learnt to write.

The Love Poems

Why - she asks doesn't she for money as if it's her birthday,
just for the cake, and how often it *is* her birthday, if she's in need?
Why - she weeps doesn't she, mournfully, for a sham loss,
that imaginary gem that fell from her pierced ear?
They many times ask for gifts, they never give in return:
you lose, and you'll get no thanks for your loss.
And ten mouths with as many tongues wouldn't be enough
for me to describe the wicked tricks of whores.

BOOK I PART XII: WRITE AND MAKE PROMISES



ry wax to pave the way, pour it out on scraped tablets:
let wax be your mind's true confidante.

Bring her your flattering words and play the lover:
and, whoever you are, add a humble prayer.

Achilles was moved by prayer to grant Hector's body to Priam:
a god's anger's deflected by the voice of prayer.

Make promises: what harm can a promise do?

Anyone can be rich in promises.

Hope lasts, if she's once believed in,
a useful, though deceptive, goddess.

If you've given, you can quite reasonably be forgotten:
she carried it off, and now she's nothing to lose.

But if you don't give, always appear about to:
like barren fields that always cheat the farmer,
like the gambler who goes on losing, lest he's finally lost,
and calls the dice back endlessly into his eager hand.

This is the work, the labour, to have her without giving first:
and she'll go on giving, lest she lose what she's freely given.

So go on, and send your letter's flattering words,
try her intention, test the road out first.

Cydisippe was deceived by the message the apple brought,
and unaware the girl by her own words was caught.

I warn you, youths of Rome, learn the noble arts,
not just to defend some trembling client:

like the crowd, the grave judge, the elected senate,
a woman will give her hand, won by eloquence.

But let your powers be hidden, don't display your eloquence:
let irksome words vanish from your speech.

Who, but a mindless fool, declaims to his sweet friend?

A strong letter often causes her displeasure.

The Love Poems

Let your speech be credible, use ordinary words,
flattering though, speak as if you were present.
If she won't receive the letter, returns it un-read,
stick to your plan, and hope she'll read it later.
In time stubborn oxen come to the plough,
in time the horse learns to suffer the bridle:
constant use wears away an iron ring,
the curved plough's lost to the endless furrow.
What's harder than stone, softer than water?
Yet soft water carves the hardest stone.
Once steadfast you'll conquer Penelope herself in time:
you'll see Troy captive, though it's captured late.
She reads and won't reply? Don't press her:
just let her keep on reading your flattery.
If she wants to read, she'll want to answer what she's read:
such things proceed by number and by measure.
Perhaps at first a cool letter comes to you,
asking: would you please not trouble her.
What she asks, she fears: what she doesn't ask, she wants,
that you go on: do it, and you'll soon get what you wish.

BOOK I PART XIII: BE WHERE SHE IS



Meanwhile, if she's being carried, reclining on her bed,
secretly approach your lady's litter,
and to avoid offering your words to odious ears,
hide what you can with skill and ambiguous gestures.
If she's wandering at leisure in the spacious Colonnade,
you join here there also, lingering, as a friend:
now make as if to lead the way, now drop behind,
now go on quickly, and now take it slow:
don't be ashamed to slip amongst the columns,
a while, then move along side by side:
don't let her sit all beautiful in the theatre row without you:
what you'll look at is the way she holds her arms.
Gaze at her, to admire her is fine:
and to speak with gestures and with glances.
And applaud, the man who dances the girl's part:
and favour anyone who plays a lover.
When she rises, rise: while she's sitting, sit:
pass the time at your lady's whim.

BOOK I PART XIV: LOOK PRESENTABLE



Don't delight in curling your hair with tongs,
don't smooth your legs with sharp pumice stone.
Leave that to those who celebrate Cybele the Mother,
howling wildly in the Phrygian manner.
Male beauty's better for neglect: Theseus
carried off Ariadne, without a single pin in his hair.
Phaedra loved Hippolytus: he was unsophisticated:
Adonis was dear to the goddess, and fit for the woods.
Neatness pleases, a body tanned from exercise:
a well fitting and spotless toga's good:
no stiff shoe-thongs, your buckles free of rust,
no sloppy feet for you, swimming in loose hide:
don't mar your neat hair with an evil haircut:
let an expert hand trim your head and beard.
And no long nails, and make sure they're dirt-free:
and no hairs please, sprouting from your nostrils.
No bad breath exhaled from unwholesome mouth:
don't offend the nose like a herdsman or his flock.
Leave the rest for impudent women to do,
or whoever's the sort of man who needs a man.

BOOK I PART XV: AT DINNER BE BOLD



h, Bacchus calls to his poet: he helps lovers too,
and supports the fire with which he is inflamed.
The frantic Cretan girl wandered the unknown sands,
that the waters of tiny sea-borne Dia showed.
Just as she was, from sleep, veiled by her loose robe,
barefoot, with her yellow hair unbound,
she called, for cruel Theseus, to the unhearing waves,
her gentle cheeks wet with tears of shame.
She called, and wept as well, but both became her,
she was made no less beautiful by her tears.
Now striking her sweet breast with her hands, again and again,
she cried: 'That faithless man's gone: what of me, now?
What will happen to me?' she cried: and the whole shore
echoed to the sound of cymbals and frenzied drums.
She fainted in terror, her next words were stifled:
no sign of blood in her almost lifeless body.
Behold! The Bacchantes with loose streaming hair:
Behold! The wanton Satyrs, a crowd before the god:
Behold! Old Silenus, barely astride his swaybacked mule,
clutching tightly to its mane in front.
While he pursues the Bacchae, the Bacchae flee and return,
as the rascal urges the mount on with his staff.
He slips from his long-eared mule and falls headfirst:
the Satyrs cry: 'Rise again, father, rise,'
Now the God in his chariot, wreathed with vines,
curbing his team of tigers, with golden reins:
the girl's voice and colour and Theseus all lost:
three times she tried to run, three times fear held her back.
She shook, like a slender stalk of wheat stirred by the wind,
and trembled like a light reed in a marshy pool.

To whom the god said: 'See, I come, more faithful in love:
have no fear: Cretan, you'll be bride to Bacchus.
Take the heavens for dowry: be seen as heavenly stars:
and guide the anxious sailor often to your Cretan Crown.'
He spoke, and leapt from the chariot, lest she feared
his tigers: the sand yielded under his feet:
clasped in his arms (she had no power to struggle),
he carried her away: all's easily possible to a god.
Some sing 'O Hymenaeus', some 'Bacchus, euhoel'
So on the sacred bed the god and his bride meet.
When Bacchus's gifts are set before you then,
and you find a girl sharing your couch,
pray to the father of feasts and nocturnal rites
to command the wine to bring your head no harm.
It's alright here to speak many secret things,
with hidden words she'll feel were spoken for her alone:
and write sweet nothings in the film of wine,
so your girl can read them herself on the table:
and gaze in her eyes with eyes confessing fire:
you should often have silent words and speaking face.
Be the first to snatch the cup that touched her lips,
and where she drank from, that is where you drink:
and whatever food her fingers touch, take that,
and as you take it, touch hers with your hand.
Let it be your wish besides to please the girl's husband:
it'll be more useful to you to make friends.
If you cast lots for drinking, give him the better draw:
give him the garland you were crowned with.
Though he's below you or beside you, let him always be served first:
don't hesitate to second whatever he says.
It's a safe well-trodden path to deceive in a friend's name,
though it's a safe well-trodden path, it's a crime.
That way the procurer procures far too much,
and reckons to see to more than he was charged with.
You'll be given sure limits for drinking by me:

so pay attention to your mind and feet.
Most of all beware of starting a drunken squabble,
and fists far too ready for a rough fight.
Eurytion the Centaur died, made foolish by the wine:
food and drink are fitter for sweet jests.
If you've a voice, sing: if your limbs are supple, dance:
and please, with whatever you do that's pleasing.
And though drunkenness is harmful, it's useful to pretend:
make your sly tongue stammer with lisping sounds,
then, whatever you say or do that seems too forward,
it will be thought excessive wine's to blame.
And speak well of your lady, speak well of the one she sleeps with:
but silently in your thoughts wish the man ill.
Then when the table's cleared, the guests are free,
the throng will give you access to her and room.
Join the crowd, and softly approach her,
let fingers brush her thigh, and foot touch foot.
Now's the time to speak to her: boorish modesty
fly far from here: Chance and Venus help the daring.
Not from my rules your eloquence will come:
desire her enough, you'll be fluent yourself.
Your's to play the lover, imitate wounds with words:
use whatever skill you have to win her belief.
Don't think it's hard: each thinks herself desired:
the very worst take's pleasure in her looks.
Yet often the imitator begins to love in truth,
often, what was once imagined comes to be.
O, be kinder to the ones who feign it, girls:
true love will come, out of what was false.
Now secretly surprise her mind with flatteries,
as clear water undermines the hanging bank.
Never weary of praising her face, her hair,
her elegant fingers, and her slender feet.
Even the chaste like their beauty to be commended:
her form to even the virgin's pleasing and dear.

The Love Poems

Why is losing the contest in the Phrygian woods
a cause of shame to Juno and Pallas still?
Juno's peacock shows his much-praised plumage:
if you watch in silence, he'll hide his wealth again.
Race-horses between races on the testing course,
love it when necks are patted, manes are combed.

BOOK I PART XVI: PROMISE AND DECEIVE



Don't be shy of promising: promises entice girls:
add any gods you like as witness to what you swear.
Jupiter on high laughs at lovers' perjuries,
and orders Aeolus's winds to carry them into the void.
Jupiter used to swear by the Styx, falsely, to Juno:
now he looks favourably on his own example.
Gods are useful: as they're useful, let's think they're there:
take wine and incense to the ancient altars:
indifferent calm and it's like, apathy, don't chain them:
live innocently: the divine is close at hand:
pay what you owe, hold dutifully to agreements:
commit no fraud: let your hands be free from blood.
Delude only women, if you're wise, with impunity:
where truth's more to be guarded against than fraud.
Deceive deceivers: for the most part an impious tribe:
let them fall themselves into the traps they've set.
They say in Egypt the life-giving waters failed
in the fields: and there were nine years of drought,
then Thrasius came to Busiris, and said that Jove
might be propitiated by shedding a stranger's blood.
Busiris told him: 'You become Jove's first victim,
and you be the stranger to give Egypt water.'
And Phalaris roasted impetuous Perillus's body
in the brazen bull: the unhappy creator was first to fill his work.
Both cases were just: for there's no fairer law
than that the murderous maker should perish by his art.
As liars by liars are rightfully deceived,
wounded by their own example, let women grieve.

BOOK I PART XVII: TEARS, KISSES, AND TAKE THE LEAD



And tears help: tears will move a stone:
let her see your damp cheeks if you can.
If tears (they don't always come at the right time)
fail you, touch your eyes with a wet hand.
What wise man doesn't mingle tears with kisses?
Though she might not give, take what isn't given.
Perhaps she'll struggle, and then say 'you're wicked':
struggling she still wants, herself, to be conquered.
Only, take care her lips aren't bruised by snatching,
and that she can't complain that you were harsh.
Who takes a kiss, and doesn't take the rest,
deserves to lose all that were granted too.
How much short of your wish are you after that kiss?
Ah me, that was boorishness stopped you not modesty.
Though you call it force: it's force that pleases girls: what delights
is often to have given what they wanted, against their will.
She who is taken in love's sudden onslaught
is pleased, and finds wickedness is a tribute.
And she who might have been forced, and escapes unscathed,
will be saddened, though her face pretends delight.
Phoebe was taken by force: force was offered her sister:
and both, when raped, were pleased with those who raped them.
Though the tale's known, it's still worth repeating,
how the girl of Scyros mated Achilles the hero.
Now the lovely goddess had given her fatal bribe
to defeat the other two beneath Ida's slopes:
now a daughter-in-law had come to Priam
from an enemy land: a Greek wife in Trojan walls:
all swore the prescribed oath to the injured husband:
now one man's grief became a nation's cause.

Shamefully, though he gave way to a mother's prayer,
Achilles hid his manhood in women's clothes.
What's this, Aeacides? Spinning's not your work:
your search for fame's through Pallas's other arts.
Why the basket? Your arm's meant to bear a shield:
why does the hand that will slay Hector hold the yarn?
Throw away the spindle wound laboriously with thread!
The spear from Pelion's to be brandished by this hand.
By chance a royal virgin shared the room:
through her rape she learned he was a man.
That she was truly won by force, we must think:
but she still wanted to be won by force.
She often cried: 'Stop!' afterwards, when Achilles hurried on:
now he'd taken up stronger weapons than the distaff.
Where's that force now? Why do you restrain
the perpetrator of your rape, Deidamia?
No doubt as there's a sort of shame in having started first,
so it's pleasant to have what someone else has started.
Ah! The youth has too much faith in his own beauty,
if he waits until she asks him first.
The man must approach first: speak the words of entreaty:
she courteously receives his flattering prayers.
To win her, ask her: she only wants to be asked:
give her the cause and the beginning of your longing.
Jupiter went as a suppliant to the heroines of old:
no woman ever seduced great Jupiter.
If you find she disdains the advent of your prayerful sighs,
leave off what you've begun, retrace your steps.
What shuns them, they desire the more: they hate what's there:
remove her loathing by pursuing less.
The hoped-for love should not always be declared:
introduce desire hidden in the name of friendship.
I've seen the most severe of women fooled this way:
he who once was a worshipper, became a lover.

BOOK I PART XVIII: BE PALE: BE WARY OF YOUR FRIENDS



pale colour would shame a sailor on the ocean wave,
who's blackened by the rays of the sun:
and shame the farmer who turns the soil with curved plough
and heavy harrow, underneath the heavens.

And you who seek the athlete's crown, you too
would be ashamed if all your body was white.

Let all lovers be pale: it's the colour fitting for love:
it suits, though fools have thought it of no value.

Orion wandered pale, for Side, in the woods,
Daphnis was pale for his reluctant Naiad.

Let your leanness show your heart: don't think it a shame
to slip a cape over your shining hair:

Let youthful limbs be worn away by sleepless nights
and care, and the grief of a great love.

To gain your desire, be miserable,
and those who see you can say 'You're in love.'

Should I lament, warn you perhaps that right and wrong
are confused by all? Friendship and loyalty empty words.

Ah me, it's not safe to praise your love to a friend:
if he believes your praise, he'll steal her himself.

But Patroclus never disgraced Achilles's bed:
and how modest Phaedra was with Pirithous.

Pylades loved Hermione, just as Phoebus Pallas,
or as Castor was twin to you Pollux.

Who hopes for that, hopes for apple-bearing tamarisks,
and looks for honey in the middle of the stream.

All delight in what's shameful: care only for their pleasures,
and are pleased too when trouble comes to others.

Ah it's a crime! It's not their rivals that lovers fear:
flee those you think are friends, and you'll be safe.

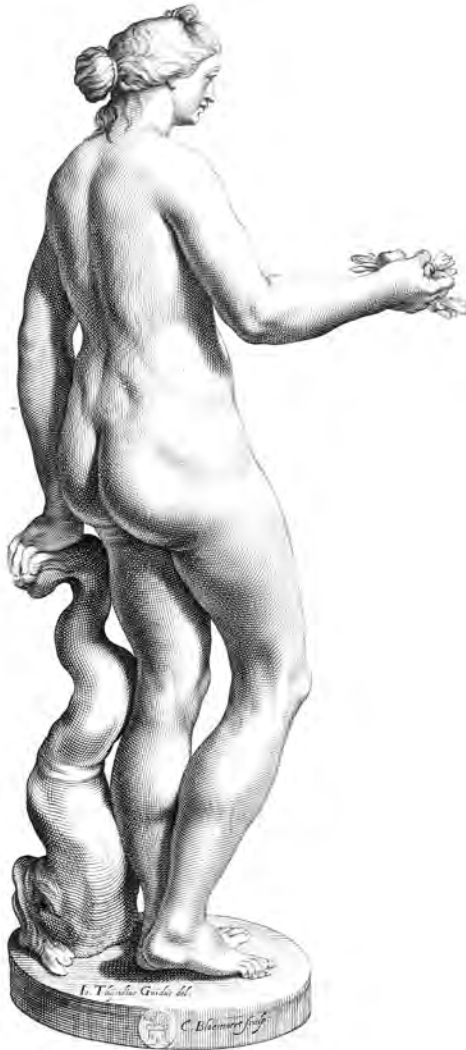
Beware of brothers, relatives, and dear friends:
that crowd offers you true cause for fear.

BOOK I PART XIX: BE FLEXIBLE



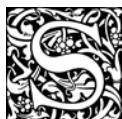
've done, but there's diversity in women's
hearts: a thousand minds require a thousand methods.
One soil doesn't bear all crops: vines here
are good, olives there: this teems with healthy wheat.
There are as many manners of heart as kinds of face:
a wise man will adapt to many forms,
and like Proteus now, melt into the smooth waters,
now be a tree, now a lion, now a bristling boar.
These fish are speared, those caught on a hook:
others trawled in billowing nets with straining ropes.
One mode won't suit you for every age-group:
the older hinds spot a trap from further off.
If the simple find you cunning, and the modest crude,
the poor things will straightaway mistrust themselves.
So it happens that she who fears to trust an honest man,
falls to the embrace of some low rascal.
Part of my task is left: part of the labour's done.
Moor my boat here to the anchor-chains.

Book II



Venus with fruit in her hands
Cornelis Bloemaert (II) (Dutch, 1603 - 1692)
The Rijksmuseum

BOOK II PART I: HIS TASK



ing out the Paeon: sing out the Paeon twice!
The prize I searched for falls into my net.
Delighted lovers grant my songs the palm,
I'm preferred to Hesiod and old Homer.
So Paris the stranger sailed, from hostile Amyclae's shore,
under white sheets, with his ravished bride:
such was Pelops who brought you home Hippodamia,
borne on the foreign wheels of his conquering car.
What's your hurry, young man? Your boat's mid ocean,
and the harbour I search for is far away.
It's not enough the girl's come to you, through me, the poet:
she's captured by my art, she's to be kept by my art too.
There's no less virtue in keeping than in finding.
There's chance in the latter: the first's a work of art.
Now aid me, your follower, Venus, and the Boy,
and Erato, Muse, now you have love's name too.
Great my task as I try to tell what arts can make Love stay:
that boy who wanders so, through the vast world.
And he's flighty, and has two wings on which he vanishes:
it's a tricky job to pin him down.
Minos blocked every road of flight for his guest:
but Daedalus devised a bold winged path.
When he'd imprisoned the offspring of its mother's sin,
the man half-bull, the bull who was half-man,
he said: 'Minos, the Just, let my exile end:
let my native land receive my ashes.
And since I couldn't live in my own country,
driven from it by cruel fate, still let me die there.
Give my boy freedom, if the father's service was worthless:
or if power will not spare the child, let it spare the old.'

He spoke the words, but they, and so many others, were in vain:
his freedom was still denied him by the king.
When he realised this, he said: 'Now, now, O Daedalus,
you have an object for your skilfulness.
Minos rules the earth and the waves:
neither land or sea is open for my flight.
The sky road still remains: we'll try the heavens.
Jupiter, on high, favour my plan:
I don't aspire to touch the starry spheres:
there is no way to flee the king but this.
I'd swim the Stygian waves, if Styx offered me a path:
through my nature new laws are mine.'
Trouble often sharpens the wits: who would think
any man could travel by the air-roads?
He lays out oar-like wings with lines of feathers,
and ties the fragile work with fastenings of string,
and glues the ends with beeswax melted in the flames,
and now the work of this new art's complete.
Laughing, his son handled the wax and feathers
not knowing they were being readied for his own shoulders.
His father said of them: 'This is the art that will take us home,
by this creation we'll escape from Minos.
Minos bars all other ways but cannot close the skies:
as is fitting, my invention cleaves the air.
But don't gaze at the Bear, that Arcadian girl,
or Bootes's companion, Orion with his sword:
Fly behind me with the wings I give you: I'll go in front:
your job's to follow: you'll be safe where I lead.
For if we go near the sun through the airy aether,
the wax will not endure the heat:
if our humble wings glide close to ocean,
the breaking salt waves will drench our feathers.
Fly between the two: and fear the breeze as well,
spread your wings and follow, as the winds allow.'
As he warns, he fits the wings to his child, shows

how they move, as a bird teaches her young nestlings.
Then he fastened the wings he'd fashioned to his own shoulders,
and poised his anxious body for the strange path.
Now, about to fly, he gave the small boy a kiss,
and the tears ran down the father's cheeks.
A small hill, no mountain, higher than the level plain:
there their two bodies were given to the luckless flight.
And Daedalus moved his wings, and watched his son's,
and all the time kept to his own course.
Now Icarus delights in the strange journey,
and, fear forgotten, he flies more swiftly, with daring art.
A man catching fish, with quivering rod, saw them,
and the task he'd started dropped from his hand.
Now Samos was to the left (Naxos was far behind
and Paros, and Delos beloved by Phoebus the god)
Lebinthos lay to the right, and shady-wooded Calymne,
and Astypalaea ringed by rich fishing grounds,
when the boy, too rash, with youth's carelessness,
soared higher, and left his father far behind.
The knots give way, and the wax melts near the sun,
his flailing arms can't clutch at thin air.
Fearful, from heaven's heights he gazes at the deep:
terrified, darkness, born of fear, clouds his eyes.
The wax dissolves: he thrashes with naked arms,
and flutters there with nothing to support him.
He falls, and falling cries: 'Father, O father, I'm lost!'
the salt-green sea closes over his open lips.
But now the unhappy father, his father, calls, 'Icarus!
Where are you Icarus, where under the sky?
Calling 'Icarus', he saw the feathers on the waves.
Earth holds his bones: the waters take his name.

BOOK II PART II: YOU NEED GIFTS OF MIND



Minos could not hold back those mortal wings:
I'm setting out to check the winged god himself.
He who has recourse to Thracian magic, fails,
to what the foal yields, torn from its new-born brow,
Medea's herbs can't keep love alive,
nor Marsian dirges mingled with magic chants.
If incantations only could enslave love, Ulysses
would have been tied to Circe, Jason to the Colchian.
It's no use giving girls pale drugs:
drugs hurt the mind, have power to cause madness.
Away with such evils: to be loved be lovable:
something face and form alone won't give you.
Though you're Nireus loved by Homer of old,
or sweet Hylas ravished by the Naiades' crime,
to keep your love, and not to find her leave you,
add gifts of mind to grace of body.
A sweet form is fragile, what's added to its years
lessen it, and time itself eats it away.
Violets and open lilies do not flower forever,
and thorns are left stiffening on the blown rose.
And white hair will come to find you, lovely lad,
soon wrinkles will come, furrowing your skin.
Then nourish mind, which lasts, and adds to beauty:
it alone will stay till the funeral pyre.
Cultivate your thoughts with the noble arts,
more than a little, and learn two languages.
Ulysses wasn't handsome, but he was eloquent,
and still racked the sea-goddesses with love.
How often Calypso mourned his haste,
and denied the waves were fit for oars!

She asked him again and again about the fall of Troy:
He grew used to retelling it often, differently.
They walked the beach: there, lovely Calypso too
demanded the gory tale of King Rhesus's fate.
He, with a rod (a rod perhaps he already had)
illustrated what she asked in the thick sand.
'This' he said, 'is Troy' (drawing the walls in the sand):
'This your Simois: imagine this is our camp.
This is the field,' (he drew the field), 'that was dyed
with Dolon's blood, while he spied on Achilles's horses.
here were the tents of Thracian Rhesus:
here am I riding back the captured horses at night.'
And he was drawing more, when suddenly a wave
washed away Troy, and Rhesus, and his camp.
Then the goddess said 'Do you see what you place your trust in
for your voyage, waves that have destroyed such mighty names?'
So listen, whoever you are, fear to rely on treacherous beauty
or own to something more than just the flesh.

BOOK II PART III: BE GENTLE AND GOOD TEMPERED



gentleness especially impresses minds favourably:
harshness creates hatred and fierce wars.
We hate the hawk that lives its life in battle,
and the wolf whose custom is to raid the timid flocks.
But the swallow, for its gentleness, is free from human snares,
and Chaonian doves have dovecotes to live in.
Away with disputes and the battle of bitter tongues:
sweet love must feed on gentle words.
Let married men and married women be checked by rebuffs,
and think in turn things always are against them:
that's proper for wives: quarrelling's the marriage dowry:
but a mistress should always hear the longed-for cooing.
No law orders you to come together in one bed:
in your rules it's love provides the entertainment.
Approach her with gentle flatteries and words to delight
her ear, so that your arrival makes her glad.
I don't come as a teacher of love for the rich:
he who can give has no need of my art:
He has genius who can say: 'Take this' when he pleases:
I submit: he delights more than my inventions.
I'm the poor man's poet, who was poor when I loved:
when I could give no gifts, I gave them words.
The poor must love warily: the poor fear to speak amiss,
and suffer much that the rich would not.
I remember mussing my lady's hair in anger:
how many days that anger cost me!
I don't think I tore her dress, I didn't feel it: but she
said so, and my reward was to replace it.
But you, if you're wise, avoid your teacher's faults,
and fear the harm that came from my offence.

The Love Poems

Make war with the Parthians, peace with a civilised friend,
and laughter, and whatever engenders love.

BOOK II PART IV: BE PATIENT AND COMPLY



f she's not charming or courteous enough, at your loving,
endure it and persist: she'll soon be kinder.
You can get a curved branch to bend on the tree by patience:
you'll break it, if you try out your full strength.
With patience you can cross the water: you'll not
conquer the river by sailing against the flow.
Patience tames tigers and Numidian lions:
the farmer in time bows the ox to the plough.
Who was fiercer than Arcadian Atalanta?
Wild as she was she still surrendered to male kindness.
Often Milanion wept among the trees
at his plight and at the girl's harsh acts:
often at her orders his shoulders carried the nets,
often he pierced wild boars with his deadly spear:
and he felt the pain of Hylaeus's tense bow:
but that of another bow was still more familiar.
I don't order you to climb in Maenalian woods,
holding a weapon, or carrying nets on your back:
I don't order you to bare your chest to flying darts:
the tender commands of my arts are safe.
Yield to opposition: by yielding you'll end as victor:
Only play the part she commands you to.
Condemn what she condemns: what she approves, approve:
say what she says: deny what she denies.
She laughs, you laugh: remember to cry, if she cries:
she'll set the rules according to your expression.
If she plays, tossing the ivory dice in her hand,
throw them wrong, and concede on your bad throw:
If you play knucklebones, no prize if you win,
make out that often the ruinous low Dogs fell to you.

And if it's draughts, the draughtsmen mercenaries,
let your champion be swept away by your glass foe.
Yourself, hold your girl's sunshade outspread,
yourself, make a place for her in the crowd.
Quickly bring up a footstool to her elegant couch,
and slip the sandal on or off her sweet foot.
Often, even though you're shivering yourself,
her hand must be warmed at your neglected breast.
Don't think it shameful (though it's shameful, you'll like it),
to hold the mirror for her in your noble hands.
When his stepmother, Juno, was tired of sending him monsters,
Hercules, it's said, who reached the heavens he'd shouldered,
held a basket, among the Lydian girls, and spun raw wool.
The hero of Tiryns complied with his girl's orders:
go now, and endure the misgivings he endured.
Ordered to appear in town, make sure you arrive
before time, and don't leave unless it's late.
She tells you to be elsewhere: drop everything, run,
don't let the crowd in the way stop you trying.
She's returning home from another party at night:
when she calls for her slave you come too.
She's in the country, says: 'come': Love hates a laggard:
if you've no wheels, travel the road on foot.
Don't let bad weather, or parching Dog-days, stall you,
or the roads whitened by falling snow.

BOOK II PART V: DON'T BE FAINT-HEARTED



Love is a kind of warfare. Slackers, dismiss!
There are no cowards guarding this standard.
Night and winter, long roads and cruel sorrows,
and every kind of labour are found on love's campaigns.
You'll often endure rain pouring from heavenly clouds,
and frozen, lie there on the naked earth.
They say that Phoebus grazed Admetus's cattle,
and found shelter in a humble hut.
Who can't suit what suited Phoebus? Lose your pride,
you who'd have love's sorrows tamed.
If you're denied a safe and level road,
and the door barred with a bolt against you,
then drop down head-first through the open roof:
a high window too offers a secret way.
She'll be glad, knowing the chase itself is risky for you:
that will be sure proof to the lady of your love.
You might often have been parted from your girl, Leander:
you swam across so she could know your heart.

BOOK II PART VI: WIN OVER THE SERVANTS



or is it shameful to you to cultivate her maids,
according to their grades, and the serving men.
Greet them by their names (it costs you nothing)
clasp humble hands with yours, in your ambition.
And even offer the servant, who asks, a little something
on Fortune's Day (it's little enough to pay):
and the maid, on that day when the hand of punishment fell
on the Gauls, they deluded by maids in mistress's clothes.
Trust me, make the people yours: especially the gatekeeper,
and whoever lies in front of her bedroom doors.

BOOK II PART VII: GIVE HER LITTLE TASTEFUL GIFTS



don't tell you to give your mistress expensive gifts:
give little but of that little, skilfully, give what's fitting.
When the field is full of riches, when the branches bend
with the weight, let the boy bring a gift in a rustic basket.
You can say it was sent from your country villa,
even though it was bought on the Via Sacra.
Send grapes, or those nuts Amaryllis loved,
chestnuts, but she doesn't love them now.
Why even thrushes are fine, and the gift of a dove,
to witness your remembrance of your mistress.
Shameful to send them hoping for the death of some childless
old man. Ah, perish those who make giving a crime!
Do I also teach that you send tender verses?
Ah me, poems are not honoured much.
Songs are praised, but its gifts they really want:
barbarians themselves are pleasing, so long as they're rich.
Truly now it *is* the Age of Gold: the greatest honours
come with gold: love's won by gold.
Even if you came, Homer, with the Muses as companions,
if you brought nothing with you, Homer, you'd be out.
Still there are cultured girls, the rarest set:
and another set who aren't, but would like to be.
Praise either in song: and they'll commend
the reader whatever his voice's sweetness:
So sing your midnight song to one and the other,
perhaps it will figure as a trifling gift.

BOOK II PART VIII: FAVOUR HER AND COMPLIMENT HER



hen what you're about to do, and think is useful,
always get your lover to ask you to do it.
You promised liberty to one of your slaves:
still let him seek the fact of it from your girl:
if you stay a punishment, forgo the use of cruel chains,
let her be thankful to you, for what you did:
the advantage is yours: the title 'giver' is your lover's:
you lose nothing, she plays the mistress's part.
But whoever you are, who want to keep your girl,
she must think that you're inspired by her beauty.
If she's dressed in Tyrian robes, praise Tyrian:
if she's in Coan silk, consider Coan fitting.
She's in gold-thread? She's more precious than gold:
She wears wool, approve the wool she's wearing.
She leaves off her tunic, cry: 'You set me on fire',
but request her anxiously to beware of chills.
She's parted her hair: praise the parting:
she waves her hair: be pleased with the waves.
Admire her limbs as she dances, her voice when she sings,
and when it finishes, grieve that it's finished in words.
It's fine if you tell her what delights, and what gives joy
about her lovemaking, her skill in bed.
Though she's more violent than fierce Medusa,
she'll be 'kind and gentle' to her lover.
But make sure of this: don't let your expression
give your speech the lie, lest you seem a deceiver with words.
Art works when its hidden: discovery brings shame,
and time destroys faith in everything of merit.

BOOK II PART IX: COMFORT HER IN SICKNESS



Often in autumn, when the season's loveliest,
and the ripe grape's dyed with purple juice,
when now we're frozen solid, now drenched with heat,
the body's listless in the changing air.

Your girl's well in fact: but if she's lying sick,
feels ill because of the unhealthy weather,
then let love and devotion be obvious to your girl,
then sow what you'll reap later with full sickle.

Don't be put off by the fretfulness of the patient,
let yours be the hand that does what she allows.

And be seen weeping, and don't shrink from kisses,
let her parched mouth drink from your tears.

Pray a lot, but all aloud: and, as often as she lets you,
tell her happy dreams that you remembered.

And let the old woman come who cleanses room and bed,
bringing sulphur and eggs in her trembling hands.

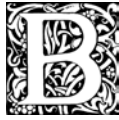
The signs of a welcome devotion are in all this:

by these means into wills many have made their way.

But don't let dislike for your attentions rise from illness,
only be charming, in your earnestness:

don't prohibit food, or hand her cups of bitter stuff:
let your rival mix all that for her.

BOOK II PART X: LET HER MISS YOU: BUT NOT FOR LONG



ut the winds that filled your sails and blew offshore,
are no use when you're in the open sea.
While young love's wandering, it gathers strength by use:
if you nourish it well, it will be strong in time.
The bull you fear's the calf you used to stroke:
the tree you lie beneath was a sapling:
the river's tiny when born, but gathers riches in its flow,
and collects the many waters that come to it.
Make her accustomed to you: nothing's greater than habit:
while you're captivating her, avoid no boredom.
Let her always be seeing you: always giving you ear:
show your face, at night and in the day.
When you've more confidence that you'll be missed,
when your absence far away will cause her worry,
give her a rest: the fields when rested repay the loan,
and parched earth drinks the heavenly rain.
Phyllis burnt less for Demophoon in his presence:
she blazed more fiercely when he sailed away.
Penelope was tormented by the loss of cunning Ulysses:
you, Laodamia, by absent Protesilaus.
But brief delays are best: fondness fades with time,
love vanishes with absence, and new love appears.
When Menelaus left, Helen did not lie alone,
Paris, the guest, at night, was taken to her warm breast.
What craziness was that, Menelaus? You left
wife and guest alone under the same roof.
Madman, would you trust timid doves to a hawk?
Would you trust the full fold to a mountain wolf?
Helen did not sin: her lover committed none:
what you, what anyone would do, he did.

You forced adultery by giving time and place:
What did the girl employ but your counsel?
What should she do? Her man away, a cultivated guest,
and she afraid to sleep alone in an empty bed.
Let Atrides appear: I acquit Helen of crime:
she took advantage of her husband's courtesy.

BOOK II PART XI: HAVE OTHER FRIENDS: BUT BE CAREFUL



ut the red-haired boar is not so fierce in mid-anger.
when he turns and threatens the rabid pack,
or the lioness giving suck to un-weaned cubs,
or the tiny viper crushed by a careless foot,
as a woman when a rival's caught in her lover's bed:
she blazes, her face the colour of her heart.
She storms with fire and flame, all restraint forgot,
as if struck, as they say, by the horns of the Boeotian god.
Wronged by her husband, her marriage violated,
savage Medea avenged herself through her children.
Another fatal mother was that swallow, you see there:
look, her breast carries the stain of blood.
Well-founded and firm loves have been dissolved so:
these are crimes to make cautious men afraid.
Not that my censure condemns you to only one girl:
the gods forbid! A wife could hardly expect that.
Indulge, but secretly veil your sins, with restraint:
it's no glory to you to be seeking out wrongdoing.
Don't give gifts another girl could spot,
or have set times for your assignments.
And lest a girl catch you out in your favourite haunts
don't meet all of them in one place.
And always look closely at your wax tablets, whenever you write:
lest much more is read there than you sent.
Wounded, Venus takes up just arms, and hurls her dart,
and makes you lament, as she is lamenting.
While Agamemnon was satisfied with one woman, Clytemnestra
was chaste: evil was done through the man's fault.
She had heard how Chryses, with sacred head-bands,
and laurel in his hand, failed to win back his daughter:

she had heard of your sorrows, captive Briseis,
and how scandalous delays had prolonged the war.
She heard all this: She saw Cassandra for herself:
the victor the shameful prize of his own prize.
Then she took Thyestes to her heart and bed,
and wrongfully avenged the Atrides's crime.
Even if the acts, you've well hidden, become known,
though they're known, still always deny them.
Don't be subdued, or more fond than usual:
those are the signs of many guilty thoughts.
But don't forgo sex: all peace is in that one thing.
The act it is that disproves a prior union.

BOOK II PART XII: APHRODISIACS?



here are those who prescribe eating a dish of savory,
a noxious herb, my judgement is it's poisonous:
or mix pepper with the seeds of stinging nettles,
or crush yellow camomile in well-aged wine:
But the goddess who holds high Eryx, beneath the shaded hill,
doesn't force you to suffer like this for her delights.
White onions brought from Megara, Alcathous's city,
and rocket, *herba salax*, the kind that comes from gardens,
eat those, and eggs, eat honey from Hymettus,
and seeds from the cones of sharp-neededled pines.

BOOK II PART XIII: STIR HER JEALOUSY



ise Erato, why turn to magic arts?
My chariot's scraping the inside post.
You who just hid your crimes on my advice,
change course, and on my advice reveal your secrets.
I'm not guilty of fickleness: the curved prow
is not always blown onwards by the same wind.
Now we run to a Thracian northerly, an easterly now,
sometimes a west wind fills our sails, sometimes a south.
Look how the charioteer now slacks the reins,
then skilfully restrains the galloping team.
There are those who don't like being served with shy kindness:
while love fades if there's no rival around.
Generally heads are swollen with success,
it's not easy to be content with the good times.
As a fire with little power, gradually consumed,
hides itself, ashes whitening on its surface,
but the doused flames will flare with a pinch of sulphur,
and the brightness, that was there before, returns:
so when hearts are numbed by slack dullness and security,
love is aroused by some sharp stimulus.
Make her fearful for you: warm her tepid mind:
let her grow pale at evidence of your guilt:
O four times happy, times impossible to count,
is he for whom his wounded girl grieves.
That, when his sins reach her unwilling ears, she's lost,
and voice and colour flee the unhappy girl.
Let me be him, whose hair the angry woman tears:
let me be him, whose tender cheeks nails seek,
him whom she sees with tears, turns on him tortured eyes,
whom though she can't live without, she wishes she could.

The Love Poems

If you ask how long you should let her lament her hurt,
keep it brief, lest a long delay kindles anger's force:
Throw your arms straightaway around her snow-white neck,
and let the weeping girl fall on your chest.
Kiss her who weeps, make sweet love to her who weeps,
there'll be peace: this is the one way anger's dissolved.
When she's truly raging, when she seems fixed on war,
then sue for peace in bed, she'll be gentle.
There Harmony dwells with grounded arms:
there, trust me, is the place where grace is born.
Doves that once fought, now bill and coo,
whose murmur is of caressing words.
At first all things were confused mass without form,
heaven and earth and sea were created one:
soon sky was set above land, earth circled by water,
and random chaos split into its parts:
Forests allowed the creatures a home: air the birds:
fish took shelter in the running streams.
Then the human race wandered the empty wilds,
a thing of naked strength and brutish body:
woods were its home, grass its food, leaves its bed:
and for a long time no man knew another.
They say sweet delights softened savage spirits:
when man and woman rested in one place:
they had no teacher to show them what to do:
Venus did her work without sweet art.
Birds have mates to love: in the midst of waters
a fish will find another to share her joy:
hind follows stag, snake will bind with snake,
bitch clings entwined with some adulterous dog:
ewes delight in being covered: bulls delight in heifers, too,
the snub-nosed she-goat supports her rank mate:
Mares driven to frenzy follow their stallion,
through distant places beyond the branching river.
So act, and offer strong medicine to your angry one:

only this will bring peace to her unhappiness:
this medicine beats Machaon's drugs:
this will reinstate you when you've sinned.

BOOK II PART XIV: BE WISE AND SUFFER



While I was writing this, Apollo suddenly appeared
plucking the strings of his lyre with his thumb.
Laurel was in his hand, laurel wreathing his hair:
he appears to poets looking like that.
'Professor of Wanton Love,' he said to me,
'go lead your disciples to my temple,
it's where the famous words, celebrated throughout the world,
command everyone to "Know Yourself".
He alone will be wise, who's well-known to himself,
and carries out each work that suits his powers.
Whom nature's given beauty, let it be seen by her:
whose skin is lustrous, lie there often with bare shoulders:
who delights by talking, avoid taciturn silence:
who sings with art, then sing: who drinks with art, then drink.
but the eloquent should never declaim mid-speech
nor the crazy poet ever read his poems!'
So Phoebus warned: take note of Phoebus's warning:
truth's surely on the sacred lips of that god.
To bring us back to earth: who loves wisely wins,
and by my skill will bring off what he seeks.
It's not often the furrow repays the loan with interest,
not often the winds aid the boat in trouble:
What delights a lover is little, what pains him more:
many sufferings declare themselves to his heart.
As many as hares on Athos, the bees that graze on Hybla,
as many as the olives the grey-green branches carry,
or the sea-shells on the shore, are the pains of love:
the thorns we suffer from are drenched in gall.
They'll say she's gone out: very likely she's to be seen inside:
think that she has gone out, and your vision lied.

The door will be shut the night she promised you:
endure it, lay your body on the dusty ground.
And perhaps the lying maid with scornful face,
will say: 'Why's he hanging round our door?'
Still, a suppliant, coax the doorposts, and your harsh mistress,
and hang the roses, from your head, outside.
Come if she wishes: when she shuns you, go:
it's unbecoming to a noble man to bore her.
Why let your lover say: 'There's no escaping him'?
Her feelings won't always be against you.
Don't think it a disgrace to suffer curses or blows
from the girl, or plant kisses on her tender feet.

BOOK II PART XV: RESPECT HER FREEDOM



Why waste time on trifles? Greater themes arise:
I sing great things: pay attention, people.
We labour hard, but virtue's nothing if not hard:
hard labour's what my art demands.
Be patient with your rival, victory rests with you:
you'll be victor on Great Jupiter's hill.
Believe me, it's no man says this, but Chaonia's sacred oaks:
my art contains nothing more profound than this.
If she flirts, endure it: if she writes, don't touch the wax:
let her come from where she wishes: and go where she pleases, too.
This husbands allow their lawfully married wives,
when you come, gentle sleep, to play your part, as well.
I'm not perfect in this art, I confess:
What can I do? I'm less than my own instructions.
What, shall I let some man signal openly to my girl,
and bear it, and not show anger if I wish?
I remember her husband kissed her: I grieved
at the kiss he gave: my love's full of barbarities.
Not a few times this fault has hurt me: he's wiser
who's reconciled to other mens' coming.
But it was better to know nothing: let intrigues
be hidden, lest her shameless mouth revealed untruths.
How much better, O young men, to avoid surprising them:
let girls sin, and think, while sinning, that they've fooled you.
Love grows with being caught: who are twinned by fortune
persist to the end in the cause that ruined them.
The story's well known through all the heavens,
of Mars and Venus caught by Vulcan's craft.
Mars stirred by mad desire for Venus
was turned from grim warrior to lover.
And Venus was not coy or resistant to Mar's pleas

(for there's no more loving goddess than her).
Ah how often the wanton laughed at her husband's limp,
they say, or his hands hardened by his fiery art.
She'd openly imitate Vulcan then, to Mars: it became her:
great beauty was mingled there with charm.
But they used to hide their adultery at first.
It was a sin, filled with the blush of shame.
The Sun's tale (who can evade the Sun?)
made known to Vulcan what his spouse had done.
What a poor example, Sun, you set! Seek a gift from her,
and you, if you're quiet, can have what she can give.
Vulcan set a hidden net, over and round the bed:
it's a piece of work that deceives the eye.
Pretends he's off to Lemnos: the lovers come
to their assignation: and both lie naked in the net.
He calls the gods: the captives are displayed:
Venus they think can scarcely restrain her tears.
They can't hide their faces, are even unable
to cover their sexes with their hands.
Then someone laughed and said: 'Let me have the chains,
Mars, if they're an embarrassment to you!'
Their captive bodies are, with difficulty, freed, at your plea,
Neptune: Venus runs to Paphos: Mars heads for Thrace.
This you achieved, Vulcan: what they hid before,
now all shame is gone, they indulge in freely:
Now maddened you often confess the thing was foolish,
and suffer regret for your cunning.
It's forbidden you: Venus once tricked forbids
traps to be set, like the one that she endured.
Lay out no snares for rivals: don't intercept
those secret hand-written messages.
Let husbands trap them, if they think they indeed need trapping,
husbands to whom the ceremony of fire and water gives the right.
Look, I swear again: there's nothing here except what's played
within the law: no virtuous woman's caught up in my jests.

BOOK II PART XVI: KEEP IT SECRET



Who'd dare reveal to the impious the secret rites of Ceres,
or uncover the high mysteries of Samothrace?
There's little virtue in keeping silent:
but speaking of what's kept secret's a heinous crime.
O it's good if that babbler Tantalus, clutching at fruit in vain,
thirsts in the very middle of the waters!
Venus, above all, orders you to be silent about her rites:
I warn you, let no idle chatterers come near her.
Though the mysteries of Venus are not buried in a box,
nor echo in the wide air to the clash of cymbals,
but are busily enjoyed so, by us all,
they still wish to be concealed among us.
Venus, herself, when she takes off her clothes,
covers her sex with the half-turned palm of her left hand.
Beasts couple indiscriminately in full view: from this sight
girls of course turn aside their faces, too.
Bedrooms and locked doors suit our intrigues,
and shameful things are hidden under the sheets:
and if not darkness, we seek some veiling shadow,
and something less exposed than the light of day.
Even back then, when roofs kept out neither rain nor sun,
and the oak-tree provided food and shelter,
pleasure was had in woods and caves, not under the heavens:
such care the native peoples had for their modesty.
but now we advertise our nocturnal acts,
and nothing's bought if it can't be boasted of!
No doubt you'll look out every girl, whatever,
to say to whom you please: 'She too was mine,'
and there'll be no lack of those you can point out,
so for each that's mentioned there's a shameful tale?

Little to cry at: some invent, what they'd deny if true,
and claim there isn't one they haven't slept with.
If not their bodies, they touch what they can, their names,
and the reputation's gone, though the body's chaste.
Odious watchman, go close the girl's door, now,
too late, locked with a hundred heavy bars!
What's safe, when adulterers give out her name,
and want what never happened to be believed?
I'm wary even of professing to genuine passions,
and, trust me, my secret affairs are wholly hidden.

BOOK II PART XVII: DON'T MENTION HER FAULTS



Above all beware of reproaching girls for their faults,
it's useful to ignore so many things.
Andromeda's dark complexion was not criticised
by Perseus, who was borne aloft by wings on his feet.
Andromache by all was rightly thought too tall:
Hector was the only one who spoke of her as small.
Grow accustomed to what's called bad, you'll call it good:
Time heals much: new love feels everything.
While a new-grafted twig's growing in the green bark,
struck by the lightest breeze, it may fall:
Later, hardened by time, it resists the winds,
and the strong tree will bear adopted wealth.
Time itself erases all faults from the flesh,
and what was a flaw, ceases to make you pause.
A new ox-hide makes nostrils recoil:
tamed by familiarity, the odour fades.
An evil may be sweetened by its name: let her be 'dark'
whose pigment's blacker than Illyrian pitch:
if she squints, she's like Venus: if she's grey, Minerva:
let her be 'slender', who's truly emaciated:
call her 'trim', who's tiny, 'full-bodied' if she's gross,
and hide the fault behind the nearest virtue.

BOOK II PART XVIII: DON'T ASK ABOUT HER AGE



Don't ask how old she is, or who was Consul when
she was born, that's strictly the Censor's duty:
Especially if she's past bloom, and the good times gone,
and now she plucks the odd grey hair.

There's value, O youth, in this or a greater age:
this will bear seed, this is a field to sow.

Besides, they've more knowledge of the thing,
and have that practice that alone makes the artist:

With elegance they repair the marks of time,
and take good care that they don't appear old.

As you wish, they'll perform in a thousand positions:
no painting's ever contrived to show more ways.

They don't have to be aroused to pleasure:
man and woman equally deliver what delights.

I hate sex that doesn't provide release for both:
that's why the touch of boys is less desirable.

I hate a girl who gives because she has to,
and, arid herself, thinks only of her spinning.

Pleasure's no joy to me that's given out of duty:
let no girl be dutiful to me.

I like to hear a voice confessing to her rapture,
which begs me to hold back, and keep on going.

I gaze at the dazed eyes of my frantic mistress:
she's exhausted, and won't let herself be touched for ages.

Nature doesn't give those joys to raw youths,
that often come so easily beyond thirty-five.

The hasty drink the new and unfermented: pour a vintage wine
for me, matured in the cask, from an ancient consulship.

Not till it's grown can the plane tree bear the sun,
and naked feet destroy a new-laid lawn.

The Love Poems

I suppose you'd prefer Hermione to Helen,
and was Medusa any better than *her* mother?
Then, he who wants to come to his love late,
earns a valuable prize, if he'll only wait.

BOOK II PART XIX: DON'T RUSH




ee, the knowing bed receives two lovers:
halt, Muse, at the closed doors of the room.
Flowing words will be said, by themselves, without you:
and that left hand won't lie idle on the bed.
Fingers will find what will arouse those parts,
where love's dart is dipped in secrecy.
Hector did it once with vigour, for Andromache,
and wasn't only useful in the wars.
And great Achilles did it for his captive maid,
when he lay in his sweet bed, weary from the fight.
You let yourself be touched by hands, Briseis,
that were still dyed with Trojan blood.
And was that what overjoyed you, lascivious girl,
those conquering fingers approaching your body?
Trust me, love's pleasure's not to be hurried,
but to be felt enticingly with lingering delays.
When you've reached the place, where a girl loves to be touched,
don't let modesty prevent you touching her.
You'll see her eyes flickering with tremulous brightness,
as sunlight often flashes from running water.
Moans and loving murmurs will arise,
and sweet sighs, and playful and fitting words.
But don't desert your mistress by cramming on more sail,
or let her overtake you in your race:
hasten to the goal together: that's the fullness of pleasure,
when man and woman lie there equally spent.
This is the pace you should indulge in, when you're given
time for leisure, and fear does not urge on the secret work.
When delay's not safe, lean usefully on the oar,
and plunge your spur into the galloping horse.

The Love Poems

While strength and years allow, sustain the work:
bent age comes soon enough on silent feet.
Plough the earth with the blade, the sea with oars,
take a cruel weapon in your warring hands,
or spend your body, and strength, and time, on girls:
this is warlike service too, this too earns plenty.

BOOK II PART XX: THE TASK'S COMPLETE...BUT NOW...

he end of the work's at hand: grateful youth grant me the palm,
and set the wreath of myrtle on my perfumed hair.
As Podalirius with his art of medicine, among the Greeks,
was great, Achilles with his right hand, Nestor his wisdom,
Calchas great as a prophet, Ajax in arms,
Automedon as a charioteer, so am I in love.
Celebrate me as a poet, men, speak my praises,
let my name be sung throughout the world.
I've given you weapons: Vulcan gave Achilles his:
excel with the gifts you're given, as he excelled.
But whoever overcomes an Amazon with my sword,
write on the spoils 'Ovid was my master.'
Behold, you tender girls ask for rules for yourselves:
well yours then will be the next task for my pen!

Book III



Venus

Cornelis Bloemaert (II) (Dutch, 1603 - 1692)

The Rijksmuseum

BOOK III PART I: IT'S TIME TO TEACH YOU GIRLS




I've given the Greeks arms, against Amazons: arms remain,
to give to you Penthesilea, and your Amazon troop.
Go equal to the fight: let them win, those who are favoured
by Venus, and her Boy, who flies through all the world.
It's not fair for armed men to battle with naked girls:
that would be shameful, men, even if you win.
Someone will say: 'Why add venom to the snake,
and betray the sheepfold to the rabid she-wolf?'
Beware of loading the crime of the many onto the few:
let the merits of each separate girl be seen.
Though Menelaus has Helen, and Agamemnon
has Clytemnestra, her sister, to charge with crime,
though Amphiaraus, and his horses too, came living to the Styx,
through the wickedness of Eriphyle,
Penelope was faithful to her husband for all ten years
of his waging war, and his ten years wandering.
Think of Protesilaus, and Laodameia who they say
followed her marriage partner, died before her time.
Alcestis, his wife, redeemed Admetus's life with her own:
the wife, for the man, was borne to the husband's funeral.
'Capaneus, receive me! Let us mingle our ashes,'
Evadne cried, and leapt into the flames.
Virtue herself is named and worshipped as a woman too:
it's no wonder that she delights her followers.
Yet their aims are not required for my art,
smaller sails are suited to my boat,
Only playful passions will be learnt from me:
I'll teach girls the ways of being loved.
Women don't brandish flames or cruel bows:
I rarely see men harmed by their weapons.

Men often cheat: it's seldom tender girls,
and, if you check, they're rarely accused of fraud.
Falsely, Jason left Medea, already a mother:
he took another bride to himself.
As far as you knew, Theseus, the sea birds fed on Ariadne,
left all by herself on an unknown island!
Ask why one road's called Nine-Times and hear
how the woods, weeping, shed their leaves for Phyllis.
Though he might be famed for piety, Aeneas, your guest,
supplied the sword, Dido, and the reason for your death.
What destroyed you all, I ask? Not knowing how to love:
your art was lacking: love lasts long through art.
You still might lack it now: but, before my eyes,
stood Venus herself, and ordered me to teach you.
She said to me. then: 'What have the poor girls done,
an unarmed crowd betrayed to well-armed men?
Two books of *their* tricks have been composed:
let this lot too be instructed by your warnings.
Stesichorus who spoke against Helen's un-chastity,
soon sang her praises in a happier key.
If I know you well (don't harm the cultured girls now!)
this favour will always be asked of you while you live.'
She spoke, and she gave me a leaf, and a few myrtle
berries (since her hair was crowned with myrtle):
I felt received power too: purer air
glowed, and a whole weight lifted from my spirit.
While wit works, seek your orders here girls,
those that modesty, principles and your rules allow.
Be mindful first that old age will come to you:
so don't be timid and waste any of your time.
Have fun while it's allowed, while your years are in their prime:
the years go by like flowing waters:
The wave that's past can't be recalled again,
the hour that's past never can return.
Life's to be used: life slips by on swift feet,

what was good at first, nothing as good will follow.
Those stalks that wither I saw as violets:
from that thorn-bush to me a dear garland was given.
There'll be a time when you, who now shut out your lover,
will lie alone, and aged, in the cold of night,
nor find your entrance damaged by some nocturnal quarrel,
nor your threshold sprinkled with roses at dawn.
How quickly (ah me!) the sagging flesh wrinkles,
and the colour, there, is lost from the bright cheek.
And hairs that you'll swear were grey from your girlhood
will spring up all over your head overnight.
Snakes shed their old age with their fragile skin,
antlers that are cast make the stag seem young:
un-aided our beauties flee: pluck the flower,
which, if not plucked, will of itself, shamefully, fall.
Add that the time of youth is shortened by childbirth:
the field's exhausted by continual harvest.
Endymion causes you no blushes, on Latmos, Moon,
nor is Cephalus the rosy goddess of Dawn's shameful prize.
Though Adonis was given to Venus, whom she mourns to this day,
where did she get Aeneas, and Harmonia, from?
O mortal girls go to the goddesses for your examples,
and don't deny your delights to loving men.
Even if you're deceived, what do you lose? It's all intact:
though a thousand use it, nothing's destroyed that way.
Iron crumbles, stone's worn away with use:
that part's sufficient, and escapes all fear of harm.
Who objects to taking light from a light nearby?
Who hoards the vast waters of the hollow deep?
So why should any woman say: 'Not now'? Tell me,
why waste the water if you're not going to use it?
Nor does my voice say sell it, just don't be afraid
of casual loss: your gifts are freed from loss.

BOOK III PART II: TAKE CARE WITH HOW YOU LOOK

ut I'm blown about by greater gusts of wind,
while we're in harbour, may you ride the gentle breeze.
I'll start with how you look: good wine comes from vines
that are looked after, tall crops stand in cultivated soil.
Beauty's a gift of the gods: how many can boast it?
The larger number among you lack such gifts.
Taking pains brings beauty: beauty neglected dies,
even though it's like that of Venus, the Idalian goddess.
If girls of old didn't cultivate their bodies in that way,
well they had no cultivated men in those days:
if Andromache was dressed in healthy clothes,
what wonder? Her husband was a rough soldier?
Do you suppose Ajax's wife would come to him all smart,
when his outer layer was seven hides of an ox?
There was crude simplicity before: now Rome is golden,
and owns the vast wealth of the conquered world.
Look what the Capitol is now, and what it was:
you'd say it belonged to a different Jove.
The Senate-House, now worthy of such debates,
was made of wattle when Tatius held the kingship.
Where the Palatine now gleams with Apollo and our leaders,
what was that but pasture for ploughmen's oxen?
Others may delight in ancient times: I congratulate myself
on having been born just now: this age suits my nature.
Not because stubborn gold's mined now from the earth,
or choice shells come to us from farthest shores:
nor because mountains shrink as marble's quarried,
or because blue waters retreat from the piers:
but because civilisation's here, and no crudity remains,
in our age, that survives from our ancient ancestors.

The Love Poems

You too shouldn't weight your ears with costly stones,
that dusky India gathers in its green waters,
nor show yourself in stiff clothes sewn with gold,
wealth which you court us with, often makes us flee.

BOOK III PART III: TASTE AND ELEGANCE IN HAIR AND DRESS



e're captivated by elegance: don't ignore your hair:
beauty's granted or denied by a hand's touch.
There isn't only one style: choose what suits each one,
and consult your mirror in advance.

An oval-shaped head suggests a plain parting:
that's how Laodamia arranged her hair.

A round face asks for a small knot on the top,
leaving the forehead free, showing the ears.

One girl should throw her hair over both shoulders:
like Phoebus when he takes up the lyre to sing.

Another tied up behind, in Diana's usual style,
when, skirts tucked up, she seeks the frightened quarry.

Blown tresses suit this girl, loosely scattered:
that one's encircled by tight-bound hair.

This one delights in being adorned by tortoiseshell from Cyllene:
that one presents a likeness to the curves of a wave.

But you'll no more number the acorns on oak branches,
or bees on Hybla, wild beasts on Alpine mountains,
than I can possibly count so many fashions:
every new day adds another new style.

And tangled hair suits many girls: often you'd think
it's been hanging loose since yesterday: it's just combed.

Art imitates chance: when Hercules, in captured Oechalia,
saw Iole like that, he said: 'I love that girl.'

So you Bacchus, lifted forsaken Ariadne,
into your chariot, while the Satyrs gave their cries.

O how kind nature is to your beauty,
how many ways you have to repair the damage!

We're sadly exposed, and our hair, snatched at by time,
falls like the leaves stripped by the north wind.

A woman dyes the grey with German herbs,
and seeks a better colour by their art:
a woman shows herself in dense bought curls,
instead of her own, pays cash for another's.
No blushes shown: you can see them coming, openly,
before the eyes of Hercules and the Virgin Muses Choir.
What to say about dress? Don't ask for brocade,
or wools dyed purple with Tyrian murex.
With so many cheaper colours having appeared,
it's crazy to bear your fortune on your back!
See, the sky's colour, when the sky's without a cloud,
no warm south-westerly threatening heavy rain.
See, what to you, you'll say, looks similar to that fleece,
on which Phrixus and Helle once escaped fierce Ino:
this resembles the waves, and also takes its name from the waves:
I might have thought the sea-nymphs clothed with this veil.
That's like saffron-flowers: dressed in saffron robes,
the dew-wet goddess yokes her shining horses:
this, Paphian myrtle: this, purple amethyst,
dawn roses, and the Thracian crane's grey.
Your chestnuts are not lacking, Amaryllis, and almonds:
and wax gives its name to various wools.
As many as the flowers the new world, in warm spring, bears
when vine-buds wake, and dark winter vanishes,
as many or more dyes the wool drinks: choose, decisively:
since all are not suitable for everyone.
dark-grey suits snow-white skin: dark-grey suited Briseis:
when she was carried off, then she also wore dark-grey.
White suits the dark: you looked pleasing, Andromeda, in white:
so dressed, the island of Seriphos was ruled by you.

BOOK III PART IV: MAKE-UP, BUT IN PRIVATE



How near I was to warning you, no rankness of the wild goat
under your armpits, no legs bristling with harsh hair!
But I'm not teaching girls from the Caucasian hills,
or those who drink your waters, Mysian Caicus.
So why remind you not to let your teeth get blackened,
by being lazy, and to wash your face each morning in water?
You know how to acquire whiteness with a layer of powder:
she who doesn't blush by blood, indeed, blushes by art.
You make good the naked edges of your eyebrows,
and hide your natural cheeks with little patches.
It's no shame to highlight your eyes with thinned ashes,
or saffron grown by your banks, bright Cydnus.
It's I who spoke of facial treatments for your beauty,
a little book, but one whose labour took great care.
There too you can find protection against faded looks:
my art's no idle thing in your behalf.
Still, don't let your lover find cosmetic bottles
on your dressing table: art delights in its hidden face.
Who's not offended by cream smeared all over your face,
when it runs in fallen drops to your warm breast?
Don't those ointments smell? Even if they are sent from Athens,
they're oils extracted from the unwashed fleece of a sheep.
Don't apply preparations of deer marrow openly,
and I don't approve of openly cleaning your teeth:
it makes for beauty, but it's not beautiful to watch:
many things that please when done, are ugly in the doing:
What now carries the signature of busy Myron
was once dumb mass, hard stone:
to make a ring, first crush the golden ore:
the dress you wear, was greasy wool:

That was rough marble, now it forms a famous statue,
naked Venus squeezing water from her wet hair.
We'll think you too are sleeping while you do your face:
fit to be seen after the final touches.
Why should I know the source of the brightness in your looks?
Close your bedroom door! Why betray unfinished work?
There are many things it's right men shouldn't know:
most things offend if you don't keep them secret.
The golden figures shining from the ornate theatre,
examine them, you'll despise them: gilding hiding wood:
but the crowd's not allowed to approach them till they're done,
and till your beauty's ready banish men.
But I don't forbid your hair being freely combed,
so that it falls, loosely spread, across your shoulders.
Beware especially lest you're irritable then,
or are always loosening your failed hairstyle again.
Leave your maid alone: I hate those who scratch her face
with their nails, or prick the arm they've snatched at with a pin.
She'll curse her mistress's head at every touch,
as she weeps, bleeding, on the hateful tresses.
If you're hair's appalling, set a guard at your threshold,
or always have it done at Bona Dea's fertile temple.
I was once suddenly announced arriving at some girl's:
in her confusion she put her hair on wrong way round.
May such cause of cruel shame come to my enemies,
and that disgrace be reserved for Parthian girls.
Hornless cows are ugly, fields are ugly without grass,
and bushes without leaves, and a head without its hair.

BOOK III PART V: CONCEAL YOUR DEFECTS



've not come to teach Semele or Leda, or Sidon's Europa,
carried through the waves by that deceptive bull,
or Helen, whom Menelaus, being no fool, reclaimed,
and you, Paris, her Trojan captor, also no fool, withheld.
The crowd come to be taught, girls pretty and plain:
and always the greater part are not-so-good.
The beautiful ones don't seek art and instruction:
they have their dowry, beauty potent without art:
the sailor rests secure when the sea's calm:
when it's swollen, he uses every aid.
Still, faultless forms are rare: conceal your faults,
and hide your body's defects as best you may.
If you're short sit down, lest, standing, you seem to sit:
and commit your smallness to your couch:
there also, so your measure can't be taken,
let a shawl drop over your feet to hide them.
If you're very slender, wear a full dress, and walk about
in clothes that hang loosely from your shoulders.
A pale girl scatters bright stripes across her body,
the darker then have recourse to linen from Alexandria.
Let an ugly foot be hidden in snow-white leather:
and don't loose the bands from skinny legs.
Thin padding suits those with high shoulder blades:
a good brassiere goes with a meagre chest.
Those with thick fingers and bitten nails,
make sparing use of gestures whenever you speak.
Those with strong breath don't talk when you're fasting.
and always keep your mouth a distance from your lover.

**BOOK III PART VI: BE MODEST IN LAUGHTER AND
MOVEMENT**



If you're teeth are blackened, large, or not in line
from birth, laughing would be a fatal error.
Who'd believe it? Girls must even learn to laugh,
they seek to acquire beauty also in this way.
Laugh modestly, a small dimple either side,
the teeth mostly concealed by the lips.
Don't strain your lungs with continual laughter,
but let something soft and feminine ring out.
One girl will distort her face perversely by guffawing:
another shakes with laughter, you'd think she's crying.
That one laughs stridently in a hateful manner,
like a mangy ass braying at the shameful mill.
Where does art not penetrate? They're taught to cry,
with propriety, they weep when and how they wish.
Why! Aren't true words cheated by the voice,
and tongues forced to make lisping sounds to order?
Charm's in a defect: they try to speak badly:
they're taught, when they can speak, to speak less.
Weigh all this with care, since it's for you:
learn to carry yourself in a feminine way.
And not the least part of charm is in walking:
it attracts men you don't know, or sends them running.
One moves her hips with art, catches the breeze
with flowing robes, and points her toes daintily:
another walks like the wife of a red-faced Umbrian,
feet wide apart, and with huge paces.
But there's measure here as in most things: both the rustic's stride,
and the more affected step should be foregone.
Still, let the parts of your lower shoulder and upper arm

on the left side, be naked, to be admired.
That suits you pale-skinned girls especially: when I see it,
I want to kiss your shoulder, as far as it's shown.

BOOK III PART VII: LEARN MUSIC AND READ THE POETS



he Sirens were sea-monsters, who, with singing voice,
could restrain a ship's course as they wished.
Ulysses, your body nearly melted hearing them,
while the wax filled your companions' ears.
Song is a thing of grace: girls, learn to sing:
for many your voice is a better procuress than your looks.
And repeat what you just heard in the marble theatre,
and the latest songs played in the Egyptian style.
No woman taught under my control should fail to know
how to hold her lyre with the left hand, the plectrum with her right.
Thracian Orpheus, with his lute, moved animals and stones,
and Tartarus's lake and Cerberus, the triple-headed hound.
At your song, Amphion, just avenger of your mother,
the stones obligingly made Thebes's new walls.
Though dumb, a Dolphin's thought to have responded
to a human voice, as the tale of Arion's lyre noted.
And learn to sweep both hands across the genial harp
that too is suitable for our sweet fun.
Let Callimachus, be known to you, Coan Philetas
and the Teian Muse of old drunken Anacreon:
And let Sappho be yours (well what's more wanton?),
Menander, whose master's gulled by his Thracian slaves' cunning.
and be able to recite tender Propertius's song,
or some of yours Gallus or Tibullus:
and the high-flown speech of Varro's fleece
of golden wool, Phrixus, your sister Helle's lament:
and Aeneas the wanderer, the beginnings of mighty Rome,
than which there is no better known work in Latin.
And perhaps my name will be mingled with those,
my works not all given to Lethe's streams:

and someone will say: 'Read our master's cultured song,
in which he teaches both the sexes: or choose
from the three books stamped with the title *Amores*,
that you recite softly with sweetly-teachable lips:
or let your voice sing those letters he composed, the *Heroides*:
he invented that form unknown to others.'
O grant it so, Phoebus! And, you, sacred powers of poetry,
great horned Bacchus, and the Nine goddesses!

BOOK III PART VIII: LEARN DANCING, GAMES



Who doubts I'd wish a girl to know how to dance,
and move her limbs as decreed when the wine goes round?
The body's artistes, the theatre's spectacle, are loved:
so great's the gracefulness of their agility.
A few things shameful to mention, she must know how to call
the throws at knucklebones, and your values, you rolled dice:
sometimes throwing three, sometimes thinking, closely,
how to advance craftily, how to challenge.
She should play the chess match warily not rashly,
where one piece can be lost to two opponents,
and a warrior wars without his companion who's been taken,
and a rival often has to retrace the journey he began.
Light spills should be poured from the open bag,
nor should a spill be disturbed unless she can raise it.
There's a kind of game, the board squared-off by as many lines,
with precise calculation, as the fleeting year has months:
a smaller board presents three stones each on either side
where the winner will have made his line up together.
There's a thousand games to be had: it's shameful for a girl
not to know how to play: playing often brings on love.
But there's not much labour in knowing all the moves:
there's much more work in keeping to your rules.
We're reckless, and revealed by eagerness itself,
and in a game the naked heart's exposed:
Anger enters, ugly mischief, desire for gain,
quarrels and fights and anxious pain:
accusations fly, the air echoes with shouts,
and each calls on their outraged deities:
there's no honour, they seek to cancel their debts at whim:
and often I've seen cheeks wet with tears.

Jupiter keep you free from all such vile reproaches,
you who have any anxiety to please men.

BOOK III PART IX: BE SEEN AROUND



Idle Nature has allotted these games to girls:
men have more opportunity to play.
Theirs the swift ball, the javelin and the hoop,
and arms, and horses made to go in a circle.
You have no Field of Mars, no ice-cold Aqua Virgo,
you don't swim in the Tiber's calm waters.
But it's fine to be seen out walking in the shade of Pompey's
Porch when your head's on fire with Virgo's heavenly horses:
visit the holy Palatine of laurel-wreathed Phoebus:
he sank Cleopatra's galleys in the deep:
the arcades Livia, Caesar's wife, and his sister, Octavia, started,
and his son-in-law Agrippa's, crowned with naval honours:
visit the incense-smoking altars of the Egyptian heifer,
visit the three theatres, take some conspicuous seat:
let the sand that's drenched with warm blood be seen,
and the impetuous wheels rounding the turning-post.
What's hidden is unknown: nothing unknown's desired:
there's no prize for a face that truly lacks a witness.
Though you excel Thamyras and Amoebeus in song,
there's no great applause for an unknown lyre.
If Apelles of Cos had never sculpted Venus,
she'd be hidden, sunk beneath the waters.
What do sacred poets seek but fame?
It's the final goal of all our labours.
Poets were once the concern of gods and kings:
and the ancient chorus earned a big reward.
A bard's dignity was inviolable: his name was honoured,
and he was often granted vast wealth.
Ennius earned it, born in Calabria's hills,
buried next to you, great Scipio.

Now the ivy wreaths lie without honour, and the painful toil
of the learned Muses, in the night, has the name of idleness.
But he's delighted to stay awake for fame: who'd know Homer,
if his immortal work the Iliad were unknown?
Who'd know of Danae, if she'd always been imprisoned,
and lay hidden, an old woman, in her tower?
Lovely girls, the crowd is useful to you.
Often lift your feet above the threshold.
The wolf shadows many sheep, to snatch just one,
and Jupiter's eagle stoops on many birds.
So too a lovely woman must let the people see her:
and perhaps there'll be one among them she attracts.
Keen to please she'll linger in all those places,
and apply her whole mind to caring for her beauty.
Chance rules everywhere: always dangle your bait:
the fish will lurk in the least likely pool.
Often hounds wander the wooded hills in vain,
and the deer, un-driven, walks into the net.
What was less hoped for by Andromeda, in chains,
than that her tears could please anyone?
Often a lover's found at a husband's funeral: walking
with loosened hair and unchecked weeping suits you.

BOOK III PART X: BEWARE OF FALSE LOVERS



void those men who profess to looks and culture,
who keep their hair carefully in place.
What they tell you they've told a thousand girls:
their love wanders and lingers in no one place.
Woman, what can you do with a man more delicate than you,
and one perhaps who has more lovers too?
You'll scarcely credit it, but credit this: Troy would remain,
if Cassandra's warnings had been heeded.
Some will attack you with a lying pretence of love,
and through that opening seek a shameful gain.
But don't be tricked by hair gleaming with liquid nard,
or short tongues pressed into their creases:
don't be ensnared by a toga of finest threads,
or that there's a ring on every finger.
Perhaps the best dressed among them all's a thief,
and burns with love of your finery.
'Give it me back!' the girl who's robbed will often cry,
'Give it me back!' at the top of her voice in the cattle-market.
Venus, from your temple, all glittering with gold,
you calmly watch the quarrel, and you, Appian nymphs.
There are names known for a certain sort of reputation too,
they're guilty of deceiving many lovers.
Learn from other's grief to fear your own:
don't let the door be opened to lying men.
Athenian girls, beware of trusting Theseus's oaths:
those gods he calls to witness, he's called on before.
And you, Demophoon, heir to Theseus's crimes,
no honour remains to you, with Phyllis left behind.
If they promise truly, promise in as many words:
and if they give, you give the joys that were agreed.

She might as well put out the sleepless Vestal's fire,
and snatch the holy relics from your Temple, Ino,
and give her man hemlock and monkshood crushed together,
as deny him sex if she's received his gifts.

BOOK III PART XI: TAKE CARE WITH LETTERS



et me speak closer to the theme: hold the reins,
Muses, don't smash the wheels with galloping.
His letters written on fir-wood tablets test the waters:
make sure a suitable servant receives the message.
Consider it: and read what, gathered from his own words, he said,
and perhaps, from its intent, what he might anxiously be asking.
And wait a little while before you answer: waiting
always arouses love, if it's only for a short time.
But don't give in too easily to a young man's prayers,
nor yet deny him what he seeks out of cruelty.
Make him fear and hope together, every time you write,
let hope seem more certain and fear grow less.
Write elegantly girls, but in neutral ordinary words,
an everyday sort of style pleases:
Ah! How often a doubting lover's been set on fire by letters,
and good looks have been harmed by barbarous words!
But since, though you lack the marriage ribbons,
it's your concern to deceive your lovers,
write the tablets in your maid's or boy's hand,
don't trust these tokens to a new young man.
He who keeps such tokens is treacherous,
but nevertheless he holds the flames of Etna.
I've seen girls, made pallid by this terror,
submit to slavery, poor things, for many years.
I judge that countering fraud with fraud's allowed,
the law lets arms be wielded against arms.
One form's used in exercising many hands,
(Ah! Perish those that give me reason for this warning)
don't write again on wax unless it's all been scraped,
lest the single tablet contain two hands.

And always speak of your lover as female when you write:
let it be 'her' in your letters, instead of 'him'.

BOOK III PART XII: AVOID THE VICES, FAVOUR THE POETS



f I might turn from lesser to greater things,
and spread the full expanse of swelling sail,
it's important to banish looks of anger from your face:
bright peace suits human beings, anger the wild beast.
Anger swells the face: the veins darken with blood:
the eyes flash more savagely than the Gorgon's.
'Away with you, flute, you're not worth all that,'
said Pallas when she saw her face in the water.
You too if you looked in the mirror in your anger,
that girl would scarcely know her own face.
Pride does no less harm to your looks:
love is attracted to friendly eyes.
We hate (believe the expert) extravagant disdain:
a silent face often sows the seeds of our dislike.
Glance at a glance, smile tenderly at a smile:
he nods, you too return the signal you received.
When he's practised, so, the boy leaves the foils,
and takes his sharp arrows from his quiver.
We hate sad girls too: let Ajax choose Tecmessa:
a happy girl charms us cheerful people.
I'd never ask you, Andromache, or you, Tecmessa
while there's another lover for me than you.
I find it hard to believe, though I'm forced to by your children,
that you ever slept with your husbands.
Do you suppose that gloomy wife ever said to Ajax:
'Light of my life': or the words that usually delight a man?
Who'll prevent me using great examples for little things,
why should we be afraid of the leader's name?
Our good leader trusts those commanders with a squad,
these with the cavalry, that man to guard the standard:

You too should judge what each of us is good for,
and place each one in his proper role.
The rich give gifts: the lawyer appears as promised:
often he pleads a client's case that must be heard:
We who make songs, can only send you songs:
we are the choir here best suited above all to love.
We can make beauties that please us widely known:
Nemesis has a name, and Cynthia has:
you'll have heard of Lycoris from East to West:
and many ask who my Corinna is.
Add that guile is absent from the sacred poets,
and our art too fashions our characters.
Ambition and desire for possession don't touch us:
the shady couch is cherished, the forum scorned.
But we're easily caught, torn by powerful passions,
and we know too well how to love with perfect faith.
No doubt our minds are sweetened by gentle art,
and our natures are consistent with our studies.
Girls, be kind to the poets of Helicon:
there's divinity in them, and they're the Muses' friends.
There's a god in us, and our dealings are with the heavens:
this inspiration comes from ethereal heights.
It's a sin to hope for gifts from the poet:
ah me! No girl's afraid of that sin.
Still hide it, don't look greedy at first sight:
new love will balk when it sees the snare.

BOOK III PART XIII: TRY YOUNG AND OLDER LOVERS



o rider rules a horse that's lately known the reins,
with the same bit as one that's truly mastered,
nor will the same way serve to captivate
the mind of mature years and of green youth.
This raw recruit, first known of now in love's campaigns,
who reaches your threshold, a fresh prize,
must know you only, always cling to you alone:
this crop must be surrounded by high hedges.
Keep rivals away: you'll win while you hold just one:
love and power don't last long when they're shared.
Your older warrior loves sensibly and wisely,
suffers much that the beginner won't endure:
he won't break the door down, burn it with cruel fire,
attack his mistress's tender cheeks with his nails,
or rip apart his clothing or his girl's,
nor will torn hair be a cause of tears.
That suits hot boys, the time of strong desire:
but he'll bear cruel wounds with calm mind.
He burns, alas, with slow fires, like wet straw,
like new-cut timber on the mountain height.
This love's more sure: that's brief and more prolific:
snatch the swift fruits, that fly, in your hand.

BOOK III PART XIV: USE JEALOUSY AND FEAR



et all be betrayed: I've unbarred the gates to the enemy:
and let my loyalty be to treacherous betrayal.
What's easily given nourishes love poorly:
mingle the odd rejection with welcome fun.
Let him lie before the door, crying: 'Cruel entrance!,
pleading very humbly, threatening a lot too.
We can't stand sweetness: bitterness renews our taste:
often a yacht sinks swamped by a favourable wind:
this is what bitter wives can't endure:
their husbands can come to them when they wish:
add a closed door and a hard-mouthed janitor,
saying: 'You can't,' and love will touch you too.
Drop the blunted foils now: fight with blades:
no doubt I'll be attacked with my own weapons.
Also when the lover you've just caught falls into the net,
let him think that only he has access to your room.
Later let him sense a rival, the bed's shared pact:
remove these arts, and love grows old.
The horse runs swiftly from the starting gate,
when he has others to pass, and others follow.
Wrongs relight the dying fires, as you wish:
See (I confess!), I don't love unless I'm hurt.
Still, don't give cause for grief, excessively,
let the anxious man suspect it, rather than know.
Stir him with a dismal watchman, fictitiously set to guard you,
and the excessively irksome care of a harsh husband.
Pleasure that comes with safety's less enjoyable:
though you're freer than Thais, pretend fear.
Though the door's easier, let him in at the window,
and show signs of fear on your face.

The Love Poems

A clever maid should leap up and cry: 'We're lost!'
You, hide the trembling youth in any hole.
Still safe loving should be mixed with fright,
lest he consider you hardly worth a night.

BOOK III PART XV: PLAY CLOAK AND DAGGER



nearly forgot the skilful ways by which you can
elude a husband, or a vigilant guardian.
let the bride fear her husband: to guard a wife is right:
it's fitting, it's decreed by law, the courts, and modesty.
But for you too be guarded, scarcely released from prison,
who could bear it? Adhere to my religion, and deceive!
Though as many eyes as Argus owned observe you,
you'll deceive them (if only your will is firm).
How can a guard make sure that you can't write,
when you're given all that time to spend washing?
When a knowing maid can carry letters you've penned,
concealed in the deep curves of her warm breasts?
When she can hide papers fastened to her calf,
or bear charming notes tied beneath her feet?
The guard's on the look-out for that, your go-between
offers her back as paper, and takes your words on her flesh.
Also a letter's safe, and deceives the eye, written with fresh milk;
you read it by scattering it with crushed ashes.
And those traced out with a point wetted with linseed oil,
so that the empty tablet carries secret messages.
Acrisius took care to imprison his daughter, Danae:
but she still made him a grandfather by her sin.
What good's a guard, with so many theatres in the city,
when she's free to gaze at horses paired together,
when she sits occupied with the Egyptian heifer's sistrum,
and goes where male companions cannot go,
when male eyes are banned from Bona Dea's temple,
except those she orders to enter?
When, with the girls' clothes guarded by a servant at the door,
the baths conceal so many secret joys,

when, however many times she's needed, a friend feigns illness,
and however ill she is can leave her bed,
when the false key tells by its name what we should do,
and the door alone doesn't grant the exits you seek?
And the jailor's attention's fuddled with much wine,
even though the grapes were picked on Spanish hills:
then there are drugs that bring deep sleep,
and close eyes overcome by Lethe's night:
or your maid can rightly detain the wretch with lengthy games,
and be associated herself with long delays.
but why use these tortuous ways and minor rules,
when the least gift will buy a guardian?
Believe me gifts captivate men and gods:
Jupiter himself is pleased with the gifts he's given.
What can the wise man do, when the fool love's gifts?
He'll be silent too when a gift's accepted.
But let the guard be bought for once and all:
who surrenders to it once, will surrender often.
I remember I lamented, friends are to be feared:
that complaint's not only true of men.
If you're credulous, others snatch your joys,
and that hare you started running goes to others.
She too, who eagerly offers room and bed,
believe me, she's been mine more than once.
Don't let too beautiful a maid serve you:
she's often offered herself to me as my lady.

BOOK III PART XVI: MAKE HIM BELIEVE HE'S LOVED



What am I talking of, madman? Why show a naked front
to the enemy, and betray myself on my own evidence?
The bird doesn't show the hunter where to find it,
the stag doesn't teach the savage hounds to run.
Let others seek advantage: faithful to how I started, I'll go on:
I'll give the Lemnian girls swords to kill me.
Make us believe (it's so easy) that we're loved:
faith comes easily to the loving in their prayers.
let a woman look longingly at her young man, sigh deeply,
and ask him why he comes so late:
add tears, and feigned grief over a rival,
and tear at his cheeks with her nails:
he'll straight away be convinced: and she'll be pitied,
and he'll say: 'She's seized by love of me.'
Especially if he's cultured, pleased with his mirror,
he'll believe he could touch the goddesses with love.
But you, whatever wrong occurs, be lightly troubled,
nor in poor spirits if you hear of a rival.
Don't believe too quickly: how quick belief can wound,
Procris should be an example to you.
There's a sacred fountain, and sweet green-turfed ground,
near to the bright slopes of flowered Hymettus:
the low woods form a grove: strawberry-trees touch the grass,
it smells of rosemary, bay and black myrtle:
there's no lack of foliage, dense box and fragile tamarisk,
nor fine clover, and cultivated pine.
The many kinds of leaves and grass-heads tremble
at the touch of light winds and refreshing breezes.
The quiet pleased Cephalus: leaving men and dogs behind,
the weary youth often settled on this spot,

'Come, fickle breeze (*Aura*), who cools my heat'
he used to sing, 'be welcome to my breast.'
Some officious person, evilly remembering what he'd heard,
brought it to the wife's fearful hearing:
Procris, as she took the name *Aura* to be some rival,
fainted, and was suddenly dumb with grief:
She grew pale, as the leaves of choice vine-stalks
grow pale, wounded by an early winter,
or ripe quinces arching on their branches,
or cornelian cherries not yet fit for us to eat.
As her breath returned, she tore the thin clothing from her breast,
and scratched at her innocent cheeks with her nails:
Then she fled quickly, frenzied, down the ways,
hair flowing, like a Maenad roused by the thyrsus.
As she came near, she left her companions in the valley,
bravely herself entered the grove, in secret, on silent feet.
What was in your mind, when you hid there so foolishly,
Procris? What ardour, in your terrified heart?
Did you think she'd come soon, *Aura*, whoever she was,
and her infamy be visible to your eyes.
Now regretting that you came (not wishing to surprise them)
now pleased: doubting love twists at your heart.
The place, the name, the witness, command belief,
and the mind always thinks what it fears is true.
She saw signs that a body had pressed down the grass,
her chest throbbed, quivering with its anxious heart.
Now noon had contracted the thin shadows,
and dawn and twilight were parted equally:
behold, Cephalus, Hermes's child, returned to the wood,
and plunged his burning face in the fountain's water.
You hid, Procris, anxiously: he lay down as usual on the grass,
and cried: 'Come you zephyrs, you sweet air (*Aura*)!'
As her joyous error in the name came to the miserable girl,
her wits and the true colour of her face returned.
She rose, and with agitated body moved the opposing leaves,

a wife running to her husband's arms:
He, sure a wild beast moved, leapt youthfully to his feet,
grasping his spear in his right hand.
What are you doing, unhappy man? That's no creature,
hold back your throw! Alas, your girl's pierced by your spear!
She called out: 'Ah me! You've pierced a loving heart.
That part always takes its wound from Cephalus.
I die before my time, but not wounded by a rival:
that will ensure you, earth, lie lightly on me.
Now my spirit departs into that air with its deceptive name:
I pass, I go, dear hand, close my eyes!'
He held the body of his dying lady on his sad breast,
and bathed the cruel wound with his tears.
She died, and her breath, passing little by little
from her rash breast, was caught on her sad lover's lips.

BOOK III PART XVII: WATCH HOW YOU EAT AND DRINK



ut to resume the work: bare facts for me
so that my weary vessel can reach harbour.
You're anxiously expecting, while I lead you to dinner,
that you can even ask for my advice there too.
Come late, and come upon us charmingly in the lamplight:
you'll come with pleasing delay: delay's a grand seductress.
Even if you're plain, with drink you'll seem beautiful,
and night itself grants concealment to your failings.
Take the food daintily: how you eat does matter:
don't smear your face all over with a greasy hand.
Don't eat before at home, but stop before you're full:
be a little less eager than you can be:
if Paris, Priam's son, saw Helen eating greedily,
he'd detest it, and say: 'Mine's a foolish prize.'
It's more fitting, and it suits girls more, to drink:
Bacchus you don't go badly with Venus's boy.
So long as the head holds out, and the mind and feet
stand firm: and you don't see two of what's only one.
Shameful a woman lying there, drenched with too much wine:
she's worthy of sleeping with anyone who'll have her.
And it's not safe to fall asleep at table:
many shameful things usually happen in sleep.

BOOK III PART XVIII: AND SO TO BED



o have been taught more is shameful: but kindly Venus
said: 'What's shameful is my particular concern.'
Let each girl know herself: adopt a reliable posture
for her body: one layout's not suitable for all.
She who's known for her face, lie there face upwards:
let her back be seen, she who's back delights.
Milanion bore Atalanta's legs on his shoulders:
if they're good looking, that mode's acceptable.
Let the small be carried by a horse: Andromache,
his Theban bride, was too tall to straddle Hector's horse.
Let a woman noted for her length of body,
press the bed with her knees, arch her neck slightly.
She who has youthful thighs, and faultless breasts,
the man might stand, she spread, with her body downwards.
Don't think it shameful to loosen your hair, like a Maenad,
and throw back your head with its flowing tresses.
You too, whom Lucina's marked with childbirth's wrinkles,
like the swift child of Parthia, turn your mount around.
There's a thousand ways to do it: simple and least effort,
is just to lie there half-turned on your right side.
But neither Phoebus's tripods nor Ammon's horn
shall sing greater truths to you than my Muse:
If you trust art's promise, that I've long employed:
my songs will offer you their promise.
Woman, feel love, melted to your very bones,
and let both delight equally in the thing.
Don't leave out seductive coos and delightful murmurings,
don't let wild words be silent in the middle of your games.
You too whom nature denies sexual feeling,
pretend to sweet delight with artful sounds.

The Love Poems

Unhappy girl, for whom that sluggish place is numb,
which man and woman equally should enjoy.
Only beware when you feign it, lest it shows:
create belief in your movements and your eyes.
When you like it, show it with cries and panting breath:
Ah! I blush, that part has its own secret signs.
She who asks fondly for a gift after love's delights,
can't want her request to carry any weight.
Don't let light into the room through all the windows:
it's fitting for much of your body to be concealed.

The game is done: time to descend, you swans,
you who bent your necks beneath my yoke.
As once the boys, so now my crowd of girls
inscribe on your trophies 'Ovid was my master.'

Remedia Amoris

CURES for Love



Diana and Endymion - Luca Giordano (Italian, 1634 - 1705)

National Gallery of Art

Contents

Part I: Words with Cupid, and The Task.....	235
Part II: Treat it Early: Fill Your Time with War or Law.....	238
Part III: You Can Also Farm, Hunt, or Travel.....	241
Part IV: But Forget Witchcraft!.....	244
Part V: Contemplate her Defects.....	246
Part VI: Now About Sex.....	248
Part VII: Have More Than One Lover.....	251
Part VIII: Be Cool With Her.....	253
Part IX: Or Sate Yourself With Her.....	255
Part X: Forget Her, and Don't Be Alone.....	256
Part XI: Now, Keep Away From Her.....	258
Part XII: Don't Weaken.....	261
Part XIII: Get Rid of all Reminders.....	263
Part XIV: Avoid the Arts.....	264
Part XV: Love your Rival.....	265
Part XVI: The Doctor's Last Advice.....	266

PART I: WORDS WITH CUPID, AND THE TASK



ove, having read the name and title on this book,
said: 'It's war, you declare against me, I see, it's war'.
'Cupid, don't condemn your poet for a crime, who has so often
raised the standard, you trusted him with, under your command.
I'm not Diomedes, by whom your mother was wounded,
she, carried back to the clear heavens on Mars's steeds.
Other young men often grow cool: I've always loved,
and if you ask me now, too, what I do, I love.
Indeed I've taught, as well, by what art you can be won,
and what was passion before, is now reason.
Sweet Boy, I've not betrayed you or my art,
and this new Muse unravels no prior work.
Let him rejoice in happiness, any eager man who loves
and delights in love: let him sail with the wind.
But any man who suffers badly from the power of a worthless girl,
shouldn't die, if he understands the help that's in my art.
Why should any lover hang from a high beam,
a sad weight, with a knotted rope round his neck?
Why should anyone stab himself with cold steel?
Lover of Peace, you earn dislike for such hateful death.
Let him who'll die of wretched passion unless he quits it,
quit it: and you'll be the cause of no one's funeral.
And you're a boy: you're not fit for anything but play:
play then: a sweet dominion suits your years.
For you might have used naked arrows with which to war:
but your shafts are free of deadly blood.
Your stepfather Mars may fight with swords and sharp spears,
and as a victor stride through the carnage:
you cultivate your mother's arts, which are safe to use,
through whose fault no parent's ever bereaved.

Make doors burst open to nocturnal fights,
and the entrance be buried in many fine garlands:
have young men and shy girls meet secretly,
and cheat watchful husbands by whatever art:
and now let the lover who's shut out, speak flatteringly,
and now curse the rigid doorpost, and, weeping, sing.
You, be content with these tears, with no guilt for death:
it's not fitting for your torch to plunge beneath greedy pyres.'
So I spoke: golden Love moved his jewelled wings,
and said to me: 'Finish the work you planned.'
Come to my teaching, young men who've been deceived,
you whose love has utterly betrayed you.
Learn how to be cured, from him who taught you how to love:
the one hand brings the wound and the relief.
The same earth nurtures healing herbs as harmful,
and the nettle's often near to the rose:
Achilles's spear that once wounded Telephus, his enemy,
also brought the cure for the wound.
But believe me, girls, I tell to you whatever I tell the men:
I grant weapons to either side:
and if any of it does not apply to your needs,
it can still teach you a great deal by example.
It's a good idea to quench fierce flames,
don't let your heart be slave to your failings.
Phyllis would have lived, if she'd used me as her master,
and gone the way she went, nine times, more often.
Dido, as she died, would not have watched the Trojan ships,
from the summit of her tower, as they set sail:
nor would pain have armed Medea against her children,
taking vengeance on her husband by harming his offspring.
By using my art, Tereus, when Philomela charmed him,
would not have deserved to become a bird for his crime.
Give Pasiphae to me, then, surely, she'd lose her love for the bull:
Give me Phaedra: Phaedra's shameful love will vanish.
Trust Paris to me, Menelaus would have Helen,

and Troy not conquered to fall at the hands of Greeks.
If impious Scylla could have read my books,
Nisus, the purple lock would cling to your head.
With me as leader, quench your ruinous sorrows:
let ship and crew sail true, with me as leader.
You read your Ovid then, when you learnt about love:
now the same Ovid's to be read by you.
The public champion, I lighten hearts constrained
by their masters: each of you, thank the rod that frees.
Phoebus, source of the power of medicine and song,
may your laurel help me, I beg of you, as I begin,
Yours is the nurturing of doctor and poet alike:
the protection of both falls to your care.

PART II: TREAT IT EARLY: FILL YOUR TIME WITH WAR OR LAW



If you've regrets, and moderate emotions touch your heart,
then halt your feet, while you can, at the first threshold.

Crush the evil germs of sudden illness while they're young,
and prevent your horse's gallop at the start.

For time gives strength, time ripens tender grapes,
and creates healthy crops from what were shoots.

The tree that spreads wide shadows for passers-by,
was only a slip at first that had been planted:

then a hand could pluck it from the topsoil:
now by its growth it stands, in all its immense power.

Let your swift mind encompass what it is that you love,
and withdraw your neck from the collar that hurts you.

Halt its beginnings: it's too late for the doctor to be called,
when the illness has grown stronger through delay.

But hurry, don't put it off to a later time:
who's not ready today, will be less so tomorrow:
all love deceives, and gains nourishment by waiting:
every next day is the best for freedom.

You see few rivers flow from mighty fountains:
by many inflowing waters they're multiplied.

Myrrha, if you'd realised sooner what sins you'd begun,
you'd not have hidden your face with tree-bark.

I've seen a wound that could at first be healed
suffer harm through enduring long delays.

But since it charms us to cull the fruits of Venus,
we always say: 'the same could happen tomorrow.'

Meanwhile the secret flames creep into our heart,
and the baleful tree drives its roots deeper.

If the moment for early help's been lost, however,
and ancient love's settled in the captive breast,

the greater the work that remains: but because I've been called
to the illness later, it won't be abandoned by me.
That bit of Philoctetes that was wounded
he should surely have cut off long ago:
they say that, having been healed, many years later
he dealt the last blow of the Trojan war.
I who rushed to drive off the nascent illness,
now calmly bring you late relief.
Either you try, if you can, to quench a fire at the start,
or when it dies down, through its own violence:
while passion's in full flow, give way to the rush of passion:
all of us find approaching its onrush difficult.
He's a foolish swimmer, who fights against the stream,
when he could descend the current obliquely.
The impatient spirit, that's not yet tractable, rejects my art,
and is possessed by hatred for my words of advice.
Better for me to approach him now when he'll let me touch
the wound, and is more suited to words of truth.
Who'd stop a mother weeping, unless he's mad,
at her son's grave? That's not the place to admonish her.
When tears are over, and the sorrowful spirit's done,
then grief can be given expression in words.
Medicine requires the art of timing: given at the right time
wine may help, at the wrong time it may harm.
Indeed you may even inflame and provoke the disease
by denying it, if it's not applied at the proper moment.
So when you're ready for my medical arts,
first ban idleness, on my advice.
This encourages you to love, and protects the love it encourages:
it's the pleasurable source, and the evil nourishment.
If you take away idleness, Cupid's bow's unstrung,
his torch is dark and held to scorn.
As plane trees like wine, as poplar trees like water,
as muddy reeds like the marshy ground,
so Venus loves idleness: you who seek to end love,

love gives way to business: be busy, you'll be safe.

Languor and excess sleep that go unchallenged,
and gambling, and time lost to too much drink
take away all vigour, without damaging the heart:
insidious Love enters the unwary.

That Boy's accustomed to following idleness: he hates the busy:
give your vacant mind work to occupy it.

There are the courts, the laws, the friends you might defend:
make your way through the splendid camp of city togas.

Or admire the youthful service of blood-drenched Mars:
then you'll turn your back on your delights.

Behold, the fleeing Parthian, fresh cause of a great triumph,
he sees Caesar's weapons now in his own country:

Conquer both the arrows of Cupid and Parthia,
and bring back twin trophies to your native gods.

As soon as Venus was wounded by Diomedes's spear,
she ordered the war to be fought by her lover.

You ask what made Aegisthus an adulterer?
the reason's obvious: it was idleness.

Others fought the long battles with Troy:
Greece had sent over all her fighting men.

If he'd wanted acts of war, there were none to be had:
if the courts of law, Argos was free of quarrels.

He did what he could, he loved: better than doing nothing.
So the Boy comes, and so the Boy stays.

PART III: YOU CAN ALSO FARM, HUNT, OR TRAVEL



Country matters too delight the spirit, and the study
of agriculture. Any care will give way to those cares.
Order tame bulls to bow beneath the collar,
to furrow the hard soil with the curving blade:
sow the seed for your harvest, in the earth you've ploughed,
seed that the field will return to you with interest.
See the branches bowed with the weight of apples,
so the tree hardly bears the weight it carries.
See the flowing streams with happy murmurs:
see the sheep grazing on the fertile grass.
Behold, the goats seek the rocks and steep boulders:
soon they'll bring back full udders for their kids:
The shepherd blows a melody on his reed pipes,
no lack of dogs for company, a watchful crowd.
Lowing sounds from another part of the high wood,
and a mother complains the loss of her calf.
Don't the swarm fly, when you smoke them out,
to take the honey from the arching hive?
Autumn gives its apples: summer is lovely with harvest:
spring offers flowers: winter's eased with fire.
The farmer picks ripe grapes at the right time,
and the juice flows under his bare feet.
At the right time he binds the cut grasses,
and sweeps the stubble soil with wide comb.
You yourself can plant seedlings in your watered gardens,
you yourself can guide gentle streams of water.
Grafting comes: make a branch adopt a branch,
and the tree stands there concealed by strange foliage.
When once the mind begins to enjoy these pleasures,
Vain Love departs on weakened wings.

Or you can cultivate the art of hunting: often Venus
retreated in shame from her conquering sister Phoebe.
Now hunt the headlong hare with keen-scented dog,
now spread your nets across the leafy hills,
or fright the quivering deer with motley scares,
or the boar's brought down, stabbed by your hostile spear.
Sleep at night, not desire for girls, welcomes the weary man,
and the limbs will be restored by calm rest.
Easier work, but still work, is capturing birds
following the humble prize with net or lime,
or, what greedy fish might swallow with eager jaws,
hiding a curved hook under a little bait.
This pursuit or that, till you forget your passion,
you've got to secretly beguile yourself.
You only need to journey far, though strong chains
hold you back, and start to travel distant ways:
you'll cry, and your lost girl's name will oppose it,
and your feet will often stop you on the road:
but the less you wish to go, the more you should go:
endure it, and force unwilling feet to run.
Don't hope for rain, or a foreign Sabbath, to delay you,
nor the River Allia noted for its losses.
Don't ask how many miles you've done, and how many
there are left: nor feign delays so you can stay around:
Don't count the hours, or keep looking back at Rome,
but fly: the Parthian flying from the enemy's safe.
Some might call my advice hard: it's hard, I acknowledge:
but you have to endure a lot of pain to be well.
Often when sick, unwillingly, I've drunk bitter juices,
and denied all food to my pleadings.
To save your body, you'll endure fire and steel,
won't relieve your dry thirsting mouth with water:
to heal your mind, what would you not accept?
So that part is worth more than the body.
Still, the entrance to my art is very gloomy,

The Love Poems

and the greatest task's to survive the first few hours.
You see how the collar at first chafes new bullocks,
and a new girth irritates a fast steed?
Perhaps you'll be sorry to leave your fathers' home:
but all the same you'll leave: then want to return:
not your father's home but love for your little friend,
will call you back, fine words excusing your crime.
When once you've gone, the countryside, your comrades,
the long road, give you a hundred solaces for your cares.
And don't think it's enough just to leave: stay away a while,
till the ashes have lost their power with their flame.
because unless, in hurrying back, your mind is strong,
rebellious love will fight you with cruel weapons.
And however long you're away, you'll return hungry and thirsty,
and the interval will have done you nothing but harm.

PART IV: BUT FORGET WITCHCRAFT!



f anyone thinks he can be helped by harmful herbs,
and magic arts, from Thessalian lands, that's his affair.
That's the old way of witchcraft: my Apollo

offers innocent aid with sacred song.

With me in charge no spirits will be ordered from their graves,
no witch, with wicked spells, will split the ground:
no crops will skip from one field to another,
nor Phoebus's orb suddenly grow pale.

As usual, Tiber's waters will run down to the sea:
as usual, the Moon will ride on snow-white horses.

No pains will be charmed away to ease the heart,
conquering love won't be put to flight by burning sulphur.

What use, Medea, to you were herbs of Colchis,
when you desired to stay in your father's house?

Circe, what profit to you were Perse's magic plants
when his breeze took Ulysses's ships away?

You did everything that your cunning guest might not go:
Love settled deep in your unwilling heart.

You could change men into a thousand shapes,
you could not change the commands of your heart.

Indeed it's said that when he wished to leave
you stopped the lord of Ithaca with these words:

'I don't pray now for what I recall, that I used to hope for,
that you might wish to be my husband:

and yet I might be thought worthy of being your wife,
who am a goddess, daughter of the mighty Sun.

I beg you not to hurry: I ask a little time as a gift:
what less could I ask for in my prayers?

And you see the waves are high, and you ought to fear them:
later the wind will better suit your sails.

What reason have you for flight? No new Troy rises here,
no one calls their allies to arms again.
Here are love and peace, where I alone am badly wounded,
and the land will be safe in future under your rule.'
While this was spoken, Ulysses loosed his ships:
carrying away her fruitless words on familiar sails.
Circe was inflamed, and turned to her usual arts,
but love was still not lessened by them.
So whoever you are who call for help from my art,
put no faith in witchcraft and incantations.

PART V: CONTEMPLATE HER DEFECTS



f some overriding reason keeps you in the City,
(that mistress!), accept my advice from the City.
He's his own best liberator who snaps the chains
that hurt his heart, and ends the grief forever.
But the man who's brave as that, I marvel at it, and him,
and say: 'He'll not act out my prophecies.'
It's you, who love, and can scarcely forget your loving,
that wish to, but can't, who must be taught by me.
Tell yourself often what your wicked girl has done,
and before your eyes place every hurt you've had.
'She's had this and that, but she's not satisfied with plunder:
the greedy girl's given the household gods notice to quit.
She swore to me, and, having sworn so, deceived me,
lying stretched out so often at her door!
She prizes others, despises my love: ah,
a pedlar has nights with her, she won't give me!
Let all this embitter your every feeling:
recall it, look here for the seeds of your dislike.
And I want you to be fluent in them as well!
Suffer enough: you'll be eloquent yourself.
Recently my affections clung to a certain girl:
she was not conducive to my spirit:
sick, Podalirius was cured by his own drugs,
and, I confess, I was a shamefully sick doctor.
It helped to continually dwell on my friend's faults,
and it often was the thing that made me better.
'How ugly,' I'd say 'my girl's legs are!'
and yet they weren't, if the truth be told.
'How little are my girl's arms beautiful!'
and yet they were, if the truth be told.
'How small she is!' she wasn't: 'How much she asks of a lover!'

That was the main cause of my dislike.
And the bad is neighbour to the good: in that confusion
virtue often bears the guilt for vice.
As much as you can, disparage your girl's attractions,
and let your judgement fall a little short.
Let her be called 'plump' if she's full-figured, 'black' if she's dark:
in slenderness there's the charge of being 'lean'.
And she can be called 'pert', who's not naive,
and she can be called 'naive', if she's too honest.
Then too, whatever talents your woman lacks,
promote those, with flattering words and prayers.
Demand the use of song, if the girl's bereft of voice:
make her dance if she doesn't know how to move her hands.
Her speech is barbarous? Make her talk with you a lot:
she hasn't learnt to sweep the chords? Ask for the lyre.
She walks awkwardly? Make her walk up and down:
Her chest's all breasts? Let no bindings hide the fault.
If her teeth are bad, relate what she'll laugh at:
Her eyes are sensitive? Report what makes her cry.
And appear suddenly, when she's applied no make-up to herself,
having hastened your steps to your lady in the dawn.
We're carried away by adornment: in gold and gems
all's hidden: the least part of it's the girl herself.
You often ask where what you love is amongst it all:
rich Love deceives the eyes with all that armour.
Be there unexpectedly, safe, you catch her defenceless:
the poor girl's undone by her faults.
But it's still not safe to trust in this rule too much:
since true beauty without art beguiles many.
So approach your lady's presence (don't let modesty deter you)
when she's smearing her cheeks with blended potions.
You'll find little pots and a thousand coloured things,
and dripping greases flowing, over her warm breasts.
Those cosmetics smell like your table, Phineus:
more than once they've made my stomach sick.

PART VI: NOW ABOUT SEX



Now I'll speak openly, about what I should offer, regarding
your sexual practice: love must be wholly driven away.
There's much of this in fact that it's shameful for me to say:
but with wit you'll understand more than my words.
For lately there's been a sort of slandering of my books,
of which the criticism my Muse is insolent.
While I please in my way, while I'm sung throughout the world,
those few can attack my work as much as they like.
Envy disparages the genius of mighty Homer:
because of it Zoilus the critic (who was he?) has a name.
And sacrilegious tongues have savaged your poem, Virgil,
you who led the conquered gods here, carried from Troy.
Envy seeks the summits: wind blows across the heights:
the lightning seeks the summits, flung from Jove's right hand.
But you, whoever you are, whom my licence offends,
if you're wise, consider everything in context.
Manly warfare rejoices to be told in Homeric measure:
what place can there be in that for our delights?
Tragedians sound sublimely: rage suits the tragic heights:
from public life comedy's realised.
The frank iambic is unsheathed against our enemies,
either as swift-paced trimeter, or dragging its last foot.
Let smooth-tongued Elegy sing Cupids with their quivers,
and play the gentle mistress, as she decides.
Achilles is not spoken of in Callimachus's rhythms,
sweet Cydippe's not for your mouth Homer.
Who could stand Andromache's part performed by Thais?
Whoever acted Andromache in Thais's role would err.
Thais is in my art: liberated playfulness is mine:
I've nothing to do with wives: it's Thais in my art.

If my Muse corresponds to light-hearted matters, I've won,
and the case against the defendant's a false charge.
Gluttonous Envy, burst: my name's well known already:
it will be more so, if only my feet travel the road they've started.
But you're in too much of a hurry: if I live you'll be more than sorry:
many poems, in fact, are forming in my mind.
Now I'm happy, and my enthusiasm for fame grows with my esteem:
my stallion's panting for the start of the climb.
It's acknowledged the elegy owes as much to me,
as the epic owes to famous Virgil.
So far I've answered Envy: tighten the reins
more resolutely, and ride your course out, poet.
So when you're headed for bed and youthful labour,
and the time of night she promised you is near,
lest your girl's charms, if you spend you whole self on her,
captivate you, I'd like you to do it as much as you want to first.
Take as much as you want, where your initial pleasure can end:
after the first the next will be much more sluggish.
Sex postponed is most welcome: sunlight's delighted
by the cold, shade by sun, water's welcome in a drought.
I speak but I'm ashamed: make love too in a position
that you think makes love least likely, and becoming.
It's not hard to do: few truthful girls confess even to themselves
that there's nothing they think unbecoming to them.
Then too order all the windows to be opened,
and note her worst features in broad daylight.
As soon as pleasure's reached the finishing post,
and the spirit lies there exhausted, and the whole body,
while you're repenting, and you'd rather never have touched
a girl, and you don't think you're going to touch one for years,
then impress your mind with whatever's wrong with her body,
and keep your eyes fixed all the time on those faults.
Perhaps someone might call these things trivial (as they are too),
but what has no benefit on its own, is useful in numbers.
And a little viper may kill a vast bull with its bite:

the boar is often gripped by a not very large hound.
You should only fight in strength, and assemble
all my rules together: from many one large heap will be made.
There are so many methods, so many positions
there's no need to give them, all in my opinion.
The action that won't offend your feelings,
to another's judgement will seem a crime.
One man who saw the sexual organs on a naked body,
brought his lovemaking, that was in progress, to a halt:
one, on his girl's rising from Love's affairs,
considered those shameful tokens, in the stained bed.
O, you're just playing at it, if those things bother you:
your heart is being breathed on by tepid flames.
Let that Boy draw the straining bow more strongly:
you'll look for greater help for a mass of wounds.
What about the man who hid secretly to observe a girl,
and saw indecent things that custom forbids us seeing?
The gods forbid that I advise anyone to do such things!
While they might help, they just aren't suitable.

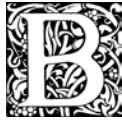
PART VII: HAVE MORE THAN ONE LOVER



also urge you to have two girls at once
(You're very brave if you could consider more):
When the heart's divided it goes in both directions,
and one love saps the power of the other.
Vast rivers are thinned out through many channels:
fierce flames die down when the fuel's removed.
One anchor's not enough to hold a well-waxed hull,
a single hook's not enough in clear water:
Who long ago arranged a double solace for himself,
long ago was victor on the highest summit.
But you, who were foolishly trusting of one mistress,
at least now a fresh love is to be contrived for you.
Minos quenched the fires of Pasiphae in Procris:
Cleopatra, Phineus's first wife, left, conquered by Idaea.
Callirhoe made Alcmaeon share her bed
lest he always love Alphisiboea.
And Oenone would have held Paris, to the end of time,
if she'd not been harmed by Helen, her Spartan rival.
His wife Procne's beauty would have pleased Tereus:
but Philomela, her imprisoned sister, was more beautiful.
Why dwell on more examples, a crowd that tires me?
Every love's defeated by a fresh successor.
A mother loses one son of many more resolutely,
than one in tears who cries: 'You were my only son.'
But don't think I'm writing new rules for you
(and I wish these discoveries added to *my* glory!)
Agamemnon witnessed it (what did he not see, in fact,
he who was in command of all the Greeks?)
The conqueror loved Chryseis, captured in the war:
but her old father wept everywhere, foolishly.

Why weep, so annoyingly, old man? They suit each other well:
you wound you daughter, tactlessly, with your attentions.
When Calchas, later, safe, under Achilles's protection, ordered
she be returned, and she was received by her father's house,
Agamemnon said: 'There's one Briseis, close to her in beauty,
and, if you allow for the first syllable, her name's the same:
If he's wise, Achilles will hand her over to me, in lieu:
if he doesn't, he'll experience my power.
If your actions show mine to be at fault in this, you Greeks,
there's something, a powerful sceptre, grasped in my hand.
For if I'm king, and no girl sleeps beside me, then it's right
that impudent Thersites take my kingship.'
He spoke, and had, from her, much solace for the first girl,
and love was laid aside, driven out by new love.
So, from Agamemnon's example, take up with new flames,
in order for your love to be distracted, in twin directions.
You ask, where you can find her? Read my works:
you'll soon possess a boatload of girls.

PART VIII: BE COOL WITH HER



ut if my suggestions have value, if Apollo
through my mouth teaches all to mortal men,
though, unhappy man, you're roasting in the midst of Etna,
make it seem to your girl that you're chillier than ice:
and if you're grieving deeply, look happy, lest she see it,
and laugh, when tears come to you.
Not that I order you to break off in mid-sorrow:
my commands aren't as cruel as that.
Pretend to what is not, and that the passion's over,
so you'll become, in truth, what you are studying to be.
I've often wished to seem asleep, lest it seem I've been drinking,
while I seemed so, I gave my conquered eyes to sleep:
I've laughed at one caught, who pretended to himself he was in love,
hunting birds, but fallen into his own net.
Love penetrates the heart by habit, through habit it's forgotten:
he who can imagine he's well, will be well.
She might ask you to come: go on the night agreed:
you've come, and the door is locked: well endure it.
Don't speak fawning words, or abuse the doorpost,
nor lay your body on the hard threshold.
The new day will dawn: lose your words of grievance,
and show no signs of suffering in your face.
She'll soon drop her disdain, when she sees your indifference:
this too's a gift you'll gather from my art.
Still, deceive yourself as well, don't let there be a plan
to stop loving: the horse will often fight against the bit.
Conceal your advantage: what's not declared will be:
the bird avoids the net that's too apparent.
Don't let her be too pleased with herself, nor have the power
to despise you: be brave, so she gives way to your bravery.

The door's wide open? Though you're called to, pass by.
There's a night agreed? Hesitate to go on the given night.
To be able to endure it's easy, when, if patience fails,
it's fine to take your enjoyment with easy girls.

PART IX: OR SATE YOURSELF WITH HER



And who can call my suggestions difficult?
Look, I even play the matchmaker's role.
For since hearts vary, let me vary my arts:
there are a thousand kinds of illness, a thousand kinds of health.
Some people are barely relieved by sharp knives:
while herbs and juices are a help to many.
You're too weak, unable to go, tenderly bound,
and cruel Love presses your neck beneath his foot?
Stop struggling: let your sails be brought before the wind,
where the tide calls, let your oars travel too,
That thirst's to be quenched, by which you're desperately parched:
I allow it: it's fine now to drink from mid-stream:
but drink even more than your heart demands,
make your throat overflow, full of the water you've taken.
Go, and enjoy your girl, any time, nothing's forbidden:
let her steal away your nights and days.
Seek loathing for your sickness: and let loathing end it.
Now, too, when you believe you could be free, stay on,
till you're quite overwhelmed, and abundance destroys love,
and disgusted you've no pleasure in her house.
Love's also lasting when mistrust feeds it:
if you seek to relinquish it, relinquish fear.
He who fears lest she's not his, and someone's taken her away,
he'll scarcely be made well with Machaon's help.
Generally a mother loves the one of her two sons best,
whose return she's fearful for, because he bears arms.

PART X: FORGET HER, AND DON'T BE ALONE



here's an ancient shrine by the Colline Gate:
Venus of high Eryx gives her name to the shrine:
Lethean Love lives there, who heals the heart,
and adds his torches to the chilly water.
and it's there the young men pray they might forget,
and the girls captivated by hard-hearted men.
He spoke to me in these words (I'm not sure if it was Cupid
truly, or a dream: but I think it was a dream):
'O you who now incite love, and now quell it,
add this one, Ovid, to your maxims too.
He who calls to mind his ills, kills love:
the god gives more or less of those to all.
Let him who fears the swift months, and the money-lenders,
torment himself with the whole sum he's borrowed:
who has a hard-hearted father, though his other prayers prosper,
let him have that hard-hearted father before his eyes:
This poor man living with an ill-dowered wife,
let him believe his wife has harmed his fate.
Have you, on a fine estate, fertile vineyards,
full of vines? Fear, lest the new-born grapes are scorched.
You have a ship returning: think of ever-hostile seas
and the losses littering the vile shore.
Let a soldier son, you, and you, a marriageable daughter torment:
and who hasn't reason for a thousand sorrows?
So you could hate her, Paris, you should have kept
your brothers' deaths before your eyes.'
Still speaking, the boyish image departed
from my gentle sleep, if sleep it was.
What to do? Palinurus slips from the ship in mid-ocean:
I'm forced to sail on unknown ways.

You who love, beware lonely places, lonely places are harmful!
Why flee? You can be safer in a crowd.
You don't need secrecy (secrecy nurtures passion):
in future it's the crowd that will assist you.
If you're alone, you'll be sad, and the form of the girl you've left
will be there before your eyes, so like herself.
Because of that, night's sadder than the daylight:
your crowd of friends missing, who might ease the gloom.
Don't shun conversation, or let your door be closed,
don't hide your tearful face in the shadows.
Always have some Pylades, to support Orestes:
here too the benefit of friendship is not slight.
What but the lonely woods caused harm to Phyllis?
The cause of her death is certain: she had no friend.
She went as the Thracian Bacchae go, marking the festival,
a savage troop of women with streaming hair,
and now, wherever she could, gazed at the distant sea,
now threw herself down exhausted on sandy earth.
'Faithless Demophoon!' She cried to the dumb waves,
and her words were spoken punctuated by sobs.
There was a narrow path darkened by long shadows,
by which she often took her way to the shore.
The poor girl traversed it nine times: and said: 'I'll show him!'
and with pallid face looked up at the branches, and gazed
down at her belt: uncertain, shrinking from what she might dare,
and from fear, and lifting her fingers to her neck.
Thracian girl, I wish you'd not been so alone then: the trees
might not have wept for Phyllis, by shedding their leaves.
Fear too much seclusion, with Phyllis as your example,
men who've been hurt by women, girls by men.

PART XI: NOW, KEEP AWAY FROM HER

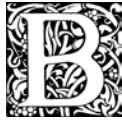


ne young man performed whatever my Muse
commanded: and his life was nearly safe:
he relapsed, he'd come among some passionate lovers,
and Love picked up the weapons he'd laid down.
If you love, but don't wish to, avoid making contact:
it's often accustomed to harm cattle too.
When eyes look at wounds they're also wounded,
and many things harm our bodies through infection.
Not infrequently into an arid place with parched soil,
water permeates from a stream flowing nearby:
Hidden love permeates, if you don't depart your lover:
and in this we're all an ingenious crowd.
Another man was already cured: being near harmed him:
he couldn't bear any meeting with his mistress.
The wound, poorly healed, reopened at the old scar,
and not one of my arts had the least success.
Houses are barely defended from a neighbouring fire:
it's best to keep away from places nearby.
Don't take your walks in the colonnade where she's
accustomed to: and don't adorn the same functions.
What pleasure for a tepid heart to be rekindled by memory?
If you can do, you should find another sphere.
It's not easy if you're hungry to hold back from a laid table,
and splashing water rouses a huge thirst.
It's not easy to restrain the bull that's seen the heifer,
the stallion always whinnies strongly when he sees the mare.
When you've done all that, for you still to reach dry land,
it's not enough for you to leave the girl.
Say goodbye to mother, sister, and the nurse who's in the know,
and whoever plays any part in your girl's life.

Don't let her slave come by, or her maid, with lying tears,
humbly saying: 'Greetings!' in their mistress's name.
And if you want to know what she's doing, still, don't ask:
endure! It will profit you to hold your tongue.
You too, who relate the reason why your love ended,
and make so many complaints against your mistress,
beware of it: it's better to revenge yourself by silence,
so she'll vanish from your longing.
And I'd rather you were silent than say that you've left off:
he who says: 'I'm not in love', too often, is.
But put faith more in love being extinguished slowly
than suddenly: slowly abandon it, you'll be safe.
The deluge may run higher than the settled river:
but all the same it won't last, while the other's permanent water.
Let love fail, and, vanishing, dissolve into thin air,
and let it fade away in gentle stages.
But it's wrong to hate the girl you loved, in any way:
that conclusion suits uncivilised natures.
It's enough not to care: who ends his love by hating,
is either still in love, or finds it hard to leave off being sorry.
Shame for a man and woman, once joined, now to be enemies:
Appian Venus, near the Court, herself frowns on *those* quarrels.
Often they're defendants, and still love: while no dispute
has really occurred, love's strayed without a warning.
By chance I took on one young client: a litter held the wife:
his every word was bristling with cruel threats.
Intending to have her bound over, then bailed, he said:
'she ought to step down': she did: seeing her he fell silent:
his hands dropped, his double-tablets (the security) with them:
he fell into her embrace, and said: 'You win.'
It's safer, and more fitting, to separate, in peace,
and not search out the law-court from the bedroom.
Tell her to keep the gifts you gave her, without any ruling:
small losses are usually a major gain.
But if some chance brings you together again,

keep in mind all the weapons I've given you.
Now you need my weapons: here, brave man's a fight:
Penthesilea's to be conquered by your spear.
Now let your rivals come to mind, now the lover's hard threshold
now the useless promises she made amongst the gods.
Don't comb your hair because you're going to meet her,
don't wear your toga free to catch her eye.
She's nothing, so please yourself, and care for other girls,
let her be just one of many, to you, now.

PART XII: DON'T WEAKEN



ut I'll tell you what specially obstructs our efforts,
and everyone can learn by his own example.
We give way slowly, because we hope to be loved:
since each is pleased with himself, we're a credulous crowd.
And don't believe that words carry any weight,
(well what's more deceptive?) or the eternal gods.
And beware that girls' tears don't move you:
their eyes have been instructed how to cry.
Innumerable arts oppose a lover's willpower,
as the waves beat on the rocks from every side.
Don't let the cause be known why you prefer divorce:
don't say what grieves you: just grieve silently the while.
Don't recall her sins, lest she dilutes them: favour yourself,
so that your own cause is better than hers.
Who's silent is strong: who pours abuse on his girl,
is only accusing himself, for his own satisfaction.
I wouldn't dare steal Love's arrows like Ulysses,
nor, having snatched his torches, quench them in the stream:
nor would I ever clip the Boy's bright wings,
nor by my art slacken his sacred bow.
It's wisdom, whatever I sing: heed the singing,
and you, health-giving Apollo, support my work: be here.
Apollo is here: to the sound of quiver and lyre:
I know the god by his emblems: Apollo's here.
Compare wool dyed in the bronze cauldrons of Sparta
with Tyrian purple: it will be less beautiful:
compare your girl too with all the beauties:
each man will start to be ashamed of his girl:
to Paris the other goddesses might have seemed lovely,
but, compared with those beside her, Venus won.

Don't just compare the face, but their characters and skills:
so long as love doesn't cloud your judgement.

PART XIII: GET RID OF ALL REMINDERS



t's a trifle, what I sing next: but many have benefited
from that trifle: amongst whom I was one.
Don't re-read the letters you've kept from your sweet girl:
re-reading letters shakes the steadfast heart.
Put them all in the fierce flames (you'll hate to do it),
and say: 'Let this be the funeral pyre for my passion.'
Althaea's brand set Meleager, her absent son, on fire:
will you give false words to the flames reluctantly?
And remove the wax images of her, if you can: why weaken
at dumb likenesses? Once Laodamia died because of that.
And often places hurt you: flee the places where you slept
guiltily together: they're a cause of grief:
'Here she was, here she lay: we slept in this room:
here she granted me playful delights at night.'
Remembering reopens love, the wound's newly re-opened:
trifling errors damage the weak-minded.
Consider how, if you touch ashes that are almost dead
with sulphur, they revive, and a tall flame comes from nothing.
So, if you don't avoid whatever reawakens love,
the flames will light again that once were quenched.
The Greek ships must wish they'd fled Cape Caphereus,
while you, old man, take revenge with the light of your fires.
With Scylla past, the careful sailor's happy:
you too beware places that were once too dear.
This is your quicksand of Syrtes: Acroceraunia's living Cape:
here fatal Charybdis spews out the water she sucks in.

PART XIV: AVOID THE ARTS


There are things no one can command to order,
yet often by chance things happen that delight.
Let Phaedra lose her wealth, you'll spare Hippolytus, Neptune,
the grandfather's bull won't scare the nephew's horses.
Pasiphae rendered poor, would have loved more wisely:
voluptuous love is nurtured by riches.
Why did no woman court Irus, no man court Hecale
because the one was a beggar, and the other poor.
Poverty has nothing with which it can feed its love:
still it's not worth wishing to be poor.
But there's value in not indulging in the theatre,
till love's truly vanished from your empty heart,
The zithers, and lutes and lyres unman you,
and the sound and waving limbs of the troupe.
There lovers' parts are danced, continually:
the actor, with art shows, what delights: and what you must avoid.
I speak unwillingly now: don't touch the tender poets!
Disloyally I banish even my own gifts.
Shun Callimachus: he's no enemy of Love:
and as well as Callimachus, you Philetas do harm.
I'm certain Sappho made me sweeter on my lover,
and Anacreon's Muse gave out no rigid rules.
Who can have read your songs, in safety, Tibullus,
or you, Propertius, whose work was Cynthia alone?
Who could depart harshly from reading Gallus?
And I'm not sure some such doesn't sound in my songs too.

PART XV: LOVE YOUR RIVAL



Unless Apollo, the patron of our work, deceives the poet,
rivalry's the greatest cause that troubles us:
so don't let yourself imagine any rival,
and best believe she lies in bed alone.
That's why Orestes loved Hermione the more,
because she'd started to become another man's.
Why grieve, Menelaus? You went wife-less to Crete,
and could do without your bride for all that while.
Not till Paris snatched her, did you miss your spouse:
through another's love your own increased.
And, in Briseis's abduction, it was this Achilles cried for,
the pleasure to Agamemnon of taking her.
Believe me he didn't cry in vain: the son of Atreus took her,
who'd have been shamefully timid if he hadn't.
Certainly I'd have taken her, and I'm no wiser than him:
she was the greatest reward of envy.
For he swore by his sceptre Briseis was untouched,
but he did not think the sceptre was a god.
May the gods let you shun the door of the girl you left behind,
and your feet be adequate to your resolve.
And you can: only have the will to hold on: go hard now,
now the task's to plunge your spur into your swift horse.
Imagine in that lair are Lotos-eaters, Sirens:
add your oars' effort now to your sails.
He also, who once grieved you with excessive rivalry,
I want you to stop thinking of him as an enemy.
Now, though you still hate him, you should certainly greet him:
as soon as you can kiss him you'll be cured.

PART XVI: THE DOCTOR'S LAST ADVICE

ehold, there's still your diet, to complete *all* the doctor's duties,
I'll give you what to swallow and avoid.

Italian onions, or the ones they send you, from the shores of Libya,
or the ones that come from Megara, every one will do you harm.

It's no less fitting to avoid that lustful garden rocket,
and whatever readies these bodies of ours for making love.

Better to eat rue, which sharpens up the eyesight,
and whatever stops these bodies of ours from making love.

You ask what I teach about the gifts of Bacchus?

Expect to be enlightened, by my warnings, very briefly.

Wine prepares your heart for love, unless you take enough,
and your wits are stupefied, overcome by the neat juice.

By wind a fire is fed, by wind it is extinguished:

light breezes fan the flames, heavier gusts will kill them.

So don't drink at all, or drink so much your cares all vanish:
if it's anywhere between the two it's bound to do you harm.

This work is done: hang garlands on my weary prow:

I've reached the port for which my course was set.

Soon you'll say your holy prayers to the shrine of the poet,
men and women, healed by my song.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Anthony Kline lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. He was born in 1947. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available in download format, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.