

# I

## FORMIDO AVIUM LOQUITUR

Vertice demisso sisto per tempora brumae  
dum rigat assiduis frigidus imber aquis:  
Nix modo densa atram faciem convertit in albam,  
post aquilone prior redditur ille color;  
Nocte modo illustrat gracilem Cynosura figuram,  
scintillisque caput prima pruina replet,  
Dum stipulā emineo fulti thorace rigenti  
castris Sarmaticis militis instar ego.  
Sed cum ver sua dona ferens redit, optimus annus,  
et mea quae tueor roribus arva madent,  
Tum saliunt panni mirā dulcedine moti  
corvos et speculans aetheris alta peto,  
Torvā nam specie deterreo quominus edant  
semina, mandavit quod mihi munus homo.  
Formosum video dominum divellere glebas  
rastris et biugos exstimulare boves:  
Haud dubium horrescent alvo tenus ocuis herbae  
quo iacuit quondam nix male larga loco,  
Ocuis et segetes velut aequora flava patebunt  
quas Phoebi genuit sustinuitque iubar.  
Sic mea servārit constans custodia aristas,  
matura et restant farra parata meti.



# 1

## The Scarecrow

With bowed head I stand fast through the winter season  
While the relentless cold rain soaks me:  
Sometimes thick snow turns my black face white  
Then the north wind blows me black again.  
Other times, at night, the Pole Star lights up my thin frame  
Till the hoar-frost fills my head with sparkling light –  
While I stand tall in the stubble like a soldier in a Sarmatian camp,  
Propped up by his freezing breastplate.

But when spring returns, my favourite time of year, bearing its gifts,  
When the ploughland that I'm looking after grows wet in the dew,  
Then my rags leap, moved by miraculous sweetness,  
And I look up into the sky, searching for crows:  
It is my ferocious appearance that deters them from eating the seeds –  
Which is the job entrusted to me by man.

I look at my handsome master turning the clods of earth with the  
plough,  
Whipping on the team of oxen:  
Soon the corn will be waist-high in the places where only a while  
ago miserable snow was lying,  
Soon the crops, born and sustained by the sun's rays, will lie  
spread out here like a golden sea.

It will have been my faithful guardianship that preserved the ears –  
And now the ripe corn is ready for harvesting.

## II

### POETA SATIATUS AMICAM ADMONET

Tu cohibe precor amplexūs, mihi parce parumper  
sensūs ne superent taedia, Chlōri, meos.

Ille accendit amor qualem modo amica recusat  
(frigida ferventi!) nunc modo prompta parat.

Cum sane placeant veneris lasciva, remissum  
interdum, fateor, me magis esse velim.

Velato faciem, nubes tua lumina opacet :  
ver novat, aestivum solstitium urit agros.

Merce simul totā praetentā (ut semper inepte!)  
cruda Cupidineis artibus argueris.

Nos acuit fastus, fastu capiuntur amantes,  
fax magis ardet eo quo mea vota negas.

Suadeo, si sapias, spernas astuta colentes;  
aufuge: non mittent te, mihi crede, sequi.

Is, cui magna fames, magis et magis appetit escam –  
quo maius cupidum postera cena iuvat!

Aspera sis, morosa, pudens, nolensque volensque –  
in fine obsequitor: quod satis esse puto.

## The Sated Poet Warns his Mistress

Restrain your embraces, Chloris, please spare me for a little while,  
Lest boredom overcome my senses.

The kind of love that excites a man is when a girl sometimes  
refuses him coldly,  
But at other times gives him what he wants straight away.

While of course I do enjoy erotic play,  
There are times, I must admit, when I'd rather be left alone.  
Cover your face, let a cloud shadow your eyes,  
Spring renews, but the midsummer sun burns up the fields.

By proffering your wares all at once (as always, clumsily!)  
You show yourself to be unversed in Cupid's arts.  
It is pride that stimulates, that enchants all lovers,  
Our desire rises when you turn down our entreaties.

My recommendation would be, if you're sensible: be clever and  
give your admirers the push:  
Get out of town: believe me, they'll keep running after you.

The man who is really hungry looks forward more and more to  
his dinner –  
And how much better the meal tastes afterwards!

So be nasty, moody, prudish, say yes and no,  
And give way in the end: I guess that's enough.

### III

## DE APIBUS COLENDIS

Prima cave! cum progenies excuditur ictu  
aestivo Phoebi verno vix tempore lapso,  
cumque vigent teneri cerato in tegmine reges,  
examen curā observes, si forte tepet sol,  
quo volitet; sequitor, nam si tibi vana tuenti  
se abscondit, perit ex oculis, vacuumque necesses  
te ire domum; dum adsis, alieno prendere in agro  
errones poteris. Sed sit tibi fiscina prompta  
somniaferumque adhibe fumum; nunc sive propinquo  
in ramo se conglomerant, seu saepe molestā,  
sis pernix, apium quoniam morosa caterva est,  
quae solet incertam tironis pungere palmam.

At tu si manibus firmis in virgea tecta  
decutis, adverso et subis ad praesepia qualo,  
cancellos apium obliquos densissima turba  
scandet et ecce! suam spissam referetur in alvum,  
rex simul artifices fucique, exercitus aptus  
ceratas magnā qui sedulitate minori  
stirpi restituat cellas thalamosque futuris  
regibus, aeternus generis renovetur ut ordo.

### 3

## On Bee-Keeping

Spring is hardly over when the first rays of the summer sun tell the young bees to leave the hive, while the young queens fatten inside.

Take care! If the sun gets hot, make sure to note the direction in which the swarm is flying.

Run after them, for if you lose sight of them, they'll disappear for ever, and you'll return home empty-handed;

But so long as you're there, you'll be able to recapture the wanderers, even on some other man's land.

But make sure your basket is ready and that you have soporific smoke available, because bees like to gather in branches and prickly hedges –

They're bad-tempered too, and apt to sting the palm of the inexperienced greenhorn.

Still, if you keep your hands steady and shake them down into a covered basket, and approach the hive with the basket upside down,

You'll have the amazing sight of a tightly packed bunch of bees mounting the steps to the hive,

The queen, the workers and the drones together, a whole army ready to rebuild the cells and chambers for generations to come.

## IV IN POETAM SENILEM

Heu miser exitio raperis – clarissima visu  
signa, hebes est oculus, guttula nare tremit.  
Non iam mens veteris faciem neque nomen amici  
nec quo cenasti nocte priore tenet.

Adde quod extentis iterumque iterumque sodales  
fabellis – deciens dixeris ante – teris.  
(Mutandi hi potius iuvenili cum grege, vino  
unde favor vili sat reparandus erit!)

Sermonem vero penitus praecidere oportet  
ne fugiat mensam tota caterva tuam.

Unicus autem horae labor est pes: qui fuit olim  
a genio quantum versificator abest!  
Calliditas acta est, actus lepor, acta Camena,  
nunc manet infelix, ante ubi flamma, cinis.

Nos equidem calamum missum malimus in ignem:  
sed quid cum obstructā proficit aure loqui?

## 4

### A Polemic against an Ageing Poet

Alas, you wretch, you are hastening to your doom –  
The signs are quite clear to see, your eye is dim, your nose drips.  
You no longer remember the face or the name of an old friend,  
or who you dined with last night.  
Also, you bore your companions with lengthy stories, again and  
again –  
Stories which you've told ten times already.  
(Who would prefer you to swap them for a younger gang,  
The kind that will be happy to applaud in exchange for cheap  
wine!)

You really must drastically shorten your monologues, otherwise  
all your guests will shun your dinner-table.  
You take a good hour now to write a single foot of verse: what a  
far cry from the poet's former genius!  
Your cleverness, your sophistication, your Muse – they're all  
gone.  
Now there's only a half-dead ember where once there was a  
flame.  
I for one would rather you threw your pen into the fire: but  
what's the use talking to a deaf ear?



## V

### DE AMORE PERENNI

His, quos coniugio iunxit mors saeva secundo,  
summum quae spectas dant monumenta torum.

Etsi iamdudum fatorum austera coegit  
lex animam fines linquere corporeos,  
Non uxore tamen valuit – namque una duobus  
vita fuit – carā dissociare virum.

Advena, ne turbare legens, noli edere fletūs,  
sed taceas, somnus lenis utrumque premit.

More columbarum nodo miscentur amantes:  
ipsa favens nexit dulcia vincla Venus.

His, quamquam exanimi coitu iacuisse videntur,  
(Cervical marmor, pallia praebet ebur –  
qua recalere ebur arte potest, mollescere marmor?)

Lectum stravit Amor, sic nihil officiet.

